Podcast Transcript

Risk Never Sleeps
Episode 111
Clay Ritchey

Ed Gaudet: Welcome to Risk Never Sleeps, where we meet and get to know the people delivering patient care and protecting patient safety. I'm your host, Ed Gaudet.

Ed Gaudet: Welcome to the Risk Never Sleeps podcast, in which we learn about the people that are on the front lines, delivering and protecting patient care. I'm Ed Gaudet, the host of our program, and today we have a special guest today, a good friend, a longtime colleague, Clay Ritchey, CEO of Verato. And you've got a great background too. So we're going to explore a lot of things. But first, let's start off with telling the listeners a little bit about you, your organization, and your role.

Clay Ritchey: Sure. Ed, thanks for inviting me to your podcast. Huge fan of it.

Ed Gaudet: Thank you. Thanks.

Clay Ritchey: Yeah, I was thinking the other day, 11 years, 11 years, we've known each other, work together and.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. 11 years. Yeah, it's a long time.

Clay Ritchey: I joined Verato four years ago as our CEO, and one of the reasons I did that was that I spent a lot of my career in healthcare tech, and we spent so much of that time digitizing, helping drive, and be a part of this digital transformation in healthcare. And as I was looking and, you know, and experiencing some of the things that we got right about that and wrong about that as an industry, over and over again, I kept seeing that this basic idea of identity was blocking the ability to have that data to flow securely, reliably. So you could have the right data at the right place, and you can trust at the right time to really improve care. And that was really the whole promise of the billions of dollars that we've now invested as an industry in the digital transformation. When I had a chance to come and lead Verato, I was excited because everything that we do at Verato is around enabling identity, giving that single pane of glass of all the data in your enterprise, and then being able to associate that with a trusted identity. So we're the single source of identity that allows that longitudinal 360-degree view of a person. And we focus that, when we think about people, we think about people not only as patients, but also as consumers, providers, guarantors, household members. So think about any type of relationship you might have with a person that you care about in healthcare. We also help master those identities to help people, help healthcare do a better job of understanding the people that they serve, and deliver better care.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. And it's such a tough problem to solve. Identity, you've heard about the last mile. Identity is like the last inch. It's proving who you are and what you can do. And that, as you mentioned, that trust is so important, and that combination of trust and transparency. And if you get those two things, you've pretty much enabled a pretty safe healthcare experience for a lot of folks. What makes you different? What makes your organization different?

Clay Ritchey: Yeah. So a couple of things. We, like a lot of healthcare tech or technology companies, I won't say healthcare, but technology companies, you start out with this great idea, and you think you're going to solve one problem only to find another. And at Verato, the company, really thought they were going to be a financial services technology company, a fintech company, and they developed this kind of concept around how to do identity better for digital identity, to help that industry do a better job of managing the consumer kind of journey.

Clay Ritchey (cont'd): And at the end of inventing, what we invented, that was so amazing was this concept of referential matching and what, versus probabilistic matching, which is most of the industry today, when they're doing identity resolution, they're using an algorithm to figure out, you know, these two people, the same person or not, or say, how do I make sure I don't have a false positive right over somebody's record? Or how do I not have a duplicate ... a fraction? What we did is we figured out and patented a technology method or approach that where, we curate data on pretty much everybody in the United States over the last 30 to 40 years, we have 30 to 40 years worth of data curated around the demographic data around people, and then we use that information, was called referential matching, to be able then to fill in the gaps. Let's take, let's say I'm Clay Ritchey, who lives on Morningside Drive today. Five years ago I lived on Pekin Lane. An algorithm wouldn't know that those two people were the same person. But because we have all this history of Clay Ritchey where we filled in those gaps and we can do a lot better job, if you give us 100 matches to make, we'll make 98 of them with certainty, and two of them we might not know. If you give, if you, or even if you have a finely tuned, highly tuned, probabilistic algorithm and engine that might need more like 70%, that will know, 30%. So that's one of the things that we do that's better and unique. And then the second thing is we've now broadened our platform. We've really thought about purpose-built for healthcare; what does that mean? And you and I had a common experience where we really realized how much, the power of understanding the healthcare workflow and understanding how technology intersects with that. And that's a difference between a horizontal player falling flat on their face in healthcare versus a purpose-built company who all they think of as that healthcare workflow being successful. And we've done a really nice job at Verato, at really only focusing on those healthcare workflows so that when we think about identity, we're doing it in a way that makes sense inside the healthcare context.

