



Global, Mobile, Digital, and Agile: Learning According to Peter O'Neil

Leading Learning Podcast Transcript for Episode 307

Peter O'Neil (00:00):

I think during COVID our challenge has been how do we package and deliver in ways that are better, different, and more. We talk at ASIS about being global, mobile, digital, and agile. Those have been our four pillars since I came to ASIS in 2016, and everything we do honors global, mobile, digital, and agile to one degree or another.

Celisa Steele (00:25):

I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb (00:26):

I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Celisa Steele (00:35):

Welcome to episode 307, which features a conversation with Peter O'Neil. Peter is CEO at ASIS International, whose members are global security management professionals. Peter and Jeff talk about the important role associations play in lifelong learning, certificates with an E and certifications with an N (as Peter likes to say), COVID leftovers versus COVID hangovers (leftovers you like to have around, hangovers you want to get rid of), the role of macro and micro data when assessing the viability of new offerings, common practices versus best practices, what it takes to be an effective international organization, and ASIS's focus on four pillars: global, mobile, digital, and agile. Jeff and Peter spoke in April 2022.

Jeff Cobb (01:26):

And so can you tell us a little bit more about the work that ASIS International does and then, of course, your role there?

Peter O'Neil (01:40):

Sure. In my capacity as CEO I oversee the entire operation. We're about a \$30-million annual operating budget. Usually about 90 staff—COVID has us down about a third right now. We're heavily content-driven. We are heavily live-meeting-driven, when you could have live meetings, back in the day. So we've obviously been working on digital, even obviously before COVID but even more so during COVID, like everybody else. We have a very robust standards and guidelines and certification practice. We do a lot, like I said, with content. We have an award-winning monthly magazine that we publish, and we do all the normal things that a good

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501(c)(6) does. We have a very strong foundation. Very strong 501(c)(3) that we run research through and a number of other things. They're a very important part of our operation.

Jeff Cobb (02:26):

Given our focus at Leading Learning, I'm, of course, going to want to ask you about that certification arm that you mentioned—credentialing, education in general. But, before we get to that, I know that first and foremost you are a membership organization. You're an association that serves the interest of people in a specific industry. So I'd like to maybe start out at a little bit of a philosophical level. What's your perspective on the role that associations play in society at this point? And how have you seen that change, assuming you have? But, if you have seen it change, how has that changed in recent years?

Peter O'Neil (03:05):

Yeah, look, I've always said that associations advance the world. The American Society of Association Executives, ASAE, the home, if you will, of people who practice in the association nonprofit space, would talk about the Power of Associations. The Power of A is what it used to be called; they're rebranding to the Power of Associations. And, in my 28 years in the business, I've been a volunteer across the spectrum of organizations like ASAE, where I was chair about a decade ago. I've served on the meeting side and the component side and all the various aspects, if you will. And I think, just philosophically, associations advance the world. Without standards and guidelines and certifications and content and the content experts in knowing how to bundle it and put it together and provide it digital, provide it live, provide it asynchronous, provide it synchronous, all the words we all use in the general learning space, without us, without associations, I think you wouldn't see the level of adult education and the broader sense of adult education that you see globally.

Peter O'Neil (04:04):

I would observe that COVID hasn't changed that from the perspective that I don't think things are different, but things are much more enhanced and much more amped up. So it was true before, and it's true now, and I think it's going to be true for forever to come. I think during COVID our challenge has been how do we package and deliver in ways that are better, different, and more. We talk at ASIS about being global, mobile, digital, and agile. Those have been our four pillars since I came to ASIS in 2016, and everything we do honors global, mobile, digital, and agile to one degree or another. Preferably all four, sometimes only one or two of those columns, those supports. But, in general, COVID, from a change perspective, it's just been amped up on the digital and the mobile side and the global side. We have to be able to sustain what we're doing and get it out to more and more people. It's just the name of the game.

Jeff Cobb (04:59):

And I know that certification is a very important part of what you do and then presumably, some of the education that would relate to certification and just thriving as a professional in the world that you serve. Can you talk a little bit about the types of certifications or other types of credentials that as ASIS provides and also education and training that might relate to those?

