



DALLAS  
**BUSINESS JOURNAL**

2026

10<sup>TH</sup> DALLAS CIO  
**ORBIE**  
AWARDS

The annual DallasCIO 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 February 27 at Hyatt Regency Dallas.

 DALLAS CIO



**LEADERSHIP AWARD  
RECIPIENT & KEYNOTE**

Diane Schwarz, Group Chief  
Information Officer, Smurfit Westrock  
PG 4



**FROM THE CHAIR**

Chris Holm, 2025-2026 Chair  
PG 3

# CONGRATULATIONS 2026 DALLASCIO ORBIE NOMINEES

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<b>JIM ASHLEY</b> Ben E. Keith Company	<b>KANG CHEN</b> Aethon Energy	<b>YIGAL ELBAZ</b> AT&T	<b>AJIT JAGTAP</b> MODE Global	<b>SCOTT LOVEJOY</b> Nothing Bundt Cakes	<b>JOHN OLSEN</b> Biote	<b>JUSTIN RICKETTS</b> Goosehead Insurance Agency	<b>MAHARAJ THANKAM</b> Fidelity
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<b>DONNA BECRAFT</b> LINQ Services	<b>NICK COOK</b> FFE Transportation Services	<b>FRANCISCO FRAGA</b> McKesson	<b>SUMANTH KAMATH</b> exp Realty	<b>TRAVIS MCHAM</b> Scout Energy	<b>UMESH PATEL</b> CBRE	<b>JUAN SALAS</b> Reliant Rehabilitation	<b>JAYAKRISHNA VENKATESH</b> Capital One
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<b>MODI BOUTRS</b> Tufts Medicine (Wellforce)	<b>MIKE DARR</b> Caterpillar, Inc.	<b>NATHAN GLOIER</b> Crescent Bank	<b>AJOY KODALI</b> Centene	<b>GARY MILLS</b> Southside Bank	<b>RAJIV PILLAI</b> Wipro Ltd.	<b>MARLON SHEARS</b> IDEA Public Schools	<b>MIKE WATTENBARGER</b> Addus HomeCare
<b>MATTHEW BOWMAN</b> U.S. Marine Corps	<b>DAVID DAWSON</b> Gainwell Technologies	<b>DON GOIN</b> Texas Capital Bank	<b>JEFF KOEHN</b> Magellan Health	<b>SHAWN MININGER</b> Bluezone Cyber Solutions	<b>MELISSA PINT</b> Frontier Communications	<b>SUDIP SHEKAWAT</b> LeaseLock	<b>SONYA WELLS</b> SRS Distribution
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<b>LARRY BROWDER</b> Elevate Credit	<b>CARISSA DE SANTIS</b> Lurin	<b>RAMON GRIMALDO</b> HF Sinclair	<b>MELISSA KRAFT</b> City of Frisco	<b>POONAM MOHAN</b> Encore	<b>CRAIG POPE</b> Crestline	<b>WILL SHOWALTER</b> JPS Health Network	<b>DOUG WILLIAMS</b> American Airlines Center
<b>JOSEPH BROWN</b> Lou Malnati's Pizzeria	<b>BRAD DELONG</b> ORIX USA	<b>JAIME GUEVARA</b> CROSSMARK	<b>TODD KREUGER</b> Tarrant County, Texas	<b>TRACY MOZENA</b> Atlantic Aviation	<b>JAY PRIMAVERA</b> LSG Sky Chefs	<b>BILL SHULER</b> Planet Home Lending	<b>LAUREN WOODS</b> Southwest Airlines
	<b>TONY DENISCO</b> Flagship Facility	<b>THOMAS HACKEMER</b> KPMG	<b>MICHAEL KRIESMAN</b> Lori's Gifts'	<b>SOBHA MULUKUTLA</b> Johnson Controls	<b>CHRIS PROGLER</b> Photronics	<b>HARSH SINGLA</b> Integrity Marketing Group	<b>KELLY WYATT</b> GM Financial
						<b>MARK SMITH</b> Berkley Hathaway Automotive	

## More than 70 DallasCIO members beat executive isolation

Even the strongest executives can feel isolated at times. When Chief Information Officers (CIOs) face their challenges beside trusted peers, that isolation transforms into clarity and confidence.