Ed Gaudet: And gives you those higher positive ratings versus negative ratings, or, like you said, creating those duplicate records, which is so probabilistic, causes such issues downstream as you're rolling out new applications or trying to reconcile that data, especially now in the age of AI. Right? How are you thinking about things differently now that AI is out there?

Clay Ritchey: Yeah. We think about AI as a market driver for us, and it also is an enabler for us.

Clay Ritchey (cont'd): On the market driver side, I know we get a lot, in our jobs, we get a chance to talk to a lot of executives in healthcare tech, a lot of CIOs, a lot of chief strategy officers, and pretty much everybody has an initiative inside their enterprise to think about what is our AI strategy. There's a lot of uncertainty about how AI should be being used in healthcare today. How do you think about not making, how do you eliminate the risk of hallucinations? How do you not have biased your data that you're training your algorithms, your AI on? And so what we're, what I see a lot of organizations wanting to do is they're thinking about that strategy. What are those high-value use cases for AI that we can really move the needle on and make a difference? Let's also, in parallel, let's start getting our data ready to be served and delivered to AI so it can be trusted, it can be safe, it can be accurate. So I think high data fidelity is more important than ever as you start thinking about deploying AI strategies. And that's really what Verato, if you think of the bare essence of what we deliver to healthcare, is the ability to have that data, high data fidelity as it relates to identity and who the data belongs to. So that's where we see really Verato helping drive and fuel the AI being appropriately used in healthcare. And then on the product side or capability side, we see opportunities for AI. You mentioned earlier transparency. And one of the first use cases we're using for AI in our own product is to provide transparency of this match. So I mentioned earlier, we have all this curated data that it doesn't sit in our customer's enterprise. So we oftentimes make matches. They're like scratching their head. There's no way these. What are you talking about Verato? I think I can, you're smoking crack or something like. But they are the same person, right? We're using AI to help really explain to folks click the breadcrumbs on why do those matches are made. And it's a lot easier for AI to do that for us than it is to have some of our highest-valued data engineers pulled off of their job and help do that. So that's one. And then second, we sometimes, in our workflows, we have some physical manual human stewardship of identity resolution. So think of like the typical HIM workflow. There's usually a team of stewards that are looking at matches that couldn't be made. So of that 2% of the matches that we sometimes can't make don't have enough information about the person to know if they're a unique person that you don't know or somebody that you already do know. We're starting to use AI to train on their behavior and figure out, can we get smarter at how humans are making these good matches that we weren't able to make machine to machine? Can we learn on how to be better at the machine and machine matches? We're seeing sometimes uplifts of like another 20 to 25% against that 2%. Starting to see ways for AI could move the needle on a deadly as well.

Ed Gaudet: Excellent, excellent. How did you get into healthcare?

Clay Ritchey: I started my career in the horizontal industries, and then I had an opportunity to work at Kronos, which is now UKG, and 40% of our business at Kronos was, at the time, was healthcare. And I had a chance as a product manager to go build a staff scheduling solution for healthcare. How do you help better marry up nursing staffing and physician staffing to Acuity and Census? So we had a demand-driven matching of what he expect the need to be in staffing levels for it. And that was our first kind of insight into wow, technology can really make a huge difference in healthcare, not only create a better care experience, but we can also drive a lot of the productivity and efficiency that healthcare needs to do better. And that's why I really got my first idea. This could be a really fun and exciting. And then from there, I had a chance to go work at Hill-Rom. And Hill-Rom invented the idea of the, of a mechanical, smart, intelligent bed. And we were surrounding that bed with technologies to help really make the whole environment smarter. And I started really seeing how we could save lives with technology. Literally, it's you could be a co-pilot to help a clinician do better. But you could also really create technology that makes a difference in delivery of care. And then that's really where I got the bug. And then my daughter, she's had a few surgeries along the way with her health. And I can't tell you like how rewarding it's been the last time she entered ... on our hospital and I saw Kronos, I saw Verato, I saw Hill-Rom, I'm able to share with my daughter how these are products that I wrote an MRD for, I helped launch.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. You're a part of.

