



Podcast Transcript

Risk Never Sleeps

Episode 109

Kerri Gallagher

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, I am pleased to be joined by Kerri Gallagher, president and CEO of First Health Advisory. Welcome to the program. Yeah, so let's start off with telling our listeners a little bit about yourself, your current organization, and your role.

Kerri Gallagher: Absolutely. And thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here. I have been with First Health Advisory now for ten years and recently appointed as the president and CEO. And the company itself has seen so many different iterations and has grown with the changing tides of healthcare. We all know it is an industry that is constantly changing. That is the only thing that you can trust about it. And I've been in healthcare IT for the majority of my career. I actually started out on the medical device side, selling and configuring peripheral arterial devices to podiatrists. And my favorite part of the job was the IT aspect, being a solutions architect and configuring the device. And from there I started to learn more about EHRs. Epic and Cerner got into that side of healthcare IT. And when I joined First Health about ten years ago, I was in the client success role and helping our clients get adopted onto the EHRs with my analyst experience. And since then, I've been able to grow just as the company has. And now, it is exciting to see the niche that we've carved out for ourselves in the healthcare cybersecurity space.



Ed Gaudet: Excellent. And how did you get into healthcare? What was the inspiration to dedicate your life there?

Kerri Gallagher: I've always been interested in health and wellness. I've been an athlete my entire life. A lot of my family members are on the clinical side, but for whatever reason, maybe it was the extensive schooling and a lot of the dedication that it takes to become a clinician or even a nurse, and some of the other practitioners that are out there. I loved the IT side of it. I loved that there was an algorithmic approach to solving a problem, and I liked that you could do it on computers. I liked that it was replicable. And again, it goes back to it's always changing. So, there was always something new to learn. And that's what was so intriguing to it or intriguing about it to me.

Ed Gaudet: I think I read you're a lacrosse player.

Kerri Gallagher: Yes, yes, I played lacrosse at Arizona State.

Ed Gaudet: So, that team aspect of healthcare, probably also is important.

Kerri Gallagher: Oh my gosh, absolutely. Especially on the cybersecurity front, I think people forget that if you're on the Biomed team, you're only worried about clinical medical devices. If you're on the IT team, you're just worried about access management and securing that part of the healthcare landscape. You need every single person to be on board, constantly thinking about cyber-resilient digital health, and that is essentially how a team functions, right? The Phillies won 96 games this year, and they didn't do it just because of the guys that were on the field. They have great trainers. They have great nutritional and wellness coaches. They've got an incredible coach, and they've got individuals that are running the team and securing trades. And that's how healthcare cybersecurity needs to work. You cannot silo out people and expect departments or the entire enterprise to be safe. There needs to be constant communication and ensuring that everyone is keeping cybersecurity top of mind, because we all know that it really comes down to the people. A lot of the times, when it comes to a breach or something nefarious happening.

Ed Gaudet: It's a contact sport you can't hide.



Kerri Gallagher: No, you absolutely cannot hide. No. Just lacrosse. Just like baseball, it is a contact sport. There's going to be there's going to be a lot of contact in order to either move the ball down the field or get where you want to go.

Ed Gaudet: So you're a Phillies fan?

Kerri Gallagher: Absolutely, I am, yes.

Ed Gaudet: I think ... Santiago is a Phillies fan, too.

Kerri Gallagher: Okay, there we go. Yes, I believe so.

Ed Gaudet: From Christiana care.

Kerri Gallagher: Yeah. Christiana care. Yeah.

Ed Gaudet: You've obviously risen quickly in your career. What drives you as a leader?

Kerri Gallagher: I think it's really focusing on our associates and the people at our company. I've realized throughout my career people are companies are made up of people, and people join companies because of the individuals that they're surrounded by, and the managers that they get to report to, and the people that they get to train up or mentor. And for me, my leadership style is always going to be focused on people. It's very people-centric. I find that if you invest in the individuals that are doing their best day in and day out for the clients. You're going to get the best sides of them, the best versions of them, and ultimately the best outcome for our clients, whatever project or deliverable that they're focused on. We're also in a day and age where there's very little separation between your work and your home life. A lot of times, it might actually just be a very thin wall. And I find that in order to ensure that our company is operating to the best ability that it can, we've got to take care of our people. We've got to make sure that not only do they have opportunities for knowledge based advancement, whether it's certifications within our industry, but also the proper rest and reprieve that you need.