Peter O'Neil (05:24):

Sure. So I'm a former certification guy, so I talk about ION, and I talk about E—certificate and certification. And I always make that intonation in my voice because so many people, even in the association or broader certification space, they confuse the word *certificate* and *certification*.

So we run four global certification programs. They broadly serve the security management profession. The platinum credential is the CPP, Certified Protection Professional, and it is the platinum standard globally. So, when you look at job recs from around the world, especially big Fortune 1000s, you're going to see CPP preferred often. We would like to see more CPPs. We have about 9,000, well, maybe now almost 11,000 globally. It should be double or triple that. We could talk about why, but that's the number right now. We have two other certifications. One that looks more specifically at physical security in the investigation space, so tend to be bigger companies unless somebody has a consulting niche in that area. You tend to see bigger companies have internal...it's like being an internal fraud investigator.

Peter O'Neil (06:37):

There's, in this case, the CFE, Certified Fraud Examiner, a much broader certification for fraud. We're talking about security investigations here that take out a little bit of a different space. We have a Physical Security Certification, PSP, and that is for somebody who's really solely doing physical security and not necessarily maybe branching out into more of an enterprise security risk management, which our CPP tests more about. And then we have an entry-level certification, which we launched three or four years ago now. We're also pretty heavy in the certificate, E, space like everybody else. So we're bundling content that we have, and, if you go through enough of it, we're providing a certificate, really, of completion. We are looking very hard at microcredentials. I think that remains to be seen that that's a business we'll get into or not. I think I'm pro microcredential; I'm not con microcredential, but it really depends on the market and what will drive that. So, broadly speaking, that's what we're doing. We have standards and guidelines that drive some of this. Drive all of it to a degree.

Peter O'Neil (07:41):

We have approximately 10, maybe 12 standards and guidelines that we put out. We're not a standards machine like some other organizations would be, NFPA, organizations like that, but we do work hard in the standards and guidelines space. We don't accredit right now around those. We've looked at that. The business model hasn't been strong enough for us to do that yet, but we'll continue to look at it.

Jeff Cobb (08:03):

With respect to your certifications, they've been around for a while and obviously had some foundation in the needs that ASIS saw in the industry, but, in terms of ensuring that they remain relevant, that they remain valued by both employers and by the practitioners who are going to use them in their careers, how do you go about doing that? And you mentioned introducing a new certification. How did you determine that a new certification was what was even needed?

Peter O'Neil (08:35):

So my favorite D word: data. So we always look at the data. When I was at my last organization and certainly at this organization, very data-driven. Doesn't mean that we won't do something that data doesn't support, but we probably won't do something if the data doesn't support it, and certification is no different, or nor are our certificate programs any different. We really look at the data. What is the marketplace telling us it wants? What is the data really saying it wants? In most associations, like ASIS and the hundreds of thousands that there are, members think they know what they want, but do they really? So, like any other, I think, good organization, we have to get at data points that show us what are some of the broader macro trends happening,

never mind ASIS for a minute, what are some of the macro security trends? How do they relate to us?

Peter O'Neil (09:25):

I'm a big scouting-the-future kind of person, big scenario planner. What are some of the data shown on different scenarios we look at? Are there sweet spots in a Venn diagram that, no matter what scenario plays out, you're seeing certain things that might lead you to a certificate or a microcredential or a bonafide outright certification? So data, data, data, data. We look very hard at that macro data and then micro data and then try to figure out how would you read those tea leaves. So, hopefully, we're not bringing things to market much differently than the people listening to this. Look, every association has a product or a service, a certification or a certificate program, that if they didn't offer it, nobody else would. At my last organization we had a fundamentals program, and we saw the numbers dwindling for reasons we can talk about on another podcast. But we couldn't *not* offer it. It was a fundamentals of that profession's profession, and that profession was dwindling in its own way and was resurrecting itself in other ways.

