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CHICAGO CIO ORBIE AWARDS

The annual ChicagoCIO ORBIE® Awards honors chief information officers who have demonstrated excellence in technology leadership. Winners in the Super Global, Global, Large Enterprise, Enterprise, Large Corporate & Corporate categories will be announced April 11 at Marriot Marquis Chicago.



INSIDE



TRACY HARRINGTON
2024 ChicagoCIO Chair



DR. TOM LEIGHTON
Co-Founder & CEO, Akamai
Keynote



DEB HALL LEFEVRE
EVP & CTO, Starbucks
Leadership Award Recipient

Credit: Getty images-Marenagnum

2024 ChicagoCIO Chair ▶▶ Tracy Harrington

Connected Leaders Move Faster



TRACY HARRINGTON
2024 Chair, ChicagoCIO
Executive Vice President & CIO,
Federal Reserve Financial Services

Great CIOs know technology moves fast, and connected leaders move faster.

ChicagoCIO brings together the preeminent CIOs from Chicago's largest organizations to enhance leadership effectiveness, create value, mitigate risks, and share successes.

"Everyone wins when ideas, experiences, and best practices are shared in a collaborative and secure group."

Member-led, non-commercial programs foster meaningful professional relationships, enabling collaboration on shared challenges to gain leadership advantage.

There is no textbook for how to be a great CIO. Leaders sharpen professional acumen through peer collaboration with others facing similar challenges. While industries and organizations vary in ChicagoCIO, successful leadership approaches are universal.

Members understand the "superpower" of trusted relationships. In any gathering of CIOs, the answer is in the room. Through regular member-led events and interactions, the collective power of executives working together generates immense value. Everyone wins when ideas, experiences, and best practices are

shared in a collaborative and secure group.

ChicagoCIO connects CIOs to 1,400 lifelong learners across 30 chapters in the Inspire Leadership Network. From public and private companies to government, education, healthcare, and nonprofits, we exist to help members succeed in one of the most demanding C-suite executive roles.

The principles serving CIOs for over 25 years are now available to CISOs

as the Inspire Leadership Network expands, with six chapters exclusively for CISOs launching in 2024.

The leadership of CIOs transforming organizations in Chicago is recognized through the ORBIE® Awards. On behalf of ChicagoCIO, I congratulate all the nominees

and finalists for their remarkable achievements. A special thank you to the sponsors, underwriters, and staff for making the Chicago ORBIE® Awards possible.

Sincerely,

Tracy Harrington



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Keynote ▶▶ Dr. Tom Leighton

Multiplying threats call for nimble defenses:

A conversation with industry icon Dr. Tom Leighton, Akamai Technologies



Dr. Tom Leighton
Co-Founder & CEO
Akamai Technologies

“Akamai” is Hawaiian for smart. The word also describes the strategy shaped by Tom Leighton as CEO at Akamai Technologies. Under his leadership, Akamai has evolved from a content delivery network into the world’s most distributed cloud platform, with solutions for content delivery, cybersecurity and cloud computing.

Leighton is the keynote speaker for the 2024 Chicago CISO of the Year ORBIE Awards. What follows are his thoughts on how to thwart cybersecurity threats in a quickly changing risk landscape.

What would you say is the highlight of your distinguished career?

Leighton: It’s the chance to make life better for billions of people. Akamai interacts with billions of people trillions of times a day to make their internet experience faster and more secure.

What do you consider the biggest technological breakthrough?

Leighton: The internet. It’s on a par with television, radio and the printing press—remarkable advances in communication. The internet has transformed our lives mostly for the good. Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be just as big as it becomes more human-like in its abilities.

How would you characterize the cybersecurity environment?

Leighton: It’s very challenging. There are very powerful, bad actors and major nation-states with big budgets and very smart, motivated people. This

"Today, enterprises are not anywhere near where they need to be with their defenses. Generative AI is going to make it a lot worse."

leads to more sophisticated and more frequent penetrations of computer systems. Today, enterprises are not anywhere near where they need to be with their defenses. Generative AI is going to make it a lot worse.

What is the biggest cyber risk to business?

Leighton: Software is full of vulnerabilities. Everything is connected. The bad guys do not have

to be physically connected to systems. They can get in virtually. They can find any hole in the system because they have access to zillions of bots to launch attacks. It makes the job of CISO very difficult.

Can you tell us about your work to promote STEM education?

Leighton: STEM education is incredibly important. There’s a shortage of cybersecurity talent and we need more. It starts in grades K-12 by inspiring and encouraging kids interested in math, science, engineering and computer science. At the Akamai Foundation, my primary interest is to encourage and support students of all backgrounds to develop strong technical talent.

What’s your best advice to CSOs/CISOs or aspiring CSOs/CISOs?

Leighton: Stay as up-to-date as you can. Talk with your colleagues. Invest in the latest defenses. Work with reputable companies.

