



Podcast Transcript

Risk Never Sleeps

Episode 62

Mike D'Arezzo

Ed Gaudet: Welcome to the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast, in which we talk to the folks that are on the front lines protecting patient safety and delivering patient care. My name is Ed Gaudet. I'm the host of the program, and today, I am joined by Mike D'Arezzo, Executive Director of Security and GRC at Wellstar. I'm happy to have you here. I love your background. I'd love to drill into learning more about what you've been doing over the last couple of years. So why don't we start off with your current role and tell us about the organization you're at?

Mike D'Arezzo: Sure! So Wellstar Health System is one of the larger healthcare providers in the state of Georgia. We do a wonderful job, we're based out of Marietta. We've got nine hospitals, and recently, in September this year, we acquired Augusta Health System. That number goes to 12. We're building two more hospitals in the next two years, so we'll go to 14, probably about 180 ambulatory centers. So 28,000 employees plus another 6500 out of Augusta Health. So WMCG now, which is what it's called now, a lot of great work. We're a top-to-bottom, front-end, ambulatory, rest, retirement communities, and things like that. We have our own radiation oncology, which is unique for a hospital. Usually, that's outsourced to a third party, but we actually do that internally, and we have a lot of fantastic people who help good people. We're a non-profit healthcare provider, so every dollar we get gets reinvested into the community and to the people we serve. So we've got a lot of great things, and we do a lot of stuff, and I'm honored to be a part of the team.



Ed Gaudet: That's terrific. Small job.

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, just a small job, right?

Ed Gaudet: So what does a typical month look like for you? What do you focus on?

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah. So, typical month, self-care, I, there's another executive director who owns security operations and digital forensics and incident response, DFIR. So I own everything except that, and usually that, what does that mean? And it's its governance risk and compliance, and then vulnerability management, penetration testing, project management, business continuity. And then, you know, staffing and information security projects. My job generally involves getting involved with IT and with operations and with people, answering questions like, how do we do this? How can we do this? How can we do this safely and securely and keep our patients' data and information safe? How do we protect our people, our team members, right? That's a very important task that people and healthcare projects, you know, we focus on the patients and privacy as I got to protect my team members, right? I, you know, I want to make sure that they're protected. So a common week, month is, you know, review of what's incoming. So what are the emerging threats? And that's working in conjunction with my peer over on the security operations side for threat Intel. What are the threat actors leveraging? And then, what do we see from a vulnerability perspective? What are the tools and products that are causing potential challenges? Zero days. And that's not just at a computer level, that's also applications, mobile devices, industrial control systems, things like that. A lot of it is paying attention and reading about the things that are incoming. C I S A, CISA, does a great job of publishing, Health-ISAC does another great job of publishing these emerging threats and things like that. That's part of it. The other part of it is meeting with other operational teams around IT weekly, and we discuss, you know, what do you need help with? What can what do I need help with? Where are we at? What are the projects look like? Merger and acquisitions, another, I literally just got off the call with merger and acquisitions. Because we're a large healthcare provider, we do, you know, move around and acquire other businesses and merge with other businesses. This is an ongoing thing that never goes away. And then it's team growth, right? So the most important part is making sure my team has everything.



Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): On any given week, I have at least 3 or 4 one-on-ones with team members, not just my direct supervisors that report up to me, but their team members as well. I want to understand what they're going through, what they're feeling, how they're managing their goals and days, and what, you know, you don't quit bad jobs, you quit bad bosses, right? And I mean, that's you know, there are times you quit bad jobs, let's be honest.

Ed Gaudet: No, but you're right, actually. Yeah, you never leave a job. You leave a boss, or typically.

Mike D'Arezzo: I mean, you have a good boss and a terrible job. You're like, I'll show up, but hey, I need you to know that this ain't the best job in the world that happens, right? Every job has its challenges and everything, but if you have somebody who's helping you get through, it makes all the difference, so I try to be that for my people. You know, when I interview you, and you start, one of the questions I ask is, you know, this may be the last company you work for, but this is not your last job, you know, what do you want your next job to be, and how can I help you get there? Because if this is a journey for you, I want to be an involved, invested part of that journey so that we can grow you, we can be happy. If you're challenged appropriately, if you're paid appropriately, and you know you're well paid, you're not going anywhere, right? Hey, I'm growing here. So I talked to somebody today who's in charge of our application security program, and I said, I want you to know that I'm counting on you to grow out this operation, right? So I want this to be a resume builder for you. Not that I want you to go anywhere, but I want you to look back and be like, I didn't. I don't want people to look back and go, I didn't do anything to this job. I didn't do anything in this company. That kind of moved the needle for me. It was the same. It was a carbon copy of the last job. So this job is I built this, I executed on this, I hired these people, I was involved in growth, I managed X, Y, and Z, and you could go, This was a great job, and I hope people move on. And so the two things that drive me as a human being are help people, even if it's, and that could be single serving, right? You meet somebody in an airport, and they just tell you their problems, and you know, you walk through them, you talk through them, or it's helping build out a career or helping somebody get through something. And then the second part of that, of filling my soul is solving problems. I love a good problem-solving, right? And it's exciting to me. You sit down either by yourself or with a group of people, and you collaborate and say, what are your challenges? What are you, you know? What are your use cases? What do we need to solve for?



Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): And that's exciting to me, right? That fulfills my soul. I could work almost any job, but right now, cyber security is one of the most difficult problem-solving things, right? It's not just how do I protect the company? How do I protect the company and still let the company do what they need to do? All of us are like, hey, I'm a security guy. We lock it in a box and bury it at the bottom of the ocean. It's safe, and you're like, yeah, but it's unusable.

Ed Gaudet: That's right.

Mike D'Arezzo: How do we meet? How do we meet the two of those?

Ed Gaudet: Amen, no, we share a lot of things in common. And you're so right, getting that balance between enforcing proper controls and enabling the business is so important. And if you don't do both, you know, you have an imbalance. And you've got to understand the business and the needs of the business, and it sounds like you spend a lot of time doing that, which is great.

Mike D'Arezzo: I hope I'm successful.

Ed Gaudet: I'm sure you are. How did you get into healthcare?

Mike D'Arezzo: My boss, whom I worked with previously, worked in healthcare prior to this, so he and I worked at a security consulting firm. He owned the managed security side of things. Great human being, great person to learn under as a you know, he's one of those people in your life that's a mentor, and I need to know what that guy knows or that person knows. And he called me, I just lost my job, and he called me, and he goes, hey, I need you to come and rebuild GRC for me. And I was like, that's awesome. Who called you? And he goes, what are you talking about? I'm like, you don't know. I just got let go. And he's, oh, I guess you could start pretty soon, and I was like, absolutely. So that's how I got into healthcare. But he really kind of influenced that, and his standpoint is, he's a very smart guy. He could do this job for any company in the world and the largest companies in the world. He could certainly do it. He's got a great reputation. He's, I like healthcare because, you know, I'm not a doctor. I've never went to medical school, but I can help protect people with the knowledge that I have.



Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): And he's one of the brightest individuals and most modest people you ever meet, but he really could do it anywhere. And he's, you want to do this. And if you're looking to help and you're looking to make a difference, this is where you can make a difference is in healthcare.

Ed Gaudet: And it sounds like that shared mission is important to him. What does that mean to you?

Mike D'Arezzo: When you work for somebody that believes, right, or you work with people who are passionate, right? That's infectious. And it's funny to say that in a healthcare job, but it's, you know, it builds people. It's the glue that binds people. If you see somebody who has the best intentions, they drive hard, and the utmost ethics, and the highest, that's somebody I would follow, right? And you know, he's, it's infectious and it drives people, and I leverage him. You know, I do a lot more of the selling to people and hiring people, but I leverage that when I talk to people. I'm like, when you meet him, you will understand quickly this is where he wants to be. It's not where he is right now. He's one of those people, I want to be here. I want to be here and solve problems, be a part of the solution.

Ed Gaudet: And I love your background. You spent time on the vendor side with GE. How has that helped you working now on the provider side?

Mike D'Arezzo: One of the first few things I'd tell vendors is three years ago I was on your side of the table. I was a value-added reseller. I worked with products. I sold a lot of this. I sold a lot of that. I've worked with clients to build things out. From a provider perspective, it helps to build partnerships, and it's when I talk to vendors, they're like, I can see you're very transparent about that. And I was like, in healthcare, if I don't tell you where it hurts, if I'm not transparent with you and tell you where it hurts, you can't fix it. If I don't tell you where my journey plans on going. Hey, I want to lose 30 lbs, you're not going to help me understand how to lose 30 lbs. So if I tell you where I'm going from a provider perspective and IT and technology, you can be a part of that journey, and/or, you know, as you develop things, and I try to meet as many people as I can. So I, my peers, and everything, as we have these conversations, and we talk at conferences or just, you know, check in with each other and once finally, what are you working on? I'm working on this.

Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): And you're like, what solutions have you found? I haven't found any. You're like, you know, I bet so and so could solve that. And I go, and I have a conversation with that vendor and say, hey, look, there's a few of us that are talking about X, Y, and Z software bill of materials, for example, right? This is an important thing to us. And so I talked to some of my partners and vendors and say, look, this is where we want to go. This is what we're looking at. We're tired of being blindsided by things. We want an easy way to check in on things to say, do I have move it in my system? Do I have, ..., you know, ...? Do I have all this stuff? I want to be able to get to it as quickly as I can. And so having that transparency with that helps. The other side of it is that I was a consultant prior to this, you know, having that consultative mentality where it's like there's a solution here somewhere, and sometimes, you know, the question or the problem that you're trying to solve, you can't find a solution for, so you change the problem, and okay, this is what you came to me with. What is it you actually need? I need to get from here to here. And you're like, doesn't matter how you get there. And you're like, I want it to be in style. And you're like, okay, short of being in style, how is there any way you care to get from point A to point B? And they're like, no, I just need it to be secure. I can solve for that. How about this solution? Or like that works, and you play the go, find me a rock game, or bake me a cake game depending on what sales solution you have, but that's kind of what it is. And from a provider perspective, that's useful, right? You deal with very smart, intense people that are really trying to save lives or improve healthcare, and they're very smart people, don't get me wrong. And sometimes, I'm a smart person, I know a lot about technology. I don't know anything about being a phlebotomist. I've had blood drawn plenty of time in my life. I couldn't tell you how to do it, or why they do it, and why they do certain things and anything else. You know, it's understanding that we all come at this from smart ways, just different directions. So how do I meet on that end? And from a consultative standpoint, I think that's probably been the best thing that's been for me in my career is understanding that come at it from this direction, at this angle, that a solution can be found. Maybe it's just not the question that we're looking for.

Ed Gaudet: Combination of empathy and shared mission really seems to be working very well for you.

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, no, it does.



Ed Gaudet: It's helpful for everybody that's involved because you're right. It takes a, it takes an ecosystem to deliver care. If you treat vendors like they're not partners, then I think that's where the disconnect typically happens. I love that. You know, as you think about the next couple of years, what are your top three priorities?

Mike D'Arezzo: So artificial intelligence and it's, how do we manage with this? So we look back at the journey 10, 15 years ago, the cloud, right, everybody? Oh, the cloud is out. What is the cloud? It's just a computer plugged in somewhere else, and that's what it was back then. Now, it's evolved into this big thing, and it's ubiquitous, it's everywhere, right? If you tell me we're not in the cloud, you're like, you've got shadow IT, and that's the end of that conversation. Like you're.

Ed Gaudet: You are in the cloud.

Mike D'Arezzo: You are in the cloud, whether you know it or not. But your company is actively working in the cloud. So artificial intelligence is just another path on that journey, right? Here's where it is. It's, and we, I led a discussion at Health-ISAC recently about artificial intelligence. You know, we had that quote from Jurassic Park. You know, you guys spend all this time and energy, and I don't know the quote word for word, but he spent all this time and energy thinking, how can we do this? We need it and stop and think, should we do this?

Ed Gaudet: Yes.

Mike D'Arezzo: There's a lot of that going on, right? I can apply all these solutions to this, and you're like, I don't think that's a good solution to apply, and here's the reasons why. No one wants to be told no. We all want to be told, that sounds great, keep going. And so that's kind of how we have to lead this conversation. It's not, stop doing that. We don't want to be the NO police. We want to be the KNOW police. We still want to know about it, and we want to direct the traffic appropriately, right? Now, you're talking martial arts, right? You're not stopping the fist somebody throws at you. You're redirecting the energy for it. You're managing that energy appropriately. That's one of the big things I'm working on is, where is this energy coming from?



Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): How is that energy being used? How is artificial intelligence being used, and how can I direct it in an appropriate manner that's successful for us, the patient practitioners, everybody? So I'm a firm believer in the win all the way around.

Ed Gaudet: Love that.

Mike D'Arezzo: So that's the first one.

Ed Gaudet: Okay. You have more?

Mike D'Arezzo: Oh no, we always have more.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Mike D'Arezzo: Right? So the second one.

Ed Gaudet: Before you go to the second one, I have a question about AI. So, many of our customers have formed AI governance committees that are cross-functional, include obviously the business, the clinicians, IT, etc. Have you started down that journey yet, on the governance side ... have committee? You have, okay.

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, so we have software development in that, we have compliance. So that's our chief privacy officer. We have the health information management team. We've pulled all these people, and they're very smart people, and they're approaching AI from different solution bases or protecting AI from different directions. The chief privacy officer, she's mainly concerned with how do I make sure that we don't put the data sets. And this is always a big concern, is we don't put two data sets that shouldn't be together in the same bucket that you don't create this picture. And quite frankly, a lot of people have questions about I don't understand that doesn't make sense. Can you explain it? Absolutely. Let me give you a real quick scenario. You have two patients. One patient has great insurance, health insurance. Another patient has terrible or no health insurance. Both patients have the same problem, the same healthcare issues, and everything else.



Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): What you never want to have happen is a doctor to go, which one of these two has a better chance of survival because they have the better health insurance? That's a terrible scenario to be in. So those kinds of data sets, maybe you don't want together because it may skew a doctor's effort, right? Even unconsciously, it may skew someone's effort and protecting that person. So that's one prime example of what we're trying to do to avoid.

