

Evan Mishler ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to the difference podcast. I'm Evan Mishler.

Sheila Gunderman ([00:03](#)):

I'm Sheila Gunderman.

Adam Wojcicki ([00:05](#)):

And I'm Adam Wojcicki. And we at VCPI believe that when it comes to public safety, the difference is made one person, one idea in one story at a time. That is what The Difference Podcast is all about. Public safety never stops changing. It is different from one moment to the next, our podcast is a story of the people, the ideas and the innovations that make this difference real. Produced by VCPI, each episode of The Difference features a guest from the world of public service in sometimes serious, sometimes funny, but always informative discussions about the challenges, experiences, and evolutions that are taking place in public safety.

Evan Mishler ([00:52](#)):

In the last year, the three of us have had the opportunity to interview some of the most dynamic and thoughtful people in public safety. And in just a few weeks, we'll begin regularly posting these interviews as part of The Difference Podcast.

Adam Wojcicki ([01:04](#)):

And when you join us, you'll notice that each episode begins with our featured guests completing the statement, "The difference is..." How they choose to finish that statement is completely up to them and their unique and sometimes surprising statements kick off the kind of unscripted and real discussions that really are in the heart of this podcast.

Sheila Gunderman ([01:23](#)):

Hopefully you'll join us for these discussions, get to know us a little bit and learn about the important work that's happening at VCPI. And most importantly, be inspired to make a difference wherever, and however, you're involved in public safety.

Evan Mishler ([01:36](#)):

As a preview to the podcast, we're posting a recent discussion we had with Paul Schoch. In our November 2020 interview, Paul talked about his experiences as an elite army Green Beret and discussed how those experiences have shaped the work he is doing in police firearms training.

Sheila Gunderman ([01:53](#)):

Paul offers some fascinating insights on the importance of thinking behind the gun. And the difference that mindfulness makes. As is often the case with our guests, much of what Paul discussed with us is resonating in today's headlines.

Adam Wojcicki ([02:07](#)):

So we hope you enjoy this special and timely sneak preview of the difference podcast featuring Paul Schoch. And please be sure to subscribe and look for The Difference wherever you normally get your podcast.

Paul Schoch ([02:19](#)):

This is Paul Schoch and the difference is mindfulness.

Adam Wojcicki ([02:30](#)):

So I got to tell you, that's a powerful word. Why did you choose mindfulness?

Paul Schoch ([02:36](#)):

It is a very powerful word and it invokes more than just say thinking behind the gun or any of the other things, the tattoo kind of elements of what we're going to talk about today. And that mindfulness factor, that's been throughout my career. The ability to focus on what you're doing at the moment and make sure that it's being done right. That's a skill that I'm trying to impart through this program specifically through the firearms training that I'm doing, is to impart that sense of when you're working or when you're operating a firearm, you need to be mindful. Yeah. I felt for a one word answer, I felt that would wrap it up.

Adam Wojcicki ([03:19](#)):

So I want to talk about that in just a minute, we'll get back to why you pick mindfulness and how it applies to the work that you're doing. But before we get there, how did you come to that realization? You just gave a pretty great description of mindfulness, but how did you get there? What brought you to the point where you would say, you will finish that statement with mindfulness?

Paul Schoch ([03:45](#)):

So I think when I was working in the unit, mindfulness was assumed. It's amazing how... And I know mindfulness sounds Zen Buddhist, and obviously it is. There's a huge element of that, but it's amazing how Zen most operators are, even though they wouldn't be able to hold a conversation about it. So throughout my career, I had noticed that mindset that's in the unit. And when I got out and I started working with folks, they would ask me to observe their training or just to come out and participate. And I would ask them simple questions as we're walking up to the target, I just say, "Well, how do you think you did?" And they would kind of look at me and say, "Well, I don't know." Because they can't see the target.

Paul Schoch ([04:38](#)):

So I said, "Well, how do you think he did? Were the sites on the target?" And they say, "I don't know." And it just, this was so prevalent in the civilian training and police training that I observed over the years, that it really made it clear to me that these folks weren't present when they were shooting. They just had layers of, I don't know what piled on top of their brain, that whatever the drill was, they had to remember that. The pressure of their instructors and me watching and all of these other things. They were thinking about everything except taking a shot.

Paul Schoch ([05:17](#)):

And I felt that, that was why they weren't able to tell me whether they did poorly or whether they did well on any particular event. And I thought that was a problem. And it was really something that was interesting to me to solve. I'm not interested in shooting or teaching people to shoot just the physical technique of it. There's no magic shooting technique out there. I haven't invented anything new. It's just, I feel that the thinking part of that and being present while you're shooting is... I think we'd all want

that. I think that's what we all want in our firearms operators when they're walking around the public, is that they're present.

Adam Wojcicki ([05:58](#)):

You're currently working with police departments on a program that you developed. Is it fair to say that?

Paul Schoch ([06:05](#)):

Yeah.