We also work a lot on API (Application Programming Interface) security. CSOs

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CIO Leadership Award Recipient ▶▶ Deb Hall Lefevre

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Deb Hall Lefevre, Starbucks Chief Technology Officer wins 2024 CIO ORBIE Leadership Award

Insights on tech innovation, mentorship and leading Starbucks' digital transformation



Deb Hall Lefevre
EVP, Chief Technology Officer
Starbucks

Deb Hall Lefevre joined Starbucks as executive vice president, chief technology officer in May 2022. In her role, she leads the tech function with the mission of ensuring stores run smoothly each and every day while delivering winning digital partner and customer experiences.

As the 2024 ORBIE CIO Leadership Award winner, Hall Lefevre recently shared invaluable advice for aspiring tech professionals and insights on navigating the ever-evolving digital landscape.

Can you tell us about your background?

Hall Lefevre: I grew up in Sleepy Hollow, Illinois. I've been happily married to my husband, Mike, for 33 years. Our daughter, Courtney, is pursuing her MBA at Kellogg, and we were thrilled to welcome her husband, Matt, into the family last summer. I chose a career in technology after a summer job at Motorola gave me the opportunity to see first-hand how tech drives business performance.

After two internships and 12 years at Motorola, I joined McDonald's, where my teams helped build and deliver the company's enterprise tech and digital agendas. While at McDonald's, we standardized and modernized tech in over 100 countries so we could scale innovation more quickly across the globe. Our digital footprint grew to

include digital menu boards, kiosks and a mobile app.

I left McDonald's after 15 years to join Circle K/Couche Tard as their first global CTO and begin an inspiring journey of reinventing the convenience store and fueling experience. I never expected to leave Couche Tard, but when Starbucks reached out, I couldn't say no to a company I've always admired for doing the right thing, for amazing technology and for a special culture focused on bringing people together around coffee. I'm about to

"I am grounded in the belief that leadership is a privilege, and my role is to ensure that the teams I am fortunate enough to lead have clarity of purpose and what they need to drive results — while having some fun along the way."

celebrate my second anniversary as a Starbucks partner and feel honored to lead the team that empowers and inspires our partners (Starbucks employees) to deliver a consistent and uniquely Starbucks experience anywhere across the globe.

How did you get interested in technology? Any advice for women?

Hall Lefevre: I had never considered a career in technology, but that

summer job at Motorola opened my eyes to a new world of possibilities. I loved the energy in the department, the focus on problem-solving, the teamwork and the excitement about improving the business through technology.

I have the same advice for women as I do for men: First, follow your passion ... do what you love. I once saw a statistic that said 80% of people dislike their jobs. We spend a great deal of our lives working, and I think it's so important to choose a career and work that you enjoy. Second, technology is in every aspect of how we live, play and work ... so it is relatively easy to take a hobby, an interest or a passion and find a connection to a career in tech. I also love that it's incredibly fast-paced, always changing and provides many new opportunities for learning.

How important were your mentors?

Hall Lefevre: I believe that having mentors throughout your career is critical, and I've had the opportunity to learn from some of the best! One piece of advice I share with all the people I mentor is to create your own "Board of Directors," a diverse set of mentors and coaches who are there to give you constructive feedback. I believe feedback is the greatest gift, and your board gives you a variety of perspectives. Mentors and coaches are people you can ask for feedback and use as a sounding board for addressing development areas; a sponsor is someone who can advocate for you during crucial talent conversations. I was fortunate to have

a diverse set of mentors who helped me see my blind spots and to have sponsors who believed in me, invested in my development and gave me opportunities to grow and succeed.

What would you say is the biggest technology breakthrough that you've been a part of?

Hall Lefevre: I've been part of three significant tech breakthroughs. The first one was during the heady

days of the dot-com boom when e-commerce was just emerging and we were reimagining how we might sell and activate mobile phones online, something we take for granted today. The second one was utilizing cloud computing to disrupt traditional IT models, allowing us to build or buy and deploy new tech capabilities more quickly than ever before. Finally — and perhaps the biggest breakthrough of our lifetime — is what is happening today with the incredible advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) and the transformational potential it has for business and our personal lives.

How will artificial intelligence change the role of the CIO?

Hall Lefevre: AI changes the role of the CIO in many ways. On one end, it increases visibility to data, empowers data-driven decision-making, streamlines business processes and helps us deliver personalized and targeted experiences to employees and customers. On the other, if not utilized carefully, it can lead to biased and harmful decisions and opens companies up to security risks and privacy violations. And, if confidential information is put into generative AI tools, companies risk forfeiting patent or trade secret protection.

At Starbucks, AI is — and will continue to be — at the heart of creating the best possible digital experiences for our customers and our partners. With the recent advances in AI, we see an exciting convergence of emerging technologies that will set the stage for shorter innovation cycles and faster time to market. AI will be powering

experiences across Starbucks from bean to cup. Imagine how generative AI can help us discover a new beverage, customized just for you! Think about how it could empower baristas with custom recipes and free them up from manual tasks so they can connect with customers and deliver that special Starbucks experience while crafting amazing beverages.

A big part of the CIO's role is to deploy AI responsibly, playing defense and offense at the same time. We

explore emerging technologies with our mission, partners and customers as our North Stars. We focus on the problems to solve and resist the allure of new technology for its own sake.

