Podcast Transcript

Risk Never Sleeps Episode 48 Jim Kuiphof

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 today, and I'm joined by Jim Kuiphof, the Deputy CISO for Corewell Health. Let's start with learning more about your role and your organization.

Jim Kuiphof: Thanks, Ed. A pleasure to be here, thank you for having me. My role is as the Deputy CISO, which is the Chief of Staff, if you will, within the office of the CISO, for Corewell Health. Corewell Health is the organization that was formed as a result of Beaumont Health and Spectrum Health coming together to form the largest health provider in the state of Michigan. So we are a $14 billion health system with a health plan, delivery, health delivery, ambulatory sites, hospitals all over the state. So 65,000 employees.

Ed Gaudet: Excellent. And you were at Spectrum before?

Jim Kuiphof: I was at Spectrum before, correct.

Ed Gaudet: All right, excellent. Tell us a little about your background. How did you get into healthcare and cyber?

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, so growing up in West Michigan, I knew about Spectrum and the mission of Spectrum Health for a long time. Out of college, I worked at McGraw Hill as a systems analyst, and then I went over to Johnson Controls, so manufacturing as a business analyst. Then, I ended up getting into information security at Johnson Controls, which is kind of an interesting, circuitous route to information security. I ended up playing volleyball with the then manager of information security, and I started picking his brain on like, what is that information security thing that you're doing? It was fascinating to me. I have a sense of right and wrong, but I also like to take things apart and break stuff, put it back together. Information security was one of those problems that was just big, hairy, and audacious enough to kind of capture my attention. I bugged him for about 18 months before he was able to get a position justified, and that's when I moved over into information security. Grew up through security analyst, engineer, architect, manager, director, and then the opportunity came up, obviously connected to community in West Michigan. The then-acting CISO was leaving, and he said, hey, Jim, I think you should interview for my job. And I said, absolutely, it sounds like a great opportunity. So I went and interviewed with CIO, and about halfway through, he looked at me and said, so if you don't get this job, are you interested in something else? And I'm like, okay, that's a nice way to let me know that I didn't get the job, appreciate it, and I didn't think anything of it. I said, sure, you know, whatever. Interested in working for Spectrum at some point, because of the connect purpose and the mission and the community? Fast forward about three weeks, and my boss gave me a call and said, let's get together, have a drink. So we went to a restaurant, had a drink, and he reached into his coat pocket and handed me an offer.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, wow.

Jim Kuiphof: A director job, yeah. So it was not something that I even really necessarily interviewed for, but I accepted that offer and really haven't looked back since. It's been a roller coaster ride. We've executed multiple million-dollar cybersecurity maturity project over multiple years, built a really awesome team. I couldn't do this without the team and will impact that, I think, a little bit later in the podcast, and then, you know, now deputy CEO and really helping to mature our operations.

Jim Kuiphof (cont'd): I'm also head of the Cyber Fusion Center, which is a pretty traditional cyber fusion center managing the attack surface, keeping an eye on threats, interfacing with risk to understand prioritization, and then executing on projects to lower our overall risk from a cyber event. And that includes things like incident response and coordinating, you know, system-wide responses to all things cyber. And so my teams deal with all of those things, forensics, the whole thing. So got it pretty expansive responsibility. And the team is, yeah, beyond fantastic in all of that, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: And how about medical devices?

Jim Kuiphof: So medical devices are managed through our digital services team, which is our IT team. And we work very closely with them to provide visibility into vulnerabilities inventory and use across the system.

Ed Gaudet: Got it, got it. Do you have do you have a bio-med group as well or?

Jim Kuiphof: We do, yeah, we have a bio-med group and radiology is separate, yep.

Ed Gaudet: Okay, excellent. So as you think about the next 18, 24 months, what are the top three priorities for you?