Ed Gaudet: Have you thought about, how do you manage an existing vendor, where you may have had a contract in place for a couple of years, and they start bringing AI in through updates, etc.? How are you dealing with that? That to me is, so a really.

Mike D'Arezzo: Microsoft, Google, and Microsoft, right? Google Bard, Microsoft Copilot, these are things. So Microsoft we that there is an easy way to do that. We signed up for the internal enterprise because we had an enterprise agreement. And so everybody who logs in with my company's email account where they're logging with their user, they get logged into a centralized internal-only version of Copilot or Bing, right? So that's great. That's easy. Google's a little bit more difficult because we don't have a Google Enterprise account there. Maybe, hey, you can use Bard to do that, and Bard is baked into the Google Chrome search bar. You're like, oh, okay. So we are revisiting that. We are like understanding a lot of it is just awareness and just letting our team members know. Here's why this is a bad idea. I know it's tempting, it sounds great, but here's why. You got to be careful. You have to look out for this. Be aware of this. Be cognizant of the challenges that this may create. Put it in terms of your information out there. You wouldn't want somebody to know that you had X, Y, and Z. You know, they used to say you wouldn't want to see it in the front cover of The Washington Times or, you know, the New York Post. So don't put it in a place that could be exposed or generally used because these are evolving data sets. Think of Myspace and Facebook 15 years ago, everybody's like.

Ed Gaudet: My who?

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, I know. Yeah, dated. I just dated myself.



Ed Gaudet: Yeah, the point is though, these vendors, they come and go, you know, you got to be really careful who you trust your data with.

Mike D'Arezzo: Absolutely.

Ed Gaudet: Really great points.

Mike D'Arezzo: And we're seeing things like in contracts, right, where you get a discount from a vendor, and they're like, here's what we're asking for in return. You're like, all right, give it to me. And so you can't share this data set with any other vendor because they want to build out their AI, modeling their large language model on your data. And they're giving you a discount for it, but you can't share that data set with another LM. And you're like, we're already in breach of contract, because I guarantee you that. To your point, there's other vendors out there who are using our data sets, and that's another challenge. It's like, no. So we have to be cognizant of contracts priority too. So software bill of materials I mentioned it already. How do I understand the evolving landscape of what this is. So it's no longer, hey, the problem is your Google Chrome browser hasn't been, you know, is has a zero-day came out last couple days. It's a component within Google Chrome. And you're like, oh, I don't know if we're using that. And I had a conversation with a company, and I said, hey, we're getting this vulnerability, it's showing up on our scanner, and they're like, we don't know what you're talking about. I'm like, here's the directory path for this jar file, and they're like, we've never seen that before. You're like, it's in your install directory. Like you can see the, it says software name, a software company name of application slash install, and it's in your install directory. And they're like, yeah, we're gonna have to get back to you on that one.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, man.

Mike D'Arezzo: This isn't a small company. This is a very large company that lots of organizations outside of healthcare, including use. And I won't dime them out because they're still figuring out this problem. But we can see this, and they're like, oh, yeah, we don't know about that. It's that software bill of materials is a big thing.

Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): One of the conversations I've had with my peers is how far do you go? When is far enough, and you're like, I'm legally required to publish it two layers down, I don't use it. What if it's three layers down, and it's easy to hit? You're like, I see where this is going. How far is enough? So I'm working with some vendors and some products that are kind of doing this, and we're investing in organizations that kind of do this. Again, it's an evolving landscape, right? It's just coming out there. So the third priority is biomedical. In October, the Patch Act went into effect. And so the FDA has published reports that says, thou shalt keep security up and running for your product. It's a collective problem. It's not their problem. It's not their problem. It's not his problem. It's all of our problems. So vendor manufacturer, you need to help out, right? You can't just say, you know what, we're just going to stay here on MySQL version five for forever and ever, even though it's been unsupported for five years. I can't do that anymore.

Ed Gaudet: The blast from the past.

Mike D'Arezzo: I wish I was kidding, Ed.

Ed Gaudet: I know, I know, I've seen it. No, I see the windows 95.

Mike D'Arezzo: Go to these people and they're like, yeah, we're not going to update this. And you're like, okay, I'm going to provide you with two things that are not going to make you happy. And my next step is to heart start having conversations with people, they're going to make your life very difficult. And like, whoa. And you're like, no. Like, if you're doing that to me, what are you doing to the small companies?

Ed Gaudet: Exactly.

Mike D'Arezzo: Right? What are you doing to the small mom-and-pop shops? They're just like, are you going to go to another vendor? There's no other solution out there. And that's why these companies are kind of, you know, they've had a stranglehold on them, right? There's two, you know, radiation oncology products out there that are the two main ones used. And you're like, because all the other ones can't afford to get licensed by the FDA.



Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): You know, what we say goes and they're like, okay, what if I turn the FDA against you and they're like, you wouldn't do that, and you're like, I will to protect my patients. And so that's where we are today. That's the third big one is, and I hate, I want to be partners with the, and I've told these manufacturers, I'm like, I want to be a good partner. One guy, one manufacturer who didn't have policies and they didn't have policies. And I'm like, I will write your policies for you.

Ed Gaudet: That's a good partner.

Mike D'Arezzo: I mean, honestly, I told their VP of sales, I'm like, hear me out. I will give you ... policies and help you complete these because they were like, we're getting HITRUST certified. And then five minutes later they tell me they don't have policies. And I'm like, there's no way you're going to get HITRUST certified, my friend. Like you lost out of the gate. It's managing with these new expectations and fixing this and living in the new world, right? It's not just you have Microsoft and we're going to own you. It's but you have this tiny little component. Maybe you've heard of it. It's called, you know, move it. And you're like, I have heard of that. It's an open-source tool or it's a component of this y, x, y, and z. And that's how I'm going to overcome your security operations.

Ed Gaudet: And certificates are important, but oftentimes people hide behind them. How do you get around that?

Mike D'Arezzo: So we have that honest conversation, you know? Hey, you have your HITRUST certified, your SoC 2 type two certified. And, you know, a lot of times my peers are like, oh, they got a SoC 2 type two. We'll just take it. You're like, did you read what that covers? Because I've had companies go, I've got a SoC 2 type two. Great, let me see it. And I'm like, you need an NDA. I'm like, I'll get you an NDA. Here's your NDA, let me see it. And they're like, here you go. And you read it and you're like, this has nothing to do with the product or services you're selling.

Ed Gaudet: Oh my God.



Mike D'Arezzo: Are you aware of that? And they're like, yeah, but they're they could be applied to everything. And I'm like, yeah, no, that doesn't fly. Like your operations over here in India are not the same operations in Argentina or Mexico. That doesn't fly. You know, we ask the questions. We leverage a vendor risk management platform much like your company, and we ask those questions. And honestly, you have to ask the questions. They can fill out a questionnaire, a 30-minute conversation. You can start to smell, right? As my friend Eric Zinn will say, it's a faint waft of sewage and you're like.

Ed Gaudet: A faint waft of sewage. I love that, I love that. I gotta remember that.

Mike D'Arezzo: That was sharp and poignant and unpleasant. Let's dig down a little deeper into that area.

Ed Gaudet: That's great. So tough couple years with the pandemic. What are you most proud of personally and professionally?

Mike D'Arezzo: So I went from driving about 10,000 miles a month to a grinding halt of never leaving my house, except for flying every other month down to headquarters. I'm proud of the team members that I've left behind at the former organization I worked with that adapted for the first year of the pandemic as the security services or, you know, branch, and we were busier than ever. You had people going, I don't have a business continuity plan. And literally, I had a pharmaceutical company right before the pandemic, you know, like you need a business continuity plan. Yeah, we were told we kind of needed one. And why do we need this? And I was like, you know, there are lots of reasons, and I listed Global Pandemic as one of them. And the guy who owns who works for a pharmaceutical company was like, a global pandemic, really? And I was like, there's the bird flu, the avian flu, and the swine flu, and these things could get bad. Two months later, Ed, he calls me and he goes,

Ed Gaudet: Make it up.

Mike D'Arezzo: You, did you bring this on us?

Ed Gaudet: I hope you played the lotto, lottery after that.

Mike D'Arezzo: I should, I probably should have. But there were challenges like this as that surface attack area for many of these companies extended basically to the user's home, as all their smart tech, smart home stuff at their house up to date. Is their router up to date? When was the last time you got a router from Verizon or Comcast?

Ed Gaudet: Was the last time you bought VPNs en masse?

Mike D'Arezzo: So that was fun. Hey, you couldn't sell Zoom licenses fast enough. Oh my gosh, for all these education people, they're like, I need Zoom, what's Zoom? And they're like, oh, you don't, like WebEx? We were given WebEx licenses a way for free just to people, just so people could get in and settle in, because we had no idea how long it was to be down. So you fast forward to a healthcare company during a pandemic. So a year into it, I'm now an healthcare provider and I'm a remote employee. All my employees are remote. And, you know, we're working through we're navigating. So you start a new job in a leadership position. You've never met these people. You've never met your peers. I think the how we adapted and, you know, let's be clear, human beings are one of the few creatures on this planet you'll find on every seven continents, right? We are highly adaptable. From -40 degrees to 125, 130 degrees in the desert. We are highly adaptable creatures that can deal with high levels of stress. It was amazing to see that in action and unfortunately be a part of an active participant in it, but I was proud of the people that I worked with who just dealt with it, and they'd come to you with problems like, I need this, I need this hardware piece to work forever. And you're like, all right, let's see what we can do.