What is your leadership style?

Hall Lefevre: First and foremost, I am grounded in the belief that leadership is a privilege, and my role is to ensure that the teams I am fortunate enough to lead have clarity of purpose and what they need to drive results — while having some fun along the way. For me, building great teams starts with connecting people with a diverse set of experiences, strengths, expertise and values — curiosity, humility and a can-do attitude. From there, it is about fostering a culture of trust within the team that enables authentic, healthy debate where everyone is heard, and the best ideas and solutions can emerge. This creates an excellent foundation for commitment across a team so that team members can hold each other accountable and deliver results.

What advice would you give to CIOs or aspiring CIOs?

Hall Lefevre: In the ever-evolving landscape of IT, the days of merely being a back-office function are behind us. While technical expertise remains crucial, today's successful CIOs must also possess well-rounded skills, including strong business acumen and emotional intelligence (EQ). Transformative results are achieved through collaboration — a village effort — where high-performing teams thrive and relationships across functions are nurtured.

What does this ORBIE award mean to you?

Hall Lefevre: Accepting this recognition on behalf of the exceptional Starbucks Tech team is truly an honor. Their unwavering dedication empowers our Starbucks partners worldwide, ensuring a consistent and uniquely Starbucks experience. I extend heartfelt thanks to the mentors, colleagues and teams at Motorola, McDonald's, Couche Tard/Circle K and Starbucks. And my deepest gratitude goes to my family — Mom, Dad, Mike, Courtney and Matt — for their unwavering support throughout my journey.

Favorite Starbucks drink?

Hall Lefevre: I love starting each day with a workout and a great cup of coffee. My favorite is an Americano with a splash of non-fat milk.



JASON BIRNBAUM
SVP & CIO
United Airlines

Jason Birnbaum is a seasoned technology executive with a wealth of experience in the aviation industry. As the chief information officer (CIO) at United Airlines, he plays a pivotal role in shaping the airline's technological landscape and driving innovation. He focuses on using technology and data to enable the company's 86,000+ employees to create a seamless travel experience for customers and to uphold United's mission of connecting people and uniting the world.



SUCCESS STORY

As the chief information officer (CIO) at one of the world's leading airlines, Jason Birnbaum has redefined the technological landscape of the aviation industry. Under his leadership, United Airlines has undergone incredible growth and transformation. From prioritizing our shift to the cloud which has driven the speed of innovation within digital technology to expanding our work in data and analytics, Jason leads with a customer-first mindset. Jason is also committed to fostering a culture of inclusivity within the organization. With the recent launch of our early-career development program, Innovate, Jason already has plans to expand and scale the program.



ATUL VERMA
CIO - US Personal & Business
Banking
Bank of Montreal

Atul Verma joined BMO Financial Group in 2020 and currently serves as CIO, U.S. Personal and Business Banking and North American Operations Technology. In this role, Atul leads a high-performing team responsible for delivering technology solutions for market-leading products and services for BMO's customers. With over 25 years of technology leadership experience, Atul brings a proven track record of driving transformations and leading global technology teams at top-tier financial services firms in the country.



SUCCESS STORY

Atul Verma believes that success is truly a collective achievement. Together, his team's greatest accomplishments helped achieve their business objectives with a world-class Bank of the West integration, innovative BMO Allo savings platform and numerous digital banking wins. They have had a lot to celebrate. But the greatest accomplishment to Atul is that they developed and inspired the amazing people who helped achieve these successes. He is extremely proud of his team and honored to be a finalist for a ChicagoCIO ORBIE® award.



ANUJ GAUR
Global CIO
Marmon Holding Inc

As Marmon Holdings' VP of Global IT, Anuj Gaur leads IT initiatives for this global manufacturing organization, with eleven diverse business groups, generating annual revenues exceeding \$12 billion. Previously, he served as CIO for PE-backed companies, and held leadership roles at GE. Anuj's career also includes roles at KPMG and Sabre, where he managed diverse IT initiatives. With a proven track record, he has consistently driven transformative IT strategies for organizations of varying scales and industries.



SUCCESS STORY

As Marmon's VP of Global IT, Anuj Gaur has led transformative initiatives, redefining communication, cybersecurity, ERP simplification and establishing a decentralized IT organization. Our comprehensive communication strategy involves an intranet and robust external digital presence. Successfully reducing our ERP footprint enhances efficiency and contributes to cost savings. In cybersecurity, we've set universal standards, ensuring system integrity and reinforcing Marmon's trustworthiness. Establishing a decentralized IT organization fosters citizen development and innovation. These initiatives collectively position our global industrial company as an industry leader, showcasing strategic leadership and organizational acumen.



JANE POSSELL
EVP & CIO - Operations,
Analytics and Security
CNA Insurance

Jane Possell is executive vice president and chief information officer for CNA, responsible for all Technology as well as Analytics, U.S. Underwriting Operations, and Global Enterprise Security. Possell joined CNA in 2019 from Liberty Mutual where she served as vice president in technology and business roles. Before that, she was managing director at Accenture, where she spent more than 20 years working with 20 of the top 25 U.S. property and casualty insurers.



