ITMATTERS - EP14 MAIN 02

Wed, Aug 30, 2023 9:16AM 46:54

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gig hard drive, part, learn, job, work, helps, jerry west, leadership, skills, type, talk, matthew, organization, team, perspective, piece, candidate, security, playing, productivity

SPEAKERS

Matthew Parks, Keith Hawkey, Narrator

N Narrator 00:07

Welcome to the IT Matters podcast, where we explore why IT matters and matters pertaining to IT.

K Keith Hawkey 00:16

Welcome to the IT Matters podcast number 15. I'm the co host, Keith Hawkey. Aaron is traveling. So I'll be manning the ship today. And we have a special guest, Matthew B. Parks, Sr. is the VP of IT Security for the Pace Center for Girls. He's been working in the nonprofit organization for over 10 years, and has been saving the day in IT since 1995. Matthew, how are you?

M Matthew Parks 00:51

I'm well, thanks for the introduction. Pleasure being here.

K Keith Hawkey 00:55

Well, we're pleased to have you on the podcast and why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself. I gave a brief introduction but love to hear a little bit about your background, what you do for the Pace Center for Girls and how you got into IT. Okay.

M Matthew Parks 01:14

So again, I'm Matthew Parks. I was born in Jacksonville, Florida, where I reside presently. I've been in IT, like you said, since 1995. And I tell the story that IT, I didn't choose IT, IT chose me. It seemed to be a good fit for myself. There were a couple of divergent paths that I was looking

at when I was researching what I wanted to be in my early 20s and this one seemed to be the best and it was a good return on investment, I would say. Occupationally, it's treated me well, and has allowed to have afforded me a pretty good living. So not only do I appreciate what IT has brought to me, but I also evangelize to others that it is a great path if you want to pursue a career that is going to benefit you. For Pace, again, I'm the vice president of IT and of security. So it's kind of in the name, but I'll go into depth a little bit. So I have at present a team of about 14. At the present we, Pace Center for Girls is a nonprofit organization that has been around for almost 40 years. And in that time, we've helped 40 45,000 young women reach their potential. What we do is we help young ladies who have some type of trauma, and we help them reach their potential and fulfill their destiny, as is the shortest and briefest way I can put that. We help to you know, right track them into better opportunities. They come from, you know, disadvantaged situations, in some cases, not all, but in some cases. And again, I want to make sure I'm clear about that because that is a misconception. And trauma is something that permeates throughout all strata of society. So it's not exclusive to disadvantaged folks that have trauma in their lives, I want to make sure that I'm clear about that. So in any case, we help to right track them. And we help to make sure that they indeed are ready to meet the next challenges in their lives. So that's pretty much our mission. So my part in that is that I helped to make sure that the trains run on time and that they're safe. We make sure that they that the network is there, that we have a staff that can be productive, meaning that they are able to do their jobs every day without having to compromise from a technological perspective that the technology isn't a burden to them, that it's an augmentation to the job in the work that they do. And we do so and we make sure that we try to keep that in as secure environment as possible. So along with the virtual security, cybersecurity, we also handle great swathes of the physical security as well.

K **Keith Hawkey** 04:16

Well, I certainly appreciate the good work that you do, Matthew. And I'm curious what got a burgeoning a budding IT leader excited in 1995. What was the coolest tech on the block, what was the talk of the town?

M **Matthew Parks** 04:39

I'll tell you the funniest story back in 1995. Back when Discworld stone. No seriously, the most exciting thing innovations that came out in 95 was obviously windows 95. It just hit the market. And so that was new. And one of the things that came along With that is there was a new storage achievement that had been hit a benchmark of the one gig hard drive. Right? So I tell that story because when I built my first computer, I was working for it when I say that, um, you know, I was in tech, professionally since 1995. I've been in tech longer than that, you know, having grown up with the old trs 80s, from RadioShack, and colecovision and those type of things. So I've been around technology for a long time. But digressing. So when I built my first computer for myself, as a started off as an assembly Tech and a wire monkey, for a company down in Clearwater, Florida, when I was in school, I wanted to get this magical mythical one gig hard drive, because at the time, you won't believe this, but we were being sold that, hey, you'll never fill this thing up. Right? Yeah, seems ridiculous now. But you know, 30 years ago, that's what we were telling people. Because in fact, we didn't have anything that could really fill them at the time. But programmers and others have helped with that over time. But yeah, I have files now that are a gig, you know, PowerPoints, so photographs that I have, but anyway, so we,