DallasCIO brings together top CIOs from Dallas' & Fort Worth's leading organizations to build meaningful relationships, share what's working, and create real business value. While industries, organizations, and cultures may differ, the challenges of leadership—and the power of connection—are universal.

The Inspire Leadership Network connects CIOs with over 2,000 C-suite executives across more than 50 chapters, spanning public, private, and nonprofit organizations across North America. Beyond CIOs, Inspire also serves communities for chief information security officers (CISOs) and chief marketing officers (CMOs).

For more than 25 years, the ORBIE Awards have honored C-suite executives for leadership, innovation, and excellence. This year, DallasCIO is celebrating the 10th annual ORBIE Awards – I encourage you to attend to meet and support these outstanding security leaders."

On behalf of DallasCIO, congratulations to all nominees and finalists on these achievements. Special thanks to the awards partners, chapter underwriters, and staff whose support makes the DallasCIO ORBIE Awards possible.

Sincerely,



**Chris Holm**  
2025-2026 Chair, DallasCIO



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## 2026 DALLASCIO ORBIE AWARDS LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT & KEYNOTE



# Diane Schwarz

Group Chief Information Officer | Smurfit Westrock

## The only limitation is your imagination

By The Business Journals Content Studio

Diane Schwarz has been a global CIO at scale for the past 15 years. Now group chief information officer of Smurfit Westrock, a global leader in sustainable paper and packaging, she leads a team of more than 1,500 professionals.

"My soul is sparked by developing talent," Schwarz said. "When I have the opportunity to grow other CIOs and help them transform their career and realize their potential, it's very rewarding."

Her commitment to building up the next generation of talent stems from her own experience with individuals who ignited her passion and steered her toward opportunities that were both challenging and exciting.

"I saw managers and mentors investing in me, and it was a natural progression for me to pay it forward," she said.

In recognition of these efforts, Schwarz will receive the Leadership Award as part of the

2026 DallasCIO ORBIE Awards on Feb. 27 at the Hyatt Regency Dallas. The program honors CIOs who have demonstrated excellence in technology leadership.

### Limitless potential

Schwarz grew up in a small Midwestern town she described as "fairly homogeneous and conservative."

"The limitations were all around me, but my parents didn't impose those limitations on me. I'm grateful for that," she said.

In high school, Schwarz became very involved with Junior Achievement, which gave her an opportunity to experience what it would be like to run a company. "We manufactured and sold products. We had quality control issues we had to address," she said. "Seeing all that play out sparked the love of business in me, and I wanted to continue that on a greater scale."

Schwarz earned a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Notre Dame, but her early career wasn't focused on technology.

"I've always been really good at solving problems. My first couple of jobs out of school, I was solving other people's problems, and I gravitated to technology to

help me do it," she said. "I wanted the easiest, fastest resolution for a problem, and technology is usually that toolset."

Her managers took notice of her natural affinity for technology and encouraged her to transition into the field at the next inflection point in her career. She went on to lead top-tier IT organizations at Johnson Controls, Hunt Consolidated and Textron before joining Smurfit Westrock.

"I'm terrible at athletics. I'm awful in the kitchen. I can't use a hammer or a screwdriver if my life depended on it," she said with a laugh. "But technology is very intuitive to me. The only limitation is your imagination."

### Leadership development at scale

Schwarz believes the best mentorship experiences happen with those you work with or who are part of your team. She highlighted one example from nearly two decades ago, when she had a conversation with a woman about her career goals. The woman said she wanted her boss's job.

"I said, 'Why are you shooting so low? Why don't you want my job?'" she recalled. "She said, 'I didn't know that was a possibility.'"

Over time, Schwarz encouraged her to take on different roles — sometimes advising her to accept lateral moves rather than always looking to move up.

"In my career, there was a time when I was leading this huge transformation, but corporate moved me into a business unit CIO role," she said. "The scope was much smaller, but I needed that business unit CIO role to take the next step and get into the enterprise CIO role. Sometimes you have to take what may appear to be a step down but is really a springboard for something greater."