SUCCESS STORY

Since joining CNA, Jane Possell has focused on enhancing culture, expanding a diverse and skilled team, and implementing strategic investments for business agility. Partnering with leadership, CNA Tech has transformed into an industry-leading organization: we are a talent magnet whose team has doubled in size with exceptional diverse talent and industry-leading engagement and retention; an award-winning innovator that leads the way on Cloud and AI; a delivery machine that has earned the confidence of business leadership to increase our tech investments 70% in the last three years; and a newly transformed agile organization helping key business partners drive success for the business.

Well Done Paul Schorr!

2024 CHICAGOCIO ORBIE AWARD FINALIST



Congratulations on your peer recognition for IT leadership at Optimas. We appreciate how your team's approach and execution have elevated customer and Optimas efficiency and our position in the marketplace.



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MARK BLOOM
Global CIO
Arthur J Gallagher & Co

Mark Bloom is the Global CIO at AJ Gallagher, one of the world's largest insurance brokerages with over 50,000 employees. Mark currently serves on the Board of Directors of Freddie Mac. Before Gallagher, Mark was Global CIO for Aegon, the global life insurance multinational. Before entering insurance, he was the digital and operations technology CIO for Citi's Consumer Bank. He has a BS in computer engineering from Bucknell, MS in electrical engineering from Virginia Tech, and an MBA from Georgetown.



SUCCESS STORY

Mark Bloom was appointed by Gallagher's CEO to lead Generative AI efforts across the company globally. Mark leads the digital technology transformation of all customer and employee experiences and the automation of hundreds of ice processes. He has implemented a globally consistent data strategy yielding double-digit CAGR in new clients, revenue, and carrier compensation. He also has identified significant cost efficiencies that allowed self-funding investments in cloud, data/AI, digital, cybersecurity, and IT operations.



PRAVEEN JONNALA
SVP & CIO
CommScope Inc

Praveen Jonnala serves as the SVP, CIO, where he spearheads the information technology organization. In this role, he is tasked with implementing a digital strategy aimed at propelling the company's transformation and attaining key business objectives. With over two decades of experience, Praveen has demonstrated leadership in guiding global teams across various domains, including product engineering, software development, manufacturing, supply chain and IT. Before CommScope, following notable leadership roles at Ford Motor and Sun Microsystems.



SUCCESS STORY

Praveen Jonnala spearheaded a profound IT culture shift, seamlessly aligning it with the broader business ethos. Rooted in empathy and humility, these principles underpinned a global IT team that wholeheartedly embraced them, fostering enhanced collaboration with the business. This collective effort elevated IT beyond its traditional back-office role, establishing it as a crucial strategic partner. Central to Praveen's approach was the ACE (Adaptability, Curiosity, and Experimentation) framework. Designed to cultivate a culture marked by proactive readiness for change, adaptability and an experimental mindset, the framework aimed to collaboratively generate business value through a steadfast commitment to innovation.



MIKE POWELL
CTO
SEKO Logistics

As a member of SEKO's Global Executive team, Mike Powell has oversight and leadership of all matters relating to technology strategy, products, solutions and operations. Mike was the co-founder and CEO of a cloud-based logistics software company, Supply Vision (acquired by Descartes Systems Group (TSX:DSG)). Mike also was vice president of technology solutions for RIM Logistics: responsible for crafting and executing the company's corporate technology strategy and streamlining operations to increase productivity.



SUCCESS STORY

One of the team's most significant accomplishments over the past few years was launching our global cross-border eCommerce platform for our fastest-growing business segments. From initial concept to successful deployment, including a complex integration with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, we launched in under six months with a small team of technologists. This new platform allowed our business unit to migrate away from a costly compilation of off-the-shelf solutions while offering enhanced capabilities and a simplified user experience for internal and external clients. Our ROI was approximately 18 business days, saving the enterprise millions of dollars since inception.



KRIS RAO
Chief Information & Digital Officer
HNI Corporation

As a technology and business transformation executive, Kris Rao brings over 25 years of repeated success in defining enterprise technology vision, strategy and roadmaps to bolster top- and bottom-line growth at global high-tech, and manufacturing companies including HNI, RICOH, Hospira, Motorola, and Oracle. Recognized for his collaborative leadership style, Kris leverages business and technical expertise to transform IT as a value-driver, and trusted advisor to executive leadership teams in propelling business performance to the next level and beyond.



SUCCESS STORY

Moving business from traditional manufacturing to digital business. What that means is, transforming business using digital technologies to scale and address market, without adding resources. Leap frogging competition and morphing to digital workplace services, IT and digital organization is driving innovation from 'Art of possible' workshops, to disrupting the industry, all driven by digital solutions, and in partnership with business stakeholders. Our IT and digital organization have morphed into a collaborative, results-driven, experimenting and innovative organization. We have moved from 'knowledge is power' to 'collaboration is power' and have sunset all siloed behavior.