so I was building my first computer and I walked in, and I wanted to get this. I'd save my money and I was buying parts a little bit at a time. And so I bought the Ram had an old motherboard that I put together it had a case. And so the hard drive was the last piece I wanted it was the most expensive and I walked in and I didn't account for the tax. So because I was short by five bucks, I wind up having to get 850 megabyte hard drive because I couldn't quite afford the one gig hard drive at the time. And that was back then, that was $285 as opposed to the $299 it would have cost for the one gig hard drive. So that's how much times have progressed and changed technology. We work in an industry where things tend to get better and cheaper over time. So it's a it's an amazing thing to look at when you look back.

Keith Hawkey 05:05

One gig hard drive. I don't think I could my my phone could run on a one gig hard drive. I mean, our phones come with like 16 gigs now. It's standard.

Matthew Parks 07:40

And small.

Keith Hawkey 07:42

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, exactly. Well, that's let's, let's get into running discovery. This is a session, I asked you three questions. So to learn a little bit more about yourself, and just get the conversation started. So entering running discovery. So speaking of one gig hard drives, what was your favorite video game growing up?

Matthew Parks 08:11

Favorite video game growing up? That's a tough one. I think it was one that was called in MDK. I have to go back. Of course it was always again, I'm older, so Space Invaders and Galaga and those type of things. Mortal Kombat. Going back, Street Fighter, those type of things. So those were some of my favorites coming up. But yeah, there wasn't one. So yeah, I played even the mike tyson knockout those type of things. So those are some of the ones that I grew up with, you know, back in the day. And then, like recently, I've been playing Ready or Not, is one that I've been playing a lot. Death Loop is another one that I've been playing a lot recently. And so those are two that stick out in my mind. Oh, and Gotham knights, which I'm really enjoying a lot. So those are two of the ones those are three that I'm playing currently. But yeah, I go back a long way. I mean, I'm a kid of the 70s so actually we actually had a we actually played on myself and my brother on television. Yeah.

Keith Hawkey 09:23

Could you run MDK on a one gig gig hard drive?

Matthew Parks 09:27

Actually, yes, you could run MDK back then on a one gig hard drive. Yeah, if it was pushing it because I think MDK was like a groundbreaking graphics at the time, but it was it was a was a was a pretty decent video game. And it was that was one of my favorites that sticks out in my mind every time.

Keith Hawkey 09:49

Yeah, back when video games used to publish and then that was the game. They had finished the products.

Matthew Parks 09:56

Right and the only thing you had to download were patches and stuff like that, but you didn't have a lot of DLC and that type of stuff like you do now.

Keith Hawkey 10:04

Back in the day, yeah. There's a game called Perfect Dark that when I was growing up, that was more of a in 64 game. But it was the first shooting game that had bots, you could fill that you didn't need another player. So you could you could put 30 different bots and they all had different personalities. One, one bot and the match would hide and he would be a coward, one would be like really aggressive, one would play defensive, one would just jump everywhere. So they tried to have these, you know, bots, but yeah, Perfect Dark. What, question number two, what exciting personal tech are you excited about on the horizon?

Matthew Parks 10:53

Personal tech that I'm excited about on the horizon? That's a tough one. I'm really excited. I'm really excited about the direction of this kind of sounds odd but the direction or the evolution of the small little the foldable phone. I think that that is something where it's still in a very mansard state. But I think it really gives it light lends a lot of credence to productivity like I use one for work I've been using one for work for several years now. And I've recently just upgraded to the, I had the first two iterations of the Microsoft duo, which again, from a productivity device, I find, I think it's still the best. And I've recently upgraded to the Pixel Fold for work and, um, like literally like yesterday, so I'm still kicking the tires on it. But it's really has been from a productivity perspective is really hard to beat those form factors. Because of the larger screen, the the increased real estate, which, you know, studies have shown that increased real estate and having multiple screens have increased productivity in the desktop. So it's a harder sell for people to under to really implement them from a personal perspective and how this works. And I think part of it too, is, you know, the developers have to get on board as far as being able to make their programs or applications or apps take advantage of the extra real estate. So those are two of the things that but yeah, that's that's one of the things that from a personal perspective, I'm excited about everything else, I mean, I've kind of you know, I kind of sit back and I want to get a little bit more on but that's something that really appeals to me I'm in and