Clay Ritchey: Surrounding your care right here. That was really awesome. So I continue to see this excitement around being able to make a difference and seeing how it could even impact our own family members as we consume care.

Ed Gaudet: That's such a great point, and I love that. It brings up the shared mission that you experience when you're in it that you don't really appreciate. People can talk about it, but until you're actually in healthcare and you're really understand the differences, everyone thinks they understand healthcare because everyone's a patient, but it's so different from other industries.

Ed Gaudet (cont'd): And that was the big takeaway for me when I first joined Imprivata and got into healthcare initially, I had no idea just how not only complicated it was, but how broad it was. You have acute, you have post-acute, and everything in between. And all the different suppliers and that whole ecosystem that supports healthcare is just really amazing. And once you connect on that shared mission, like you said, it just changes the way you look at things. And I love the, I love that story of your daughter. And yeah, I similarly, had a similar experience with my mom when I would bring her in and to the point where she'd go into hospitals on her own. Oh my, my son created that, and I'm like, No, I didn't create that. I was part. Oh, no, she's telling everyone. I was a part of it, mom. But yeah. No, I love that. I love that experience. And you're right, those products are still being used in healthcare and they're still being relied on, which is really cool. What, as you think about leadership, obviously, you've held significant senior leadership roles throughout your career, what drives you as a leader?

Clay Ritchey: I think that, I think it's really important, I mean, you mentioned mission earlier, and I think one of the things that really drives me, especially at this stage in my life and my career, is I find myself saying a lot of things like life is too short and that's my reason on not to do a lot of things I don't want to do. And I think that all comes down, a lot of that comes back to what you were saying earlier about mission and this idea of having a higher calling of, and what I really love about leading healthcare organizations and healthcare technology companies is that we have this kind of double bottom line of being able to do good from a mission perspective, while at the same time building all the goodness that comes from building a great company. And so from a leadership perspective, we spend a lot of energy trying to have a common mission and a common sense of where we're all heading in the context of doing good. And we have three core values at Verato that kind of reflect this a bit. One of them is we ask our, everybody to make a difference in everything that they do every day, And again, for this mission, and making a difference could be by solving a big problem for a current customer and improving their workflow. Or it could be helping the person you're working with side by side with you have a better day and be able to work through a problem that they have. We ask them to be trustworthy. We asked them to don't have a hidden agenda in politics, but be the best in the world at what you do. Be a trusted expert. And then we asked them to be customer obsessed, which is this idea of ..., whether or not it's an internal customer or an external customer; finding a way to exceed their expectations.

Clay Ritchey (cont'd): And like those three things, I think they embody all the things that I have thought have been good about the best organizations I've worked with and the best leaders I've worked with. So that's maybe the best lens I can think about. When I think about leadership, what drives me is through those three lens, and it's really from working with great companies like Imprivata and others where we've learned, we've seen them in action.

Ed Gaudet: No, I love that. And it's simple. And it also, like you said, becomes this lens by which you can also attract the best people to the organizations you're hiring, rubric, if you will, as you look at bringing people on board. and things? What is wrong with us? What are you most proud of as you reflect back on some of those challenges?