JOHN YIN
Global CIO
Berlin Packaging

John Yin serves as CIO at Berlin, which is an exciting opportunity to consult from within, especially at a rapidly expanding and dynamic company. He states it's a privilege to contribute his knowledge and experience to a talented and hard-driving team. The success of the modern organization is heavily dependent on the creative use and application of technology. Beyond the technology itself, equally crucial are organizational effectiveness, efficient business processes, effective project management and embedded change management. It is



SUCCESS STORY

As the Global CIO for Berlin Packaging, a worldwide leader in packaging solutions, John Yin drives an integrated IT strategy and roadmap to achieve the company's vision and competitive differentiation. John specializes in enterprise applications and enabling technologies, leveraging his more than 30 years of transformational consulting across diverse industries. Before joining Berlin, he served as a partner and technology practice leader at two top advisory and accounting firms, Grant Thornton and CohnReznick.

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BHAVANA DEVULAPALLY
SVP & CIO
Ventas, Inc.

With 25 years of professional IT experience, Bhavana Devulapally oversees information systems, infrastructure, cyber-security and data analytics for Ventas, Inc., an S&P 500 company and leading Real Estate Investment Trust. She is a member of the senior leadership team and the Enterprise Risk Management Committee. Bhavana earned a dual bachelor's degree in economics from the Wharton School of Business and systems engineering from the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania.



SUCCESS STORY

Bhavana Devulapally has significantly enhanced Ventas's IT function since joining in 2019. She led the migration of IT applications to the cloud, modernization of the company's network infrastructure and rationalization of its application portfolio, improving efficiency, efficacy and reliability. She reorganized her team, aligning it with the right mix of skills and experience to deliver for the business every day. Under Bhavana, the IT team embraces transparency, accountability and continuous improvement, publishing a monthly performance report that enables managers to quickly identify areas for improvement and launching a quarterly governance process to ensure focus on the top business priorities.



NORMAN FLEMING
Chief Information
Technology Officer
Chicago Public Schools

As the Chief Information Officer, Norman Fleming provides strategic leadership and coordination in the use of technology, including support services to educational and city-wide operations at Chicago Public Schools. He has over twenty-five years of digital transformation, information technology and business leadership experience for Global Fortune 500 companies. He holds an Executive Certificate from Kellogg School of Management, an MBA from Keller Graduate School, and a BS in Management from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.



SUCCESS STORY

In 2023, as a CIO in Norman Fleming's first year at Chicago Public Schools, he has accomplished approval from the CEO and COO on the CIO's 5-Year Strategic Plan and Vision for CPS, implemented NextGEN ITS Operating Model and Organizational Structure to improve IT services to students, parents, educators and administrators, and improved NextGEN ITS recruitment, retention and promotional opportunities for employees by increasing employee headcount by 26%. The Federal Communications Commission's Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) awarded CPS ITS \$41.4M in federal funds for our 1:1 Student Device strategy deploying Google Chromebooks, Apple iPads and Windows devices.



DR. ALOK MEHTA
CIO - Business Systems
Kemper Insurance

Dr. Alok Mehta is an experienced global information technologist with a proven global track record in all aspects of information technology. Skilled in all phases of product and project life cycles. Effective at building global and culturally diverse teams. He is an expert in transforming business and IT via redesigned business processes, strategy and innovation. Alok has strong communication skills and is customer-centric, with the ability to initiate profitable alliances with global partners, vendors and suppliers. He is a businessman with technical skills; an entrepreneur and visionary.



SUCCESS STORY

A CIOs success depends on understanding the corporate mission, relentlessly supporting business objectives, effectively communicating at all levels, managing relationships, building high-performing teams and delivering innovative solutions with flawless execution that provide tangible business value. At Kemper, Dr. Alok Mehta and his team strive to meet these success criteria by being trusted and reliable advisors to their business partners and having fun along the way. Alok is excited and grateful to be part of the ORBIE award journey and is thankful to have met some very impressive leaders through this process that has allowed him to reflect on his leadership style.



SAMIR SHAH
SVP & CIO
Fortune Brands Innovations

Samir Shah is senior vice president and global chief information officer at Fortune Brands Innovations, Inc. (NYSE: FBIN). Samir has 25+ years of experience developing and executing business-aligned digital, analytics, and cybersecurity strategies and solutions. Samir is focused on creating and leveraging business partnerships to drive value-added digital commercial and supply chain transformation. He has delivered multiple large-scale transformations using agile methodologies, and modern cloud systems and has built resilient and adaptive NIST-aligned cybersecurity programs.



SUCCESS STORY

The FBIN team achieved remarkable milestones driving its growth strategy. They successfully developed a Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) platform to accelerate growth and business expansion. Additionally, they implemented transformations with modern Cloud ERP systems, resulting in improved operational efficiency and increased capacity. The team consolidated multiple platforms (Finance, HR, DTC, PLM, and O365) into unified platforms of the future. Leveraging AI-driven solutions across commerce, HR and technology operations, they achieved increased productivity. FBIN's efforts were recognized with the 2023 Boomi Innovation and North America ISG Paragon Award, celebrating outstanding transformation.