to see if there's something that I would apply from a personal perspective. I guess the other one because I'm a movie guy is too the increasing, the way that the price is coming down on larger screen televisions that are higher quality, again, taking advantage of that cost curve that we have in technology with things again get cheaper and better over time. And I think that's something where post COVID More people are, you know, taking advantage of using their all of these streaming services to have content so having a nice theater theatrical experience at home is something that I think that I see. It's something that excites me and something that I'm constantly playing around with and trying to make sure we have the best experience because we started going back to movies and stuff you know, and recently we just saw Mission Impossible dead reckoning. Oh, yeah.

K Keith Hawkey 13:55

Can Tom Cruise still do backflips and jump out of planes?

M Matthew Parks 14:02

Yeah, he's done all of the areas. Yeah, he's a 60 something but yeah, he's done the backflip jumping off mountains and you know, the fight scenes and stuff then, you know, again, it is a he's he's become the American Jackie Chan. Right where he does his own stunts for the most part. So yeah, he's he you know, be it he says it and you see it and it shows up on film. That if it looks like if you think it's him, it's probably him. You know, he's flying helicopters and flying planes and just it's really amazing that he's kind of the last action last great action hero of our time, I guess.

K Keith Hawkey 14:37

Yeah, I've heard I heard that he's never done a television commercial. He is only existed in movie like he is a through and through movie star. He's only in movies. He's never done ads for for any kind of television commercial or she's never been in a show I don't think. I don't know if that is 100% true, but I did hear that and it sounded right. So it must be true.

M Matthew Parks 15:04

Strangely enough, it does sound right. When you mention it, yeah. Because even the only ad I can think of is a movie trailer for him so or promoting a show, unless you count like television talk show appearances, right? Yeah. But that's usually promotion of something. But yeah, as far as him being a serial television show or an ad, yeah, I can't I have no recollection of anything like that. Even a lot of stars do that the big stars like, like Brad Pitt. And so I still go over to other countries and do the ads, they just don't do him in the US.

K Keith Hawkey 15:39

Oh, maybe there is a loophole. Maybe he has. He's the face of a soap brand.

Matthew Parks 15:47

In Korea or something? Yeah, maybe? I don't know. Yeah. But yeah.

Keith Hawkey 15:55

The last running discovery question, what is your worst day in IT? What has been your worst day in IT?

Matthew Parks 16:07

I'll probably say the worst day in IT for me was the day that we I guess, Presently, the worst day is maybe about four years ago now, three, four years ago now. 21. So three, two years ago, when we discovered that we had a ransomware attack. That was probably, and I it's one of those things where at the time, I didn't, I couldn't process that because I had to go into action. And my team had to go into action. So we didn't really process that as well. But that and then learning some of the mistakes that were made to allow us to be so vulnerable. And then, as we corrected those mistakes, learning, also that, you know, there was some level of exposure of sort, there had been some exfiltration of data that we weren't aware of, because we weren't set properly through the security premises that we had in place, or at least we were told were in place. And so yeah, that was that was a that was a dark year, I would say. And I couple that by saying again, we just come up with COVID. So COVID, we were surprisingly prepared for the technology piece, because we had already migrated to teams, we pretty much 98% of our our staff have laptops, because we're mostly mobile and phones, probably about 40% of the staff. So we were able to handle the stay and work from home orders pretty well. But it brought in new challenges and, and brought in new things. So that was a dark time because it really stressed out the team because we really pushed the limits of a lot of different paces from a security perspective. And from a connectivity and productivity perspective. It pushed us really, really stressed us out. And then coming out of that. And then you had the ransomware attack that happened that it was a I'd say 20 to 21 and probably you said dark day I probably say it was probably a darker period that I had that we came throuhgh. But you, know just like anything else, you don't really appreciate the light until you've gone through the dark. So having all of that come to come to fruition and you know, coming out on the other side cleaner, is something that I really look at and celebrate.

Keith Hawkey 18:45

It's, it's an episode all too familiar with a modern day IT leader. And if you haven't gone through one,

Matthew Parks 18:55

You either don't know it or it's coming. So it's one of those

Keith Hawkey 18:58

That's true. So awesome answers let's uh like to change gears here. And one of the qualities that you've been able to build upon and deploy in your IT department is how to recruit and develop a diverse IT force and benefits it yields are tremendous and from gaining different points of view, having a force that has exposure to varying degrees of technology, what does a diverse IT force look like? In your mind? What does that mean to you and how do you go about recruiting?