Clay Ritchey: I think that the hardest things we all fight through coming out of the pandemic. And during the pandemic was like, how do you deal with crisis? And how do you really, there's no playbook for this. And we would call our peer groups, and what are you doing? How are you handling these situations? But at the end of the day, we were all having to make hard decisions about how to navigate this. And I'm pretty proud about, Verato during that time period, we tripled in our size and we hired a bunch of people, and we had to do all those things while dealing with these extraordinarily hard challenges of all of a sudden you went from having, we had just signed a six-year lease in a beautiful new facility.

Ed Gaudet: I did the same.

Clay Ritchey: All build out, tricked out with?

Ed Gaudet: Oh, yeah. Yeah

Clay Ritchey: You know, and I had never seen more than a third of the capacity of that because of the. So we all, we've had to learn how to do this with a remote-first culture. And we, I know a lot of people right now are talking about back to work and mandates. And I just saw that the Whole Foods CEO like walk it back a little bit thing, the strategy there. I think we're, I'm pretty proud of the fact that's not even a conversation that we're having in our organization.

Clay Ritchey (cont'd): And we really have done, I think, a nice job of making sure we all know what success looks like, making sure people have a chance to work together. We do a lot of face-to-face meetings. We do a lot of engagement, a lot of transparency, and we feel like, I think I'm pretty proud about the fact that even though we would all love to work in the same office, that genius feels like is out of the bottle for us. We do a lot of engagement, a lot of transparency, and we feel like, I think I'm pretty proud about the fact that even though we would all love to work in the same office, that genius feels like is out of the bottle for us.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, I agree. So you're hybrid, you're a hybrid right now?

Clay Ritchey: Yeah, we're hybrid. We have two headquarters. One headquarters is in corner in Northern Virginia outside of DC. And then, and we only have about 25% of our employees are with, or assigned to that office. And then we have a nearshoring effort in Merida, Mexico, on the Yucatan Peninsula. And just an amazing town. And I have a great experience, a great reason to go to Mexico on a regular basis and enjoy some of the better weather there and food and everything else. And, but we have another about 25% of our employees there really tapping into that innovation in Mexico. We think of that as a development center for software development. Excellent. And then we have the other half of our employees are hired in the wild in their home offices. And so if you think about that dynamic, even if we, no matter where you are, then given the team you're associated with, you are never going to have everybody in one place coordinating your work. So we're doing the best we can to create opportunities for collaboration. But we're, and we're hybrid in the sense that we've got the physical spaces for people to come in and use. But we're, our size right now is to create events where people want to come and be together, because it's kind of help them be better at their jobs and help them enjoy their work more. And that's, and then we're trying to invest in the right technologies. How does Verato product managers do a better job of whiteboarding without a whiteboard? You know? There's some pretty cool technologies out there that helps you do a better job remote.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, and I think when you do come together, a, it's you're much more purposeful about the experience and you're much more present, I find, than you used to be because you took it for granted. I think those are really good points. What keeps you up at night?

Clay Ritchey: With threat to, I've got three teenagers, so.

Ed Gaudet: Say no more. Time to do this. God bless, man.

Clay Ritchey: Oh, yeah. On one side, I've got that, and on the other side, I think we're all probably worried about what's happening in the broader kind of world and content. But I think inside of healthcare, how we build and really help healthcare continue to progress. I feel like, I had this discussion of, I love the fact that you were going, when you're the CEO of Censinet, you can't be, I don't think we can all be good stewards of healthcare. The digital transformation in healthcare, if you aren't thinking about security and thinking about how to do that. One of our customers, Ascension, look what happened. They had a security breach that they're on paper for 6 or 8 weeks, and they handled that extremely well. I cannot even imagine. I'm so impressed with how well they handled that whole situation. But that's just an example. Look at CrowdStrike. Who would have thought that CrowdStrike could have brought down?

Ed Gaudet: Every quarter it's something new.