For both Schwarz and her mentee, the approach paid off: Fifteen years after their first conversation, Schwarz's mentee is on track to become the CIO of a publicly held company.

"She didn't realize she had the potential. So, I just opened the horizons for her," she said.

While those one-to-one experiences are powerful, Schwarz knew there is also power in numbers. About a

decade ago she and four other female CIOs came together to create additional opportunities to support one another. They envisioned a time when their group of five could increase to 200 female CIOs across the country.

Now, the group has become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization called T200, with a mission to inspire, educate, celebrate and advance women's leadership in technology. It has far surpassed its initial goal: The organization now has 1,500 members.

### Technology challenges and opportunities

Schwarz has always been drawn to the limitless potential of technology. At the same time, the field is not without its challenges — particularly as technology intersects with the world of business. She sees technology debt as one of the most pressing.

"We all have servers and applications that are older than our adult children. Unfortunately, it costs not only money to replace it, but you need the business resources alongside you," she said. "You have to understand what business problem you are trying to solve."

Artificial intelligence could make eliminating technology debt easier and faster. Schwarz cautions we're not there yet, but the potential exists if we think bigger than incremental productivity gains when envisioning how AI could transform a business.

"You have all these pilots and initiatives focused on reducing the number of errors in a product cycle versus, 'How can we rethink how we do business, so these errors never get created in the first place?'" she said. "That requires a lot of imagination, being bold, understanding the business and a lack of fear to try new things."

### Inspiring others

For Schwarz, being recognized with the DallasCIO Leadership Award is an opportunity to inspire others.

"My purpose is I'm just one girl who helps others realize their potential — both seeing it and achieving it," she said. "My humble roots are the same as anyone else's. If I can do this, so can anyone else."

# GREAT LEADERS NEVER LEAD ALONE

The pace of business has never been faster. As a CIO, what makes the difference isn't simply expertise it's having the right relationships, conversations, and insights at the right time.

Inspire Leadership Network gives you access to exceptional peers, remarkable events, and practical insights—so you can turn today's challenges into tomorrow's wins.

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# SUPER GLOBAL FINALISTS

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MULTI-NATIONAL OPERATIONS



## Matthew Bowman

CIO & CTO  
United States Marine Corps



LtCol Matt Bowman recently served as CIO/CTO for 3d Marine Logistics Group and has transitioned to serve as the CIO/CTO for III Marine Information Group, supporting operations across the Indo-Pacific. An experienced Marine Corps leader, he blends tactical command with advanced technological expertise to strengthen resilient C4 architectures, joint interoperability, and AI-enabled decision systems. Skilled in leadership, operational planning, consulting, program management, and systems integration, Matt is dedicated to continuous learning, mentorship, and community service.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As CIO/CTO for regional Marine Corps Logistics and Information Groups, I led initiatives that strengthened operational readiness across the Indo-Pacific. My team integrated military and commercial SATCOM to deliver resilient command and control, supporting bilateral coordination during exercises including RESOLUTE DRAGON 23.2, KEEN EDGE 24, and FREEDOM SHIELD 24. We standardized Kymeta and Starshield integration for transport diversity, advanced additive manufacturing data transfers over tactical radios, and deployed automation and AI tools to accelerate analysis and decision-making. These efforts enhanced interoperability, network resilience, and mission agility across joint and combined operations.



## Jack Brock

CIO  
Carelon



Jack Brock, Chief Information Officer of Carelon, is a seasoned technology executive with deep expertise in digital transformation, data strategy, and operational excellence. Leading a global technology organization driving innovation, scalability, and affordability across healthcare services. With a passion for empowering teams and advancing AI-driven solutions, Jack champions technology that improves care quality, enhances member experiences, and delivers measurable business impact across Carelon's diversified portfolio.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As Chief Information Officer at Carelon, leading a global team of more than 1,800 technology professionals driving digital transformation across a \$70 billion enterprise that supports more than 100 million lives. Together, we are driving growth and innovation throughout Carelon. Through modernization, AI integration, and scalable platforms, we are delivering \$90.6 million in savings, and our initiatives have fueled 62% revenue growth, enhanced provider satisfaction, and improved care outcomes. We are fulfilling Carelon's mission to be a lifetime, trusted health partner, advancing whole health, improving affordability, and empowering members, communities, and associates to live healthier lives while making healthcare simpler.