Ed Gaudet: ... developed on the 3D printer, like, the ingenuity and the innovation that was that came out of that was incredible. Yeah.

Mike D'Arezzo: Is it, necessity is the mother of invention, right?

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, I do like music, and, but I'm terrible at it. I'm an awful musician. I want to be passionate about it. I kind of think of Sherlock Holmes playing violin, right? Like he's just terrible at it, but he puts his heart and soul in it because it helps him think and relax. That's, I'd to do a little bit more of that. I have a children's story. I know that's bizarre, but I have a children's story in my head that's been there for 15 years that I've been cultivating that I'd love to publish and get out there. But at the end of the day, if, you know, if you ask the question, hey, if you won the lottery, what would you be doing? I'd still help people. I'd have some kind of organization that provided help for somebody on some level or something. You know, it feeds my soul. And, you know, I've met people who have all the money in the world or, you know, all this and that and the other thing, and they haven't tapped into the what feeds your soul to wake up in the morning and get up early and do things and reach out to people and be uncomfortable, right? If you learn to embrace being uncomfortable, that's a human being that is unlimited potential.

Ed Gaudet: It's the Buddhist way. Embrace your dread.

Mike D'Arezzo: Absolutely. Embrace your dread. That's a fantastic way state of mind. You don't grow as a human being unless you're challenged. Let's find some way to challenge yourself.

Ed Gaudet: If you could go back in time, what would you tell your 20-year-old self?

Mike D'Arezzo: Get to know people. And I think that's a power that I've learned later on in life, is expressly learn how to be present in the moment, be authentic. And I was, I'd like to think I was pretty authentic as a 20-year-old. Be authentic. Learn how to be a person. Learn how to be part of the world. How can you? Don't be the person that people want to point at and be like, that guy's cool. Don't stress about that.

Ed Gaudet: I love that.

Mike D'Arezzo: Who do you want to be? Every morning you wake up, you have the power to choose who you want to be as a human being. Always choose someone who is better than the person you are.



Ed Gaudet: Choose a good person. Be a good person.

Mike D'Arezzo: Choose a good person.

Ed Gaudet: Love that.

Mike D'Arezzo: And am I perfect at it? No. Am I good at it? Some days, right? We all have bad days, but you know, the 20-year-old version of me didn't have their life together, didn't know what they wanted to be, didn't know what they wanted to do, thought they wanted to do something, crashed and burned a few times. I was working full-time and going to school part-time, going to college part-time. And it's, don't worry about that. Get a sense of who you are, meet people, find mentors, mentor people, and just be a part of humanity and the collective. Be happy. Pursue happiness. And I think that would have made me earlier. I'm happy a person now. You know, it's not perfect, but be grateful is the other thing. The last thing is embrace gratitude, right? We all have hard, you know, hard lives, right? Every single human being has one thing in their life. They're like, I was overweight, I had psoriasis, I was this, I was that, you know, I was not the right ethnicity. I was not the right person. I was not the right sex. I was not the right this. My parents weren't this, my, you know, my lineage wasn't, like we all have some kind of burden or demon or something that changes who we are. But having that grateful mindset, right? Hey, you know what? I'm grateful for the home that I live in. I'm grateful for the heat that I have in during the wintertime and the air conditioning in the summer. I'm grateful to have a job. I'm grateful to have knowledge. They can't take my knowledge away from me. I have a bachelor's degree. I have these certificates and stuff. Having that grateful mindset, I think, baselines me, you know? It's, it keeps me grounded where it's like, hey man, this could go away in a minute. When I was 17 years old, my house burned down right to the foundation. And a week and a half later, I was in a massive car accident which essentially left me with one pair of underwear, one pair of jeans, and one shirt to my name.

Ed Gaudet: Wow.



Mike D'Arezzo: And I had just graduated high school. And then three months later, I broke a toe in the accident. It's a long story, but I broke a toe in the accident. Three months later, I had gangrene. I mean, it was a bad year.

Ed Gaudet: Wow.

Mike D'Arezzo: And, you know, never lose your sense of humor.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Mike D'Arezzo: Always be grateful. And, you know, be present, be authentic. Those are the things that I would tell my 20-year-old self. It'll get better.

Ed Gaudet: I love that.

Mike D'Arezzo: It'll get bad, it'll get worse, but it'll also get better.

Ed Gaudet: I love that. So I've got to ask you this question. It's the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. What is the riskiest thing you've ever done, Mike?

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, so I saw that. I saw that question. I heard that question ... From my standpoint, the riskiest thing I've ever done. There's different kinds of risks. So we've all heard that story that, you know, if your friend jumps off a bridge, would you jump off with them? And the answer is yes, I have. And okay, well that's a physical risk thing, right?