Kerri Gallagher (cont'd): Now that we have cell phones glued in our hands at any given time, a manager could get ahold of one of their team members. And we want to make sure that people have the opportunity to be able to step away and be fully engaged in their life outside of work, while also focusing on how can I ensure that I am up to date on my certifications. I know the policies that are coming down from the hill that could affect my clients and how they're planning their own internal policy developments. And so it's really it's really important nowadays to focus on the people.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. And what do you look for in terms of traits when you're hiring? What common traits are you looking for?

Kerri Gallagher: Flexibility. It's got to be the biggest one. Flexibility. And that goes without saying in cybersecurity because you never know what's coming around the corner. You never know if there's a breach and you're away from keyboard, but then you get a text message that you got to get back to your house. I think flexibility too, in how you communicate, that's a big one. There are times where we're doing big report readouts to our stakeholders, and then the next call that you're on, you're doing a mentoring session on how to properly prepare for that report and make sure that it's built out correctly. So not only do you need to be flexible in how you approach security, but flexible in your communication. Sometimes, the individuals that are sitting across from us at these stakeholder meetings, they might be a chief financial officer. The verbiage and vernacular that we're so comfortable using that's going to go over their head. And then we're not going to be able to connect on how important it is that we are focused on these outcomes or what the assessment is ultimately saying. What's not just communication from being able to talk to very senior leadership folks and be able to mentor, but also being able to craft your message so that it lands properly so people really understand what we're talking about.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, that's a great point. And unlike other industries, healthcare has this unique shared mission that you experience with clients. What does that mean to you? What does that look like in your world?



Kerri Gallagher: Yeah, I think a unique shared mission is probably the best way to say it because, at the end of the day, it's patients' lives that are at stake or valuable information pertaining to their health records. And so having that mission top of mind, it helps give you that compass to guide yourself. Due north, it gives you that gut check to say, am I doing the right thing? Is this really what the client needs? What's my ultimate goal here? The shared mission is always going to be about patient care. And so as long as we're coming back to that same central theme and we're all able to connect on that, then you can work with any department. You can work with any type of individual at a healthcare organization and be able to quickly get on the same page.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, and there's the operating officer at First Health. What are you looking at over the next couple of years strategically? What are some of the top initiatives?

Kerri Gallagher: I'm going to be really curious to see what's coming out of Washington. I know, I know that there was a lot of talk at the beginning of the year as to what kind of policies might be implemented. It gives me a very strong sense, and it's almost very reminiscent of meaningful use and that attestation period that we all went through, and it's starting to feel very similar to that where Congress is working very close with the Healthcare Coordinating Council to determine what these types of policies or procedures should be in place. I think it's also really interesting what New York is doing, where New York is saying, we're not waiting for the federal government; we're going to start putting together what we feel are some best practices now that healthcare entities need to be abiding by to ensure patient care, proper transmission of data between entities, access protocols. I think as we look bigger in the next five years, it's going to be very interesting. The types of mandates that are coming down from Washington and at the state level, and how that's going to affect how we serve our clients, because it's not necessarily going to be driven by what we think the client needs, or, looking at an assessment report, we might have to have certain guidelines or mile markers that are essentially put in place by the government or other states. That's going to help drive how we deliver to our clients.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. And you're right. And it has to be that balance where you have the carrot stick. There's got to be that incentive to drive participation like we had in meaningful use, obviously.



Ed Gaudet (cont'd): As you think about, we talked about some of your strategic initiatives, how do those translate, and how do you work with your CEO, who I know very well, on taking his vision and operationalizing it at the company level?

Kerri Gallagher: Yeah. I think what's great about Carter Graham, our CEO, is that he does have a very strong mission and it really is focused on excellent client delivery. And so the best way I can support his vision is ensuring that we not only have the best people, but we also have the best tools in place so that we can deliver what we promise to for all of our clients. And one of the other things that we're really focused on is when it comes to our team of technologists, of analysts, and engineers, we are starting to think broader about the types of individuals we're bringing on board. It is a very easy place now that we live in this connected society, to learn about cybersecurity, to get certifications, you don't necessarily need to go to a standard four year college program and then get a master's degree. You can actually start on the biomed team, get trained up at a healthcare entity, take a couple supporting certifications, and then join a company like First Health Advisory and be able to deliver on some pretty key, important projects that we never really had access to. All of that information before, and that is something that I know Carter is really focused on too, is as we take that client centric approach, we also wrap it into how we build up our own personnel and our team members here. And my job is to really take Carter's mission and vision and his big five-year strategic plan, and be able to try to break it down into annual goals, annual milestones, and different markers that we can do our own internal checks on. How are we getting there? Are we on the right path? And we've already talked about in healthcare, things can change on a dime. So it might be that we pivot. Or maybe the Hill isn't making any sort of policy mandates this year. So, do we have to shift back our attention into another area of the market to make sure that we're still out there in front of our clients and we're still offering the services that they so are in demand for?

