Big 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 (00:16):

Thank you for joining me on the Safety Moment podcast. Nice to have you back with us. My guest today is Mr. JD Maniscalco. JD is the former CEO President and CEO of Colorado 8 1 1. He was the dirt guy, the Damage Information reporting tool. He put that together with a couple of his colleagues many years ago, and it's essentially the exact same tool we're all using today in North America. And we are just going to have a great conversation about all kinds of stuff, but we do talk about data as well. Jd, let me begin by saying, man, do I ever miss you? I really do. It's so good to see you again, and I know we were chatting here just recently and I'm really glad you got the chance to join me on the safety moment. So welcome to the safety moment being all official and everything. But yeah, it's just good to see you again, man.

J.D. Maniscalco (01:09):

Thanks, Mike. Yeah, it's been a while. I miss you more. It's been a while, miss. Dammit, prevention, but things happen and it's good that we're here now talking.

Mike Sullivan (01:21):

Oh, for sure. No, this is really good. And you look well, you look like you've been outside tanning or something. Colorado's

J.D. Maniscalco (01:30):

Always sunny,

Mike Sullivan (01:31):

So anytime. Yeah, I wish. Not today here. It isn't sunny here.

J.D. Maniscalco (01:34):

I'm outside five minutes and I get a 10, but I did play golf yesterday, so yeah, I've been outside a little bit.

Mike Sullivan (01:40):

I don't think there's any golf courses open here quite yet, but you do get snow. I mean, I should know this, but I mean obviously the avalanche are in the playoffs. Calgary is not in the playoffs this year. We are not. Mind you, nobody expected them to be in the playoffs, but it was exciting hockey. They did make hockey kind of exciting again to watch. It is almost like they weren't supposed to make it, so they just let it all out there. They put it all out there and they had a lot of fun. They were fun to watch. Watching Colorado. Now that's quite a team. I mean, you got Kale McCarr, who is from Calgary, by the way. I don't know if you know that.

J.D. Maniscalco (02:20):

I didn't know that.

Mike Sullivan (02:21):

Yeah, he is a Calgarian. So if you happen to see him on the street, and I'm sure you will say, Hey, Mike Sullivan says hello.

J.D. Maniscalco (02:29):

Yeah, well, we think you offer our team because with that it came from the Nordics and a lot of people, Jan are still upset about that, but we embraced it and we will welcome another cup in Colorado, that's for sure. The absolute

Mike Sullivan (02:44):

Landscape. Not only, I mean, not only did you take the Nordics, but then you took Patrick's St. Patrick out of the Montreal Canadians and then he, yeah, so I don't know. It is amazing. We're still friends. I just leave it at that.

J.D. Maniscalco (02:59):

Well, we looked past that. That had nothing to do with it, so

Mike Sullivan (03:03):

No, no, personally, no, but I mean, you could have stood up and said something

J.D. Maniscalco (03:08):

Anyway, here in Colorado when we had the chance and the owner's group brought 'em here, it was a thrill and it's been a thrill ever since for us.

Mike Sullivan (03:17):

So thank you. Oh, that's pretty cool. Well, I watched, there was a documentary on it actually a while back. I can't remember. I think it was on Netflix or something like that. And it was really cool. I mean, it was a really interesting documentary about how the avalanche came to be. It was great. But anyway, what have you been up to? I mean, we haven't seen each other in a while and you've been enjoying life, I hope. Enjoying life

J.D. Maniscalco (03:39):

With my wife, enjoying life and getting out there and take care of my mom. So she's getting up there. She's 93 now. She'll be 94 in September. So for her, I check to see her on a daily basis. And so that's takes up a lot of my time as my mom visiting her and making sure she has all that she needs.

Mike Sullivan (04:00):

Good for you. And that's a real benefit. I did the same and along with my brothers and sister and what an opportunity for you to be able to do that. But we were talking recently and I wanted to have you on the podcast, and for those of you who may not know, apart from being a bit of a genius, jd, you're also one hell of a drummer, and we got to explore some of that. So before we get into the work stuff, let's talk about the play stuff, man. Do you only play drums? Is that your only instrument, or do you play something else as well?

J.D. Maniscalco (04:38):

Other stuff? Well, percussion mostly. There's so many instruments in the percussion realm, but I play K Guys and timbales and a lot of different Latin percussion. That's never ending. But that's where I studied in school, not business or not, that hurt me later when I went into the business world in the damage prevention world. But I was a music major at UNC for many years until they finally had a kick. They said, if you're not going to graduate, you need to get out of here. I just,

Mike Sullivan (05:07):

You're taking up space.

J.D. Maniscalco (05:09):

Taking up space. And while I was playing all over the place, I played with a lot of different groups, Glen Miller, revival Band, and of course I was a founder of a group called Doro who is still playing to this day. And I still see my friends that played with in high school. All of them are really acclaimed musicians, which is, you don't hear of that often, but No,

Mike Sullivan (05:35):

That's

J.D. Maniscalco (05:35):

Right. It was a privilege and it taught me a lot of life lessons.