Ed Gaudet: So tell me about that. You go bungee jumping or?

Mike D'Arezzo: Bro, that was a dumb teenager. And we just literally.

Ed Gaudet: Just jumped off a bridge?

Mike D'Arezzo: Literally just jumped off bridges because it was fun. It was like a 35-foot drop into you don't know what or a 58-foot drop into, you don't know what you're like. Yeah, whatever. We're you're 18, you're immortal and dumb.

Ed Gaudet: That's right, yeah. The combination is beautiful, isn't it?

Mike D'Arezzo: Oh, it's beautiful. You, the stories you could tell everybody, every human being you feel like, Yeah, when I was a kid. But there are things like I left General Electric. So I was at GE, I had a decent career there, right? I was three and a half years in, and I walked away from it to start a security consulting practice for a consulting firm. I could have been unemployed and weeks I could have lost everything. I was making decent money; I wasn't making great money because I starting off and everything else. But I took that chance, and I was a part of building something out with a group of people who are wonderful. You know, Arnold Bell left, he left GE first, and then I followed him two weeks afterwards. And, you know, we built the practice with him. And then Joe, my current boss, joined me. And, you know, we helped build it out even more, and then it was acquired by E+ Technologies, and that was great. Built something, and it was successful enough that somebody else was willing to pay money for it. That was a risk. I could have anything, I could have left. I've been offered jobs while I was there the whole time, and I was like, I at any point in time, I could have stopped and said, yeah, I'll do this. But I kept doing it, I stayed there for six years. I think the riskiest thing I've done was get complacent. But, you know, if I had to ask, it's, and it's dangerous, right? It's being complacent. Just this is my lot in life. This is where I'll stay.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Mike D'Arezzo: That's a risk. I was at a company called Microsystem. Think they're owned by Oracle now as a restaurant point of sale, and I traveled a lot. And, you know, I lost friendships because I just lost touch with people. And I stayed at that job longer than I should have, and because I was complacent.



Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): And my wife was like, I want to leave, and so she got a chance to work at a university where she was an alumni from, and we had 13 days to move down to a new area, a new state with area had no we knew nobody, and we had very little money, and we made it happen. And, but with that complacency, you know, you think that you think leaving everything behind and moving to a job is the risk. You're like, no, the risk is complacency.

Ed Gaudet: I love that answer. It's unique. I hadn't considered it before. I really love that answer. It's great. Yeah, no, really good. We talked about being grateful. So now we're going to enter into some of the, what I'm grateful for. I'm grateful for music. So one of the questions is, you're on a desert island. What are the top five albums you bring with you?

Mike D'Arezzo: Five albums?

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Mike D'Arezzo: Okay. So that's a tough one.

Ed Gaudet: I know.

Mike D'Arezzo: And I, you know, the easy choice would be greatest hits.

Ed Gaudet: No, you can't do that. No, I'm sorry.

Mike D'Arezzo: But you can't do that because there's some B-sides. You're like, they never made it onto the greatest hits album. That's my favorite song. Pearl Jam versus Dave Matthews.

Ed Gaudet: Oh, you can do live. You can do the Central Park concert.

Mike D'Arezzo: You know, they're like movie soundtracks. So Pulp Fiction, Preacher Man, you mean it has some great hits on there and you know, so that's three right there George Michael, I know that's random.

Ed Gaudet: I love George Michael.

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah. So his Ladies and Gentlemen, which is a greatest hits compilation.

Ed Gaudet: Were you a Wham fan?

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah. No, my, you know, I love Wham!, not my favorite band, but as an artist and appreciation later on in life to see what he did and what he accomplished with Andrew and Wham and all the instruments he played and everything, it's holy cow! Very but very just a beautiful vocalist and beautiful songwriter. He would write those songs on a fly, and that was, there was a documentary where they talked about that. I was like, ... There are songs in here where you're like, you hear them, you're like, that's an awesome lyric. And what's the story behind that? You're like, yeah, Mike, just Michael just wrote that down while he was standing there. He wrote it, he sang it like the way it sounded and wrote it down and rerecorded it and you're like, that's insane.

Ed Gaudet: It's like Style, you know, Style Council. If you hear the Style Council?

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: Sort of reminds me of that same type of.

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah. And so the fifth one, that's a tough one. So there's a lot of different bands that I grew up listening, but it's probably Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Ed Gaudet: Whoa. Which one? Which album?

Mike D'Arezzo: It's the one with Fortunate Son, Cosmic. Yeah, I grew up on that. My mom, you know, would play that a lot and everything else. I think that and maybe forced LED Zeppelin four songs, right? That's probably a neck-and-neck Jimmy Page. Yeah. Just, yeah, he's the man. Listen, he's the man. Now out of that, Ed, I'd miss out on all the blues that I love listening to Howlin Wolf and Popper and all those things. I'd miss out on the blues, but I think those are the five.