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, that's great. That's great. All right. Let's talk a little bit about the person, Kerri. This is all about you now outside of your day job. What would you be doing? What are you most passionate about?



Kerri Gallagher: I love spending time with my family and friends, and I'm a very big, die-hard Philadelphia sports fan, so I'm recovering as to what happened in Florida against Tampa Bay right now. Today's been a sad day, but tomorrow is the start of Red October for the Philadelphia Phillies. So looking forward to some postseason baseball. It's the third year in a row, so I can't complain about that, but I do spend a lot of time with my family. The majority of my family is in the greater Philadelphia area, so most weekends are spent with family and friends, and cooking in the kitchen, watching sports, and just really connecting and honestly trying to stay off my phone as much as possible.

Ed Gaudet: Do you have to be, to your point earlier, you have to be present when you have those moments. Otherwise, what's the sense? What are we doing? Yeah, cooking. So, hobby?

Kerri Gallagher: Hobby. Yes, I love baking, okay. I'm a huge baking, I, my goal for this year for Thanksgiving is to bake a croquembouche. It is essentially a beautiful cream puff tower or a beautiful centerpiece at Thanksgiving. And croquembouche roughly translates to crack in the mouth. So you cover it and drizzle it with caramel. And so, as you bite into the cream puff, you get that little crunch. And it's delicious. It is a pretty ambitious feat. So, I will be doing some trial and error. So if you give me your address, if a batch comes out good and I'll send you some, I'll send you.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, we love that. So, how many do you have to cook to get the tower?

Kerri Gallagher: Okay, so for the tower that I want to do, it's probably going to be about three dozen.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, wow, okay. Okay.

Kerri Gallagher: Yep. Perfectly cooked.

Ed Gaudet: Yes.



Kerri Gallagher: Of course. That's what we tell ourselves. That's what we tell ourselves.

Ed Gaudet: Cream puffs. Oh, yeah. Cream puffs. What do you do for your center? What? Do you have anything special? Or do you just follow a traditional recipe or?

Kerri Gallagher: I follow a traditional recipe, but I will judge it a little bit just based on my own baking experience. What I like, what I don't like. But I will always start. It's actually Martha Stewart's recipe that I'm starting with as the base, and I feel like you don't ever need to correct or edit Martha Stewart, so I have a feeling I won't need to do that with this recipe. But yeah, I think, for the most part, anytime I ever am baking in the kitchen, I will actually use the recipe somewhat as a guide. The only key elements I'll never change are anything that are actual agents, like the chemistry that's involved in baking. I'm never going to mess with that. But when it comes to when it comes to the flavoring and that type of thing, I'll definitely augment to my family and friends, as well as my own preferences.

Ed Gaudet: But no custard, right? You're using cream versus custard in the center.

Kerri Gallagher: So, like cream cream over custard all the time at home

Ed Gaudet: Just checking. All right. Yes, you could go back in time. What would you tell your 20-year-old self?

Kerri Gallagher: I would tell her to allow yourself to fail. Allow yourself to get back up. No path is ever set in stone. You can always hang a left. You can always hang a right. And don't get caught up in all of the normal milestones that other people might put on. You accomplish this by this age. Do this by this age. If you're not here by this age, then you got to rethink everything. Take your time. And the other thing I would really advise her to do would be get a couple different mentors, a couple different mentors, a mentor that you can see yourself living a similar lifestyle from a career standpoint, a mentor that aligns with who you are from, like your creative pursuits, and then a mentor who aligns with who you are and how you show up in relationships.



Kerri Gallagher (cont'd): And I think having those individuals that have already walked the walk ahead of you, being able to call on them when you have, when you're going through either a tough time or you're ready to celebrate something, you've got someone that reflection of you in the future that can either give you advice or give you a pat on the back or a high five.

