Announcer ([00:02](#)):

You are listening to the Safety Moment Podcast by Utility Safety Partners. Safety is always a good conversation and it's a click away. Here's your host, Mike Sullivan.

Mike Sullivan ([00:15](#)):

My guest today is Mr. Jason Manning. Jason and I have known each other for quite some time in various incarnations of our roles over the years. Jason is the Vice President of OneCall operations with Pelican Corp, and today we're going to be talking really about Jason Manning and his journey through the damage prevention industry. Thanks for joining me on the Safety Moment podcast, like I said to you, and some correspondence prior to our recording today. This is your life, Jason, this is more about, I want to have more of a discussion with you today about you. You've been around this industry in Canada particularly, but North America for I hate to say it a long time.

Jason Manning ([01:03](#)):

Yeah, I was tricked. I was tricked into being here by the way. I was told I was showing up for,

Mike Sullivan ([01:09](#)):

Yeah, well it's not hard to do that anymore. It's not hard to do that. But you've been around this industry for quite some time and you've seen a lot of changes and I'm curious, man, if for a guy who probably has his finger unknowingly on the pulse of where this industry is and where it's going, I'm curious to hear what you think. Where are we going to go? But we'll get to that in a little bit. Before we do any of that, can you just tell the thousands and thousands of listeners out there?

Jason Manning ([01:45](#)):

I'm told? Yeah,

Mike Sullivan ([01:46](#)):

A little bit about you, meaning your title now is VP one call Operations, correct? With Pelican

Jason Manning ([01:51](#)):

Corp? Yeah, that's correct. Yeah.

Mike Sullivan ([01:53](#)):

Now, you didn't start there like me, I didn't start here in this position. In fact, actually the very first time I met you, or I think I met you was probably in the mid 1990s and I was working with the National Energy Board. I was an inspector there with the N E B and I was treated to a tour of info excavation in Montreal. And I distinctly remember you standing by the elevator bay. How much time did you spend in that elevator be? But you were working with Info X at the time.

Jason Manning ([02:34](#)):

Yeah, I was going to say, did I have hair back then? I might've you I think I might've might've actually had full on long hair back then. You had

Mike Sullivan ([02:41](#)):

A lot of hair. Yes.

Jason Manning (02:44):

So I believe it's been around 30 years in the industry for me now. And that was kind of a few years, I think after Info X had sort of moved out and they were subcontracting with another provider to do the call answering and that sort of thing. And they had made a decision to go out on their own and I believe that's where we met. You came to visit us at the offices there? Yeah, and I do remember that. Do remember who this guy was? Who

Mike Sullivan (03:22):

Was this self important guy?

Jason Manning (03:25):

Who is this? And he'd the inspector or whatever.

Mike Sullivan (03:28):

Ladi da.

Jason Manning (03:30):

No, at the time it was pretty common for us to be doing because we had just sort of opened up our own offices and all the rest of it. I think it was fairly common for us at the time to be doing tours

Mike Sullivan (03:43):

And apart from Alberta, it was really the only second province to do so. Ontario one call was not what it is today by any stretch. Nope. Not even close. And BC One call came later and info x though it was the second one, and I should know this, but I can't, don't remember. When did info x start? Was it 1994?

Jason Manning (04:02):

I believe it was 94. Yeah, that was the official launch and it was, man, I remember you talk about the evolution of things in the industry,

Mike Sullivan (04:15):

And I

Jason Manning (04:15):

Remember that was the idea of mapping on a computer was just like, it was insane to people, this idea

Mike Sullivan (04:29):

That

Jason Manning (04:30):

You could view this. And I remember we actually, we had a laptop which weighed about 15 pounds and the screen was about this big. And yeah, that was one of the first times, it

Mike Sullivan ([04:43](04:43)):

Was the way around. The screens are

Jason Manning ([04:44](04:44)):

Massive and

Mike Sullivan ([04:47](04:47)):

To the way around,

Jason Manning ([04:49](04:49)):

But we, I do remember that. And the big technological leap at the time was getting people to fax in their locate requests. That was the big thing to get people off the phone. And the idea that we could, this is maybe a few years into it, the idea that we could have someone fax it in shortly

Mike Sullivan ([05:08](05:08)):

After the stolen tablets, right

Jason Manning ([05:12](05:12)):

After PETA got really tired of us using carrier pigeons. They were having to unwrap the little bands around their feet that got to be problematic. So we went to fax and that was a huge jump and it got me off phone, technological phone. We literally had someone sitting there with a flatbed scanner stuff coming out of the fax machine and putting them on the flatbed scanner. But we were able to attach them and that was just, that was a marvel of technology at the time. And to think that now we have people walking around and able to just do it from their phones and that so many centers, including your own, have achieved these 90 some odd percent self-serve web tickets would've been unthinkable at the time. And it always

Mike Sullivan ([06:15](06:15)):

Reminds me it was the space age technology.