Clay Ritchey: Yes. So I think that talk, every single meeting, every time we have the company come together, whether it be a monthly meeting, we talk about security and making sure that we're doing all the things that we can to make sure that we have the right posture, that we're doing all the right things. And so I think that's one thing that keeps me awake. And you can isolate the one existential thread that could really affect all of us. But then beyond that, I feel like it's just how do we really. I spend most of my time and energy, maybe not a stressful kind of thing, where we have all this information, all we have digitized most of healthcare and think of the high tech act may just do that, you know, in an extremely fast time frame, right? If you think about that, at the time, there was no single platform that was going to be able to do all those things. So we really created this scenario where there was a very fragmented set of technologies. We're really spending all of our time thinking about, well, how do we really help that digital data flow in a way that's trusted, secure, and can really bend this cost quality curve? Because if you take a look at the US healthcare outcomes versus any other kind of Western civilization, our outcomes aren't great; our cost for outcome is not great.

Clay Ritchey (cont'd): The highest cost per capita was some of the lowest life expectancy rates if you think of that as a gross measures for how we're doing. I really believe, I still believe that we're on the cusp now as we move beyond digital transformation, where now we have all the data, the digital, how do we now, the next phase of this is how do we start really putting it to work? How do we have systems of insight that allow us to really take that data and change behavior and start driving different results with respect to better outcomes at lower cost? So I feel like we're trying to find ways to continue to be part of that story. And you mentioned earlier like these other things that are hard in healthcare. But I do think that things like as value-based care is starting to get a little bit more real, I think we're starting to go past the 25% threshold of Capitated revenue. That's starting to align the value chain with it more than it has been in a long time. So I think there's some real positive things here happening in healthcare from a broader macro perspective that can, that's setting up the right environment for these digital investments now to really start finding that next level of value.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, I know I love that. I love that. All right, we're going to get personal now, Clay. So let's, if you could go back in time, what would you tell your 20-year-old self?

Clay Ritchey: Oh, don't overthink it.

Ed Gaudet: Amen.

Clay Ritchey: 20 years ago, I was not, a friend of ours, Omar Hussein taught me this, maybe more than anybody. He talked about intuitiveness. And I think being in touch with your intuition and having it informed by your data-driven analytics, like it takes both. But I think if I would talk to my self 20 years ago, I would say trust your instincts, be bold; along those lines.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, yeah. No, that's really good. He told me the opposite, of course, because I'm so instinctive. And he told me to actually use more data.

Clay Ritchey: So he tailored that for me.

Ed Gaudet: That's why we were such a good compliment. We had all the data and I had all the gut check and stuff, and he could just put us together. I think that's what, that was his hope anyway. No, it's really good. It's a really good way to look back on it. I love being reflective now that I have time and a little more maturity about, of the things that matter, which is what I love about this podcast, learning about you and your journey. And so next question. If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing? What are you most passionate about?

Clay Ritchey: I've learned a lot along the way. So is, even though what we do is really hard, Ed, it's not bespoke, it's not, like there's muscle memory here. There's a playbook. And these playbooks do, they do prepare us to do, to be able to respond and perform and manage through some of these things that makes it really hard to be a CEO and a leader and building a company. I'm not saying by any means I'm a master; I'm learning every day. But I really like being able to coach and mentor and help others along that line. And I, so I try to spend some time on that. And what I hope to do is, and I've done some kind of board advising and things of that nature, and I see a lot of founders and executives that if they just had a better mentor and coach, somebody that helped them along the way, maybe they wouldn't have had to have given up on their journey when they did. Maybe they could have helped be a part of the next phase of that. And so one of the things I'm really hopeful to find more time to do as I continue to progress in my career, is being able there's things I've learned about the big mistakes I've made, and there's things I've learned where I got it right and so that we can help others, help this next generation of leaders and founders benefit from those playbooks, because we've learned more sometimes than I think we give ourselves credit to it.

Ed Gaudet: We've learned a lot. I see an HPR course in your future, Professor Ritchey.

Clay Ritchey: I'm not sure.

Ed Gaudet: You'd be a great teacher. Come on.

Clay Ritchey: I would love to do it. But I.