Mike Sullivan (05:40):

Well, lucky you. I mean, I dabble as you know, and I like to play music and I've had the opportunity to play music since I was a kid, but how long ago was it that I remember with Scott Landis, he had this wild idea, Hey, why don't we put together, or you, Hey, the Royal, we put together a band and you guys can play at the conference. And this Scott has such this way about him, right? Like a soft touch that you can't say no to the guy. Absolutely no was never going to be the answer. And it was you and me and Louis Panzer on Keys and Jason Manning on guitar, and that was it. I think. So a couple of people

J.D. Maniscalco (06:30):

Came up and sat in, but we had a great time. I look forward to it again. Maybe it will present itself again at some point.

Mike Sullivan (06:40):

Well, you never know. It was a lot of fun. And remember the first time, I think we were in Florida the first time we did it and mean, I can't remember, I think we just sent around, okay, we'll play these songs and they won't just be ready. And that's what we did. And then the next time in Vegas, Jason Manning couldn't make it. I dunno if you've ever heard this story, but Jason Manning couldn't make it. He was no longer with, and he was in between Tell Dig in Pelican Corp. And I got a call or a text or something like that from Scott saying, Mike, we don't have a guitar player. What are we going to do? Maybe one of your buddies in Calgary can come to Vegas. So I asked a couple of guys and one of my buddies, Don Nesbitt, he says, yeah, I can do that.

(07:26):

I said, okay, well here's what's going to happen. They're going to pay for your plane ticket. They're going to pay for your hotel, and all you got to do is show up. We'll play the gig, and then you have a weekend or whatever you want to do in Vegas. So he's, okay, cool. So we got the song list and he was ready. And he plays with me in a band called Don and the Corleone, and I guess that Scott knew that and some other people knew that. And so anyway, we're all in the event and setting up or something like that. And I get a text from Don, he says, Mike, I'm at the front desk, but they don't have a room for me. So that's weird. So I reach out to Scott and one of the people he works with gets back to me and she sends me a picture of a yellow sticky and it has his, whatever you call it, the room number ID or something on this yellow sticky. And she's registered him into the hotel as Don Corleone in Vegas. That's awesome. Yeah, something broke, huh? So I look at this and I was almost crying. I said, okay, that's not his name. But then I called my buddy Don, I said, I'm on my way to see you. He says, you won't believe what's going on. You are registered under the name of Don Corleone. And anyway, that was pretty funny. But that gig in Vegas, they had a stage for us. They had everything for

J.D. Maniscalco (09:00):

Us. I got to order the drums I

Mike Sullivan (09:02):

Wanted, and they were all playing. I got to set 'em up. They had a bass for me, and I get there and I open up say, oh my God, it's a five string. And which is fine if I'm just playing bass, but if I'm singing and playing as I have to just muscle memory, I can't think about this extra string. So I had to zip back to the music store and switch it out for a four string.

J.D. Maniscalco (09:28):

Was it the extra string on the bottom or the top?

Mike Sullivan (09:32):

The top, yeah. So it was

J.D. Maniscalco (09:33):

A low beat. That's where you, your thumb and everything. It all starts there. I could see maybe if it was on the bottom, but

Mike Sullivan (09:43):

Thinking of it now, I should have just retuned the whole thing. So it was an ea dg, but I didn't bother. But anyway, that was pretty funny. I think back to that, and I know the whole Don Corleone thing, and after we were finished that he was sitting by the pool and enjoying life for the whole time, and the rest of us are running around giving presentations or whatever. So pretty funny. But that was God, how many years ago? That's got to be at least 10

J.D. Maniscalco (10:08):

Years ago. I'm thinking 10. Yeah.

Mike Sullivan (10:10):

Wow. 10 years. Wow. So you played drums and obviously I think the first time we played together in that Florida gig, I had no idea you were a drummer and one hell of a drummer. I mean, you've been playing a long time, right? So are you still playing A little bit, I mean, with anybody or

J.D. Maniscalco (10:30):

A little bit. I'm trying to get back into jazz rules really tight still. A lot of my friends still play locally here and I'm trying to work myself in, but I think churches on Sundays a better fit for me. You start maybe at nine and done about 12, and I'm home by having lunch by one because the late night and the 12, one o'clock, two o'clock, I don't see myself taking my trap case out at two o'clock in the morning at 60 years old. So I'm looking for the white gig, and that's even harder because I haven't played in town for years, but I've been practicing a lot in my basement, so I'm ready to go.

Mike Sullivan (11:18):

Well, that is good. I've played with a couple of bands still based in one band, guitar and another, and the guitar band, it's like a trio, and we play some happy hour gigs, which is great. I'm home by 7 30, 8 o'clock and not a lot of stuff. I mean, I have a couple of hollow body telecasters. They're god dang guitars and man, this is easy. This is so lightweight. If I'm playing a bass, a gig with the bass man, that thing's heavy. Yeah. I must be getting old.