Jason Manning ([06:17](06:17)):

And it always reminds me when people come up with some crazy idea and I go, I was around when the idea of someone doing their own ticket on the web was a crazy idea.

Mike Sullivan ([06:26](06:26)):

That's Right.

Jason Manning ([06:27](06:27)):

When webpage is kind of loaded, eh, and you had the scratch of the dial up modem. But every time someone comes out with kind a crazy idea for the industry and goes, soon we're going to be doing this. And people go, nah, it's never going to happen. No, it's going to happen. I was like, well, this has happened in my career that several times this has changed. And the things that we thought were cutting edge at the time, now we look back and laugh at, I make jokes about fax machines now. And I mean, no offense to the centres that do it, but we have to laugh about it. Or people be sort of self-aware when

people, we still hear people arguing that, no, no, no, we need to support faxing. And I'm like for, for emergency requests from 1983,

Mike Sullivan ([07:21](#)):

There might be a fax still coming from 1983. We haven't got it yet.

Jason Manning ([07:25](#)):

Yeah.

Mike Sullivan ([07:27](#)):

So

Jason Manning ([07:27](#)):

It's funny that if we don't,

Mike Sullivan ([07:32](#)):

You have to push the future. You have

Jason Manning ([07:33](#)):

To push the future

Mike Sullivan ([07:35](#)):

Forward.

Jason Manning ([07:35](#)):

You almost have to shame people sometimes into accepting a newer better thing and kind of make some maybe good natured jokes about the fact that, hey, this is ancient technology now we don't do teleprinters anymore. I don't know, actually. There may still be centres doing it

Mike Sullivan ([07:54](#)):

If there are. I don't know why, but Yes, yes.

Jason Manning ([07:57](#)):

But it's that kind of thing where when people hang on to, and I know this is sort of deviating off of your question, but

Mike Sullivan ([08:03](#)):

It's not actually is interesting because I want to kind of go here later, but keep going. Yeah, this is good.

Jason Manning ([08:10](#)):

I'm screwing up the orders. No, that's good. It's amazing to me. We always see it and at the risk, I guess at the risk of sounding critical of what anyone's doing, and I really applaud anyone who's in the industry

and trying to do their part for safety, but sometimes people and institutions have to be dragged along kicking and screaming or shamed into it, if that's jokingly shamed into it a little

Mike Sullivan (08:42):

Bit.

Jason Manning (08:43):

But if we keep, this is an industry I think has sometimes been very centred around the operations people kind of dictating how things go. And there have not always been a huge amount of visionary leaders and the ones that are kind of visionary and push these things and managed to get the support of their boards or the member companies to do these things really are the ones who kind of push through and get to the next level and then everyone sort of rushes to catch up. I mean, you remember Mike when the idea of doing web tickets or self-serve tickets was just again absolutely unthinkable.

Mike Sullivan (09:35):

And that's not long ago. I mean, I've only been in this role a short amount of time and it's within that span of time. And it's interesting you say the operations folks wanting to maybe holding things back or getting too focused on the details. You're right. Because I think that's where I benefit from this role when I came into this role and people like me who came into their respective roles, leadership roles, we knew the industry obviously, but we knew a variety of facets of the industry. We weren't going to get bogged down by the details because we didn't know them. And we said, okay, you know what? You see this from the surface, where are the challenges? And you see them, they're obvious because we're not in the weeds. And then we can say, okay, you know what? This is where we need to go. And we say that people like me say that or can say that I should say, because we're not going to be bogged down by thinking if we go that route, boy, it's going to be really hard over here or really hard over there. We don't know those details. So we forge ahead and knowing what the end game should look like because you have to get there anyway. And then thankfully in our case, and many people probably the same thing, blessed with some really intelligent and smart people in the operations side

Jason Manning (11:07):

Who

Mike Sullivan (11:07):

Help us get there and not getting bogged down by the details is big.

Jason Manning (11:12):

I was going to say, Mike, I work with your operations staff. I know that you don't worry about the details, but I don't have to read you.

Mike Sullivan (11:21):

Yeah, I

Jason Manning (11:21):

Didn't mean to sort of be in any way disrespectful to the operations people. I just mean

Mike Sullivan (11:27):

No, I get it.

Jason Manning (11:28):

The operations people are experts at operations.

Mike Sullivan (11:31):

Absolutely, that's right.