Matthew Parks 19:49

You know, I think part of it and I think you hit it on the head with the by defining it is that the most important piece of the diversity is the the diversity of thought than anything else because by bringing in people from different backgrounds, you have a diversity of thought, a different, a diversity of exposure and diversity of experience that helps to make for a more rotund and more full picture of the environment that you're working in and the environment at large. So that's a very important piece to me is to make sure that we do that. So in the recruiting part of it is just making sure that there's a level of exposure to in your application, or in the job description that you post that is, I guess, more friendly, so it will be more open to bring in more candidate. So working with the, you know, either recruiting company or your HR to tell them that, I want to make sure that I'm getting resumes and applications from a wide swath of what America looks like, I want something that's representative number one. And number two, you know, I want to make sure that we reach out to whether it be colleges or schools that we may not have, that may not be traditionally on your list of your, from your candidate pool. Because, to me, those are opportunities that I want to at least afford. And when I say that, you know, it is, um, I'm going to hire the best candidate, regardless of your skin color, regardless of you know, experience, regardless of acumen, I want to hire the best candidate, that is also the best team fit, right. But part of that in something that I learned in my personal life is that, personal professional life, is that the interviewing process is also a learning experience also, because there are times when you know, I know that I may have been under-qualified for position, but I was able to get in front of the recruiter or in front of the hiring manager, and I was able to sell myself and my skills and through that interaction that was able to convince them to look at a different direction to go in a different target than they may have already had in mind. So the opportunity itself, opening the opportunity, to me is an important part of the equation. I also think that from the candidate perspective, it helps them so that they have a diverse experience when it comes to job searching. And they're asked those questions, you know, the live fire questions, you can simulate this but you know, it's hard to do when you're when there's nothing really on the line. Whereas, you know, when you put it out there, you know, is you've got that's your shot, right, you've got to shoot a shot. And it's really a thing helpful for beneficial so even if we don't bring them in, I feel that that's something that helps enrich the candidate for the next opportunity is that they were able to sharpen their iron against our iron.

Keith Hawkey 23:23

Yeah, yeah, I I couldn't disagree with anything that you said. And especially what was stuck to me is that the the computer science departments differ university to university. So if you have a handful of universities that are your favorites that you select from, you're going to be receiving a handful of thought patterns that are derived from these universities and B if the different personalities the different exposures yet widen, widen the scope of the universities

that you're selecting from, widen the scope of the geographies and you're going to have a team that has more experience and exposure to a wider swath of IT and technology and cultural experience which I think is applicable to IT as well. It's almost like it's like those people that know multiple languages are able to think and cross pollinate ideas perhaps more effectively than those that know a single language like me, for the most part. Yeah, I completely agree. So after you have on-boarded a, one of your new IT employees, what, so much of the IT role today is developing people skills and it's communicating a vision to a board, communicating not just the bits and the bytes and the the technical know how of of how this is going to optimize a computer process. It's this affects the bottom line at the company, it's developing a relationship, it's understanding the politics of the situation, how do you go about training a traditional, more technical minded, from a diverse background individual into a well rounded leader that can communicate a vision to the likes of a board?