Adam Wojcicki ([06:06](#)):

Okay. So, and the name of the program is?

Paul Schoch ([06:09](#)):

Thinking Behind the Gun.

Adam Wojcicki ([06:10](#)):

So you mentioned unit, tell us a little bit what you mean by that. What unit, where did this insight come from?

Paul Schoch ([06:20](#)):

So I was in Delta (1st SFOD-D), so that's Delta force for people who aren't familiar with the military special operations community. I was an operator there for 17 years. Got there as a young man, I was 25 years old when I got there as an E-5, a Sergeant and retired from there as a Sergeant major. So while I was there, I had a... Just a ton of experiences as you might imagine. And that timeframe I retired in 2009. So there were numerous combat deployments around the world.

Adam Wojcicki ([06:58](#)):

And tell us, what's the role of Delta force?

Paul Schoch ([07:01](#)):

So Delta is, they are one of basically two units. The Navy has a sister unit, a tier one unit that's responsible for counter-terrorism. So it's a direct action counter-terrorist unit. So airplane gets hijacked, embassy gets hijacked, obviously since 9/11, we've been doing more than counter-hijackings or embassies. We typically are chasing down terrorist infrastructure, leadership, stuff like that. So it's a small unit of direct action, special operations.

Adam Wojcicki ([07:38](#)):

So getting back to this whole idea of mindfulness and how this insight came to you when you were with Delta. So you started to realize that, or what was the training, how was the training different or your experience different in Delta than when you came out into the civilian world and started working with law enforcement?

Paul Schoch ([07:56](#)):

Well, so my experience in a unit, I'll briefly describe that. So I was in assaulter first. Everybody is. And that's a pretty direct job. It sounds like it, right? So it's basically, it's pistol and long gun AR-15 type gun. So those are typically your two weapons. Well, I did that for several years and then I became a sniper. So in a sniper reconnaissance. And my golf bag of guns got quite a bit bigger. So I'm now responsible for long range target introduction, interdiction, excuse me, and reconnaissance, and a lot of other more specialized skills. But interestingly in the unit, they require me as a sniper to still pass all the, I don't want to say qualifications, but we get tested frequently, as you can imagine. And I still had to pass all of those tests that the assaulters take so pistol long guns, stuff like that the evaluations, as you say.

Paul Schoch ([09:04](#)):

So I knew that since I was putting so much time into these long range platforms and other specialized skills, I didn't have enough time on the range to really compete with a pistol or an AR-15, the way that I would want to. So I kind of... That was my first aha moment where I just said, "You know what, I'm going to go out there and not embarrass myself, just make sure I focus on front side, make sure I'm just good, solid performance." And once that happened, my performance behind the gun just really leveled out and became consistently good. I'm not God's gift to shooting. I'm not a competition guy. I can name all the names, guys that came from unit really great shots. But I was consistently good, no matter what the stress was or the event.

Paul Schoch ([10:01](#)):

And I just developed this personal approach that, that's what I wanted. I wanted a good solid performance regardless of what I was doing. And so that mindset kind of stuck with me. And this is not just me, plenty of guys I'm sure had the same mindset in the unit, the guys who weren't the number one shots in the unit. Everybody else was just good solid, do your gun work and move on. And that more relaxed way of shooting, I found that frequently I would beat guys who were clearly better shots than I was, because they were trying to be getting the top spot. And then because they were trying so hard and the competition is very fierce, somebody has got to crater, there are no bad shots in the unit. So eventually everybody's going to cycle on down to that low spot on the roster.

Paul Schoch ([11:01](#)):

I was able to avoid that just by good solid workman-like shooting. And that's kind of... That's the approach I bring to my instruction too. I'm not here to teach anybody to be... If you want to learn to be a competition shooter, I can probably get you halfway there, but if you want to get into the real pro level stuff I'm not your guy. So that was my evolution in the unit, how I started to develop this mindset around shooting.

Paul Schoch ([11:30](#)):

And then when I got out, like I said, well, I would normally be introduced at the SWAT level with police. And I was with Newport News specifically, Newport News police department. I've met their SWAT guys, observed training, and I basically was giving shooting tips, never gave any instruction. But it's clear to me that even at that level, they didn't have a process that allowed for... They didn't think the same way I did behind the gun. I think that's the best way to put it.

Paul Schoch ([12:06](#)):

They were obviously thinking behind the gun there. They'd been operating for years very successfully. But they just didn't think the way I did. So over time I was able to develop a relationship with them, start

training with them and show them the way I think behind the gun. And they liked it. My big question for them was why are we waiting? A squat guys got, four or five, six years. And as a cop already, then I'm getting them. And I'm having to change their process of shooting to allow for thinking.