CHRIS WALTER
CIO
Central Garden & Pet Company

As Senior Vice President and CIO at Central Garden & Pet, Chris oversees the company's digital and technical operations. Over his 18-year tenure, he has succeeded in developing talent, driving innovation, implementing transformative change and unlocking revenue potential. Before Central, Chris spent nine years in PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting practice. Chris holds a BS degree in Business Administration / Logistics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is a graduate of the University of Chicago Advanced Management Program.



SUCCESS STORY

Central Garden & Pet has grown through 80+ acquisitions of all sizes. In 2005, Chris Walter was hired to consolidate the back-end systems across the company. Over his 18 years at Central, they have deployed SAP 20 times and Central has never missed an order. This has positioned Central to standardize its supply chain footprint, reduce risk and consolidate technology support instead of managing 46 different ERP systems. Chris attributes their success to the single-team atmosphere they have created and their philosophy to use work to get people done instead of using people to get work done.

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MIKE CARR
VP IT
Clune Construction Company

Mike Carr is a versatile vice president of IT with a 30+ year career over a large variety of organizations including food manufacturing, software companies, toy manufacturing, steel wool/fiber manufacturing and three separate firms in the AEC space including Clune where he is at today. Ensuring the operation has all of the tools it needs and security to ensure the daily operations is a key part of Mike's role and one he takes seriously.



ANDREW COLLYER
CIO
Fitch Group

Andrew Collyer, chief information officer (CIO) at Fitch Group, is responsible for the company's technology and data strategy and operations. With over 20 years of IT and software development experience in the financial services and technology industries, he formerly served as the Head of Technology for Credit Ratings at Morningstar and as Director of Software Development at SunGard. Andrew holds a bachelor's degree in Pure Mathematics from the University of Kent.

financial services and technology industries, he formerly served as the Head of Technology for Credit Ratings at Morningstar and as Director of Software Development at SunGard. Andrew holds a bachelor's degree in Pure Mathematics from the University of Kent.



GARRET FITZGERALD
CDO
Enru Logistics and Postal Optimization

Through a digital-first career with GE and now Enru, Garret Fitzgerald brings a depth of experience in information technology and developing and launching new Industrial SaaS

product offerings into industrial and logistics companies. He joined Enru Logistics in January 2022 to re-platform the business IT stack, upgrade and enhance the technology talent, and incubate our proprietary SaaS technology to revolutionize the industry.



MARK DAHLBERG
VP IT
Sysmex



When everything works perfectly, no one seems to notice the IT teams responsible for the innovative technology and complex, secure systems required to support modern business and commerce...until now.



PAUL HAISMAN
CIO
Rotary International

Paul Haisman leads a global team supporting Rotary International, Rotary Foundation and clubs worldwide. His leadership ensures innovative and modern technology, emphasizing continuous improvement

and value. With over 25 years in technology leadership, Haisman holds a B.Sc. in computer science and an MBA. Recognized for thought leadership, in 2013, he received the Academy of Achievement Award from Illinois State University's College of Applied Science and Technology, and the 2023 Chicago SIM and AITP CIO of the Year candidate.



SUCCESS STORY

Mike Carr started with Clune in May 2016 as the director of IT. Mike was brought in to implement a systematic change in the direction of the IT department gearing up for a major deployment of CMIC. The team consisted only of two systems technicians, and he soon added a Systems administrator to help start the transformation of our infrastructure. Before Clune, he had 10 years in the AEC space. He has another 20+ years in his career in IT including two software companies, a food inclusion plant, a toy company and a steel wool manufacturer.

SUCCESS STORY

As Chief Information Officer (CIO) of Fitch Group, Andrew Collyer's attributes his success directly to his people. Their expertise and innovative spirit have been pivotal in integrating technology and data operations and transitioning 99% of their systems to a greener cloud infrastructure. The deployment of "FitchGPT," an in-house AI tool, has revolutionized their operations, empowering over 1,500 employees to experiment and innovate. By cultivating a culture of collaboration, underscored by our shift to Agile and the introduction of innovation sprints we have fostered an environment that champions continuous improvement, customer satisfaction and growth for Fitch's businesses.

SUCCESS STORY

Garret Fitzgerald's team executed a true end-to-end Cloud transformation and carve-out Enru Logistics and Postal Optimization from LSC Communications. This included a total re-platforming and modernization of end-of-life and on-premises infrastructure to a modern Azure cloud-only platform. They refreshed circuits and core network and implemented modern security tools and a comprehensive Compliance program. They transitioned to the M365 platform, providing a swath of disparate tools. Finally, many enterprise apps have been implemented, including a new TMS, a greenfield integration, data lake and BI tech stack, and major modifications to their ERP. They also reduced operating costs by 30% and pivoted into investments for the future.



MANOJ POONIA
CTO
Somatus, Inc.

Manoj Poonia has 23 years of experience building products and businesses. Recently, Manoj led the IT and analytics teams at Somatus and launched RenallQ. Manoj graduated from the leadership

program at Abbott, cofounded Healthtech startups and led engineering teams at Cognizant, GE, and IBM. He earned his MBA from INSEAD and his B.Tech from NIT, India. Manoj likes to run and play chess. He has finished eight marathons and was a chess champion at his alma mater.