M Matthew Parks 25:42

Now that's a good question. I actually do a talk on that. It's called from the from the Help Desk do the Big Desk. And we actually go through, it's the actual name is from the Help Desk to the Big Desk, started from the bottom now we're here type of thing, right? So we, what we talked about in that is we go through that path, because what you said is something that's very important that people don't really consider, there isn't a direct business correlation to leadership in IT, there just isn't. Where if you think about the accounting department, for example, there is a direct link because of the way that they interact with the business. You can go through a myriad of other departments, you know, whether it be HR or any of those and those actually have a more direct path to that leadership, business leadership than it does in IT. So it does take additional cultivation, because most of the IT folks are, overwhelmingly, I don't want to over generalize. But overwhelmingly, the numbers show that we're mostly introverted, that we mostly myself included, it also shows that we tend to not, which means we don't tend to naturally build relationships, which is an important piece of the business piece. It's something that if it's that question, I always get asked a What would you tell your younger self? Networking and relationships, do it earlier. Learn that. Something I'm trying to help, you know, my son and others who are coming into this to understand. So yeah, well, as we talked about, that we discussed, the relationship piece, we talked about the need to learn how to zoom out and look at it from an organizational perspective, because again, we're task oriented, right, we have a ticket comes in, and we need to solve this for this ticket. And we tend to zoom in from that perspective, and we have to be able to zoom out and look at it of how this one ticket affect this much of the productivity, and this productivity affects this particular location. And this location affects the rest of the region and the rest of the organization. So being able to zoom out and know that, you know, this one thing that you're doing today, contributes to the greater productivity of the organization, the greater health of the organization. And then from that perspective, looking around and saying, how do I, my first you have to understand, how does your IT department, what cog on the wheel are you? How do you fit into the organization past, present and future? Then where do you fit in your IT department in your contribution to the department's greater contribution. So those are the things that you have to learn from a leadership perspective, because you have to think beyond yourself beyond that ticket that you're working on today. You have to be able to think more organizationally. And then you the other piece is learning that, you know, you have to go from that operational to tactical to strategic, to be able to move into the different strata of leadership in organization. One of the thing, you know, Admiral Grace Hopper, she had a quote that says that you manage things but you lead people. And you know, that's one of those important distinctions that you don't, all managers aren't leaders. You can have great leaders that were great managers, but inherently

all great employees don't make great managers. And all great managers don't make great leaders, because it's a specific skill set. Is there some innate qualities about leadership that are there? There are, I think, I think that you can make a good leader, but I don't know if you can make a great leader because I think that You know, it's kind of one of the examples that we talked about in there as we we use, but I juxtapose Michael Jordan and John Elway, and we talk about their careers and you know for who they are in their respective sports, they are considered some of the best if not the best at their position. And not just the position, you know, some of them are considered, you know, Michael is considered the greatest basketball player by many. John Elway is considered one of the greatest quarterbacks, which is the top position in football. And so there is that argument the whether he can be considered among the best ever. And you look at their transition into the executive part of the game. So that's one of the things that I take apart is, you look at Michael Jordan's path to that. And, overall, overwhelmingly, he's been one of the worst executives in the history of basketball. And that is not you know opinion, that is something you can look at every level he's participated in, and his level of success or lack thereof. Then you take John Elway, and you look at what his level of success, to where he was able to build a team, got it to a Super Bowl, and the sport that he played in respect. And so as you look through that, you look at how they were able to achieve that. And what that means is that just because you had someone who was great at their particular field of study doesn't mean that that translates to them being able to bring others along, because that's what leadership is. Leadership is that you have to convince others that this is the path you have to provide a vision for others to follow. And yes, there may be times when you have to jump off that horse, and you may have to go fight yourself. But for the most part, you're actually now in a position where you have to lay out the plan, and a vision for others to follow. And then you have to track and project manage, if you will, how well that vision has been followed.

Keith Hawkey 32:02

I love what you said, I wonder, I'm going out on a limb here, if any of that has to do with the role of a quarterback on a team, compared to a point guard on a basketball team. If the skills that you you gain, being being the quarterback of a football team where you, you're now making the calls, but you are calling audibles. A lot of times you are the center cog of the offense, you have to earn the respect of of your linemen who are protecting you, they have to have an emotional connection to protect you in a lot of ways rather than mechanically just doing the job. You have to build relationship with your receivers, you have to have a different type of relationship with the running backs that you're handing the ball over to. That idea popped in my brain. I don't know if it transists at all. But it is interesting to think about if you're a career quarterback, you are in some ways, having to manage a multitude of relationships on a team.

Matthew Parks 33:12

Yeah, you do annd I think that's part of it. But I mean part of it also, because, you know, one of the other things we talked about is, you know, in a smaller degree, it depends on you know how long I've been paid to do this talk. So you know, it goes from an hour to 75 or 90 minutes. But when we talk about this, but, you know, we also talk about, you know, someone like Matt Millen versus someone like Jerry West, and again, flipping the basketball football analogy, if you will, and even comparing, you know, someone like Jerry West and Michael Jordan, because, you

