

## **The Collators - Show notes**

### **Episode 0 - Who are The Collators?**

#### **Overview**

This is a trailer episode to introduce the pod - We've tried to make a show for people who want to sharpen their thinking — whether you're a seasoned analyst or simply curious about how we make sense of the world. If you're interested in critical thinking, information theory or just how people form beliefs, then I think we might have something for you. On behalf of Mark, Howard and Jay, Hello world...

#### **Transcript**

##### **Mark**

So I've been in Intel and analytics for over 20 years now. I've watched podcasts be invented, come, go and become the phenomena they are now. And to be honest, I've always wanted to do one because I thought it was a good medium to kind of have some long form conversations about difficult topics.

I've never really had the courage to do it. And I never even had the time to do it, to be honest, but now I find myself to have a little bit more time. You can do podcasts on anything, right? I wanted to shine light on something that has kind of eluded me for a long time.

So I should explain to people listening that Howard and I have known each other for many years. Howard was, my trainer and senior officer for many years, but we've later become friends

Then in later life, we've delivered training together and worked on various different projects together. So I invited him to be part of this podcast. The purpose of the podcast was kind of twofold.

I have noticed throughout my training career that it's very difficult sometimes to train analysts and Intel officers. It seems to be that some had a natural flair for it and others just couldn't get it no matter what you tried. And it wasn't an intellect thing which we're talking about. They would be incredibly bright and intelligent people, but some people just struggled.

When you do any sort of Intel training or analytical training in Intel analysis, you get told various things about how it's multidisciplinary and involves aspects of psychology, sociology, logic, game theory, maths. Everything gets thrown in there.

Because it is such a wide, broad scope, it's very hard to train. Okay, if it was like first aid training

or firearm training, there are some fairly basic fundamental things you can have the basic 101 course and get going. But when you're trying to train people in how to deal with information, you've got so much ground to cover.

So the [first] purpose was, could we use this podcast to start to explore what are the fundamentals when you're trying to train people in how to use information? That's the first purpose. The second purpose of the podcast is almost a bit of catharsis and an apology to my colleagues.

Because my career path was basically me going to uni, getting obsessed with information science and science in general. Me ending up in the police, me landing in the police and basically looking around and thinking, hang on a minute, this isn't very scientific. This isn't very logical.

And I remember when I got into it and I witnessed investigations for the first time and intelligence gathering operations for the first time, I can't remember thinking at the time, hang on, this is just people guessing. And this is people doing kind of like, there was no hidden art to it. There's no hidden science to it. It was just people being people, doing very basic things, but I didn't appreciate what they were doing and why.

To my scientific mind at the time, it's like, well, this isn't scientific, this isn't robust, this is educated guesswork. And I was a pain in their backside. I was also a pain to Howard sometimes at the very start.

And it wasn't through until I kind of got some experience and some actual live investigations under my belt and some live intel gathering opportunities under my belt. I started to understand that Intel analysis can't be scientific.

It is more art than science. It can't be as robust as a scientific method. You could be rigid, but you can't be solid. And then when I left the place and went into data analytics in the public sector, I had the precise reverse experience. I landed into a very scientific and structured analytical role and basically felt confined by it.

And I'd reversed my position. I was now the educated guess worker trying to apply these intelligence analysis principles to a completely different analytical framework. So this podcast is an attempt for me to try and explain the differences because I tend to find that now I've, I've rode both horses now that I've seen intelligence analysis for 10 years and I've seen data analytics, business, Intel analysis, qual, quant, whatever you want to call it.

I've seen both sides. I realize now that you kind of have to do it, live it and breathe it for a few years to fully get it. And it's very hard to communicate. And I'm hoping that me and Howard would find a way to communicate both sides. Cause it's not that one isn't better than the other.

They're just different. So Howard, thank you for being patient. I've a lot of ground there, but I just want to get it all off my chest and try and explain to people what the pod was about.

## **Howard**

No problem. From my point of view, I am much older than you. I am in my seventh decade. My career in terms of full-time employment is over. I started out in life before any thoughts of career being inquisitive. I would always ask questions. I would study things and I was always a bit of a loner. I love working with people, but I explored things myself.

So it was logical when I left school, I went and did a degree in science and that gave me, it was in the biological sciences, it gave me a discipline of how to collect data and study that data and question it and come up with theories and ideas and change your understanding of the world. Then.