Jason Manning (11:32):

And they work hard to sort of optimize their own operations and make things work given the sort of rules that they have. But I've seen states where they have legislation where you go, wow,

Mike Sullivan (11:50):

This

Jason Manning (11:50):

Was written so prescriptively. I could almost, by reading the legislation, tell what year it was written because they refer to specific technology and they get really prescriptive about things and

Mike Sullivan (12:03):

Well, it's locked in, I

Jason Manning (12:04):

Understand,

Mike Sullivan (12:05):

And it gets locked in time. We are going through the process right now with our legislation and people who are out there looking around saying, well, where's Alberta on legislation? They worked really hard and it's disappeared. Well, it hasn't. There's been a lot going on in the background and we're about ready to launch the next phase of that legislation, that language. But that was one of the key things we have to draft legislation, legislative language, that's not going to lock us in time because once you can submit this to the regulator or the province or the state or whomever, what you get back, who knows what it's going to look like. But if you are able to lobby properly and engage whomever you're lobbying and make them understand that it's written this way, because we don't want to show examples, we don't want to get locked in time because that legislation's going to last 10, 20 years. It's so hard to open and revise once it's done.

Jason Manning (13:06):

And then when you do open it and revise it, it's a bit of a Pandora's box of whoever wants to

Mike Sullivan (13:12):

Get, you cant just open one section. You have to open everything.

Jason Manning (13:15):

Yeah, it is quite interesting actually to think about that. And this is definitely your thing more than it is mine. But when we do software, very often people come to us and rather than describing the need, the requirement, they describe a solution as they perceive it. This is sort of a constant battle. How

Mike Sullivan (13:40):

Do we get there? How do we get there?

Jason Manning (13:42):

And so sometimes we have to, and it's difficult because these are people who really know their business and they know it better than we do. It's just sometimes they describe the solution that they came up with and then this is a bit of a trap and a kind of constant battle with software where they'll describe that. And if we just sort of go, yeah, sure, we'll just do that, we go and we build a solution that was kind of designed by someone who doesn't build software. Whereas if we just say, can you just explain what is the problem exactly? What are you trying to achieve? What is your goal? We can sometimes come up with a more elegant solution. And I sort of feel like it's the same way with legislation where again, I can look at legislation from somewhere and go, this is someone who described exactly what they're doing today. And they described the work instruction or the process that they used as opposed to someone who said, what are we trying to achieve? What are we looking to do with this? What is the end goal? How do we write something that is not, evergreen is probably the wrong word, but

Mike Sullivan (14:54):

Pretty close though

Jason Manning (14:55):

Last, it's got some staying power and can survive technology changes and paradigm changes in the industry. And we see some coming. I know we do not to keep jumping ahead probably it's the next thing in your notes, but

Mike Sullivan (15:10):

Yes, my notes, yes, yes.

Jason Manning (15:15):

The checkin with some

Mike Sullivan (15:16):

Checks,

Jason Manning (15:17):

Notes. I'm sure you've scrolled on the back of a cereal box or something

Mike Sullivan (15:22):

Back of my hand.

Jason Manning (15:23):

There's things I see it changing. I can see the way locates work changing and these cracks start forming and you see them sort of spread through the industry. And again, it's someone who kind of forged ahead and said, well, let's just try a little something.

Mike Sullivan (15:41):

And

Jason Manning (15:41):

We are seeing it everywhere now, but

Mike Sullivan (15:44):

Everything changes. The key thing, everything changes. And as a friend of mine likes to say, he's not wrong. Everything rots and it's true. I mean, nothing will stay the same. And if you're averse to change, you're probably in the wrong business. If you're averse to change everything, then you're probably in the wrong business. But you have to be constantly adapting and constantly trying to see round corners. And if you can do that repetitively, then you'll be successful. But in that language that everything rots, even those people who are constantly adapting and adaptable and able to see around corners, at some point they can't anymore. And that's when great leaders or whomever they have their day and then something new comes along. So going back to you when I met you, speaking of

Jason Manning (16:42):

Rotting, speaking of rott, let's get back to you

Mike Sullivan (16:44):

What happened. No, but speaking of change, you've kind of been this traveler through the one call centre world, the one call damage prevention world for the last 30 years. It's interesting. And when you asked me the other day, well, Mike, what are we going to talk about? And I said, look, we're not going to talk about your employer, we're not going to talk. We'll talk a little bit about that, but we're not going to spend time on the inner workings of Pelican Corp or the software secrets and the Cadbury Secret and all that. We're not going to do that. You've been this constant traveler through the damage prevention industry here in Canada and North America. You've seen a lot. So you started info X and then you went to the software provider that was providing the software side and you were there. Now how did you have a thing for software, but you were a people person. And that's one of the great blessings I find of every role I've ever had, whether I was a working somewhere in the summer times or in the role I have today, is the people they make or break, whatever you're doing. And your role with your software provider today and prior, you were, that was a big part of your role, but you weren't just a glad hander. You knew what you were talking about because of where you came from.