know, Jerry West Hall of Famer, world champion, greatest point, one of the greatest point guards of all time, transitioned into building one of the greatest teams of all time with the Lakers, and then went to other teams and was able to help build them at least into into competency if not proficiency and relevance. So it is a thing where there there are some there are some innate qualities to that position, if you will, but in fairness, Michael Jordan was a shooting guard, not a point guard, but he was the undisputed leader on that team. You know, they all look to him and they follow his ethos into the battlefield or onto the court. So, when we look at those things, you look at it again, even in the same sport, you look at someone like Jerry West versus Michael Jordan, or you look at someone you know, who was a leader in his position from a Matt Millen who's you know, again, Hall of Famer, that type of thing. Terrible executive with the Detroit Lions. I mean, they had a what's called the Millen Man March in Detroit to fire him. Those type of things. Versus again, someone like an Elway and it So, you know, trying to pick those analogs, where you have some successes and some failures. And, you know, breaking those down and seeing how, what were the commonalities of why they were a success, and what were the commonalities of failure. So bringing it all back in, part of it is that with us, I'll use myself as an example, I honed my troubleshooting skills, troubleshooting skills, to a very fine point. So that means that I had to have that ability to remove everything else, and you know, identify what the problem is. So through all of the noise to hear the signal. So that's an important piece. But going and ascending into a leadership perspective, that's not necessarily a skill that is a translatable skill per se. Directly translatable skill, we talked about that too, as far as you know, is that what skills are transferable directly, and which ones are indirectly which ones you may have to push back on? Because, again, I don't do board level circuitry anymore, going back to you know, that level of troubleshooting? I don't, it's not part of my role. So how do I keep my razor sharp for the next haircut, then, you know, I had to figure out those type of things. How do I continue to cultivate that in myself? But also, you know, what skills do I transfer? You know, do I transfer? Yes, I don't necessarily have to troubleshoot those type of problems, but the troubleshooting skills, I learned, they're transferable into corporate and organizational issues, that if there is something coming up, you know, listening to what people were saying, because again, that's something you learn from the Help Desk. If you're effective, you have to learn effective listening. So part of the effective listening is listening to what folks are saying, discerning what the signal is, versus the noise, trying to get to root problems, root causes, and then solutions that will help to and not treating, not treating symptoms but treating causes, all of those things can translate into how you can operate a business. And so those are the pieces that you have to take with you. Unfortunately, there are other pieces that you will that may attribute a little bit, there are pieces that may get dull over time, and you'll have to find ways to sharpen. So for me, that's my research time. So I bring in new products to the organization and I, you know, may purchase them, and I'll experiment and try them out to see because it's been an overwhelmingly that's benefited organization, because when something comes up, or we go into this type of thing, oh, yeah, I have a hardware solution for that. So I find ways to keep that sharp in mind, because that's just a desire that I have, because I get that question a lot. Well, you don't troubleshoot anymore. So yeah, I don't, but being able to look at these new technological innovations as they come in and new solutions as they come in. It also helps with something else that is beneficial is, it helps with my discussion with vendors. Right. Because when I deal with vendors, a lot of folks that sit in my chair, they don't have the same ability to really discern what they're being asked or what they're being told or what they're being sold. And so being able to ask deeper, more probing questions, being able to push them into more comfortable positions to have to answer. And then being able to really evaluate whether I'm getting that value. That's something again, that I picked up from my days at the help desk. That helps me to now perhaps, move the organization toward or away from particular vendors, because of the acumen that I've built over time. But again, those are those skills that you have to figure out that okay, I have this set

of particular set of skills to quote taken, and now I'm going to apply those here and how do I apply those and where to apply those. And so that's where, you know, the whole leadership thing though, so you have to find it in you folks to and your people and give them and stretch and challenge them to see where they have opportunities because again, you know, we have someone who may just be on the help desk, but putting them on projects, will give you an opportunity to see okay, can that person manage the project? That is an important skill that is and that is not cultivated enough in IT presently from my humble opinion, if they can, you know, can they self manage, how was your time management? So that's what you see what those things are. And those are all translatable skills that can help them ascend from the management and then later into the leadership. You know, it's a long winded answer, but,

Keith Hawkey 40:05

It's all valuable. And, you know, in the same stroke of explaining, you know how to conceptualize and view the IT role today, we're coming up toward the end of the podcast and before we leave, I like to ask one question, I'm actually going to flip it around a little bit than the traditional way we ask it. In the same vein of what you should be doing, as you want to develop your IT career, if you could display a message on a billboard, around the world, that's IT, the industry, middle of the road, and yet towards the end of the career, would be disseminated to everyone in IT of what to avoid? What not to do, that can get you into trouble. What would your message say?