J.D. Maniscalco (11:53):

Yeah, I know. I started playing with a guy named Gregory who's a smooth jazz artist out of Denver, and I'll be, damn. We started getting really popular in Denver, and all of a sudden he sent me off the next dates that were outside of Colorado and he says, oh, he says, oh yeah, man, we're going on tour. And I said, I don't know about tour with you guys. I like you guys. I love playing, but there's no touring in my, unless it's with Harry Connick Jr. Or someone like that.

Mike Sullivan (12:25):

Well, yeah, or Mike Sullivan, Jason Manning and Lewis Panzer. Right.

J.D. Maniscalco (12:30):

You find him out of of money. Right, exactly. This was kind of like still schlepping the gear and I had to be my own drum tech and everything else, and I just didn't see it, so I had to bow out of that. But I'll find another group in town that just wants to play in town and at the right time and jazz festivals in the summer. That's the kind of stuff to do. That's the kind of stuff.

Mike Sullivan (12:52):

Oh, I agree. I love playing outdoors. And not today it's cold, but I like playing outdoors. Anyway, enough about our brush with fame, but I did want to talk to you about dirt. Now, dirt's been around quite a long time now. I mean, it's got to be, what, 15 years?

J.D. Maniscalco (13:13):

Yeah, at least I remember Bob, KIPP and I, we signed an agreement 2006 for us to host it for PGA because I was on the data collection committee is what it was in the beginning. Best practice had just passed, and there was a section called Data and Reporting and Collection. And so I had that and I knew I needed to build a system to collect this information. And very fortunate to have Rudy Gonzalez and DJ

Berg that were principal architects, engineers with at the time was Sun Microsystems. And Sun Microsystems educated these individuals with all aspects of the open stack in technology. So they were architects, engineers, they can do the whole thing, troubleshooting everything else. And it just happened to be related to me in some way. And I said, I have this problem, this passed in law, which I asked for because I knew if I did have it in law that the facility owner had to report to the one call center that it wouldn't get the information that we needed.

(14:28):

And so explaining what we needed to them CGA, and the committee had went through and sent out R FPS to the industry for a TED provider to do this for us. And we got back, I don't know how many RFPs we got back. We selected one, we played an ungodly amount of money for it, and we didn't get really at CGA what we wanted. And so I was hosting a meeting in Colorado in Golden, Colorado at our office, and I happened to get the ear of a techie with, I believe it was Duke Energy, and he knew it and he knew what was needed. But as a committee, it's really hard to get everyone moving in the same direction. It's much easier when you're the leader of an organization. You say, this is the decision, this is the direction we're going. And so I took Doug into, he was from Michigan, and I took Doug into my RIT room and I showed him the servers that it was sitting on, and he started asking me questions of how it was built and who built it.

(15:42):

And by the time we met back, everyone was at lunch. And when we came back, Doug said to Bob, kipp, he said, this is the system that you need and you need to use this system from Colorado. And because we had been as a committee, we had been struggling with RF and not getting what we wanted. And basically we've got the RFP and what we got back was nothing that was working for us as a committee and the ability to take the data, not only from Colorado, but upload that into the main system. And I was making lasagna at the time. I used to make lasagna for our staff and our board for about 150 people.

Mike Sullivan (16:32):

You're upsetting a precedent for me that I just can't meet. You know that, right?

J.D. Maniscalco (16:36):

Well, you're not Italian, so maybe pick another genre of food,

Mike Sullivan (16:40):

Maybe Guinness Beer lots and lots of Guinness Beer.

J.D. Maniscalco (16:44):

So I'm making lasagna in, and Rudy and DJ are sitting there and they have a whiteboard in front of us, and they're all writing out what their vision of what was needed and the ability to capture that data, have it transcend all these different layers, not only for Colorado, but for CJA and have it protected the data protected so that I could do my reporting. And so Virtual private Dirt came into existence. I'm not sure how many virtual private Dirt CGA has now, but they have a ton, and I believe it's called the Data Something Network Now. Data Action Network is what it's called now. And so that's all from the Dirt system. And it was clear early on that it was a hit. It worked for Colorado, and we started signing up other companies, other entities, whether it be a utility, a one Call.

(17:48):

And so if a One Call signed up, they could get their instance of virtual private dirt, the theme and the color and everything matched their logo as best we could. So it gave it a local flavor, captured the data, brought it through on the end to allow CGA could do its reporting Colorado to do its reporting, and I guess it was containerizing all of this data securely and for all of our own purpose. So I could write a report for the state for the Public Utilities Commission and not necessarily have all of that exposed of who were the bad actors, because at the time, we didn't have an underground Damage Prevention safety commission that was to look at this and help drive improvements in safety at that level. Everyone was afraid. But getting it passed in law, I still don't know how that was passed in law, Mike.