## Mike Darr

VP & Group CIO,  
Construction Industries  
Caterpillar, Inc.



Mike is an accomplished IT leader with decades of experience in automotive and industrial equipment industries. Skilled in talent development, technology strategy alignment with business goals and experienced in stakeholder engagement, Mike excels in leading complex innovation programs and enabling bold business transformation. As Vice President & Group CIO for Construction Industries, Mike applies his proven ability to build high-performing IT organizations and drive business-focused change to position Caterpillar for our next century of innovation.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As Vice President & Group CIO for Construction Industries, I lead a dedicated team of IT professionals to enable global manufacturing production. My objective is to equip our businesses with innovative technologies while elevating IT from a service provider to a strategic partner. Over two years, we've strengthened our team with strategy and business architecture talent, aligned IT with business objectives, and embraced smart manufacturing and AI-enabled automation. This transformation has enhanced IT delivery capabilities and reputation, laying the foundation for Caterpillar's growth and helping to enable the Caterpillar Mission in "Solving our customers' toughest challenges."



## Sobha Mulukutla

VP, IT, Global Products,  
Corp & Transformation (fmr)  
Johnson Controls



Sobha Mulukutla is Vice President of Information Technology (fmr), leading large global initiatives, (ERP, PLM, MES, and Finance) platform strategies and transformation initiatives. Sobha drives digital modernization, governance, and enterprise architecture to enable operational excellence and business growth. With a focus on global standardization, risk management, and innovation, Sobha partners with senior leaders to deliver secure, scalable technology solutions. Known for fostering collaboration and empowering teams, Sobha champions IT as a strategic enabler of competitive advantage.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Successfully drove key transformation initiatives to strengthen operational efficiency, simplify technology landscape, and deliver measurable business value: ERP Modernization: Revamped the enterprise ERP strategy and established a roadmap to deploy incremental value capabilities within 12–15 weeks, minimizing operational risk and disruption. Application Simplification: Partnered with business leaders to streamline the application portfolio, achieving a 35% reduction and promoting the benefits of a simplified, agile IT environment. Cost Optimization: Leading a multi-year initiative to reduce IT costs by 30%, with 12% savings realized in year one, through disciplined prioritization, process efficiencies, and technology consolidation.



## Maharaj Thankam

CIO, Head of Fund &  
Investment Operations  
Technology  
Fidelity Investments



Maha Thankam has been with Fidelity Investments for 15 years and currently leads global technology teams across the U.S., India, and Ireland. His organization delivers innovative platforms and solutions that enable asset servicing, investment operations and market data for Fidelity businesses and shareholders. Throughout his tenure, Maha has spearheaded technology modernization and transformation initiatives including trade settlement and fund accounting platforms. Prior to Fidelity, he spent nine years in engineering and architecture roles at ACI Worldwide, a leading payments solutions provider.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Maha Thankam has transformed how Fidelity approaches technology innovation. His vision has driven a bold modernization strategy, delivering next-generation capabilities such as the pricing platform and infrastructure powering Fidelity's alternatives business. Under his leadership, Fidelity's asset servicing technology ecosystem has become faster, more resilient, and future ready. Maha is equally committed to cultivating talent and fostering an inclusive culture that sparks creativity and collaboration.



## Lauren Woods

EVP, Technology & CIO  
Southwest Airlines



Lauren Woods serves as Senior Vice President & Chief Information Officer at Southwest Airlines, leading technology strategy for the nation's largest domestic carrier. Since joining in 2010, she has driven major initiatives, including AWS cloud adoption and enterprise data platform transformation, enabling advanced analytics and system integration. Previously with Diamond Management & Technology (now PwC), Lauren brings deep consulting expertise. A Cornell graduate, she is passionate about cloud innovation, customer experience, and technology leadership.