Peter O'Neil (10:23):

So, don't get me wrong, there's lots of positives, great positives, to that organization, but that organization, under my leadership and under the leadership of the boards I served, we kept that product because that's the way it was. We've been looking very hard at ASIS at one of our certifications. The numbers, I think, are weak. The data is not strong in terms of the marketplace really wanting it or needing it. Everybody loves to blame marketing when something doesn't sell. So everyone's told, "Well, it's because it hasn't been marketed right." Really? For 15 years it hasn't been marketed right? I mean, I'll give you one year, two years, five years. I won't give you 15. So follow the data. We've kept that product, by the way. We've kept that certification program for reasons I won't bore you with on this podcast, unless you want me to. But it's always about the data, what's the market doing, what's happening micro and macro, and then making the best business choices we can.

Jeff Cobb (11:19):

And have you seen the demand for those certificates with an E, has that gone up in recent history?

Peter O'Neil (11:25):

Yeah, we've definitely seen, especially during COVID. First of all, I think the demand was there before COVID; I want to be clear about that. We were already on that march anyway, so it wasn't like that was news to us. During COVID, like I think a lot of other people with certificate and certification programs, we definitely saw big upticks in people submitting applications, people buying, maybe buying the cert prep products before they're going to maybe necessarily apply for the certification, et cetera. So it'll be interesting to see can that be sustained or not.

Jeff Cobb (12:00):

And do you think that was because of the turmoil in the employment market that COVID and other forces have created, or was it just that people have more time on their hands? Or what were the factors that you think are driving the increased demand for certificates? And you said also certification was seeing an uptick.

Peter O'Neil (12:18):

Yeah, I would say, E, all the above. Meaning I think it was a little bit of everything you just said. I think some people outright lost their jobs during COVID, and so there was time on their hands. I think some people were shifting to remote work, the way many of us could fortunately, and still perhaps found time on their hands. I think we saw people deciding during COVID, "Wow. I better figure out how to differentiate myself in the marketplace so I'm not one of the people that lose their jobs in X company or, if I'm out of work, that I can differentiate myself in the marketplace to other companies." I'm credentialed, and I've always said to people—I have three kids. I have a 24-year-old, a 21-year-old, and a 16-year-old. My 24-year-old's graduated from school, has got a great job. She's living in DC, living the life. And I'm like, "You got to have differentiators on your resume the same way you had to have differentiators on your college resume to get into college."

Peter O'Neil (13:10):

And I talk about this with my kids all the time, and I've pushed my daughter, in particular. She's really interested in project management in her case, and I'm saying to her, "Go to PMI, get the junior certificate or certification program, begin to differentiate yourself in the marketplace as having gone through these programs." So I think that certifications are differentiators for people in the marketplace. They can't hurt. I've never known a certification to hurt or a certificate to hurt. I've known them to help. And I've known in some cases, where you get two candidates, Jeff Cobb and Peter O'Neil, if they're exactly neck and neck, and Jeff Cobb is certified, guess who gets the job? So I think COVID amped up and ramped up people to really push them to finally go do it. It probably had been on their mind, but it's definitely been a boom to us during this time.

Peter O'Neil (14:01):

I joke with my team about COVID leftovers and COVID hangovers. Everyone loves a leftover. No one loves a hangover. I hope a COVID leftover will be that more and more people continue to see the value in certification or certificate programs, and that doesn't wane. I'm hoping that's not the case. Not just because it's a money generator for ASIS but also because, professionally, I think, for folks, it's the right thing to do.

Jeff Cobb (14:23):

I suspect we're going to see that. I think that's where the economy has evolved. It's where the labor market's evolving. There's just a lot to support that direction. You're clearly an international organization. You've got it right there in the name, ASIS International. What are the particular challenges or opportunities when it comes to certification, certificates, supporting people with content, how's that different for an international organization, from your perspective?