(18:52):

It was a higher power or something that was with me, because if I told you I was going to build the system to you report every time you made a mistake, you wouldn't want to have anything to do with. That happened on a couple of large incidents in Colorado where people got hurt, and that was always usually the driver of one call improvement. So it passed and all a sudden I had to deliver on this system and the rest is history. But really that became part of this whole movement in how do we really measure the effectiveness of One Call and damage prevention. I had a border challenge me that with that one time, and I could not answer his question

Mike Sullivan (19:44):

Really. And what it does, it just drills down to that root cause analysis. Right. And I mean, you've seen obviously the evolution of that dirt over the years, and so you guys mean you, Rudy, you guys started it in your kitchen. Obviously you're mapping it out in your kitchen. And today where it is, I mean it's used all over North America. Alberta has a virtual private dirt, the Saskatchewan, British Columbia, you name it. And all the states, as far as I know, they're all doing the exact same thing. How many evolutions of it have there been though? I mean, have there been?

J.D. Maniscalco (20:22):

It's evolved over several iterations, but I couldn't tell you how many. But any software, software has a lifecycle and it t then it's obsolete. And so you need to keep improving it and enhancing it or else it will go away. It has a life cycle and it will end if you don't continue to improve it.

Mike Sullivan (20:50):

The Canadian Common Ground Alliance is excited to hold its 2025 Damage Prevention Symposium at the Halifax Marriott Harbor front, November 5th, sorry, November 4th to sixth and 2025. This is the signature event for the CCGA, and typically it attracts over 200 people. You can log in now to their website and you can register for the event or have a call for papers. And I look forward to seeing you there. I'll be there with a couple of my colleagues representing Alberta. Well, I was just reaching for this actually. I can't really see it, but this is the field form actually for dirt. I picked it up when I was at the CGA event last week in Orlando, and there's a lot of information to fill there. And one of the things that I know from my colleague, Joe Rosenberg, who manages our dirt data, is the data quality index, DQI. And that seems to be year after year after year. It's the area that we're just not getting enough information nation. And if you were to take dirt start again today, how would you build it? So it's simpler or would it be an app or how would you build it today?

J.D. Maniscalco (22:11):

It would be the same way, Mike, because the way they built it has transcended this amount of time since it's beginning, it's agile enough to make modifications and changes to it. What is archaic about it is that form the different elements that each state has that make it unique to Oklahoma or Tennessee or California. It's already built with all of that flexibility in it because the guys that built it took that in mind and said, we don't want this to be static. We want to be dynamic. And so what does that mean? The containers for each field have a lot of room to be modified and collect a lot of data. If one of those fields happens, you all of a sudden you're expecting this size of file and all of a sudden it's two terabytes. You have to accommodate it in some meaningful way. So they took industry best practices in it in the open stack that said, this is how they built these systems for some microsystems at the time. Now they're onto Raytheon, the defense contractor, US Defense Contractor, the biggest defense contractor in the world, I believe. But they are now, they build systems for them. And I believe if I asked them, there would be few modifications to the original design and architecture of the system because they built it with those themes in mind.

Mike Sullivan (23:44):

Okay, yeah, makes sense. And when I go to the Damage Reporting Evaluation committee meeting, I stopped into that meeting last week and nobody had any issues with the form. And I'm thinking, well, that's a lot for somebody to fill out if there was a damage. And it is voluntary, it is not mandatory. And I know about the DQI issues, the data quality index issues that if the report is not robust enough, you really can't determine the root cause. You're making some assumptions. So that's why I was, I thought, okay, in the meeting, well, wouldn't the benefit by simplifying that and having a simple form. But you're right, when you read through it, well, if you're going to simplify it, you're probably going to leave stuff out that really should be there,

J.D. Maniscalco (24:30):

Right? Data collection for one call, right? For damage prevention, let's include all of the elements you can if the excavator vacili or doesn't have that information, you want both perspectives. You want the facility owner and the excavator. The DQI was really important for us to go back and be able to go back to those stakeholder groups, say, this is where you're missing the mark. This is where you need to improve your data. You want to tell your side of the story because we always see each person pointing the finger at the other. It wasn't my fault, it was dislocated,

(25:05):

It was located properly, the excavator hit it. But in the safety commission, when push comes to shove, and God forbid anyone get injured as a result of that, then knows where the rubber meets the road. And so as the one call center, we wanted to take a very diplomatic so that people continue to report but not say, oh, we can't report to that or not call in because they're collecting all this data. But one of the key elements, because you look at all those elements on the form and you say, well, I can't digest all this because when I was writing the report, it was, and I didn't ever write a report, by the way. I hired a specialist to write a report, a friend and a colleague of mine, Barry Miller from Foresighted Advantage, and he was the one that was an economist that took all of the data and can write that report.

(26:00):

And so he wrote it and it was like a hundred pages the first year, and it's like, this is way too much. I need a boil down report that everybody can understand. And he said, what do you want? And I said, I want to report card. And he said, you want to report a card? I said, yeah, because everybody understands it's elementary school. When we succeeded was a day when we didn't do as well was a B.

When we did average a C and we did poorly, it was a D, right? So in this data quality index in Colorado, we developed a report card for each county that looked at their public awareness metric, that looked at their notification metric, and it gave them a grade. So in these areas, you're doing good, but in these areas you're doing back and they were actionable items to take forward.