**SUCCESS STORY:** One of my most significant achievements was replacing our decades-old airline operations system. The legacy platform had become vulnerable and inflexible, limiting our ability to meet modern aviation demands. Leading a multi-year transformation, my team implemented a resilient architecture with real-time data processing, automated failover, and advanced cybersecurity. This modernization reduced downtime, improved data integrity, and enhanced scalability. Most importantly, it enabled consistent, secure experiences for employees and customers. This success reflects our organization's strength in strategic vision, technical execution, and cross-functional collaboration—delivering future-ready solutions that align with operational excellence and business growth.



# DEEP EXPERTISE WHERE IT COUNTS MOST

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**David Dawson**  
VP, Technology  
Gainwell Technologies



David Dawson is an accomplished technology executive with a distinguished career driving innovation, modernization, and measurable financial impact across the healthcare and payments industries. He has built a reputation for transforming complex business challenges into scalable, high-value technology solutions. David currently leads Application Development for Gainwell Technologies' Cost Containment business. Known for developing high-performing teams, David consistently builds cultures of trust, innovation, and accountability—turning technology into a strategic advantage for every organization he serves.

**SUCCESS STORY:** At Gainwell Technologies, I led the creation of COB on Demand, a patented, award-winning solution that modernized how Medicaid identifies third-party insurance. What once took days or weeks now happens in seconds, reducing billing errors, preventing improper payments, and delivering billions in savings. Designed for scalability and compliance, it integrates with hundreds of insurers and now supports 300+ health plans and 40 state Medicaid agencies. By combining advanced matching algorithms with secure, cloud-based interoperability, COB on Demand set a new industry standard—improving accuracy, accelerating care, and strengthening financial sustainability across Medicaid programs nationwide.



**Jeff Hayward**  
CTO  
TriNet



Jeff Hayward serves as TriNet's Chief Technology Officer. An award-winning global technology and engineering executive with more than 30 years of experience, Jeff oversees the company's technology strategy and team. In his role, Jeff helps advance TriNet's mission by modernizing technology platforms, scaling operations, and delivering innovative solutions. Throughout his career, Jeff has built a strong track record of leading distributed global teams to achieve enterprise goals, transforming multibillion-dollar portfolios, and enhancing organizational effectiveness.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Under Jeff Hayward's leadership, TriNet's Global Technology Organization delivered transformative innovations and operational excellence. The team launched AI-driven products like TriNet Assistant, and Dynamic Dashboard, modernized core platform elements with cloud services, and automated processes saving over a million hours. Jeff led the migration of 100% of production systems to the cloud in nine months with zero customer impact and implemented a digital resilience program enabling restoration of critical systems within four hours. He also drove record system uptime, consolidated global operations for efficiency, and strengthened security posture. These efforts fostered collaboration, boosted engagement, and positioned TriNet for sustained growth.



**Charles Larkin**  
Principal Technology Officer  
GameStop, Inc



Charlie started his journey with Babbages, Etc. as an intern in 1998. As the company evolved into the company now known as GameStop, so did Charlie's career. Starting as Help Desk technician, and growing through numerous software engineering, strategy and architecture roles, he took the reigns as the global technology leader in 2023. In his current role, Charlie focuses on continuously streamlining operations, evolving the technology organization and delivering new/innovative business and technology capabilities.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Over the past 30 months, the GameStop technology team has transformed from one of the top expense centers in the company into a revenue and margin driving juggernaut. The team continuously simplifies, streamlines and reduces costs that fund GameStop's transformation. The technology organization has enabled the expansion of the GameStop retail and eCommerce platforms to rapidly expand gross margins, deliver new products/services to existing commercial channels, and launch new businesses/revenue streams globally. The team has achieved a trifecta of reducing cost, improving operations/stability and driving top/bottom line growth.



**Chad Lucas**  
EVP & CIO  
Army & Air Force Exchange Service



Chad Lucas is an Executive Vice President and the Chief Information Officer for the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (Exchange). Mr. Lucas provides leadership, technical vision and oversight of information technology strategies to support the Exchange's organizational initiatives and goals. Mr. Lucas holds a Master of Business Administration degree in Strategic Leadership from the University of Dallas and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Management Information Systems from Texas A&M University

**SUCCESS STORY:** My team's success is rooted in our commitment to internal development, consistently prioritizing internal candidates for advancement opportunities. Through initiatives such as our internally led IT Academy - which offers targeted training, leadership development, and increased visibility for high performers - we have fostered a culture of growth. As a result, more than 150 IT associates have been promoted during my tenure as CIO, reflecting our dedication to empowering talent and driving organizational excellence.