Jason Manning (18:11):

Thanks. I think

Mike Sullivan (18:14):

Always good. It's a good thing. Weren't just a pretty face.

Jason Manning (18:17):

Yeah, clearly this is just audio, right?

Mike Sullivan (18:22):

Yes. Well,

Jason Manning (18:23):

There's nothing to prove that I'll fix it in post. Yeah, that's interesting. And I guess I've kind of gone between a vaguely mildly technical sort of roles to ones that had nothing to do with that, whether they were business development or whatever. Was it director of operations at the center at info excavation? Something for me in this business where I think because I grew up largely in kind of the Canadian Center and it was devoid of legislation. This wasn't a, we are the Hammer. It was really you had to get collaboration and it depended on the goodwill of people and the folks who were at that point in the industry, the people who were sort of given roles on the board or whatever, and they really worked their tails off to make these things happen, to make the one calls work and to go around to these industry shows and develop it. And it was built on that goodwill. So I think you almost have to, there is no, and I kind of see in places where they have a lot of legislation and enforcement and you kind of lose a little bit of that.

Mike Sullivan (19:43):

We're all for, yes,

Jason Manning (19:45):

We're all here for a common cause,

Mike Sullivan (19:47):

But we have this legislation we can all relax now. Yeah, that's

Jason Manning (19:50):

Not,

Mike Sullivan (19:51):

You can't turns,

Jason Manning (19:52):

And I don't want to generalize, but I have seen that where it turns from a, we are all working together to you are working for us and you better do this.

Mike Sullivan (20:02):

And

Jason Manning (20:02):

It's a bit of a shame. I never liked the approach. I understand it. I respect the places where they have the legislation and they've worked for it. I just always thought that that was important. And so I've always

just tried to be that because I want to enjoy working with the people who I work with. So you try to be that person. And I hope that never changes as much as I'm probably out there lobbying all the time for kind of what some people would perceive as disappearing the human element of this by saying, you don't need to phone, you don't need a call center, you don't need these things. I still think it's just moving that human interaction to a different area where it's not an impediment to the fidelity of the information that's being passed on. So when we use people, the

Mike Sullivan (21:03):
Human interaction is not as prevalent, right?

Jason Manning (21:07):
So when we use people in a role for connecting with other people in terms of maybe safety ambassadors or doing training or things like that, I think the people persons out there, you can't see people, people

Mike Sullivan (21:26):
Going on,

Jason Manning (21:26):
The people out there, they're connecting with people and their sort of human interaction is kind of cementing that message in with people and they're actually adding to the whole process. I think when we put them, and it sounds counterintuitive, and I think you're a believer in this as well, when we put them in between that chain of information, I think they actually affect, they negatively affect the fidelity of that information going through

Mike Sullivan (22:00):
Is a potential Yes. A greater potential.

Jason Manning (22:03):
There's a greater potential. That's a great way of putting it.

Mike Sullivan (22:05):
That's right.

Jason Manning (22:05):
And so I'm just a fan of moving where the human interaction happens. I'm not saying get rid of people. I think people are what make the industry tick. I'd actually just like to see them moved as far away as possible from having to be a translator of sorts for the information going through. I think that's one of those things that some people think is crazy. And I think just wait another few years and that's going to be

Mike Sullivan (22:36):
The norm. You're absolutely right on the mark. I mean, this is kind of where our conversation is moving towards. You were there the very beginning days of the one call.

Jason Manning (22:48):

Sorry, that was me. What kind

Mike Sullivan (22:52):

Of electric device was that? That

Jason Manning (22:53):

Was my,

Mike Sullivan (22:59):

What the hell is that buddy?

Jason Manning (23:05):

I have a standup desk here.

Mike Sullivan (23:08):

I have one too.

Jason Manning (23:10):

And I just absent mindedly, put down my glass of water and I had forgotten to lock it. I'd put down my glass of water on the button to raise the desk. So all of a sudden it's like the desk came.

Mike Sullivan (23:27):

Have you registered for Utility Safety Partners? 40th anniversary and safety conference taking place at the Banff Springs Hotel at the end of February, 2024. Please go to our website and do so go to www.utilitysafety.ca.

(23:39):

Okay. And cut or start action. This is kind of what I wanted to talk about exactly the transition. You were there when one call centres were people heavy. And now in Canada particularly and in North America too. I mean in the US we're seeing that transition obviously to web-based requests. People are realizing that that's the best way to go for a variety of reasons. And now, and my colleague and I share Kirk, whom?