(26:50):

And if you go to Colorado eight one one's website, I'm sure they still have it up there, and you'll see these report cards that give it by county. And that was really as shown a lot of value because we all understand that without evil looking at it, you understand, Hey, Denver County, you're a C. Let's look at the data. Why is Denver a C? Why are they failing those regard in this regard? These are the areas for improvement. Maybe it's public awareness, maybe it's down prevention, and it broke it down in those ways and then gave them the composite score and then we color coded it and you give somebody an inch, take a mile. Then we just kept evolving it, involving it from what appeared to work. I can't tell you how many presentations I gave when somebody got a D or an F.

(27:43):

They wanted to understand, now they were calling me to go out and give a presentation because they wanted to take action in a particular county. And we showed that by having the damage prevention committee in a local jurisdiction and those people meeting on a regular basis to talk about why they were getting their locate, what was the whole time at the call center, whatever their excuses, whatever their reasoning for not having a higher grade, they began to talk about that in those at the state, not in Denver. Because in Edmonton there's different facility numbers and contracts. Exactly.

Mike Sullivan (28:24):

Area. So they're talking about it locally.

J.D. Maniscalco (28:27):

Yes. So having that report card allowed us to evaluate them, look at their score really quickly without going through all these spreadsheets and all these columns to say, oh, over here, down over here. No, no. Your color code for this year was red because you got a D. If you had a report card that was a, everything was in green. And then we color coded that in a by county on the state map and showed them where the trouble areas were. So if it was a board member, they can say, Hey, I have facility way in the northwest corner up by Steamboat Springs. I have a problem over here. I can go address that, and I know exactly what it is. That's a public awareness. Is it damage prevention or what are the issues that are going on in there? So I would ask you to go look at that. I'm sure they have it. And Barry, and help me put all that together. It was my idea, but nowhere did I have the intellect to be able to pull off what I envisioned

Mike Sullivan (29:30):

And the report card, I never knew this. I never knew this about the report card. And I find it fascinating because it's a trigger, right? It initiates a response of something. I mean, you're doing well. Hey, you can show that to your insurance company if you wish, your board of directors, your citizens. If you're not doing well, then it shows we need to enhance whatever we're doing here. We need to do better. And I love the idea of that. And you got my wheels turning, and I think we may have to have another conversation, not on the podcast, but you and I about this because when we talk about data and we talk about reporting of damages or near misses, or I like to call them, I don't like to call 'em this, but I refer to 'em as near hits because the near miss sounds like, okay, it's passive.

(30:16):

They didn't hit us, we're good. But it could just as easily have been a near hit. And that sounds a little bit more dramatic because you don't know where you're digging blind, right? So what you're talking about here, I really like this idea. We have a variety, a number of municipalities in Alberta and 70% of the big municipalities have registered with us. We don't have legislation that says you shall register. It's a bit of partial legislation for transmission pipelines. But everybody else, they pretty much, they register if they believe they should. And thankfully most do 70% of the municipalities and about 50% of the rural municipalities, so smaller towns and villages, and that's a good thing. But if I could go to them and say, look, here's how well you're doing and here's how you might be able to improve. Maybe we improve your mapping. Maybe we no longer register you by grid, but by Polygon, maybe we do some training in terms of how to manage your tickets or whatever the case may be. So I love this idea, and I think we need to talk further about this, but going back to the dirt big picture

(31:26):

When it first rolled out, how was that? I mean, you're telling people, Hey, please report your damages. It's voluntary and it's anonymous. Did people actually believe that, that it was anonymous?

J.D. Maniscalco (31:40):

Well, no, they didn't give ordain to register. Right?

(31:48):

That's right. It was really gaining the confidence that the data wouldn't be compromised and it was secure. So having the best network and in that regard was imperative. And year over year, it was mandated in Colorado. So we again had that grace from somewhere that allowed me to pass that. But it was really just missing. I lost my train of thought, getting them all on board and making it available and letting them know that we weren't going to release those names of individuals. That was later, I believe in 2018 when the Underground Damage Prevention Safety Council was established. That was their role, not Colorado eight one ones. Because the minute we got into and asked me to be on that night, I recused myself because the minute we get in and making decisions based on against the facility owner or an excavator, that it kind of taints the role that we play as the middleman between the excavator in the facility or

Mike Sullivan (33:07):

I think it's brilliant. When I look back, I mean that was, so 2006, you had that conversation with Bob kipp, and that's really where it was began to solidify. But you were in advance of that. You were working on

J.D. Maniscalco (33:18):

This. Yeah, absolutely. That's when Bob KIPP and I negotiated, because it wasn't really for me for CJ to purchase the software from us and all the rights to and virtual private because it was clear it was going to become a national and international endeavor, and it wasn't my place to hold the industry hostage, nor was I willing to host it for the entire United States internationally. So I knew that I needed to get it out of my hands, but I wanted those guys because I initially didn't pay them hardly anything, Mike. It was laughable. What I paid for the development of this tool that was really a world-class effort, and I could say it, but until somebody wanted to buy or it's use was so much that now it was driving something. Some other organization should own that. So we negotiated a price to which I kept it there as Colorado wait when One Knot I as JD Maniscalco, because I didn't see a penny of that, right? The

organization got a third, DJ got a third, and Rudy Gonzalez got a third. And that was just some payback for a lot more time. Went into that in their thought than initially designed first, they just wanted create, not them, but some of our stakeholders said, oh, you can build this at Access and we can roll this out and it won't be any big deal. Go ahead and try.