**Udit Mehta**  
EVP & CTO  
Simpson Strong-Tie



Udit Mehta, EVP & CTO at Simpson Strong-Tie, is driving our business transformation that positions technology as a core business differentiator. Under his leadership, the company has launched cloud-native, AI-driven solutions fueling its highest growth, modernized enterprise systems, delivered multi-million incremental revenues and YoY cost optimizations. Udit combines strategic vision, operational excellence, and talent development to elevate technology from support to a growth engine—making him a standout leader in the global category.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Under Udit's leadership as CTO, Simpson Strong-Tie has transformed technology into a core business driver, launching cloud-native, AI-powered solutions that accelerated growth and modernized enterprise systems. His strategic approach delivered measurable results in attracting new revenue, annualized cost savings, and positioned the company for expanded market share. Udit also built a high-performing, diverse technology team and strengthened industry and community engagement, elevating technology from a support role to a true growth engine for the organization.

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Since joining McLane in 2024, Murat has been steadfast in building an intelligent, AI enabled digital supply chain that elevates the customer experience, strengthens our supplier ecosystem, and fuels a culture of continuous learning and growth.

Congratulations, Murat. Being named a 2026 Dallas CIO ORBIE Awards finalist is a testament to your leadership, which resonates throughout McLane and illuminates a path of endless possibilities for the future.



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# LARGE ENTERPRISE FINALISTS

OVER \$3 BILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



**Kang Chen**  
CIO  
Aethon Energy



Kang is CIO at Aethon Energy and has 25+ years of strategic information, technology and digital experience. Previously, he was Manager of Digital and IT for ConocoPhillips after it acquired Concho Resources where he was VP and CIO. He also held leadership roles at LyondellBasell and Deloitte. Kang earned a Master's in MIS from Boston University, a Master's in Finance from Suffolk University and a Bachelor's in Finance from Tianjin University of Finance and Economics.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Aethon has executed a series of transformative IT-led initiatives to elevate its operational efficiency, cybersecurity preparedness and digital capabilities. Our people-centric approach to innovation and technology ensures we continue to outperform in our technical execution and financial returns. Recent achievements include improving Aethon's cybersecurity posture through third-party benchmarking, re-architecting and modernizing the company's technology environment, and fully migrating all IT systems to the cloud. Initiatives have also been launched to improve the quality of Aethon's data assets and analytics capabilities, pairing them with upskilling programs to empower a digitally fluent workforce.



**Murat Genc**  
Chief Information &  
Digital Officer  
McLane Company



I have been McLane's Chief Information and Digital Officer for about a 1.5 years. Prior to this, I led Whirlpool's global technology and digital strategy, across 50 countries. Before that, I took various regional and global leadership roles at Procter & Gamble for 18 years around the world in Europe, India, Middle East and Africa, Asia and North America, including technology, digital and P&L responsibilities. I serve in boards and executive advisory roles.

**SUCCESS STORY:** At McLane, we established a transformative AI-first technology and digital strategy. In record 12 months timeline, built a strong leadership team, delivered critical real time supply chain improvements, new frictionless digital customer experiences and revenue streams, cloud and AI projects. Launched a new tech & AI hub in Texas. Step changed operational excellence and performance metrics, on track to deliver a record year as a company.