Paul Schoch ([12:44](#)):

And my push over the past couple of years has been get me in at the beginning level when we've got a recruit and I can teach them the process of shooting that allows them to later fill in more and more advanced level thinking. But if you don't build the process from the beginning to allow room for thinking, then I'm just going to have to break you down. When I get ahold of you as an intermediate or advanced shooter, I'm going to have to break down your process and slow you down and show you where you need to be thinking. And that's just not an efficient way to do it.

Adam Wojcicki ([13:19](#)):

How is this received to be, and everybody listening to this one now, those of us attracted to policing and public safety, we tend not to be the most easygoing. We tend to like control and that's not a bad thing. It's important. How do people receive that message when you've got them out on, or you're talking to the instructors or you're talking to the recruits, do they look at you kind of funny when you first start talking about being mindful and thinking?

Paul Schoch ([13:50](#)):

Yeah, they absolutely do. So it's a... I was fortunate enough with Newport News to have a relationship with them over quite a few years and the proof's in the pudding. So again, I'm not God's gift to shooting, but I'm very consistent. And so I would consistently perform. And if you want to know how I'm doing it, here it is. And there were a couple of folks there who saw that and were open-minded enough to go, "You know what, I'm going to..." And I told them, I said, "Guys, I'm going to have to break you down. We're going to have to go. We're going to start from zero. I'm going to have to slow you down. You're going to be a slower shot." Which for some people means a worse shot, but in my mind, speed is not a good shooter.

Paul Schoch ([14:40](#)):

I said, "I'm going to have to slow you down and prioritize accuracy and this awareness of why did you miss?" And then very, very quickly once you've learned it, once you've internalized it and you go, "Oh my gosh, okay, I get it. This shooting is very simple." Don't interrupt a gun when it's trying to do its business. The gun, these things are amazing feats of engineering, these weapons. If the sights are aligned, it's going to hit, but you just got to get out of its way. So once they saw that and they saw it in their own shooting, and then their times actually increased, so invariably what I'll see is you will end up being a faster shooter, but with more time to think, and it sounds counterintuitive because you're learning inside the process of shooting the way I teach, what is important to prioritize and what is not.

Paul Schoch ([15:37](#)):

So that right there, that proof in the pudding, we had several instructors that bought into it. They said, "Okay, I'm willing to let you, basically remake my process." And they did it. And man, they just like, through the roof, just started performing constantly, doesn't matter the situation, how much stress, how long it's been since they shot, they've got it. And then that started to grow and other people are hearing about it. I think cops need to hear it from cops. Again, that's part of that double-edged sword

that I deal with as far as, "Yeah, okay. That's great for Delta, but we're cops we're going to do what's right for us." And that's a hundred percent a good attitude, but this works for cops.

Sheila Gunderman ([16:26](#)):

I feel like it has so many applications to just day to day police work that doesn't involve shooting.

Paul Schoch ([16:32](#)):

Absolutely. It absolutely does. And what I'm trying to, okay. The physical act of shooting, no magic, right? It's been that way since well for decades now. And there've been little changes in how people stand or whatever, based on the fad of the day, but actually getting a bullet into a target and do an X on a bullseye, that kind of really hasn't changed for a while. But teaching, using a firearms program to teach, command culture, leadership, I don't want to say mindfulness because that's a little too Zen, but it actually is. That's exactly what we're teaching. Self-Control, so the big theme on the range that I see is, people when they start missing, new shooters they've got a crowd of people around them watching. They mess it up and they get a miss. Well, your folks that are hotheaded and put too much expectations on themselves, they get angry and they start performing worse and they start shooting faster and they start shooting and they shoot worse.

Paul Schoch ([17:53](#)):

And so a big push of ours is to stop that person right away. One or two misses, if you miss once or twice, and you haven't even noticed it, you're already not aware. And we don't want to practice that any more than... We just don't want to practice it. So we stopped them and say, "Okay, slow down let's get a hit." And they'll slow down and get a hit. And so now these people who are used to responding with anger, they'll recognize it. They'll see they just missed or on their second miss they'll go, "Okay. Nope. I can't get angry. Relax, look at my sites and get that hit."

Paul Schoch ([18:30](#)):

That's, that workman-like performance that we want under pressure. And we want it throughout the spectrum of things that you have to do, defensive training or... I'm thinking of all the hard skills, but even the soft skills, learning how to respond versus react. Those two words are very close, but to respond to a deadly threat is very different than reacting to a deadly threat. And that's kind of the field that we're trying to give and that, yes, hopefully that does go and follow them into other aspects of their training.

Adam Wojcicki ([19:10](#)):

What do you think about police agencies or I guess it's the policing community as a whole? Are we measuring the wrong things? Are we thinking about it as organizations or about firearms? Are we thinking about it wrong? Is this a change that I can, that happens at the individual level, but does it need to happen at an organizational level?