Great CIOs know technology moves fast, and connected leaders move faster."

SUCCESS STORY

Under Manoj Poonia's leadership, they have successfully launched Somatus' proprietary RenallQ® technology platform, which provides actionable insights and community-based care team interventions. RenallQ® predicts the disease progression, gauges utilization and forecasts the likelihood of hospital admissions and unplanned dialysis start. The platform has been successfully assessed for HITRUST and NCQA certification, underscoring the commitment to IT security standards and clinical quality. Somatus expanded its RenallQ® offerings, now featuring Interoperability that connects multiple clinical data platforms in real time, Scheduler that offers patients timely reminders for upcoming appointments, and a Provider Portal designed to engage providers in Value-Based Care programs.

- Tracy Harrington, ChicagoCIO Chair



TIM WALTER
CIO
Edward Don & Company

As CIO at Edward Don & Company with over 30 years of comparable experience across various industries, Tim Walter holds an MBA from LSU, an MS from DePaul University and a bachelor's degree from Valpara-

iso University. He leads the programming team and is a member of SIM Chicago's Board of Directors, participates in the Technology Executives Advisor Group and supports the I.C. Stars charity, fostering the growth of future tech leaders.



SUCCESS STORY

Edward Don & Company's IT department's transformation from being viewed as a commodity to a dynamic partner, innovator and enabler is a testament to Tim Walter and his team's success. The department was pivotal in enabling the company's seamless shift to remote work. Now, they're spearheading innovative projects that enhance back-office operations and profitability and boost customer engagement. Under Tim's leadership, they're empowering users to leverage technology for process improvement, allowing them to concentrate on activities that add more value. This shift in perception and function underlines IT's critical role in the company's ongoing evolution.



RAJ SAMPOORNAM
SVP & CIO
Byline Bank

Raj Sampooram is chief information officer at Byline Bank in Chicago. As a strategic leader with expertise in digital transformation, data analytics and M&A Integrations, he defines and

implements Byline's IT vision and strategy and leads the IT operations, cybersecurity and applications and analytics functions. Raj previously headed the business intelligence and analytics function at Banco Popular. Equipped with a bachelor's and master's in computer science and an MBA, Raj continues to drive innovation in the financial technology space.



SUCCESS STORY

Raj Sampooram's greatest success was establishing a bold technology and digital strategy and securing support from their executive management team for that, thereby laying the foundation for Byline's digital transformation. The bank achieved an impressive business value and a higher customer satisfaction rate, especially with the implementation of digital account opening and loan origination solutions. Raj is incredibly proud of his exceptionally talented team for achieving aggressive goals to modernize the technology landscape, enabling Byline to achieve its strategic goals and swiftly complete M&A integrations while also enhancing our cybersecurity posture.



PAUL SCHORR
CIO
Optimas Solutions

Paul Schorr leads the global technology strategy for Optimas. Before joining Optimas, Paul was the founder and managing director of Strategic Outlook, a boutique CIO advisory firm. Paul has served in a

CIO capacity as a consultant or full-time employee for a number of great organizations including Performance Health, Zesty Paws, Zenwise, Uni-ball and a division of Disney Home Entertainment. Paul holds a BS in MIS from Eastern Illinois University.



SUCCESS STORY

Over the past 18 months, Paul Schorr and his team have led a complete IT turnaround; financially, technically and culturally. This began with restructuring the IT organization, putting the right leaders in place, and setting a business-first culture. They then completely restructured the aging IT infrastructure and security framework. Data centers were modernized with true disaster recovery failover. Simultaneously they drove a multi-million-dollar reduction in IT spending with additional efficiencies in their 2024 plan. Most importantly, they reinvented the IT culture, rescued the IT/Business relationship, and migrated IT culture from a confrontational, non-supportive posture into a true global business partner.



LACHLAN TIDMARSH
SVP & CIO
Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

Lachlan Tidmarsh is senior vice president and chief information officer for the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA), a national federation of independent and

locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) companies. As head of the Enterprise Information Technology organization, he sets the vision for the evolution of the Blue System's technology infrastructure and solutions, as well as market-leading data capabilities, to enhance services and experiences for the nearly 118M Americans BCBS companies serve.



SUCCESS STORY

Only a few years ago, BCBSA's work was powered by legacy technologies with limited ability to support emerging needs—speed to market for new solutions, interoperability and advanced data insights. Today, they're successfully architecting a modern cloud-enabled platform and dramatically enhancing analytic capabilities, leveraging an unparalleled data ecosystem encompassing nearly 118M members. Additionally, they're enabling enhanced security collaboration among 33 BCBS companies and preparing Generative AI pilots to seize potential efficiencies while minimizing risk. This collection of work is driving innovation and creating a more connected healthcare ecosystem, improving services and experiences for the one in three Americans we serve.