**Michael Naggar**  
CIO, U.S. Personal Banking  
Citi



As CIO for USPB Technology, Mike leads frictionless, glass-to-core solutions. He drives product intake/delivery, fosters innovation, and ensures optimal client outcomes through integrated digital experiences. A proven leader with over 20 years in technology and 16 patents, Mike holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from University of Texas at Arlington. He actively contributes to his local community through PTO work and champions the advancement of women and neurodivergent individuals.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As CIO of US Personal Banking, my team's greatest accomplishment was enabling the strategic acquisition and subsequent platform modernization that redefined our market footprint. Under my leadership, we successfully executed a monumental tech infrastructure overhaul and integration strategy, retiring legacy applications and migrating APIs for larger-scale deployments. These changes will help promote a seamless client experience and operational efficiency. A prime example is the strategic growth initiative laying the groundwork for the conversion of the Barclay's American Airlines portfolio in Q2 next year including the migration of millions of card accounts to our modernized platforms. This massive undertaking delivered enhanced cardholder controls, simplified maintenance, and robust new brand conversion logic. Furthermore, we integrated critical partner products into the Citi ecosystem, expanding our offerings and market reach. The significance lies in our ability to leverage technology to not only absorb vast new client bases efficiently but also to deliver a superior, unified experience. This technological agility and execution prowess were instrumental in securing and realizing the value from these acquisitions, demonstrating our capacity to drive strategic growth through innovative and resilient infrastructure.



**Rajiv Pillai**  
CIO, Americas  
Wipro Ltd.



Rajiv Pillai is the CIO for Wipro Americas, overseeing IT strategy, transformation, and operations across North & South America. With responsibility to support a geo that generates >\$5B regional business, Rajiv drives digital innovation, cybersecurity, and AI adoption to align technology with business outcomes. Passionate about empowerment and collaboration, he champions talent development and operational excellence. His leadership ensures IT remains a strategic enabler for growth, resilience, and success in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

**SUCCESS STORY:** At Wipro, technology is more than an enabler—it's a catalyst for seamless human experiences. With 230,000 employees worldwide, every interaction with our systems impacts innovation and collaboration. When we saw 150,000+ service tickets each quarter, we reimagined IT support—not just reducing tickets, but eliminating friction. This vision led to WiNow, our AI-powered ServiceDesk platform. Integrated across MS Teams, browsers, and portals, WiNow delivers instant, contextual support using NLP, RPA, Generative and Agentic AI—achieving responses in under 9 seconds and reducing ticket creation by 73%. WiNow proves that blending AI with empathy creates workplaces that are intuitive, responsive, and human-centric.



**Gustaaf Schrils**  
CIO  
Omni Hotels and Resorts



Gustaaf Schrils is an accomplished CIO with extensive experience in hospitality and retail technology. He currently leads IT strategy and innovation at Omni Hotels & Resorts, building secure, high-performing systems that enable business growth. Previously, he served as CIO of White Lodging and held multiple global IT leadership positions over a 20-year span at IHG. Known for driving transformation and developing high-performing teams, Gustaaf brings decades of expertise in complex problem-solving and technology leadership.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Under my leadership, our team strengthened our technology foundation through three major initiatives: moving applications to the cloud for ease of management, flexibility, business continuity and scalability; network resiliency and redundancy to ensure uninterrupted cloud services and network connectivity; and launching a customer data platform that unifies insights to enable more personalized, consistent guest experiences. These achievements enhance reliability, support better decision-making, and reflect our team's commitment to innovation, collaboration, and operational resilience.

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# ENTERPRISE FINALISTS

OVER \$1 BILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



## Mark Galea

SVP & CIO  
Willis Knighton Health



Mr. Galea is the SVP/CIO responsible for Information Technology, Digital Strategy, Technology Transformation, AI and Analytics at Willis-Knighton Health. With over 35 years of hands on leadership experience Mr. Galea has developed many IT healthcare leaders while implementing and optimizing cost effective and innovative technology at health systems including Parkland Health, Stanford, Triad, The Cleveland Clinic and Willis-Knighton. Mr. Galea believes in serving patients, providers and caregivers by making technology simple and easy to use.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Mr. Galea led an ambitious rollout of Meditech's Expanse Ambulatory solution across 132 clinics in just 14 months, consolidating three EHRs and a highly specialized Oncology system conversion to improve technology for infusions, therapies and advanced cancer treatments. The EMRs' clinical documentation and order management has been globally recognized as the best of Meditech Expanse by Meditech customers. The results demonstrate that world class results can be accomplished at 25% of the cost observed by competing EMR solutions, allowing WKH to redirect the savings to providing more investment and access to care to the community.