Jason Manning (24:19):

Yeah,

Mike Sullivan (24:20):

She's fantastic. Oh yeah, she's great. I mean, Cher, Kirk and I, there's only one share, I call her Sher Kirk but Sher and I, we had a conversation vividly remember it, driving to the airport in a rental car in Kelowna. And I said something to the effect of within the next three or four years, this Alberta one call and Utility Safety Partners today, we're going to look so different. We are transitioning to a damage prevention hub. We're not going to be a call centre anymore. We're not going to, we'll still be a notification centre because that's what happens, but we're going to be a damage information hub. And

we're there now, and I can't tell you the day or the week or the month, that switch was flipped, but we're there now and we're going to keep solidifying as that. Do you think that's happening elsewhere? I mean, I think it is.

Jason Manning ([25:23](#)):

I see it.

Mike Sullivan ([25:24](#)):

You do? Okay.

Jason Manning ([25:25](#)):

Well, I see it in varying degrees. I see it from, we both know some one call sort of executive directors or CEOs who are as, I love to call them, like yourself, disruptive innovators. People

Mike Sullivan ([25:46](#)):

Who, I don't mean to be, honestly, I don't,

Jason Manning ([25:51](#)):

There's some people who see it and they believe it to the point where I think they frighten people around them because people go like, this guy is unhinged. And really, I think they're just excited about seeing something new. And they are people who, they don't try to fight the wave. They just surf the wave. This change that's coming as, I love that joke. You're either on the steamroll or you're part of the road thing, but there are those people who see that, and there are those who absolutely deny it. And then there's a lot of people in the middle, and I'm starting to see the people who saw it a long time ago, they were the people who were going, I got to get rid of this building, not build a new one. I got to get rid of this building. I'm going to decentralize everyone. And of course, having to have people being forced to have people work from home was like the real life disaster recovery scenario that everyone thought of and then actually had to do. But just this idea, as you said, where people's web percentages are shifting and they're kind of going, I don't need 90 people to answer the phone anymore.

([27:09](#)):

You could actually get away with nine, not 90. And what do we do with these people? And I'm really seeing it. I'm seeing the people shift in their thinking about that. Some of them are doing it very cautiously and tiptoeing, some of them are smashing through the wall like the Kool-Aid man. But I'm definitely seeing it. I'm definitely seeing it change, and I'm seeing even things change. Even the perform performance

Mike Sullivan ([27:31](#)):

Metrics too, right? I mean, we've done that ourselves is we're not so focused on speed, speed and the next call, the next call, the next call, because they're not there. The calls are coming from homeowners and the calls are during the digging season. And in Alberta, for anybody who's not familiar with our geolocation geographic location, we have a six seven month construction window of heavy construction. That's when homeowners are digging. They dig once in a lifetime, once every 10 years. So they're going to call 50% of 'em call. We're getting 55 sometimes 60% of online with homeowners. That's an organic thing though. As much as we can try to influence change, it's just going to happen over time. And we're

familiar with that and we're okay with that, but we don't need, you're absolutely right. I mean, we used to have over 50 agents for one province.

(28:29):

Now we have 30 for three. And in the winter months that are coming up here, we're laying off people. Now for the end of the year, the construction season is coming to an end, and we're going to have 10 people for three provinces over the winter months. And even those 10 people during a week, maybe too many, but their job is, even though it's winter months, their job is not answering the phone to process a locate request. Their job is to help people. They're doing info at, so the responding to emails info@utilitysafety.ca, they're on chat. They're managing three or four or five chats at a time. They're not answering the phone to assist somebody in a locate request for the most part. Or they're doing emergency call-outs. Their job has changed. They're more of an information resource, which is great. And that's where we are today. But now where are we going? So this is where I have this idea of where we're going. And I don't know, people are not ready for it, honestly. I know people are not ready for it. And I've talked with some people very close to me, and I said, the next phase is we don't, the industry doesn't need people like me. And that's coming.

(30:04):

There's always going to be leadership required to manage the finances, to manage the direction, to manage the contracts you have and to manage the business. But I don't think it's going to be at the level that it is today. I don't think the phone's not going away someday. Someday it may become the facts where we're down to 4% or something like that. And then you got to say, okay, well why are we doing this? Why do we still do this? But that's probably not going to be in my lifetime or my career span. Could be, but maybe not. I

Jason Manning (30:37):

Don't know that we're that far, Mike. I don't know that we're that far away. Because if you think about it, services that people use every day all the time, Google or Google Docs and Google Sheets and all of that whole universe of things. If you ever called them, you ever called them to have, you have

Mike Sullivan (30:59):

Them on dial, no idea.