Ed Gaudet: Stones or Beatles?

Mike D'Arezzo: Stones. Yeah. Gimme shelter, gimme shelter. One of my favorite songs to play on guitar.

Ed Gaudet: Me too. That riff is just haunting.

Mike D'Arezzo: It's just haunting. It's, yeah.

Ed Gaudet: Terrific. Yeah, and Keith just had his 80th birthday the other day.

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, it's unbelievable. He's still, outliving that Deadpool, right?

Ed Gaudet: That's right, that's right. Yeah. Last question. What advice do you have to kids coming out of school or cyber professionals looking to pursue a career in healthcare?

Mike D'Arezzo: Be tenacious and what you learn and absorb, right? So I got into infosec indirectly through PCI compliance, which is the credit card compliance stuff about 15, 20 years ago. And it burgeoned into vendor risk management and all these other things, software development. Get out there and do this. I tell people, I tell students all the time you will have. You will know people who you feel are so successful and that they've had of everything, and they achieved so much and accomplished so much. Don't pay attention to that. You are the main character in the story of your life. Everyone else's story around you is just an outside character. What do you want your story to be? Worry about your story and it honestly doesn't have to be about success or money or position or title. It's do you have a wonderful family? Did you create a wonderful family with somebody else? Did you provide for them? Do you did you find that one person who makes you laugh every day, that you could walk the path of life with? Don't stress so much about money or things like that. You know, you, there are plenty of rich people who will tell you it's great. It solves a lot of problems, but it's not the answer. And hearing that, it solves a lot of problems, but it's not the answer. You're like, what does that even mean? Like you'll find out later on in life. But just I would just tell them, be tenacious and unending for your absorption of knowledge. Never give up.



Mike D'Arezzo (cont'd): If you want to be in cybersecurity, you can never get up. You never given up reading. It's like being an electrician or an auto mechanic. You're never giving up learning. So if that's not something you're interested in doing or pursuing with just a voracious appetite, maybe this isn't for you. Be patient. I'm, God bless it, I am not a patient human being. I try so hard times, and some people will go, wow, man, you really handle that. And you're like, if you only knew the internal screaming in my head right now, that would break glass. But be patient, not just with other people, but yourself, right? Don't feel like you need to push yourself. Drive. Drive yourself. Yeah, but don't beat yourself up for missing, right? Because failures are how we get better in healthcare.

Ed Gaudet: I love that, and you invoked Walt Whitman, O Me! O Life! I don't know if you knew that or not.

Mike D'Arezzo: There you go.

Ed Gaudet: That last line that the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

Mike D'Arezzo: Yeah, yeah, I love that. Yeah.

Ed Gaudet: And Walden too, you know, as you, Walden Pond.

Mike D'Arezzo: Anyway.

Ed Gaudet: Thoreau.

Mike D'Arezzo: But. Monroe? Thank you.

Ed Gaudet: Thoreau. Henry Thoreau.

Mike D'Arezzo: Thank you.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.



Mike D'Arezzo: But yeah. So it's be, and it was Immanuel Kant who says, you don't really live life through life. You live life through death.

Ed Gaudet: That's right.

Mike D'Arezzo: This is finite. You don't come back again. So make the most of it. Take risks. The biggest risk you can take is not taking any risks at all.

Ed Gaudet: Yeah.

Mike D'Arezzo: We're all going to fail. There are plenty of successful people out there who failed like no tomorrow, Abraham Lincoln, Hershey's chocolate. There's so many stories of people who fail. There are so many stories where you hear people succeeding. You've never heard of the door slamming in people's faces, and it happens constantly to successful people, but they embrace that. They're grateful. They keep pushing. They keep pursuing. Be passionate. Find something you're passionate, lock on to it. It can be, you know, it could be something you want to do, something you love doing for other people. Don't make it about a person. Don't be passionate about a person. Find somebody who can support you and pushes you and challenges you in a positive way to be a better human being and try, and you know, wants to support your dreams. Support other people's dreams as well. Be the rock for other people as they are to you. My wife is a wonderful human being who's so patient. She's one of the most patient people in the world because I am just a maniac.

Ed Gaudet: I think we're married to the same woman, but yeah.

Mike D'Arezzo: She's, my wife is an amazing human being, and she's supportive and everything else. And she'll tell you like, oh, you're successful. And I'm like, we are successful.

Ed Gaudet: Yes.



Mike D'Arezzo: We're successful together. I've been with people who weren't supportive or anything else. My wife is a supportive person, a wonderful human being. We're very successful together.

Ed Gaudet: Great way to end the podcast. Mike, thanks very much for being on today. Really appreciate your advice and your insight. This is Ed Gaudet from the Risk Never Sleeps Podcast. And remember, if you're on the front lines delivering patient care and protecting patient safety, 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](#)