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, no, that's actually a really, a big challenge as we look at bringing two teams together, very disparate teams from across the state under one umbrella with a singular chartered mission that everybody can get behind. Technically, we're looking at things like maturing our EDR, building out a comprehensive pane of glass, if you will, to understand our threat landscape, our vulnerability environment, the attack surface, making visible to other teams who are ultimately responsible for technology and applications that are, the maturity of their various spaces. Professionally, for me, I'm looking to grow and develop the skills necessary, the executive it, if you will, to potentially move into a CISO role someday. So it's a little bit of everything for me. It's kind of a mixed bag, right?

Jim Kuiphof (cont'd): We've got some new technology to deploy, maturing a lot of our old technology and colonizing across all of Corewell, and then for me, just making sure I'm the best leader I can be, right? And preparing myself to be positioned to take the next step if it should present itself.

Ed Gaudet: Has AI reared its ugly head in the system yet?

Jim Kuiphof: It has. Yep, it has. We found out early on that we had a fair number of users who were exploring this ChatGPT thing, right? And that was kind of an early warning for us that we should get ahead of this. And so we've taken the stance of sort of a universal block, the likelihood that PHI leaks out to a site that we don't have good contractual relationship with is high enough that the org said, you know what, let's just block it. We will put some training together and make people aware of their obligation and responsibility to protect information and then poke little teeny tiny holes to explore and start the process of evaluating to see if this is something that we should embrace wholesale. We're exploring things like the Microsoft Private instances, right? The Bing search, things like that, where we might be able to protect our data a little bit more, a little bit more proactively. But yeah, right now, there's a AICOE that's trying to just grapple with all of that, wrestle with it, and get their arms around it, which is a huge problem, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, I know it's been a, it's been an interesting couple of years. We lived through a pandemic, right?

Jim Kuiphof: Yep.

Ed Gaudet: And learned a lot through that process. And now we're dealing with AI, which is, you know, arguably the largest, most important technology advancement in years.

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah.

Ed Gaudet: What keeps you up at night?

Jim Kuiphof: Like I said, I have a great team, so I sleep well at night.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, good.

Jim Kuiphof: I really do. And part of, you look across the industry, and there's statistics about deputies and CISOs who burn out after just a few years because of the churn of incidents, largely in the pressure. Ransomware is ever-present threat, and we're one ransomware event from a very significant material impact. But we have, I, the team is tremendous, and I have an opportunity to have amazing resources available. So we're not, yeah, it's not an unlimited budget, but yet we can spend on good technology, spend the time to tune it well, and we've been able to deal with some pretty significant things very proactively to protect Corewell. So yes, I sleep well at night.

Ed Gaudet: Now, are you still in a remote status, or are you coming back hybrid or?

Jim Kuiphof: We're mostly remote with a little bit of hybrid, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, good.

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, we're trying to be very deliberate about why we get together. So the majority of my time will still be remote, but when we do get together, it's for a specific reason. And we're trying to build that community back, right? So it's not just all two-dimensional. We can be comfortable with each other in three dimensional again as well.

Ed Gaudet: I love that. So given obviously the pandemic and the challenges we went through, what are you most personally and or professionally proud of?

Jim Kuiphof: That's a really good question. Personally, we undertook a lot of change. Just my wife and I decided, we have two biological kids, we decided to adopt just at the tail end of the pandemic. So we actually ended up flying to Ukraine in January of 2020, 2022. I'm sorry, just before Russia invaded, so we were there a few weeks before Russia invaded, on the tail end of COVID, so all the COVID testing and everything was still in play there.