Ed Gaudet: I love that, especially because I think we often put so much pressure on ourselves when we're younger. And I was trying to pull up a quote here from the Grateful Dead, let your life proceed by its own design, which basically is what you're saying.

Kerri Gallagher: Yeah. Let go. Loosen the grip. It's going to be okay as long as you're conducting yourself and being kind and making the best, healthiest decision for yourself. You really can't go wrong.

Ed Gaudet: You can't go wrong. All right. This is the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. I have to ask you this. What's the riskiest thing you've ever done?

Kerri Gallagher: Okay. Riskiest thing I've ever done. I would say moving across the country and starting over. And just like moving back east and moving back close to family and putting everything into a new move and a new direction, and it's really risky because there's no guarantees. But so far I have no regrets and things have been going wonderfully.

Ed Gaudet: Were you at the West Coast or?

Kerri Gallagher: Yes, I was in Scottsdale, Arizona for about 13 years.

Ed Gaudet: Okay. All right. Yeah, yeah, that's a nice place.

Kerri Gallagher: It is beautiful. It's definitely beautiful.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, I, yeah, I was out there. I'm trying to remember the, I was in Phoenix actually with that hotel. What's that really nice hotel in Phoenix? Oh, the Phoenician.



Kerri Gallagher: The Phoenician. Yes. Oh my gosh. Beautiful, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah, I was lucky to stay there for a few months. One year anyway. Yeah, I know exactly. It's like, why was I there for a few months?

Kerri Gallagher: I know, I will say Scottsdale is a beautiful place to visit, so it is absolutely gorgeous, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: All right. So you're on a desert island and you can take five records with you or five movies or both. What would you take?

Kerri Gallagher: Okay. When it comes to records, I would do John Meyer, Battle Studies.

Ed Gaudet: Whoa, a Meyer fan, all right.

Kerri Gallagher: Love John Meyer. I would also do, I think this might be cheating, but I would do the Forrest Gump soundtrack.

Ed Gaudet: You could do that. We'll let you do it.

Kerri Gallagher: Okay.

Ed Gaudet: There's just so many good hits.

Kerri Gallagher: So many good hits.

Ed Gaudet: It's like the big chill. Like the big.

Kerri Gallagher: Yeah. You cover all of your bases with that. I would do as far as movies, just to keep myself entertained. Field of Dreams, which is a great one. Yeah. Bridesmaids, because you're gonna you're gonna you just. You absolutely just need to laugh.



Kerri Gallagher (cont'd): And then I think staying in that idea of making sure you're laughing, Old School, which is fun Will Ferrell classic. Because it's the ... deserted island.

Ed Gaudet: Was it blue? The guy that the old guy that was like.

Kerri Gallagher: Yes. There's my boy, blue.

Ed Gaudet: My boy, blue. We're quoting Old School, Kerri, for the podcast. All right. That's great. Any advice to young professionals coming out of school wanting to break into healthcare and or science?

Kerri Gallagher: Absolutely. Listen. We're at like we talked about, we're at this really cool. We're at a really cool phase in access to digital information, and you don't necessarily need to even know anybody that works in healthcare cybersecurity. You don't need to have gone to a four-year school. You can jump on LinkedIn. You can go onto Coursera. You can definitely self-educate yourself to a certain point and then start getting hands-on experience. There is no traditional path anymore to get into healthcare, IT, or cybersecurity and embrace that. I know it can sometimes be scary because it makes more sense. I'm following the four-year college plan. I'll get an internship every other year. It's okay if you don't do that. There is so many more opportunities out there. And again, get yourself a mentor. Get yourself a mentor, and that way, you've got some guidance in the industry, someone that you can call on and lean on. And, like I said before, someone that can pick you up when you're down and can also celebrate your successes.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah. And remember, it's all about attitude. Have a great attitude. Be a lifelong learner and celebrate the wins and celebrate the losses too, because it's a learning opportunity.

Kerri Gallagher: Absolutely, yes. Absolutely.

Ed Gaudet: Kerri, thank you so much for joining us today. I really appreciate it.

Kerri Gallagher: And the pleasure's been mine. Thank you so much for having me.



Ed Gaudet: Kerri, thank you. This is Ed Gaudet from the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. If you're on the front lines delivering patient care and protecting patient safety, remember to stay vigilant, because Risk Never Sleeps.



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