Jason Manning (31:02):

There's services, there's the Ubers of the world or whatever. There's so many services where there's no training, there's no certification required to use it. You don't have to have someone translate for you. Always. The example's, getting tired now. But I am old enough to remember booking through a travel agent and getting an envelope full of paper tickets and thinking, this is such a complicated thing. People, regular untrained people are never going to understand airport codes and times and flight numbers and

Mike Sullivan (31:38):

Thousand minutes, seconds.

Jason Manning (31:39):

Now you can literally do it in the cab on the way to the airport. There's so many of those services that people, and as you said, everything rots. I'm going to use that now. You see different generations and

we see it on boards, you see it in, if you hold an excavator meeting or whatever, the generations of the people in the industry are changing. And you now have some centres where you could go into an annual general meeting and talk about BI software and things like that. And everyone is totally comfortable. And there's other places where that's like, I don't understand your words, but this is happening. And even people who are older are using all of these services, they use Google Maps to get around. They do all of these things. So this idea of building something, and it's one of our objectives, is to be able to build something that's so simple that you don't need training to use it. And we still get into this. This is where we run into the operational thing.

Mike Sullivan ([32:45](#)):
So when are we rolling out with that? Just curious,

Jason Manning ([32:50](#)):
What sprint is that being delivered in? But we still see this where I've talked with my boss, Dwayne, who you know about this, where we often say, really all that's needed is where are you doing the work That's really, and when that's needed and when and when

Mike Sullivan ([33:12](#)):
And when

Jason Manning ([33:12](#)):
And where and when. If you can transmit that, you really don't need to know the person's eye color and date of birth and a million other things about them. And these questions that we ask and every call center does them. Again, I'm not trying to criticize it. I understand where it comes from. These things Are you working on, it's the

Mike Sullivan ([33:35](#)):
Damn lawyers, Jason, it's the damn lawyers.

Jason Manning ([33:37](#)):
Well, you know what, I sort of agree with that. But we see that something that should have taken 15 seconds to do is now a five minute process that has a bunch of questions and all these other things, and we hang onto those and we push them through. But we're complicating things for ourselves. And actually in the process of doing that, we're actually, again, kind of messing with the fidelity of the information. So what we really want, what's the goal,

Mike Sullivan ([34:08](#)):
Right? What's the goal? The where the win, even the how we're, we're not too worried about it right now, the utility owner can worry about that. It's the where and the when.

Jason Manning ([34:17](#)):
Yeah. And that doesn't require any kind of special training. It doesn't require speaking to someone. It shouldn't. And so it requires those people who kind of believe that to keep pushing through and going ask the questions, why do we ask this? Why are we making people answer this question about whatever

it is or acknowledge these things? And I mean, you said half jokingly that it's the lawyers, but this could be, I'm

Mike Sullivan ([34:44](#)):

Not wrong, you're not wrong.

Jason Manning ([34:47](#)):

And this could be a dead simple and actually universal process. We've created the clutter with all of the, in our state, the business rules say it must be you have to do this two days before a national holiday, unless it's in the Wednesday, in which case, and all of these things

Mike Sullivan ([35:11](#)):

Autopopulate really honestly.

Jason Manning ([35:13](#)):

Yeah, we're complicating the process. We're like, we've got this potentially lean, mean sort of super simple

Mike Sullivan ([35:23](#)):

Process,

Jason Manning ([35:24](#)):

And we're there stapling all of these

Mike Sullivan ([35:29](#)):

Other

Jason Manning ([35:29](#)):

Useless kind of appendages to it, and we're making it more complicated,

Mike Sullivan ([35:33](#)):

Making it very clunky.

Jason Manning ([35:35](#)):

If you get down to that where and when, and you truly stick to the essence of where and when, this could be a universal thing. Oh

Mike Sullivan ([35:45](#)):

Yeah, I agree. We could make

Jason Manning ([35:47](#)):

So much of the structure around it go away and people want to protect what they've built. And I understand all of that. But I mean, it really is quite simple at the root of it. And we could, the potential

for it to be streamlined down to that is great. And again, keep referring to these other technology companies, but something like Uber, you literally just say, this is where I want to go. You put a dot on the map, your phone shows where you are standing, and that's it.

Mike Sullivan ([36:22](#)):

It

Jason Manning ([36:22](#)):

Someone comes and picks you up and you don't have to say a word to them and they drop you off exactly where you want to be, and you get out and the payment is handled. They don't need to know who you are. No, that is a decent example of something that has been paired down to its absolute minimal. Like, Hey, what is the objective? And that's a great one. The objective

Mike Sullivan ([36:47](#)):

Is I do think it's great. And Pelican Corus, talk about Pelican Corp for a brief moment here

Jason Manning ([36:53](#)):

If we must.