Paul Schoch ([19:34](#)):

Well, I am enjoying changing things at an organizational level with Newport News. It's always great to see a student, and that's one reason I still teach firearms because I really do enjoy seeing that light bulb moment. But it doesn't have as large an impact. And I would say, yes. I don't want to imply that anybody's been doing it wrong or that they're measuring the wrong things. It's just that there are more things that they can measure. So I will say for example, so one call that Newport News does, and I don't

have all the numbers memorized, but I can give you the feel for what it's like. It's basically anywhere from five yards all the way out to 25 yards and they have to get a 75% or 70% to pass the qual. So as anybody who's done a qual you know, let's say you have 10 rounds of five yards to shoot.

Paul Schoch ([20:34](#)):

And those are going to be pretty fast exposures. They have turning targets. So these targets will turn and you're going to have to shoot pretty fast at five yards. That's very reasonable. What are we testing there? We're testing response time, get accurate shots off quickly at close range. Okay. Nothing wrong with that at all. As you start to move back in yard lines, they give you correspondingly more time. However, the student's training hasn't told them what to do with that time. So imagine now we've gone all the way back to 25 yards and for that same 10 rounds, instead of giving you five seconds, they're now giving you 20 seconds to shoot 10 rounds. Well, what do you do with that extra time? What am I prioritizing? And do I just take a breather in between shooting?

Paul Schoch ([21:29](#)):

And what I have seen is that they really don't take the time. They just shoot as kind of as fast as they can and still keep the sites on the target. Which is, that's not a fault of the qual. That's a fault of our training the recruit, or the student to know what to do with that time, to slow down so that they can overcome anticipation, to let the gun recoil, to focus more on the sites, because at five yards you don't need it at 25, you do.

Paul Schoch ([22:07](#)):

And teaching them that so that they can perform what we want out of this qual. So personally, if I were to designing a qual and this is where I think the state misses the ball a little bit, you want a student to show you three things generally, when you're a recruit and you're getting ready to go off to be a cop, can you safely handle a weapon? And I don't want to go off on a tangent, but I will tell you that most of the time that I've seen when they're running a range, that student doesn't make a single decision about safety.

Paul Schoch ([22:41](#)):

They're told where to stand, where to point the gun, when to load it, when to clear it. And they're just step-by-step, pull your weapon out, lock the slide to the rear, removes it. It's like, "My God, when are these people going to learn how to just do this on their own." And so the qual also does not demonstrate in any way safety, because it's so controlled. But that's a whole other tangent that we can get into. The other things that you're going to ask a recruit to show you are speed and accuracy. Can you shoot the weapon fast and can you demonstrate to me that you understand the principles of accuracy and what makes an accurate shot?

Paul Schoch ([23:24](#)):

Well, generally the answer is no, the answer is focused on speed, where they give these par times and they say, "Hey, if you can shoot well enough this fast, we're happy." And the problem with that is if you think about the example I gave from five to 25 yards, I did the math and out of, I want to say 16 rounds. My math may be, or my numbers may be a little bit off for all those instructors out there who are saying. But bottom line is, it's quite a few rounds, maybe 16 or so or maybe eight at 25, but you only have to hit one. If you hit all your other ones, you really don't have to perform very well at 25.

Paul Schoch ([24:10](#)):

And really hitting from five to 15, you're going to hit them all. So the 70 is not that hard. But I will say that you haven't shown anybody that you understand the elements of the accuracy. You've only shown that you understand speed. And I think that's a problem. At 25, I would have a two minute timeline to get those 10 shots in. And I would make sure that we are capturing that this student can take an accurate shot. So yeah, in order to get that accurate shot, you need to have perfect sight alignment or good sight alignment and not anticipate. And nowhere in the qual, do we ask anybody to demonstrate that they understand those two concepts

Adam Wojcicki ([25:03](#)):

It's, and getting back to what Sheila was talking about, it's really interesting to me, as I'm listening to you talk about this, is that so much of what you're talking about is not, it's not exceptionally complicated, but it is counterintuitive, right?

Paul Schoch ([25:18](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah.

Adam Wojcicki ([25:19](#)):

The whole idea of the fact that we're trying to control something and we're doing a poor job at it, meaning the anticipation, that results in a poor outcome. The fact that we're hoping and this is all across the country. Speed is such an issue for us. And we always want to take care of things quickly, whether it be on the range, qualifications or handling a call. Response time is huge for obvious reasons. That's a good thing.

Adam Wojcicki ([25:52](#)):

How quickly you clear up a call so that you can go to the next call, always speed. And then, but there's a consequence to that. So that's what we're focused on. Are we really paying attention to the other side? And that seems a little, the quality of what we're doing. And that seems a little counterintuitive, but it makes perfect sense. And it seems like, like Sheila said, I think it goes all across, pretty much everything we do in public safety.