Matthew Parks 41:11

The motto that I live by personally and professionally is "If you stay ready, you don't got to get ready". So the other side of that, I would say is that, you know, don't stop evolving, is what I would say, because this industry, the one thing about this industry, unlike a lot of industries that are present is that, you know, for the most part, there are new challenges, and maybe new grants and maybe new roles. But you know, and again, this is no disparaging against accountants, but pretty much that job is the same. They have new things that they have to learn over time, new tax laws and that type of thing. But the actual day to day thing, right, is the same. We don't teach technology the same way we did you know, when I started. When I started, we were doing board level troubleshooting with logic probes and stuff. And then once I got into the workplace, in 95, we were swapping out those same boards that we were trying to troubleshoot. We don't solder onto motherboards, for the most part for not in a commercial environment. You may do that in personal or research, but not in a commercial environment, you don't do that anymore. So just thinking in my own past of the things that I've had to learn and change and evolve and adapt, I would encourage anyone to, to not stop evolving to, to not be stagnant. And because if you are, this train is going to leave you it is definitely going to leave you and you're going to be in a in a much less successful place than you intended when you started.

Keith Hawkey 43:00

Matthew Parks, thanks for joining the IT Matters podcast, how can our listeners find you?

Matthew Parks 43:06

Hey, I tell you, first of all, LinkedIn is a great place. I'm there. So you know we connected. There's also, well, it's not Twitter anymore, right? It's X.

Keith Hawkey 43:21

Why? Why?

Matthew Parks 43:22

Fun fact, by the way, that X that logo, if you look at it, and you've been in a game as long as I have, that X logo showed up, you asked about 95, there was a program that Microsoft used to use and they still made but it was a scaled down version of Windows that was intended it was kind of their version of a version of the Windows and Windows server called X server. Yeah, yeah, it's the if you look at the logo, it's the same logo. When I looked at it, I was like I've seen that before. And then I started looking at other folks who are gray beards like myself, and we're all like, yeah, that's the X Window logo. But I digress. So Twitter is a great forum to find me there. And of course, LinkedIn is also a great place that you want to hit me up. And, you know, those are two main places I would say, to look for me.

Keith Hawkey 44:17

Well, we'll make sure to include those in the show notes description. Thanks again, Matthew.

Matthew Parks 44:23

Thank you so much, Keith.

Keith Hawkey 44:24

Continue saving the day and IT. The job you do is invaluable and really appreciate what you do on the nonprofit side. It takes a special type of soul to help the youth in our very young woman, so.

Matthew Parks 44:42

I appreciate it, but Keith if I can get a couple of seconds just to wrap up on something that we discussed earlier. Again, when we talk about you know bringing in disadvantaged populations of minorities into IT, I think, just really brief. One thing we need to do is we need to redefine STEM and we need to embrace vocation, again, because the vocational jobs that we have thrown our nerves up at, a lot of those are STEM jobs. Right? You know, you have to know a lot of math, a lot of engineering, to be a carpenter, to be a plumber, to be a mechanic. And those jobs are very high paying jobs. Also, we need to expand that umbrella in IT because I

mentioned earlier project management, that is a very crucial role to IT, and to organizations in general. So we need to do that. Representation is important, exposure of our young people to the field is important, and investment both at the governmental level for a lot of these disinvested environments that folks are coming up in, that will be helpful and of course, the business community because again, there are almost a million IT jobs that are open today and we don't have enough people to fill them. So businesses and government investment into that because when we talk about not only IT we talk about cyber, it's becoming a national security risk now not having enough cyber people, not having enough people in IT in general because we're losing, we're stagnant in our lead in the IT space. So I just wanted to throw those up before we leave as just another aside, sorry to take up that time.

Keith Hawkey 46:19

Yeah, no, all great points and well received. We'll post where to find you, Matthew, in the show notes and hope to have you back. Thanks for joining.

Matthew Parks 46:31

Anytime. Thank you, Keith. I appreciate the time.

Narrator 46:36

Thanks for listening. The IT Matters podcast is produced by Opkalla an IT advisory firm that helps businesses navigate the vast and complex IT marketplace. Learn more about Opkalla at opkalla.com.