Mike Sullivan (35:00):

Yeah, go ahead and try. Exactly.

J.D. Maniscalco (35:01):

Not that easy. I did try. I am and I consider myself a technologist, but I am nowhere near a programmer or have the skill to do that. And using those standards that they were educated in, that's how they built it with the open architecture.

Mike Sullivan (35:19):

So through the years of data collection analysis, root cause analysis, is there anything that stands out to you that, wow, we didn't know this, and all of a sudden it's staring you in the face. We need to do something about this, otherwise we're going to have more serious damages. We have a serious risk to public safety.

J.D. Maniscalco (35:41):

It was this thing that we always thought and realized. We knew that no notifications were being made and excavations were taking face. Those were the instances, and we needed somebody to hold those people accountable. In the United States, non R is true in Canada, but you can go rent a backhoe and one day and in the same day you can be digging holes and Colorado, it takes three days to get those locate put on the ground, but if you don't have some kind of certification for the excavator, and I looked at Canada as I tried to implement some of those things in Colorado, and that was one of the last things I was working on, was trying to get that certification to One Call so that they were educated, that form, they were familiar, so they're prepared before they call. The worst thing is somebody calling for locates and not knowing where they're digging and when they're digging in what county. As we have those calls, I'm sure they have 'em to this day, it's old adage that just get 'em out there and I'll show 'em where I'm excavating. They go beyond that. They go a little bit over here and all of a sudden that fiber line or that gas pipeline is, I didn't think it would be so close. And you had incidents, but that's what really drove a lot of legislation in Colorado. I hate to say it, but fire and brimstone and those things drive improvements in damage prevention.

Mike Sullivan (37:22):

So I mean, before I go to my next question, actually, I did want to touch back to the data, and you've heard me say for a decade now that we shifted calls to clicks and really pushed click before you dig really hard. And the story of how that came up is we couldn't get 8 1 1, and we had Qlik before you dig.com as plan B, which quickly became, oh, this is probably a better option. And then we found out that locate requests over submitted online were less likely to result in damage because exactly as you said, that we know exactly where the locate request needs to be. Nobody knows better where they're digging any excavator, and they can put that on a map.

(38:11):

And we track that for five years now. We've been tracking that, and it hasn't changed. In fact, it's even more compelling. And a couple of other provinces have mandated locate requests on the web for members and contractors. Ontario adjusted it for homeowners about at the beginning of this month. And I think we're going to go there. I mean, I was writing an article today for a magazine, and I was thinking it wasn't that long ago that we got rid of the fax. And when that came in, probably in the eighties, like, oh, hallelujah, this is amazing. And you're watching that fax come in really slow, and it's like, wow, this is incredible. It was like space

J.D. Maniscalco (38:53):

Age, especially if you forgot about checking 'em before you had fax that you can just get on a device on a pc. The paper ran out or the paper had just been running and there's a stack of paper that was a nightmare. Oh, it was that out early on too. But that was one of the best moves.

Mike Sullivan (39:18):

I had already started that Alberta one call when I think we were down to 4% of the locate requests were coming in on fax. And so you know what? We're going to turn it off. And we had this major communications campaign going out to everybody we're turning off the fax. There was one guy who actually used to come into the office with a long sheet, he would print out himself and hand it to us, these are my locates for the week type thing. I said, okay, we're not doing it anymore. You got to go online or we are just turning the fax off. And we thought, oh, this is going to be horrible. I mean, nobody's going to want to do this. It's going to be awful. We'll have the police at our door or whatever. And it was such a non-event at the end of the day, and now we're down to 12% of our locate requests come in by phone.

(40:05):

And overall it's like, well, now we're thinking of, well, maybe we should turn that off too, because we know that a locate request online, the integrity of is so superior, there'd be less damages. But there's that tipping point, right? Okay, well, what if the person submitting the locate request by phone, they're not able to go online or they're older, they don't understand, they don't have the patience, whatever it might be. What's that tipping point that a person, because you're making it, you have to do it this way. You don't have the option anymore that they're not going to submit it all. And that's the hesitation, right? Well, that's the hesitation. I remember that were

J.D. Maniscalco (40:45):

Receiving at a public library, right, receiving the requests at the public library, and they didn't have any technology, so they had to go to the community center and go check their email to get the locates for the day and pulling everybody. And just because we think we're so advanced with technology that we have to all move together. We can't leave anybody behind. And some of them were facility owners too, right? I mean, some of the facility were getting their tickets at a public device at a public place because they didn't have the technology. It's just an evolution. But I thought with our generation, the baby boomers, when we cycle out, I thought that a lot of that would go away. But I know that there are still people that are using printers and printer modems, printer faxes

(41:41):

And everything else. And that old technology where we'd have to call 'em up and say, can you turn off your machine and turn it back on? We can't communicate you with you. And every procedure that we had, if we didn't have an emergency that was delivered, we had to pick up the phone and call them to

give 'em the information. They didn't have it. Well, a lot of them relied on that too much. It is like I think they let the printer go out of paper sometimes on purpose so that they would get those. But nevertheless, it is a challenge for everyone to move altogether. And I use that as my mantra in public speaking when addressing our damage prevention breakfast and our excavator meetings, is that we can't leave anybody behind.