Paul Schoch ([26:19](#)):

It really does. And I want to circle back a little bit to a question somebody asked like, "How is this received?" And I have to be honest, if I went up to any serious cop and said, "Hey, I need you to walk around in a Zen state of awareness. And when you're faced with a deadly threat, just take a deep breath and deal with it." Well, that's not reality. And I'm not pretending that it is. What I'm talking about is training. That there is a complete difference between those two. But what I want, and I don't tell my students this, but I'll give you guys a secret. I do know that stress will overwhelm performance at some point, unless you're a whatever, a 20 year Delta Force operator. But man, when you're under the gun, when you're surprised, when all of these things happen, your performance will drop. It's a 100% guarantee.

Paul Schoch ([27:20](#)):

What I want is, our habit on the range to reinforce recovering from that drop in performance. And so I teach that from the beginning and I feel that, that sets a young recruit or a shooter or anybody up for

how to practice and really for being ready, more ready to be on the street than the old way. The old way is teaching somebody how to react under pressure with a firearm, pull the weapon out and get the safe shots off. And then it's assumed that over time, so I call that prioritizing speed. There's par times on all of the quals that that cops do. And you have to get these number of shots off in this amount of time. And that you've now proven to me that you can go out in the street. Well, the problem is this mythical future date, when you're going to talk about advanced shooting, that doesn't happen.

Paul Schoch ([28:26](#)):

You're probably as good as you're going to be after a week or two of shooting, right as you graduate from the Academy, as you're going to be two years from now, unless you get into the SWAT field, and you start shooting on your own. So what they're banking on is, we're going to teach you how to get these off accurately enough and over time, your accuracy will improve. Well, I'm the opposite. I want accuracy to be non-negotiable and over time, your speed will improve. Accuracy needs to be a habit.

Evan Mishler ([29:08](#)):

Well, where do you think this emphasis on speed comes from? Is it a training thing that's ingrained in new recruits or is it just a human nature kind of thing? Where do you think that, that comes from?

Paul Schoch ([29:22](#)):

It's a human nature thing. And I also, I want to be very careful here. Speed is important. Again, you're not going to be in a high threat environment where you're surprised, or even if you're not surprised, these things happen very quickly and you have to make a decision. You have to respond to protect yourself. 100% get that, nobody is saying that. What I'm talking about is a way of training. So I kind of equate it to, what if I told you, "Hey, someday, you're going to have to lift your car off of your kid." You never heard that story where that mom lifted her car or whatever off the kid. Yeah. So what if I told you, "Hey, you're going to have to do that. One of these days. That's what you're going to have to do." And so we said, "Okay, well, let's go to the gym and you're going to lift a car every day."

Paul Schoch ([30:08](#)):

Well, no, that's not how we get stronger. You're going to start out lifting what you can lift. And you're going to get stronger and stronger and stronger over time, knowing that at some point you might have to lift this car off a kid. And so I think we put this into our mind that, "Hey, someday you're going to be in this situation where you're going to have to pull that weapon off and pull it out and get those shots off fast."

Paul Schoch ([30:30](#)):

And so that's all we're going to train to. And I just think that's doing a disservice. You will be able to get that weapon out quickly and get those shots off. My hope is that once that initial part of the encounter is over, that your habits will then kick in and you will start assessing for effect, and you will start taking more effective shots. If you haven't already resolved the situation. That's what we're training towards.

Paul Schoch ([31:01](#)):

Now. That's a little bit much for new recruits. I'm not going to train them through this whole... I'm not going to put them in that firefight scenario just yet. We're basically teaching them how to lift at the gym. So that's my counter to the cops who rightfully say, "Hey, we're not going to, I don't want to, I don't feel

comfortable teaching them to slow down when they're going to be on the street next month. And they're going to have to shoot fast."

Paul Schoch ([31:31](#)):

And they're absolutely right. But it is counterintuitive if they slow down and I'm just talking the first two or three days of shooting. Just slow down, show them where the thinking happens, teach them about anticipation site alignment and all the other things that are not important. Competition against their friends, whether they are messing up in front of me, all of these stressors they put on themselves. I feel is incumbent upon me as an instructor to take all of those stressors away.

Paul Schoch ([32:03](#)):

I'm a very open person. If somebody has questions about it... I'm going to miss, I sometimes hope I miss in front of my students. I don't try to, sometimes it happens. But I'm always shooting in front of my students because I want them to see that, "Oh man, Bob went out, the recruit, went out and hit his first shot at 50 and Paul only hit on a second shot." It's like, "Okay, awesome." That's why we're here. To show you that nobody's perfect. The fact that you missed a target is no big deal. We've got to get over that and start training well. So yeah, this is a training methodology and it dovetails well into the tactical side very quickly.

Adam Wojcicki ([32:52](#)):

So I'm just listening to this. I'm very impressed with Newport News PD. Obviously you change their mind from the initial reaction when you came on board, but it takes a lot of, probably takes a lot of guts and confidence in your personnel to kind of adopt this methodology. And it sounds like they've had some great results thanks to it.