Peter O'Neil (14:51):

It really is different, first and foremost. So for people that think it's not different, that's just not been my experience in two different organizations. So I'll tell you it is different. It's more complex. It's more costly. I'm fortunate at ASIS to have inherited three, and we created a fourth credential that are largely built to be geography-agnostic. We don't have a lot of, say, United States HR laws in it. We don't have, for example, a certification where we have U.S.-centric regulations in it. Pretty much the way these certifications were stood up from the beginning was to be globally agnostic. Practice specific but globally not just in this region or this country or

whatnot. So we're very lucky. Some certifications have so much U.S.-based or Canada-based or APAC-based or whoever-based laws or regulations or rules or customs or practices, you can't scale it. When you're global, you've got to be very careful that your exam represents the global practice of fill in the blank. So we're very fortunate around that.

Peter O'Neil (15:56):

Look, we're ANSI-recognized in three of the four certifications. We go through job tasks analysis every five years to make sure that our exams are the latest and greatest, et cetera. I think the other piece that the global complexity brings to us is languages. So ASIS's board has said we are an English first organization. We are not going to be translating everything we do to other languages. On our certification side, our certification exams are in Spanish. We do have the whole set done in Spanish, but the cert prep material needs to catch up with that. Therein lies the complexity and the expense. Soon as you go to multiple languages, you now have to ramp up what your costs are going to be, and the recovery time, the so-called financial recovery time, can be longer as a result. And then maybe the last quick piece I would add in is, look, some professions and trades can treat the globe the same and then some cannot.

Peter O'Neil (16:54):

So the practice of security management in sub-Saharan Africa is fundamentally different, and the cost structures are fundamentally different, than in, say, the United States or Canada or Europe. I can't charge somebody in Middle East, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, some parts of APAC, I can't charge what we would call Western rates and expect to get a volume of people. So organizations like mine have to really balance what are we charging folks in, say, Europe, say, America, say, Canada. Is there a price differential for other parts of the world that are more developing, and, if so, what are they? And who's going to recover that? Where's that margin going to come from? So I'm losing margin in one region and gaining margin in another. Where is it going to balance out for my bottom line? Because no margin, no mission. Just because we're nonprofits doesn't mean we don't have to make money, as you know. So I think managing and leading in a global environment makes things much more complex. And, if you add other languages in other than English as a primary language, it gets even more challenging. Not impossible, just more challenging.

Jeff Cobb (18:03):

An aspect inherent in what you do that I think also relates to the international question is, you're offering these certifications, which have exams associated with them, which means there's going to be test preparation for those exams. How is that handled? Is that all through a network of providers that you sanctioned? Do you provide any of that yourself? And, at this point, how much of that is happening online versus face to face? I assume that's shifted quite a bit.

Peter O'Neil (18:30):

Absolutely. So when I came to ASIS in 2016, we didn't really own any of our own certification preparation materials, so called cert prep. And, in the last four years—we'll do the last set here shortly—we have put out our own cert prep materials, and we will license preferred providers to use them. That's in its relative infancy, so that's a year or so, maybe a year and a half, two years old. Launched it just after COVID, and so it's been a little slower to market. There are companies out there that offer their own cert prep programs for our certifications. We don't endorse them. If they want to use our materials and they want to come through our preferred

provider program, that's a different story. So we really have tried to, I would say, wrestle back control of our cert prep materials.

Peter O'Neil (19:22):

Through our 501(c)(3), we have a very large global chapter structure, about 271, 273 global chapters, and so we are working with our foundation to provide scholarships to chapters to be able to use the cert prep materials at a reduced rate. We already offer the cert prep materials to chapter leadership to provide cert prep courses in their local chapters at a significantly reduced rate, but even for some of our chapters it's still not low enough. So we've built in a mechanism through our (c)(3), through our foundation, where chapters can apply for grants and then the foundation will "pay for" their cert prep material. So it's complex. You've got to try to make sure that there's equitable access to the information and to the knowledge in a way that people can access it. Obviously, everything was going online anyway. We just got to amp that up more—COVID leftover—got to amp that up more during COVID. So global, mobile, digital, agile, almost anything we're doing around that is all really built to be online as much as face to face.

Jeff Cobb (20:25):

It does seem like just such a tremendous business model, and it always has been, but I think now, in this post COVID world, just the way that the employment and the labor market has gone, that, if you have a credential or a set of credentials that are actually valued in the marketplace, employers value them, employees value them, and—I know this is challenging, and you referenced some of the access challenges, and there's the separation challenges between the test and the content to prepare for the test—but, if you can manage those challenges and be not only the source of the credential, but also a key source of the training for the credential, that's powerful.