Mike Sullivan (42:28):

And that's the tipping point. We're so worried about, do we mandate the web and reduce damages or do we not end at our own peril? Right?

J.D. Maniscalco (42:38):

Right.

Mike Sullivan (42:39):

So yeah, I mean

J.D. Maniscalco (42:41):

It's tough. The same theme, Mike, we found the same thing that when I told you a story and you had to write down the story and then you told the story to somebody else, we've all seen that. We've all been in meetings where we've went through that role, and by the time it got back to the person that started it, it wasn't the same. So we had to transpose that information or what the excavator was saying. And when you're doing thousands and thousands, and maybe an agent had been there for so long and 25 years, 20 years, you get conditioned and you maybe stop listening and you get complacent and you get tired and just one keystroke on the keypad, and you could put 'em in different location, read back the information we validated, but how many times did they really listen? We mostly did that for our own protection in the event that something happened that said, yes, you validated this address and this location when you're with the agent at the time, right?

(43:45):

And that's why we had such high insurance premiums and the ability to get that insurance was getting harder and harder. The years went by because of the risk of mitigating that risk, protecting that risk more so as an insurance company. So it was getting harder for us to attain that in the event that our agent made a mistake and someone took us to task in court, which was happening more and more, not for us as an operator, because we didn't have those incidences where we did that because we were so committed to quality and the quality of artas. And taking your time, taking your time listening. But that's not to say that mistakes still don't get made.

Mike Sullivan (44:30):

Well, that's the thing. We are always about speed because of the volume of locate requests on the phone. And now we're more about taking the time and measuring our agents accordingly because take the time of the people on the phone, the professional excavators and our members, yeah, they're online. They're almost a hundred percent online only the emergencies are called in, but that's what they do every day. They're used to that. A homeowner, they dig once every five, 10 years, maybe once in a lifetime. And it's all new to them. It's all new. So yeah. Now in jd, you were one of the industries I looked at, you as one of the industry's pioneers we're roughly the same age, but you were in this gig long before I was, and you were definitely one of the industry's pioneers. You came to Canada a number of

times giving presentations. I know you and our good friend Scott Henley, we were good pals, and we lost Scott not that long ago, and another major pioneer. So tell me a little bit about that. I mean, you're a humble guy. You're not Joe Hollywood. You're a humble guy. But how did that feel? Somebody saying, Hey, man, I need you. I need to come up here and talk to the people that I work with.

J.D. Maniscalco (45:50):

Yeah, it was great. It was always great whether I was representing CGA or not that I was ever representing them as a board member, but mostly Colorado and one, it was always a privilege and an honor to be able to share what I knew because I knew I was making a difference in what actions I was taking may save somebody's life. And when you're doing millions and millions of transactions a year, it's so easy to get complacent. And we love speed. Everybody wants to go fast and get it done. Driving in now, Colorado is a challenge, and I know how much longer I can drive, not because of my ability, but more so what I see and how other people are driving. It was the same in damage prevention. Everyone just wanted to rush to get those locates. You don't even take all that time on the call.

(46:44):

Yeah, you do. And it was information coming to those excavators, and a lot of times, I hate to say, but a lot of times that information was incorrect coming from the facility owner that drove that damage. So getting the quality of information, because who's driving the projects, Mike? It's the facility owner. Now, contractors aren't out there doing things on their own in the utility space. They're always hired by someone else. And then when I would hear that this push to get all these done, because what they didn't prepare to plan, they didn't plan accordingly. All of a sudden they got this rush to get them done, and it was an emergency on your part. That whole saying doesn't mean it's an emergency on our part. So our agents were trained to slow down, take your time, be courteous, be professional. And the same thing is true in the driving world because these younger drivers that just want to get somewhere and they just got a car, and I was probably the same way when I was 16. Oh, we weren't like that at all. No, not at all. Probably the same way I had thing I was going to get where I wanted to go. And so I Hi. A lot of stuff

(48:02):

That hasn't happened since then because I learned the value of what my insurance premiums went up. I lost my license before I was 18. Well, I didn't think it was a big deal, right? Well, yeah. Then when I went to college, I couldn't drive to school or drive to gigs or drive anywhere else. I had a real problem, but I had to realize that. But as a young adult, I didn't appreciate what I was so free. Oh, no, you don't.

Mike Sullivan (48:29):

No. I mean, you were talking about report cards earlier, and all I could think of was my report cards when I was a kid, and mom would get so angry because it always said attitude needs improvement. And I was bored. I think that's what it came down to. I was bored in class. But yeah, I was like, Michael knows the subject matter, but his attitude needs improvement. And so I can hear my mom's voice in my head when you're talking about report cards. But you're right. I mean there's the value of taking the right pace. There's the value of even you're giving a presentation of taking the right timber, the right pace, moving slowly, emphasizing the right words. And that's the key part of the communication because you're not seeing the person, right? We're not doing this.