Paul Schoch ([33:19](#)):

Yeah. Well, to be honest, the sell is easy, higher right. Into the higher command, because wow. If you're telling them, "Hey, we're training our young cops to think while they're shooting and to make good decisions and to manage their stress and leadership." That's kind of what, at least I hope most good leadership. And they're like, "Yeah, good. That's exactly what we want." Now they don't understand the weeds of how we're doing that on the range, but they know that, that's what the effect is. So from a standpoint of the higher command, they're 100% like, "Yeah, let's make this happen."

Paul Schoch ([33:57](#)):

The slow ones to come around are always the tactical guys. And I 100% understand that. That has taken me literally years of working with Newport News and getting their trust and showing the proof in the pudding. And more importantly, having a cadre of their guys, flip the switch and go, "Nope, look at what I was before, and look what I am now." And we're talking about guys who are 30 year cops, SWAT team, all that stuff. And they're like, "Man, I wish I knew this when I was a recruit." And so it's their voices really that turn those hardcore tactical guys around and say, "Well, yeah, maybe there's something to this then."

Adam Wojcicki ([34:42](#)):

What's really exciting about what you're talking about. At least for me, is my experience has always been that the soft skills and the hard skills don't meet in whether it be the range or the defensive tactics or. We in the past have kind of been very, we separate the two and we say, "Well, the soft skills we'll

talk about in the classroom. And now we're going to focus on mechanics and tactics." And I love the fact that what you're talking about, it's like, we're no longer abdicating that time on the range, because we spend a lot of time on the range. Many agencies qualify twice a year. So we spend a lot of time on the range. And how great is it that you're introducing this concept of mindfulness into the place where you probably needed the most?

Paul Schoch ([35:29](#)):

Yeah, man I'm so glad you brought that up. That's just a huge component. It's called siloing the training. And so each one of these... Imagine a young recruit, he shows up to the range and he's told by his instructors, "Hey, this is the most important training you're going to get. You could leave here a month from now and be in an ambush situation and you better be able to save your life and your partner's life." And it's all this fear based like, "You better be able to do this stuff." And they're all stressed out and, "Oh my God." And maybe that's a part of your department's selection process is to stress them out under that kind of pressure. Me, I think the firearms program is there to teach people to shoot. We'll sort them out through stress later. But they definitely need to learn it. So bottom line is they silo that firearms training.

Paul Schoch ([36:21](#)):

Then the young recruit goes maybe the next month and he goes and he starts receiving training about, even just tactics out on the street, "Hey, pay attention, look around. Don't be in your head, don't be in your phone, just be mindful of what's going on. And when you're engaging with a citizen, we'll look at them, take a little second, look at their stance, look at how they're... Look around behind them, just be aware." And they're being taught these things. And they're like, "That's the most important part of being a cop." Okay. Well then they go to the next training and it's whatever driving training. And they're saying, "No, the most important is this." But it'd be nice if we were all rowing in the same direction.

Paul Schoch ([37:05](#)):

And I'm not telling you that, you go to my shooting class and we're going to get in a Lotus position and start meditating before we shoot. It's still shooting. But we know as instructors that... So for example, leadership principles. How do I teach leadership principles on the range? Well, I'm not giving a PowerPoint class on leadership and I probably don't even use the word. But when we're out there, we're leading by example. When we say ranges, they're at 08:00, then we're there at 7:45 making targets. The range instructors are out there making targets. We're not above that. We're not the cool guys that you wish to be. We are here to help you, asking questions, being a caring leader and even admitting when you're wrong.

Paul Schoch ([38:00](#)):

So there have been times that I'm trying to remember what I did wrong. I've done so many times I'm wrong, but I did something out on the range and I think I, whatever it was we start... We tried a new drill. So we took the students out and we tried a new drill. And man, we really try not to do that because if it fails, it's the student that thinks it's their fault. Right. If we didn't get the the effect out of the drill that we thought. So we tried this drill. Sure enough, it did not work out. We didn't get the effect that we wanted. It kind of muddied the waters for the students. And during lunch, we did an after action report amongst our instructors. That's still another thing I'm big on is, "Hey are mindful training." It's not just mindful shooting.

Paul Schoch ([38:52](#)):

And so we get to gather and like, "Yeah, we messed up on that drill. Right? We kind of muddied the water blah, blah, blah. It's our fault. We shouldn't have done it." And so we're having this AR and we're bringing up all these good points. And then it occurs to me, I'm like, "Hey, do you think the students should hear this? Shouldn't they see behind the curtain and realize, how easy it is to make this mistake." So we march over there as instructors and we sat down in front of them while they were eating. And we said, "Hey guys, this is what happened with that drill. We kind of got ahead of ourselves. We wanted to try this, but we didn't vet it. We rehearsed it beforehand and sure enough, it caused these muddy waters." And we have to all be able to question ourselves. And so that's a leadership.