Peter O'Neil (21:06):

It is. And we have very much a firewall between the training and between the certification piece of what we do. So our certification team, led by a really great director and a really great team, they sit in a figurative bubble, and what's around them, including all of our systems, I can't access those systems. I wouldn't even tell you how to get in there. I can't go to Prometric and ask for anything. I'm not on any contract—well, I guess that's not the contract. I don't have the rights to be able to do anything, right? Anybody that has certification programs like we do, where content is also being developed in addition to the cert prep courses and whatnot that we've been talking about, it's obviously imperative to have that really strong wall between those activities to make sure nothing coercive is being done.

Jeff Cobb (22:04):

A topic I've been really interested in lately, and I think it probably relates into certification, may relate into being international as well, but it's just the extent of collaboration between organizations to provide certification and training and then the companies and other organizations that serve the space they're in. So I'm wondering to what extent do you collaborate with companies in the security industry? And I'm thinking about things like addressing emerging workforce development needs, making sure you're on track in terms of supporting career needs, as the employers see value in that. What type of collaboration do you do with private industry?

Peter O'Neil (22:46):

In principle, we value collaboration. So let's start there. We work with the trade association, sister, cousin, nephew, whatever you want to call them. We have a good relationship with the group that is really the trade association for the security management space. We collaborate with them wherever we can. In 2017, it might have been early 2018, we launched a whole career pathways project. We did that in collaboration with the Security Industry Association, SIA. We continued to build out personas related to career pathing. So we do a lot of work around that. We have a relationship with FMA, is the acronym—it's the Facilities Management Association; I think they're out Houston—around some specific security practices around facilities proper, if you will, as a niche of the security management sector. We have been on our own for a number of things because it's been easier for us, frankly, and we've wanted to go to market much more quickly than what sometimes our partnership gets you. And we always look at who wants to collaborate on the next thing and what makes sense to us and what makes sense to them to get that done.

Jeff Cobb (23:51):

And what about with academia, higher education? How do you relate with academia? How do you collaborate with higher education institutions, if at all?

Peter O'Neil (24:01):

Yeah, I would say we do that I would say primarily through our chapters. In particular chapters where we have student chapters, obviously, we would have folks on campus who are doing that. We do have sub communities within the security management space. We don't collaborate as closely with universities as you might think we do. There are different reasons for that. None of them are good reasons or the right reasons. A lot of security management professionals come to security management as a second career. I don't know the numbers off the top of my head. I should get them refreshed for this year. But you do certainly have people that go through a four-year program, say, criminal justice or something, and they end up in physical security or whatnot. But the lion's share of folks in this space are coming here after 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, sometimes 20 or more years in law enforcement or in military, where they've been involved in security from a different perspective, and they come to this as a second part of their career.

Peter O'Neil (25:01):

And so we look at career development, career management, even our certifications, a little bit differently than maybe what, say, my last organization would look at it, where you really have to have a bachelor's in science, and/or most had a master's, many had PhDs, and you were doing that as you were working in that professional space. The security management space is a little different when it comes to those types of entry. So it creates a challenge for us, no different than other organizations. We all have our different challenges in terms of making sure we're creating transition programming and things like that. So there's relationships with colleges and universities but not quite as deep as, say, my last organization, where we had lots of student chapters because all of our people were coming up the ranks, if you will, from academic programs. Not necessarily the case in security management.

Jeff Cobb (25:53):

That is an interesting distinction. I would imagine that maybe you're also not experiencing what some organizations are, where academic institutions, particularly the continuing education

arms of those institutions, executive education, they've been experiencing a real boom in recent years because they've gotten into that certificate with an E business. They've gotten into doing those career credentialing type offerings, and, in many cases, associations are finding competition coming from those academic, what could be, collaborators but are often turning out to be competition. Sounds like you're probably not experiencing quite as much of that in the real world.