Mike Sullivan ([36:54](#)):

Sure. Pelican Corp. It's holding. Its first, as far as I know, with first users group meeting coming up soon in December. I'm looking forward to that. And this is what I hope we talk about. Honestly, this is what I hope we talk about. I mean,

Jason Manning ([37:10](#)):

Same.

Mike Sullivan ([37:11](#)):

Yes, yes. I mean what we have today is what we have. And in my view, every center, every province, every state that is a Pelican Corp customer or client, if they're working out whatever, the nuances are fine. That's great. Let's look at this. If the user group is going to get bogged down in, well, our center, we have this or one board member doesn't like that, forget it. I cancel my ticket. Is no point in going this is No, seriously, because listen, that's fine. But as leaders, we're being invited to this user group meeting. And to me that first and foremost, we have a duty to lead. If that is what we're doing. And this is the kind of discussion because let's say we all agree to something like this. Can you imagine the speed at which we'll get there?

Jason Manning ([38:16](#)):

Well, one of the things that, and I agree with you, I love that. And we say this, and again, with your own center, we have sort of ongoing meetings to work out operational

Mike Sullivan ([38:29](#)):

Nuts and bolts

Jason Manning (38:30):

Because you need to, because we still have to function. We still have to

Mike Sullivan (38:34):

Deal with reality of today we're what we have and the challenges we have. We're not abandoning them.

Jason Manning (38:39):

But I agree with you in these discussions of one of the things, and I think I had said it to you, I've said it to some of the other customers, is one of the things I wanted to do is ask each of the center's, directors or presidents, CEOs, whatever, to talk about where they want to be in five years. And it can be crazy. It can be crazy because my hope, and my guess is actually that there are going to be some shared crazy ideas across the board and everyone coming out and saying their shared crazy idea actually might make people go, oh, wait a minute, you guys too. So do you think we could do this? And even if we don't actually hit that, we can at least move in that direction. And one of my fears, again, it sounds like I'm complaining about operations people, and that's where I came from, but is that we get so wrapped up in, as you said, these things about, oh, well, this member wants this checkbox on this form and they don't want, we get so wrapped up in that that you are sort of staring at your own toes and you're not looking ahead and you can't see where you're going when

Mike Sullivan (40:00):

You get forced to move at the slowest. But because of the slowest, right? You're forced to slow down to accommodate. And this is where the boards of the respective notification centers their role to be that governance. They have to believe in whom they have at the helm of operations. And if they do, then great. But if they don't have the broad site of, okay, where are we within the giant sphere of the industry? Are we a leader? Are we a follower? Are we the anvil that's being dragged through the sand? And if you're the anvil, then you better change who's in the operations seat because and are the other side, which is completely directionless when they change a leader that is forging ahead for the worst reasons possible. That is a big problem too. And hopefully that doesn't happen too often ever, if ever.

Jason Manning (41:00):

I mean, I hate to see that because that is industry sabotage in sort of the worst kind because we have, again, I want to be careful not to tick anyone off, but that's sort of what I do, I think is when you have somebody, you want a leader, you want a leader to lead, right? It's not a puppet. You want someone who's got some vision, you want them to lead, and then when they do it, if someone is displeased with it, if you remove them, it's such a shortsighted thing to do because first of all, you're never going to get consensus. I know some of our

Mike Sullivan (41:44):

Impossible

Jason Manning (41:44):

Industry groups work on the idea of consensus, but it's basically impossible. And as you said, it slows things down to the slowest, right? The lowest common denominator,

Mike Sullivan (41:55):

The weakest way. It's collegial speed. You can't do that.

Jason Manning (41:59):

And some of them, one of our colleagues who's a center director, who she knows who she is, is gleefully, always says, let's rip off the bandaid. And I love that. I love that because it's something that it moves things forward. It takes being willing to deal with a little bit of pushback, a resistance to change for a short amount of time. And then people get over it. And once you understand that, they get over it. And they, in fact, very often the people who were kind of whining the most about something are the people who come back to you afterwards and go, this is great. It's just they need to be pushed into that change. And so when we kind of sabotage ourselves in the industry by bowing down to any sort of resistance and any kind of, it gets a little bit like, well, I mean, I don't want to deviate too far into political topics, but it gets a little bit like the cancel culture thing where all of a sudden what was perhaps some extreme cases of someone saying or doing some horrible things turns into, well, let's just silence anyone who I don't agree with.

(43:28):

And it kills discussion and it kills any kind of innovation, and it kills forward thinking because you're just silencing people who you don't agree with. And that's terrible. I mean, this industry has been great so far about getting together and discussing how to move things forward in a collaborative manner.