Large Corporate Finalists ▶▶ Over \$300 million annual revenue

Corporate finalists ▶▶ Up to \$300 million annual revenue



JON BEYER
 CIO - Executive for IT & Digital Solutions
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Jon Beyer serves as chief information officer at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He develops and directs the IT and digital strategy and maintains relationships with other executives to ensure the enablement of strategic priorities. Jon began in information security at Andersen Consulting (Accenture), continuing at Arthur Andersen as an architecture lead. He served as VP of infrastructure and technology operations at two Chicago startups. Jon received a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from DePaul University.



SUCCESS STORY

Jon Beyer's leadership role is diverse, including: 1) providing excellence in functional services as CIO, 2) leading the intersection of business and technology for growing engagement with utilizing modern program execution, and 3) driving the organization to greater digital utilization with amplified reach to achieve the organization's strategic intents. Closely partnering with Strategic Communications, he is driving the creation of an AI-powered digital platform to engage seekers of faith and spirituality from where they are in their faith journey. Underpinning this digital ecosystem is a strategy to get people online, allowing them to get offline to build relationships and connections.



NEIL GOODRICH
 Chief Innovation Officer
 Envista Forensics

For more than a decade, Neil Goodrich has been building teams that treat IT as a creative discipline, pioneering new capabilities and not only transforming their organizations but the team's role within it. His multi-disciplinary background includes previous lives in investigations, operations, accounting and business analytics. He holds certifications in gamified design and project management and an MBA from the University of Illinois Chicago.



SUCCESS STORY

By blending new methodologies with the experience of long-tenured employees, Neil Goodrich has reinvented the IT team's role within the business, delivering new capabilities while simultaneously solving long-standing challenges. The team has brought mobile toolsets to the experts in the field, implemented new platforms to power the Sales and Marketing teams, created a centralized reporting platform to enhance decision-making, migrated its infrastructure and file storage to the cloud, and leveraged automation to transform service levels and return countless hours to employees across the organization.



ANIL CHOUDARY
 CTO
 Alliant Credit Union

Anil Choudary is chief technology officer (CTO) at Alliant Credit Union leading technology functions responsible for planning, building, managing and transforming Alliant's member-centric technology capabilities. Anil came to Alliant in 2021, from CIBC USA, where he was Head of Enterprise Architecture - U.S. Before that, Anil was CTO for Marcus Savings at Goldman Sachs and led technology teams to build, launch and scale Marcus Savings. Previously, Anil held multiple leadership roles in engineering at GE Capital.



SUCCESS STORY

Anil Choudary spearheaded Alliant's digital transformation initiatives transitioning Alliant Credit Union into a fully digital consumer financial services organization while partnering with key stakeholders across all lines of business to establish a business value-based technology strategy and delivery model. Anil led the buildout of technology capabilities enabling speed to market and high availability and resiliency to support strategic business goals establishing the organization as a leading fully digital financial service organization. This work included building out cloud-integrated data centers, building out foundational data capabilities and application pipelines for API enablement, and enabling readiness to leverage Gen AI capabilities.



AKSHAY PATEL
 VP & CIO
 College of American Pathologists

Akshay Patel is CIO and VP of the College of American Pathologists (CAP), the premier organization of board-certified pathologists. He is responsible for all technology-related operations, strategy/sourcing, architecture, PMO, cybersecurity and innovation. He serves on the Executive Team and advises the Board of Governors on technology strategy, risk management and the adoption of emerging technologies. Akshay holds a BS in Physics, an MS in Technology, an MBA, and PMP certifications, and received CAP's Presidential Honors Award.



SUCCESS STORY

CAP provides technology to enable pathologists/laboratories, improve patient outcomes and build an engaged, diverse workforce with shared purpose. By building mutual respect with senior executives and the board and a partnership culture, CAP has embarked on a multi-year, aggressive technology modernization and evolution roadmap to realize these goals. The investment in its digital foundation enables CAP to pivot and evolve in an era of rapid technological advancements. Patient outcomes are improving with secure access to better information, enhanced insights and accelerated tool delivery. The technology may appear ordinary viewed through a microscope, but, in its entirety, helps save more lives.



KHAN TRAN
 CTO
 Avante Health Solutions

Khan Tran is a senior executive with over 30 years of experience leading IT and engineering organizations in the health care and telecommunication industries. He capitalizes on expertise in product design and development, technology start-up, new product introduction, M&A integration, divestiture, organizational transformation, business development and partnership, global portfolio planning, and digital strategy. Khan delivers true innovation to revolutionize business processes critical to enterprise-wide cost savings and revenue generation.



SUCCESS STORY

Khan Tran successfully established a unified IT organization with digital operating framework and cloud-first strategy as the catalyst to help Avante reimagine its business services and accelerate its digital transformation journey with a System of Actions. This enabled Avante to continuously operate among many business units while being presented as One Avante with a holistic view of its customers and a cohesive information security posture with streamlined operations. This also re-ignited vendor engagement toward a value-based partnership model to gain better alignment for collaborative innovation, capitalizing on emerging technology solutions for long-term value creation to ultimately move healthcare forward.

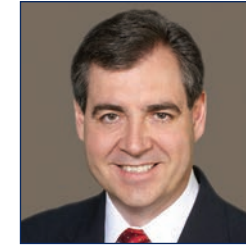
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