Peter O'Neil (26:30):

Not really. Not really. We have a relationship with Wharton for an executive program. We have a relationship with the IE Business School in Madrid for a European-based security, a masters, lowercase M, a masterclass, if you will, in security. We have relationships here in the United States with a couple of different universities, like American Military...what is it? I'm blanking on the acronym all of a sudden. Is it American Military University? AMU. Where you see a number of folks from military and law enforcement go there maybe for associate's or bachelor's, sometimes for a master's degree too. Universities in those spaces we're looking at very differently depending on who we think the audience is. So a Wharton masterclass in security management is going to be different than something that American Military University is going to put on for somebody who may be making a transition from military or law enforcement to the security space.

Jeff Cobb (27:25):

Related to collaboration, whether it's with academia or with corporations, private industry, I've mentioned to you before that I feel like when I read about lifelong learning in the mainstream media, and it's a great thing that you now see lifelong learning mentioned in the mainstream media much more than it ever was before, but I feel like I'm continually hearing about what higher education institutions are doing, what corporations are doing. You have players like Google now getting big into certificate programs, things like that. I do not very often—in fact, I would struggle to name an instance of seeing an association mentioned in those mainstream coverage of lifelong learning. I'm wondering, A, does that jibe with your experience, and then, whether it does or not, how do you think association leaders and executive teams, boards, how might they best think about the role of their organizations in supporting what's clearly a strong need for lifelong learning in our current world?

Peter O'Neil (28:30):

Sure. So, you're right. I think in general you see all the things you just said—I'm not going to repeat them just for the sake of time—happening. And I think a lot of times associations are partnering with those organizations, and they're not the lead name, but they're still in that space with those folks. So I would say that. I think it'd be phenomenal if the association space could be lumped in with that group. We were here long before they were here. I think a lot of this is lack of awareness of the power of associations, and we could have a long podcast about that too, if you want. And look, I think ASAE has really advocated hard on behalf of this profession to be seen and heard better, different, more. And I think it's like anything else. We all want our moms to know what we do for a living.

Peter O'Neil (29:16):

And doesn't really matter for many of us, unless we're engineers or doctors or nurses, something that's really super straightforward. I joke that we struggle with our parents knowing what we do for a living, and if, one day they understood, then we would have arrived. I do think that ASAE has done a good job, as I said, advocating, and I know that they work really

hard, for example, going after some of this government money that's being spent on apprentice type programs. Why should associations not be seen, as so many of us have, for lack of a better term, apprentice-like programs that certify and certificate and train and transfer knowledge and all sorts of things? We should be qualified in there. Some of these big companies not only have their own money they're throwing at it, they're getting government money to also throw at it. So the question remains, why are associations not considered the same? And, again, that advocacy is there, and they're working on that.

Jeff Cobb (30:09):

What would you like to better understand about how those other association leaders are thinking about that role as education providers, training providers, credentialing providers?

Peter O'Neil (30:21):

Yeah, I'm super lucky. I mean, I'm super lucky because I get to network with people every week in my space. I don't feel like I don't know what others are doing, and I don't say that with ego or hubris. That's not how I intend to come across. I just know that over the last 28 years I've built a network that tells me what they're doing, and vice versa. It's all open and whatnot. I also am really fortunate. In my last organization and at ASIS I have had some of the best chief learning officers that I've partnered with and some of the best related content teams that I've been able to partner with, and their networks are super solid. It's one of the things that was a reason to hire those people. I feel like we're really well positioned, and we really understand what's happening now in the space. And the space is big, right? It's adult learning. It's content management. It's technology—how is it all going to be delivered?

Peter O'Neil (31:20):

There are all these spaces that have converged very nicely in the last, really, I think, five, six, seven years, not just because of COVID. All those pieces and parts of what our certification programs and certificate programs and content transfer programs, they're all really coming together nicely, and they're being looked at more holistically. So I've always felt really fortunate in my own personal network and in the network of our teams that we get what's happening. The question is, how does it apply to, in this case, ASIS International? I mean, I don't love the term best practice. I love the term common practice. Just because something is commonly practiced, there's a reason for it. We could agree on that. But is it the best thing for your company or for my association? I think a leader's got to stop and really think about it's great that thus and so is common. Again, there's a reason for it. Know that. Then you got to come back and apply it to your own organization and say, "Does it apply to us? Maybe it applies to us, but it's different. Maybe it doesn't apply to us at all."