Jim Kuiphof (cont'd): So that was emotionally grueling and incredibly intense. We've since pivoted, and now we're looking at adopting from India, and we're significantly underway with that process. We're pretty much just waiting for the call to say the paperwork is done, you've adopted, come get your baby. So yeah, it's a pretty amazing journey that we've been on, personally, and we're very excited to take that next step. Professionally, the integration, and really building a team out of two very different systems, different philosophies, right? And bringing cohesion to form that best team possible. And that looks like taking ideas from both sides and tearing down silos, and embracing the idea of best practice. And it's not easy, it's difficult. We're moving a lot of cheese, but it's very rewarding as well. We get to really see the results, those aha moments when someone discovers something new, and they get to realize it's a better way of doing something, right? And some of the conversations have been really fascinating for me because it's challenged my leadership. When I have engineers coming to me saying, Jim, I don't think we can do what you're asking of us, and unpacking that and understanding, What do you mean you can't do it? Because as an org, we've decided to accept a little bit more risk to go faster, to get this integration done quicker, so that we can come together as a team and understand what the work looks like as a bigger org, and then tune and get better over time, right, as a single team, rather than trying to do something in a silo that is the 9/10 that we like to execute too. So kind of discovering and having conversations about personal risk versus the business risk and empowering teams to try and fail, right? And gaining that level of trust from the teams to be able to say, I trust Jim. And he tells me that the risk tolerance has changed, so I'm going to try and do my best, but I still might not achieve everything that we think we could, and that's okay, and to be able to do that.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, it's really interesting because you're taking literally two unique cultures, and you're not only blending them, you're, kind of come out with a different culture, a newer culture. And what are some of the things that you found in that process that have been surprising?

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, probably the biggest surprise for me is just how difficult change can be on a personal level, for me, personally, and being confronted with those difficult situations and then being the empathetic leader that then translates and says, look, I know things that the team doesn't, and it's still uncomfortable for me.

Jim Kuiphof (cont'd): Imagine not knowing what I know about what that destination looks like. Or maybe I'm three years out of school, and I've never gone through something like this before, right? I haven't experienced a lot of change or upheaval right in my job, and just knowing how unsettling that could be and tailoring communications written, verbal, right, one-on-ones, to target that uncertainty specifically and talk to it and use examples. Aligning mentors is another great way. Hey, I've got a senior engineer. He could be a manager and has chosen to stay as an individual contributor because he likes the work, like that level of maturity on the team, and being able to align people for mentoring relationships to help navigate these waters of change and help the teams really see there's a path forward, there is an out to all of this chaos and change and difficulty. There will be an end to it, and we will come out stronger as a result.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, it's so interesting. Integration is always so difficult. Most companies never make it through. And you are not only integrating these organizations, but you're doing it and changing at the same time.

Jim Kuiphof: You got it.

Ed Gaudet: Which is a huge challenge for anyone. What are some of the, you know, what are some of the hard lessons that you've learned through that, that you can take as you move forward in your career?

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, that's, there are many.

Ed Gaudet: Right, I bet.

Jim Kuiphof: There are many, stepped on many a landmine, the pitfalls. I think probably the biggest is learning how to communicate up the chain of command. Yes, we can do that, but here's what it means. It means this to our people. It means this to our risk tolerance. It means this to the quality of deliverables and supporting the rest of the business. Are we okay with that? And being able to surface it in a non-emotional way? Even when your emotions might be raging, like, why would we think to do this, right?

Jim Kuiphof (cont'd): No, it's like, okay, how do we be successful in doing what we've been asked to do and deliver and to bring people along that journey and be transparent? I think if you talk to my teams, I engender a bit of trust from them more than I think others, because I'm very transparent. I'm able to articulate, like I don't fully know how we're going to do this, and I need your help to solve this problem.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, right.

Jim Kuiphof: I believe we can. I know who you are. You're capable of doing this, but we have to come together to be able to do this, or we will fail.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: And so being able to say, look, I've got resources. Tell me what the problems are that you need to bring resources to bear on. Where are you having conflicts so I can go pave that road as smoothly as possible so we can run as fast as possible. So I'm I feel like I'm part of the team, and I'm not leading the team, it's a different role, I have a different responsibility. But at the end of the day, I need them, I think, more than they need me.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, well, isn't it always the case, too? And I think, you know, again, I think you learn you're a leader regardless of what position you're in, because it does take more than one individual. It does take a community of folks too, especially when you're going through that level of change organizationally, and that's huge. Wow. So love hearing about your current role and what's happening at the organization. If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing outside of healthcare and IT?

Jim Kuiphof: That's a great question, Ed. So if I wasn't doing anything in IT at all?