Ed Gaudet: I went back to Bentley. They asked me to go back and talk on entrepreneurship, and I gave what was supposed to be like a one-hour lecture. They went for four hours, and at the end, they're like, No one's ever stayed this late. They just kept asking me questions four hours later. I'm like, and it was great. It was fun, Clay. It was great to just tap into that energy and that curiosity that you forget as you get older.

Clay Ritchey: Oh, it's awesome. That's why Bentley is doing so well. The reality is that the class learned more from you and that type of conversation than they would have probably in a whole semester of book learning. And so, yeah, that's great. And I bet you had a good time.

Ed Gaudet: It was a good time to go back. Yeah, it was a little scary, but it was a good time. All right. Risk Never Sleeps podcast, I have to ask you this question. What's the riskiest thing you've ever done? Yeah, yeah. And remember, I know your secrets. So be true.

Clay Ritchey: I would first tell you that I teach my children that the rules aren't for them. And what I mean by that is that we raise them to have good judgment and good understanding of right and wrong, use good judgment, do it. But just from trying to encourage them to be risk takers and also, as opposed to maybe rule followers. But the stupidest thing I've ever done that was also risky was in the middle of us trying to outrun a snowstorm, and I got stuck with my two young children driving, trying to outrun a snowstorm.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, no.

Clay Ritchey: Ed, it was so funny. I started driving from Raleigh Durham to Pennsylvania to see my parents. My wife was home with our, pregnant with our third child, and we got stuck on the 495 beltway around Washington, D.C., going up the hill. And I remember I had thought, my gosh, if I stay here, what's going to happen? I'm going to run out of gas. And so I got out of my car and locked my kids in the car, and I walked up to see what was going on.And I realized that the reason that we were stuck was that the tractor-trailers couldn't get up the hill. So they stopped. But there's no reason, so the lemmings that we all are. We all, so I started knocking on people's windows yelling, Hey, we can go!

Clay Ritchey (cont'd): Let's go around! Let's get everybody going! And anyway, so we got everybody up and going and I eventually got home. But like when I look back and I realized that like a four-hour trip took us 15 hours.

Ed Gaudet: Oh. You're lucky. You're so lucky.

Clay Ritchey: That was really bad judgment and unnecessary risk.

Ed Gaudet: I'm glad you didn't say swim with dolphins because I was a little, I was concerned you were going to say something like that.

Clay Ritchey: And now that you brought that up.

Ed Gaudet: Here we go.

Clay Ritchey: And I think it's fair. We had a great, I was your successor coming into Imprivata.

Ed Gaudet: Yes. You were.

Clay Ritchey: You were taken and you had a chance to go and build a new, a whole new business for us, which just ... The way that you introduced me to the whole company was you went and googled Clay Ritchey on, and you found a profile on Facebook of another Clay Ritchey who likes to swim with dolphins and kiss dolphins.

Ed Gaudet: That's right.

Clay Ritchey: And you put that picture in: This is your new chief marketing officer.

Ed Gaudet: Oh. Not my finest moment.

Clay Ritchey: Actually it was. Actually, it would be a great icebreaker for all of it. That was funny, and I love it that you brought that up, because that was how we got on, and that's how we started.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. Yeah. No. And yeah, that's when I was taking partake in the drink. My judgment wasn't always sound back then. But no, it was, it worked out. It worked out fine, but all right.

Clay Ritchey: Worked out great.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, it worked out great. Yeah. Yeah. All right, so you're on a desert island. You can bring five records or five movies with you. What would you bring?

Clay Ritchey: Oh my gosh.

Ed Gaudet: Are you a music guy? I forget. You into music?

Clay Ritchey: Yeah. I grew up in a household in the 80s where. So I would say the 80s and the late 70s formed most of my music tastes.

Ed Gaudet: Okay. Good decades. Yeah.

Clay Ritchey: And so big Rolling Stones, and then LED Zeppelin, a little bit of ACDC whenever I was.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, a little ACDC, a little thunderstruck, and Hells Bells, and.