Just because of needing to make a living I transferred into law enforcement which is something I had no inkling ever to do. It was just a practical decision. In my 34 years as a police officer I was really fortunate in that I traveled the world. I worked with information intelligence, analysis, investigation, evidence, all the things we're going to be talking about.

I did it not only with different police forces, different organizations, different people, public, private sector. I did it as a practitioner, but I also was studying it at the same time and looking at what the organizations knew and the individuals in them, so-called experts and in the field, what you might call the professions. I was heavily involved in many of the professional bodies in the early days, as it were. But also realizing on kind of what a shaky ground intellectually and structurally many of these perceptions and cultures and practices were based.

Now I'm not saying I'm right but that experience, lived experience, changed my understanding and my approach. So after my police career finished I moved over to academia to teach and research and I still do lots of projects like that.

So for me, life is a journey. My professional career has been a journey and it's a journey I'm still on. And in terms of this podcast, it's about recognizing that that experience that's led me to challenge and question and my view of the topics we're talking about has changed over time and with that experience and continues to change because I'm still learning.

It's only my journey and everybody will have a different journey. Ultimately it's gone from this process was a practice, very structured to becoming never a science, but people would claim it was science or scientific to a profession, to a pragmatic profession that turned out products that maybe didn't meet certain standards of rigor, but were practically necessary, to now it's kind of a philosophy.

I've never found a situation in my career in law enforcement, public or private sector, or anywhere, where my ability to collect data, to interpret it and reason with it and look at how I went through that process and any biases or limitations, to sort of pick it apart, which I've done with everything since I was a child, hasn't benefited me and the people I was working with in a positive way.

So this podcast is a way of doing that. It also continues the relationship that Mark and I have. I was in the third decade of my police career, law enforcement career, when by pure chance, Mark applied for a job in a new intelligence unit I was setting up and was successful on interview. We are very different people. We come from very different places.

But we very quickly built a relationship where we play ping pong. We throw ideas between each other. So I'll say something and it stimulates something with Mark and vice versa. And by discussing it and sharing it, we usually end up in a better place. And over the many decades since that relationship has continued both professionally and personally.

There's nobody I respect more, not only for their knowledge, but their ability to challenge themselves and others and their ethics in that and their honesty, because I think that's really important how we behave as human beings and as professionals, particularly in a field like law enforcement. But my argument would be in every situation.

So if you like, Mark has gone from coming into my world as a fairly new entrant, much younger but with a very different background and process. He's had all the very worst of indoctrination and working with me and the experiences that I've had. And we've ended up developing a greater and better understanding and a much better relationship and a more productive relationship going forward.

And this podcast is just another way of reflecting this. Although it's in a podcast form, I'll share and chat with anybody, any place, any time, in any forum about the things that interest me because I learn as much as I share and I'm always interested in what other people think because it helps me think better.

Mark suggested this. I was happy to be part of it and I'm looking forward to seeing where it takes us. the Mark and Howard show. Imagine us sat over two pints in a pub or over a curry discussing this as two nerds. Well, that's kind of our relationship and this is just capturing it in a podcast.

Make of it what you will, maybe it's of use to you. But we hope it is.

## **Mark**

Howard, I think that's perfect. I think you've been very generous to me and far too humble about

yourself. I'm not gonna go into too much detail about your professional record, but if it's a matter of public record, the caliber of officer you are. So we'll not [linger] there, but sufficed to say, you've got a lot of value.

We wouldn't be having this conversation if you didn't. But I think you're right. It is just two guys who have been through a lot, trying to make sense of what happened and trying to find those little kind of gemstones of information along the way.

And it's an experiment, right?. It's an experiment to see normally me and Howard would have a structured syllabus and a textbook or a course outline. This isn't that.

This is me and Howard just sat down, picking a few subjects and having a chat. And there's not a lot of prep beforehand. Sometimes there is zero prep. Literally he will turn up or I will turn up and he'll say, right, we're gonna talk about intelligence today. And that's what we'll do.

And we wanted to try that to basically make it as genuine and as heartfelt and as useful to everybody as possible. So with that in mind, we hope you enjoy the first episode and I encourage you to listen to episode one and I hope to speak to you again soon. All the best.

#### **A Note from Mark**

**Hands up from me, I messed up - I asked Jay to kill the recording before I thanked him. The upshot is there's no transcript, and you'll hear me on a different take. Entirely my fault, and to be frank not a great start. Beginner's nerves. So, humble apologies to my dear friend Jay who has simply moved mountains to make this pod happen. The man is a wizard and I am in his debt.**