Paul Schoch ([39:40](#)):

And when that recruit sees their senior tactical, cool guys come in there and say, "Yep, drop the ball on that one guys. Here's how we're going to fix it." That's leadership. And so that has to be shown throughout a recruit's training. You need to show them what it is that our organization is expecting from them. What kind of behavior, what kind of person do we want a Newport News cop, for example, to be. So that siloed training approach, it works in the military. And this is that double-edged sword of the military, special operations. We are very good at our weapons.

Paul Schoch ([40:28](#)):

We spend an inordinate amount of time doing it, and we're really, really good at it. But that's not why they send us someplace. They send us someplace because a decision needs to be made on the ground, like which one of these people needs to be dealt with, which one of these people or what's going on here, what's going on there. There are decisions that had to be made on the ground and we are selected, trained and maintained. We stay in the unit if we demonstrate that we can think. And so that's the side that you don't get from a lot of firearms. If cops only steal from one half of that special operations formula, all they're going to get is faster shooters.

Adam Wojcicki ([41:16](#)):

If there were one piece of advice that you wanted to end our discussion with today that you want to offer out there, put it out there in the universe, what would it be?

Paul Schoch ([41:29](#)):

Man, yeah, this was a hard one. So and I don't want to come across as too Zen, but I do think that both in the professional world, in the tactical world that we're talking about here and in the broader people's lives, I kind of wish if I had one piece of advice to folks out there would be to develop a sense of humility. I just think that there... A lot of people confuse kindness for weakness and they're not at all linked and they shouldn't be in our culture. So if you can just develop some humility, realize that people should question you and frankly you should question yourself and realize that you're fallible. If we all did that, I think that would pay some big dividends kind of all the way around. But even specifically in a tactical world, you can't know it all, you got to be open to learning. You got to have that sense of humility that we're all growing together.

Adam Wojcicki ([42:36](#)):

So that was a great interview with Paul Schoch. Paul has some really amazing insights about firearms training, but so much of it is, or has application to policing in general and public safety, really. A couple of things really stood out and I want to hear what you guys think. But one of the key takeaways that I

got from this was how easy it is to get stuck in a certain way of thinking, especially when it comes to training. So one of the things that Paul talked about was the difference or the focus on speed and accuracy and how they're looked at differently when it comes to firearms training, that's typically being done.

Adam Wojcicki ([43:26](#)):

So the focus has for such a long time been on speed as being the pass-fail aspect of firearms training. So you have a certain amount of time and you have to perform, the qualification and certain amount of time. And so really that's a pass fail. It's a hundred percent, you have to do it in order to successfully complete it. Whereas the accuracy, we have a little bit more leeway there. In some places it's... You can miss a certain percentage of your shots and you still pass. So, and that makes perfect sense. And we've, those of us who had to qualify all those years, it makes perfect sense. That's how we're used to doing it. But the question is, why is speed a hundred percent where accuracy may not be.

Evan Mishler ([44:18](#)):

Right? And we're talking about a bullet here, right? It does seem that accuracy should be the point with which we judge effectiveness. And I know that we talk a lot about internally, the difficulty in measuring success in policing. And we see that here, it goes all the way back to the training ground.

Adam Wojcicki ([44:39](#)):

And it's easy for us to... We're talking in a podcast, so it's easy for us to say, this is... But I feel for the range officers and I feel for everybody who's putting together firearms training. And if you don't have that time, if you don't have that ability to step out of the box and think, "All right, is there a different way we can do this?" In so many places it's mandated and there's already a structure put in place. And what I really enjoyed about Paul is that he's willing to walk in there and challenge it. And he's challenging it from a place of authority. With his experience and his proficiency, when he says, "Hey, we may want to think about some things differently." People tend to listen.

Sheila Gunderman ([45:24](#)):

Yeah. And it sounds like this is impacting other areas of their work. Not just, it's not just staying on the range where they're implementing this concept of mindfulness in other ways. That really stood out to me, because I feel like there's so much power in it. And if it's a firearms training that sort of gets officers thinking differently about how they approach situations with community members, I think that's really cool. If that's their introduction to mindfulness and it has the power to impact other parts of their life. I just think it's a really neat thing. I think it's neat to approach it from the firearms training standpoint. And I really hope it takes off.

Adam Wojcicki ([46:10](#)):

I agree. And just the idea that, the way Paul put it all together is that the range time, it's not just for firearms training. Although that's certainly the focus and we want that to be the focus and we don't want to ever do anything that compromises the officer's safety, but there's an opportunity there. And when you, again, when somebody like Paul gets, he sees those opportunities that maybe the rest of us have missed over time. Not because of any other reason than this is the way we've always done it. So first, really great interview. And we hope to have Paul back and hear more from him. There's a lot of application with his ideas to a lot of things.

Sheila Gunderman ([46:52](#)):

Yeah. I think something interesting too, a lot of times in a training environment, not specifically firearms, but just training in general, there's a lot of talk about concepts and learning about what things mean and how they can impact the way you're doing things. But I feel like, mindfulness is something that has to be practiced to truly see the power of it. And I feel like what he's doing, the actual practical exercises is training officers to really think differently. And that just feels so much different than just learning about mindfulness. Hearing a presentation about mindfulness, I don't really know how far that will go.