J.D. Maniscalco (49:29):

No,

Mike Sullivan (49:30):

We're on a phone call. And maybe that is a bit of the essence of communication that's lost when you're pushing it online. Yes, it manages volume greatly. Yes, it reduces damages, but sometimes somebody just needs to talk to somebody, but the art of conversation is disappearing. We are seeing that right before our eyes.

J.D. Maniscalco (49:53):

Absolutely. We want to communicate. And it's almost like you should know what I want before I tell you.

Mike Sullivan (50:00):

Yeah, we're

J.D. Maniscalco (50:01):

Not telepathic. You have no, well, not yet not to communicate. And unfortunately, they're communicating the way they're driving just banshee, like the Tasmanian devil. I know I'm older, I'm a senior citizen now, but I'm sure our folks said the same things about us, but it's so much true now and the harm caused and lives lost as someone driving too. Damn. For what? For what?

Mike Sullivan (50:31):

Yep. For what? Yeah, for what?

J.D. Maniscalco (50:33):

In such a damn hurry.

Mike Sullivan (50:35):

Yep. Where do you think, I mean, going back to you're kind of a data guy. You say you wouldn't consider yourself a technologist, but obviously you are. I mean at the heart and soul of it. I mean beyond being a musician, you're not a failed musician, but you're definitely a successful technologist, put it that way. Where do you see all of this going? I mean, data, data is good, but where do you see this going in five, 10 years that the whole locate request process getting, I won't say paint on the ground because that may not be a thing one day. I mean, it doesn't have to be, where do you see this going?

J.D. Maniscalco (51:17):

Well, everyone talks about AI and all of that. It's using artificial intelligence and machine learning to help us get to the next level. I think that's the next big step in all of this is implementing technology safely, reading the tickets, ingesting them, finding out where your errors are a lot quicker. So that technology gets us to the root cause a lot sooner before the three days, right after you process a request, maybe it runs through and it knows having GPS and all of those lines, GPS instead of a grid or a parcel. What's the narrowest area that we can get that down to Building buffer. I'm not talking about taking away that buffer zone at all, but how do we use technology and artificial intelligence to help us evolve our products? And there's a key, several individual key players in that space that are doing just that.

(52:23):

And I wasn't at the conference, but I know if their presentations are worth any credence, they need to be looking, those vendors need to be looking at and helping the one calls, helping the facility owners

evolve in a safe space so you can test it. So you just don't throw the engine in there and all of a sudden, hey, yeah, we reduce this, we reduce that, but all of a sudden incidents of damage go way up and injury the last go up. So I think using that precursors to knowing around high profile facilities, we had references on our old tickets that keyed the utility owner when they were getting near those facility owners because they cared more about those, the high pressure mains than they did the distribution lines. So how are we going to use that technology in a similar way to ingest that, compile it, predictive incidences, given the information and all the tickets that went before for the last 30 years, you're probably going to have a hit on this ticket in this area given all of that data, use all those tickets not just from a couple months or a couple weeks.

(53:50):

Use all those instances to run through the machine learning and AI to how predict those GOs of where they're going to be. Then we can improve those resources in those areas. And a lot of the time in this blanket approach that we just serve all the same and all the same, Mary, you and I both know that's true and it doesn't work now. So how can AI help us to substantiate the additional resources? And of course, utilities and facility owners never want to talk about additional resources, but if you're not going to use additional resources of the humankind, how can we implement new technology in the form of AI and machine learning to advance safety, not advance efficiency of which it will, but how do you do that to improve safety overall for the person and first, the person first and the facility secondary, right?

Mike Sullivan (54:54):

Jd, this has been great chatting with you again and we got to do it again, whether it's just you and I and maybe a couple of my colleagues because there's stuff I want to explore with you further for Utility Safety partners. But you've given me a lot to think about. You always did. So I'm not surprised about that. But just as I said at the top of our chat here today, I miss you. The industry misses you and you've got so much to share and so much history behind you, and I am just so glad to be able to do this with you. It's a lot of fun.

J.D. Maniscalco (55:27):

Thank you, Mike. It's been my pleasure. And you know what? I miss you more, brother. So thank you to hear from you and thank you for the invitation. It's been a pleasure.

Mike Sullivan (55:35):

We'll talk again real soon.

J.D. Maniscalco (55:36):

Thank you, brother.

Mike Sullivan (55:38):

That's going to wrap things up on the Safety Moment podcast. I want to thank our producers stories and strategies, and I hope you choose to follow this podcast on any directory you're listening on. And please do leave a rating. We certainly appreciate it. You can follow us on X 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, please don't hesitate and email us at info@utilitysafety.ca and put podcast and big letters in the subject header. I'm Mike Sullivan. Thanks for listening to the Safety Moment podcast today. And I'm the present Utility Safety Partners. And remember, one click costs you nothing. Not clicking could cost you everything.