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, what are you most passionate about? Like when you.

Jim Kuiphof: Oh, man. We're also in the middle of a remodel. So remember I said we tackled some pretty big life things? I love working with my hands at the end of the day. So, through a series of misfortunes with the remodel, I've had to do a lot of the work myself. And so learning and just really appreciating being able to get out and plan and tackle something that's physical and tangible is really awesome. So what would I be doing? Probably something in that space.

Ed Gaudet: Flipping houses maybe?

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, maybe, could be. Yeah, potentially.

Ed Gaudet: What, how big is a remodel?

Jim Kuiphof: It was a complete tear down, basically, and rebuild, so yeah, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: That's not a remodel. That's, you just built a new home.

Jim Kuiphof: That's new construction, yeah, pretty much.

Ed Gaudet: New construction, yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: There were a few walls left standing, but yeah.

Ed Gaudet: Well, I come from a, well, my wife comes from a family, which I come, I guess from a family of folks that are very good with their hands. My wife is obviously, she's a realtor, but she understands how to, she built our house alongside with her brother and father and it just fascinates me how, and they, we talk constantly about construction and it's just it's fascinating how difficult it really is, and how precise you have to be.

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah.

Ed Gaudet: About everything. It's crazy.

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, especially trying to meet customer expectations because everybody has different taste. And what I think you might want is probably not exactly what you wanted.

Ed Gaudet: And that's right, the backsplash that, it's too blue. It's too blue.

Jim Kuiphof: You got it. You got it.

Ed Gaudet: So if my brother-in-law is listening to this, he'll know what I'm talking about. We've all been there.

Jim Kuiphof: Oh, that's great. That's great.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, so if you could go back in time, and this is probably like, what, five years ago for you? You look so young. You're in amazing shape, I bet. Like, look at me, I look good for 28, right?

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

Ed Gaudet: What would you tell your 20-year-old self?

Jim Kuiphof: Oh, that's a great question. My 20-year-old self was, was a boy, not a man. At the end of the day, I was lazy, I was indifferent, probably a little cynical. So if I had to tell myself something at 20, it would be that, I would quote Jocko, Discipline equals freedom.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, I love that.

Jim Kuiphof: Be disciplined in every area of your life. Learn to be disciplined in all areas. Grow up, be a man, embrace responsibility. In fact, ask for it. Lean into it and own it. Put yourself in hard, difficult situations. Embrace it, work hard, fail, pick yourself up, try again, fail again, and be disciplined in the execution of all of that rather than seek fun only. Not that I only sought fun, but you know, your 20-year-old self definitely does not appreciate the value of very hard work.

Ed Gaudet: You just described me at 20 in the military begrudgingly, but it was the best experience I've ever had. That's what saved me. It was that discipline. I love that quote, by the way. That's, yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: What branch were you in?

Ed Gaudet: I was in Army. Field Artillery.

Jim Kuiphof: Awesome.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. Did you serve at all or?

Jim Kuiphof: I did not, no.

Ed Gaudet: Okay.

Jim Kuiphof: I had asthma, so I was not.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: I was contemplating the Marines and they said, oh, you have asthma. We don't want you.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, they're brutal about that. Any little thing. So, awesome, that's a great answer. I would be remiss if I didn't ask you this question. This is the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast.

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah.

Ed Gaudet: Jim, what's the riskiest thing you've ever done?

Jim Kuiphof: I'm pretty risk averse, so.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, no.

Jim Kuiphof: I know, I know, I know, I know, I know.

Ed Gaudet: Everyone says that. And then they say something like, well, I actually traversed the Zion Gorge.

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: With one line.

Jim Kuiphof: I have a, I have my scuba cert, and come to find out from my insurance broker that actually is a high-risk behavior for life insurance.

Ed Gaudet: Okay.

Jim Kuiphof: Didn't know that. I appreciate that. No, but probably I would say fast. I've driven very fast in automobiles and not always on the racetrack.

Ed Gaudet: How fast? I have to ask.