Clay Ritchey: Yes. All night long.

Ed Gaudet: Nice. Nice.

Clay Ritchey: These are anthems. Yeah. So I would, I've got a, I have an 80s playlist that has got about 300 songs on it. That I actually went through and curated, so. I'll send it to you.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, I'd like that. Is it on Spotify or?

Clay Ritchey: It's not. It's on Apple Music.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, okay. Yeah, shoot it to me. Yeah.

Clay Ritchey: Yeah. But I think I would probably want to go back to certainly the roots of some of those things made me think about what it was like to be growing up in the 80s and all those emotions and feelings that you have as a teenager, and as you're thinking about being an adult and think about it's like, who would have thought that genre would still be dominating the airwaves today?

Ed Gaudet: So good. It's so good. Yeah. The 38 special. Next. What is it, Dexter Midnight. What is it? Come on, Eileen; that song, I forget who sings that. Yeah, it's a weird.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, it's like an Irish band or a Scottish band or. But anyway, it's a great song.

Clay Ritchey: Do you ever go, could you ever go, could you ever sit down and not dance to Come on, Eileen.

Ed Gaudet: Come on, Eileen. And Men Without Hats, the safety dance.

Clay Ritchey: Oh my gosh. We definitely need that. We need a chair as a playlist here for sure.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. All right. What advice do you have to young professionals that want to get into healthcare and, or IT?

Clay Ritchey: I think on the healthcare side, and I learned this early, like some of my most successful products I've been a part of launching and building were born not in a conference room where we all got around a private detective do, but was born by going out and actually sitting in the environment, watching a nurse, watching a doctor, sitting next to an IT professional and seeing what their daily life looks like, and really understanding what the kind of the challenges they have and the workflow issues. And so my advice to people that are thinking about healthcare is: this isn't for the weak of heart. Like you've got to get out there and really understand health care and understand health care. You have to walk in the shoes of the health care practitioners. That doesn't mean you got to go and get your, go and be a doctor, or go and be a. It means you got to go and spend time in their environment and really understand it. And you mentioned earlier it was complex, it was broad. It's taking the time to really go and spend time learning, reading, and experiencing it. Yeah. But then on the IT side, and I make everybody in our company, I make them watch Hidden Figures. I know you've watched that movie, but Hidden Figures is a story about getting to, when our space program at NASA, when we were working towards getting to the moon, and it was a story about the people behind the scenes that helped get that team to the moon with this. And one of the storylines in there is they had all these computers, and at the time computers were people, mostly females, that had slide rules that were sitting in the back of the room doing complex calc. And they were just on the cusp of being disintermediated by the IBM supercomputer. And the storyline there is that the leader of that group saw this coming and basically forced her way into a library to which was allowed to have entrance to, got a Fortran book, learned Fortran, taught her team how to run a Fortran, and then they became the first generation of programmers at NASA on the IBM mainframe. And who knows how much of that was Hollywood versus how much of that was real. But the point is that being intellectually curious, and I think it's a big part of being in the IT world like you, when we think, for me, being a part of an organization where your young coders are already ahead of you because they know the language that's coming, they're already teaching themselves, they're already learning how to put it to work and how to do amazing things with it. That's my advice. I've seen over and over again. The people that you want in your organization that's going to help you go get from good to great are those types of people that are so intellectually curious and always wanting to think about what's new and staying, staying ahead of it, and not letting yourself get disintermediated by whatever the next thing is, and instead be ahead of it.

Clay Ritchey (cont'd): And I think if you could do those two things, commit yourself to understanding healthcare, being in the workflow and being inexperienced, and at the same time be intellectually curious to stay ahead of your craft, I think those are the things that I try to coach people on.

Ed Gaudet: I love that, I love that, that's a great way to end, Clay. Thank you so much for your time today. This is Ed Gaudet from the Risk Never Sleeps podcast, and if you're on the front lines protecting patient safety and delivering patient care, remember to stay vigilant because Risk Never Sleeps.

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