Mike Sullivan (43:49):

Well think how many industries actually do that, right? I mean, you don't see, you don't seet see Ford and Chrysler and Toyota getting, Hey, what should we do? That doesn't happen.

Jason Manning (43:58):

But

Mike Sullivan (43:58):

This industry it does because we have a common goal.

Jason Manning (44:02):

Well, and I think getting into this space where it turns into this, either tow the company line or you're out is, like I said, I think ultimately it's counterproductive because those voices, those people who are at the point of the spear, they may seem crazy now, and you don't have to just follow it blindly, but maybe listen, take that advice, let it sort of soak in and maybe do your version of it. But it shouldn't be silenced. They shouldn't be. And I think we see a little too much of that. And I know when we get into governance and things like that, your favorite topic, we run into that a lot. And I hate to see the shift from people getting together for a united cause turn into, well, I'm just here to represent my company's interests and anything that doesn't directly benefit them in the very short term I'm going to shut down is again, I think counterproductive to the industry. And I've seen it and I don't like seeing it. And I really hope that that's something that the industry in general is capable of doing so that we remember what hat you're wearing when you're in the damage prevention seat. And it doesn't just turn into sort of a selfish collective of people sitting around just doing their own thing. I don't want to say that everyone's doing that. It's just something I think we have to be cautious of as the

Mike Sullivan (45:52):

Industry. You have to keep in mind to it, right? You really do. You have to keep an ear to the ground, so to speak, and know what's happening out there. Because those whatever's happening, good or bad or indifferent, they do attract the like-minded views. And when that chorus of views gets loud, then it can become a challenge to moving forward. And that happens everywhere all the time. And you have to keep an order to the ground for that and be ready. It's part of seeing around corners. And I use that expression a lot because I really believe in it. You have to have the ability as a leader and as you are to see around corners, and that's really where we are. If there weren't people looking around those corners, we wouldn't be where we are today. And that's really what it comes down to.

Jason Manning (46:49):

Yeah, I think so. And I mean, I think we probably both have ideas of where the industry is going to and what we could do. And some of those are probably pretty scary for some people. I'll admit. I know some of those things are going to freak some people out. But I guess I'm always hoping that the good leaders will have the ability to, I guess, see themselves and envision what role they occupy in this new thing and shift with it rather than fight against it. I said about the wave, sometimes you can't fight a wave. It's too big to go ahead, try it,

Mike Sullivan (47:36):

Have to it, man.

Jason Manning (47:37):

Go stand in the ocean and see how you do. Stand up straight and see how you do. When a wave smacks you, it's just not going to work. You got to have to

Mike Sullivan (47:44):

Ride, man. You got to ride

Jason Manning (47:45):

It.

Mike Sullivan (47:47):

And hopefully you can navigate it really well. And that's, again, I think you've navigated your career incredibly well. No matter what you've done, and I've known you for quite some time now. You've always remained the same guy. And I really appreciate that in a person that you've never forgotten your roots. You've never forgotten who you are and what's important to you, and you've let that influence whatever role you are in. So congratulations for that.

Jason Manning (48:13):

Well, thank you, Mike.

Mike Sullivan (48:14):

I think Pelican Corp is very lucky to have you and vice versa. I think it's a great marriage. I look forward to the user group meeting we're having soon. I'll see you in Quebec City for the CCGA's Damage Prevention Symposium, and I hope we'll see you in February in Banff for Utility Safety Partners. Excellent. Already

Jason Manning ([48:36](#)):

Booked.

Mike Sullivan ([48:37](#)):

Good. Well, that's good. And there's, we're looking forward to, that one's going to be a lot of fun. Jason, thanks for joining me today. This has been a real pleasure of mine. I've been meaning to have you on this podcast for quite some time, and finally you're able to do it. So thanks for doing it and bright and early in the morning, by the way, so whoever's listening, whether it's midnight, whoever you are, this was recorded in the wee hours of the morning when it was still dark out and in Alberta. And no, thanks for joining me. I really appreciate it.

Jason Manning ([49:06](#)):

It's been my honour, Mike, thank you very much for having me.

Mike Sullivan ([49:10](#)):

That's going to wrap things up on the Safe Moment podcast. I want to thank our producers Stories and Strategies, and I do hope you choose to follow this podcast on any directory you're listening on. Please do leave a rating. We certainly appreciate it. You can also follow us on Twitter at Utility Safety, and we're also on Instagram and Facebook. If you'd like to send us a note, maybe you have an episode idea, email us at info@utilitysafety.ca and put podcast in the subject header. I'm Mike Sullivan, president of Utility Safety Partners. Click to know what's above and below. One click costs you nothing. Not clicking could cost you everything.