Sheila Gunderman ([47:40](#)):

But I love the actual practical application that's happening there. And in other agencies around the country. It's just, I think it's got so much positive potential to impact community. If an officer, whether they're in a threatening situation or not where they have to use their firearm, just being mindful as they're working with community members and being mindful that they really care about what's happening in their own community and the things that they share with you as an officer about how you may be able to help them. I feel like that mindfulness sort of unlocks so many potentially positive things not just for the officers, but for our community in general.

Adam Wojcicki ([48:26](#)):

Yeah. And you know, what. And huge shout out, kudos to the Newport News, Virginia police department. They were, as far as I can tell, the first ones to hook up with Paul and sounds like they're doing some really fantastic things there. And it's a very positive example that we can look to.

Evan Mishler ([48:46](#)):

So I have to ask, is there anything that we have that would support the work that Paul's doing? We'll talk about how to contact him in a little bit, but we have some programs, some resources.

Sheila Gunderman ([48:56](#)):

Yeah. One resource that VCPI worked on recently with the Bureau of Justice Assistance is the measuring what matters e-Guide. And you can find it on our website. It doesn't cover mindfulness specifically, but it covers a variety of law enforcement best practices that we share through insights from a variety of different subject matter experts and practitioners on issues, and topics that are related to police effectiveness. And one of them is on officer safety and wellness. So inside the e-Guide, and you can find just a ton of resources and videos, interviews with subject matter experts on all aspects of officer safety and wellness, and mindfulness certainly fits within that.

Sheila Gunderman ([49:52](#)):

But besides that topic, we talk with some experts about organizational culture and reducing violent crime and sustaining success and law enforcement practices. So I encourage everybody to check that out. We'll put the link in the show notes. But it's on our website [@vcpionline.org](#). And it's free. You can access it from anywhere that you have an internet connection and an unlimited number of people can access it as well. So I encourage everybody to check that out and let us know if there's anything you ever need help with. If you're looking to implement some program in your agency that deals with mindfulness, or if you want to get in touch with Paul.

Adam Wojcicki ([50:41](#)):

Yeah. And I got to say, Seriously, if anything that Paul was talking about, if you found any of his insights or his thoughts, if you found them useful or interesting, you really are going to appreciate the MWM e-Guide. I'm biased, but that's one of my favorite resources out there. So if you have a chance, please check it out.

Evan Mishler ([51:03](#)):

And we really developed that resource to be a choose your own adventure type resource. So feel free to jump around as you see fit. If you're there for the officer's safety and wellness section, that's great. But you can always jump around to the other sections as you please.

Adam Wojcicki ([51:21](#)):

That's a great point. So it's not this huge commitment, you can just go in and get what you need. Right?

Evan Mishler ([51:26](#)):

Mm-hmm.

Adam Wojcicki ([51:27](#)):

So Sheila, so agencies out there, or if individuals are interested in contacting Paul, I know he's very interested in talking and continuing his work with policing. How do we get in touch with them?

Sheila Gunderman ([51:39](#)):

Yeah. We hope to do much more work in the future with Paul and in the show notes, we're going to share an article that he wrote, that you can learn more about the thinking behind the gun philosophy and mindfulness. And if you're on LinkedIn, you can look him up. The spelling of his last name is S-C-H-O-C-H. His first name is Paul, and currently he's working with special forces. But we do plan to do some more work with him in the future. And we'll be happy to get anybody in touch with them if they'd like to reach out.

Adam Wojcicki ([52:19](#)):

All right. Excellent. Yeah, definitely. Check the show notes and that's a good place to start. So Evan anything coming up that we should know about.

Evan Mishler ([52:29](#)):

Yeah, Adam, I just wanted to say that we would love to engage with you guys, our listeners about the topics being discussed in our podcasts. And if you have any questions for our guests, you can find us on Twitter right now @DifferenceVCPI or by searching the difference podcasts. Be sure to use #thedifferencepodcast so we can find your questions and comments as well. And in future episodes, we'll go over some of your thoughts on the topics we've discussed.

Adam Wojcicki ([52:57](#)):

All right. Thanks Evan. So with that I want to thank Sheila, Evan, Paul again for participating in our podcast. We hope you join us again. And we thank you for the time that you spend with us. And we hope that this Paul story and all of our episodes continue to inspire you to make a difference wherever and however you're involved in public safety.

Evan Mishler ([53:28](#)):

The difference podcast is produced by VCPI and hosted by VCPI's deputy director, Adam Wojcicki and Sheila Gunderman, VCPI's director of programs. The podcast is recorded and edited by me, Evan Mishler. Have thoughts or comments about this podcast. Let us know on Twitter [@DifferenceVCPI](#) or by emailing thedifference@vcpionline.org.