Jim Kuiphof: I've seen 160 in a car.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, me too, me too. Yeah, I rented a Shelby Cobra one year in California and went up to the 101.

Jim Kuiphof: Nice.

Ed Gaudet: Blazingly fast, stupid. I was much younger, but.

Jim Kuiphof: At that speed, you just. You're, you have no time to respond or react.

Ed Gaudet: And you feel the car lift. That's the thing, that's the thing that freaked me out. That's why, yeah, it's probably not good. Probably not a good.

Jim Kuiphof: When the car tries to become an airplane, it's not good.

Ed Gaudet: Not good, yeah, all right. This has been fantastic. Thank you for this. Any last thoughts or advice for folks that are maybe graduating, thinking about joining the cybersecurity profession, maybe getting into healthcare?

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, do it.

Ed Gaudet: Cybersecurity, just do it.

Jim Kuiphof: Cyber, yeah, information security, cybersecurity side, we have a huge need.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: I think the last number that I saw is 3 million jobs worldwide unfilled.

Ed Gaudet: Wow.

Jim Kuiphof: And it is probably one of the hardest emotional jobs that you're going to face because even governance risk and compliance, like our risk analysts, they're dealing with weighty subjects. They're dealing with weighty topics.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: Compliance, understanding the regs to make sure that we're operating within the legal boundaries within healthcare. That's heavy. You know, responding to ransomware and cyber events is difficult.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: Trying to get other people to do their job to patch systems is hard. It's a difficult profession, but it's noble. And it's very easy, especially in healthcare, to connect to purpose, which gives you just amazing opportunities to have conversations that you never thought you could have before, right? Because the ultimate good of, you know what? Our patients' and members' information is part of their healthcare journey. And going and walking the halls of the Children's Hospital and realizing, you know what? I'm here with them, protecting their information so that when they're done with their cancer treatment or their, right, dialysis, whatever it happens to be, they don't have to worry about their information showing up on the dark web and their identity being stolen, or their medical identity being used to get illicit drugs. Like that's the noble goal. That's the worthwhile objective of working in information security.

Ed Gaudet: So are their services being disrupted or?

Jim Kuiphof: We can't provide healthcare, right? I mean, that's the end of the day, right? We have to keep the lights on.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: I would say, that's great, do it.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, do it.

Jim Kuiphof: Get into healthcare, get into information security, cybersecurity. Find a company that you can connect to the purpose of the company. Connect to information cybersecurity, whether it's compliance, whether it's risk, or whether it's, you know, doing forensics and reverse engineering of malware, it doesn't matter. All of those roles are important and vital, and you can put your head on your pillow at night knowing that you've done something noble and good and right, and that is a really awesome thing to be able to do.

Ed Gaudet: That's great advice. Wow, I have to ask you another question, since this has been such a fascinating conversation for me. Desert Island. Top three movies or albums, music. What would you pick?

Jim Kuiphof: Yeah, that's a, oh, that is a tough one. Yeah, because you know what? In my younger self, I would have been able to rattle off movies off the top of my head. Now I realize, I'm a little bit older, that doesn't matter.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Jim Kuiphof: So I would probably go back to music, and it would probably be three albums, and I would say probably anything musically complex, jazz, classical symphony, Beethoven, Brahms. I love piano music as well. My wife is a piano player. We have a baby grand, so I just, I love the tone of a nice piano as well. So it would be something in that genre. I have a number of CDs from back in the day. I'd grab three of them and go, so.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, sounds like Radiohead would be on that list. You're a Radiohead fan?

Jim Kuiphof: I am not, no.

Ed Gaudet: That's that complex music right there. All right. Well, thank you, Jim, this has been terrific. I really appreciate 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 care delivery, remember to stay vigilant, because risk never sleeps.

Censinet RiskOps™ Demo Request

Do you want to revolutionize the way your healthcare organization manages third-party and enterprise risk while also saving time, money, and increasing data security? It's time for RiskOps.

SCHEDULE DEMO

www.Censinet.com