Peter O'Neil (32:31):

I think I'm very fortunate that between the network that I've been fortunate to develop and the network that my teams have developed over the years, we understand what's happening in the space. The question becomes, how does it get applied to ASIS and what do we do about it, the "so what" for us?

Jeff Cobb (32:49):

You definitely are somebody who's well networked. I've witnessed that. I think I know you because you are well networked. You're also—

Peter O'Neil (32:56):

I think I know you because you were well networked.

Jeff Cobb (32:58):

Well, yeah, our networks have collided in one way or another. And I do know that you've had some fantastic people on staff because I've had the good fortune of interacting with those people. And I suspect it's because of the network, it's because of the people that you have with you, those are both, I'd say, a reflection of the fact that you are a learner and somebody who likes to, I think, foster learning.

Peter O'Neil (33:25):

I've been really fortunate over the past 28 years because I try to be a lifelong learner every day. And I think, with the teams that I and we have been able to put together, we create environments where people can fail, and it's okay, as long as we've learned from it, and it's not the same mistake three times in a row—let's talk about that. But I think our teams are continuous learners, and our teams understand that lifelong learning is a key component to our success. And, look, we've had people come, both in my last organization, this organization, where they weren't lifelong learners. They weren't continuous learners, and they needed to have another place to go because there are plenty of places that don't want lifelong learners, but at ASIS you have to at minimum legit be that.

Jeff Cobb (34:10):

And you obviously rely on your networks for learning, from the people that you interact with. You rely on the excellent staff that you have there, as you've indicated. Beyond that, how else do you approach your own continuing education, lifelong learning? Do you have specific habits, practices, sources?

Peter O'Neil (34:34):

Lots of bad habits. My wife will tell you know. I read a lot, but I read across verticals. I really try to ask people good questions and listen to the answers that they give me and process them in a way that either helps me figure out how to be better, different, more or the organization I serve. I'm so fortunate to have the professional friends that I have. Again, I don't mean to say that in a way that's egomaniacal. It's just I learn from them when I'm able to be with them. It's been hard during COVID because physically being with them has not been obviously an opportunity. So I feel like during COVID I got dumber in a way. I got smarter in some ways and dumber in other ways. I was at a meeting two weeks ago in Chicago, a group of CEOs that ASAE brings together, and I can't even tell you. I had a headache at the end of the first day, and it was in part because there was just so many really good ideas that you can't always get off of Zoom.

Peter O'Neil (35:31):

I met with these people all through the pandemic, and they're wonderful. They're amazing CEOs of all types of sizes of individual membership organizations. What binds us together is we're all IMO CEOs, different organization, sizes, and scopes. But this medium does not replace that face-to-face medium, so I get a lot out of being with my peers. I learn continuously through them. So I don't really have a magic sauce. I just don't.

Jeff Cobb (35:59):

Again, I think just because you are so open and curious and questioning and willing to engage in conversation, both online and off, that comes through. And I think this is reflected in how you approach work and life.

Celisa Steele (36:17):

Peter O'Neil is CEO of ASIS International, a global and diverse community of security practitioners. You can find a link to the ASIS Web site in the show notes for this episode at leadinglearning.com/episode307. And you're welcome to e-mail Peter directly at peter.oneil@asisonline.org. O'Neil is O-N-E-I-L.

Jeff Cobb (36:46):

At leadinglearning.com/episode307, you'll also see options for subscribing to the podcast. And we'd be grateful if you would subscribe, if you haven't yet, as those subscriptions give us some data on the impact of the podcast.

Celisa Steele (37:00):

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Jeff Cobb (37:17):

Lastly, please spread the word about Leading Learning. At leadinglearning.com/episode307, there are links to find Leading Learning on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Celisa Steele (37:28):

Thanks again, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

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