## Ed Jolly

Chief Information  
& Technology Officer  
General DataTech



Ed Jolly is the Chief Information & Technology Officer at General DataTech (GDT), a global IT solution provider that focuses on delivering solutions to help solve business needs. Ed has served in progressive leadership roles in the Financial Services and Technology Industries in public and privately held companies with a track record of positively transforming businesses with a focus on building high performing teams, operational excellence, and generating value for customers and team members.

**SUCCESS STORY:** The GDT Enterprise Technology team has achieved significant business impact and value in the past 2 years. We have looked inward to secure, transform, and innovate. We utilized our own, customer-facing services architects and engineers to assess, create recommendations, design, implement, and support our environment. We are transforming the business with solutions that protect the company and its data, removes complexity, elevates knowledge, and prepares the organization for the future. Partnering closely with sales, services, finance, HR, legal, and marketing businesses, we have refined, improved, and introduced capabilities that support generating business value for our customers, partners, and team members.



## Steven Klohn

CIO  
Dave & Buster's



Steven Klohn serves as the Chief Information Officer for Dave and Buster's, one of the US's largest Entertainment companies. With a primary responsibility for creating technology strategies that result in business capabilities to differentiate the company, Steve's organization is focused on delivering secure, reliable, and scalable technologies to enable the business to serve its guests and team members best.

**SUCCESS STORY:** I had the pleasure to lead our teams as; we launched self-service kiosks across our venues to enhance guest engagement and operational efficiency. By integrating digital ordering, ticketing, and personalized promotions, we created a seamless, interactive experience for visitors. The project required collaboration across IT, operations, and marketing, along with careful change management to ensure adoption. The kiosks reduced guest wait times, increased upsell revenue, and provided valuable real-time data for marketing and operations. This initiative strengthened the guest experience, empowered staff, and demonstrated how technology can directly drive engagement and business growth.



## Virginia Suliman

Chief Information &  
Digital Officer (fmr)  
Invitation Homes



Virginia is the Chief Information & Digital Officer (fmr) at Invitation Homes, where she leads technology and digital strategy, and system execution. Joining in 2019 after 22 years at Hilton, she goes beyond software development to drive company objectives, focusing on human-centered design and scalable solutions. Virginia also serves on the Board of Directors for Title Resource Group. She is an advocate for children with her work at St. Jude and Cooks Children's Hospital.

**SUCCESS STORY:** I reflect on building digital key for a hotel. The project needed a combination of hardware, firmware, chips, software, and back-end systems. When creating the digital key for a large brand, we failed many times. Launch communications were in progress, and something we did caused our working prototype to malfunction. Within hours, a joint team discovered that a poorly written use case led to a code change, resulting in failure. The team worked to resolve issues, improve the product, and launch a press event later that week. Every door I unlock reminds me of all the people behind the work.



## Justine Tran

CIO  
Dallas County



Justine Tran is a transformative CIO with 30+ years of experience spanning development, architecture, and program leadership. She has led large, complex organizations and major technology portfolios across public and private sectors. Justine is known for strengthening operational processes, improving collaboration, and transforming IT departments into reliable, trusted, high-performing partners. Her leadership is grounded in clarity, accountability, and collaboration, with a strong focus on empowering teams, building relationships, and delivering consistent, measurable results.

**SUCCESS STORY:** When I joined Dallas County as CIO, the IT department was viewed as reactive, siloed, and inconsistent. My priority was rebuilding trust—clarifying expectations, establishing governance, and reorganizing the department into a modern, capability-based organization. We strengthened operational processes, resolved long-standing system issues, initiated the modernization of critical public safety and justice platforms, and delivered millions in cost savings through strategic negotiations and application rationalization. Most importantly, we rebuilt a leadership team and culture centered on accountability, transparency, and collaboration. We are becoming an IT organization regarded as a trusted strategic partner driving meaningful, measurable progress across the County.



## James Whatley

CIO  
Mary Kay Inc.



James Whatley has been at Mary Kay for 27 years, starting out as an eCommerce developer and now has been fulfilling the role as Global CIO. Responsible for all IT including Supply Chain, eCommerce (IBC and Consumer), Sales & Comp Product Suite, Digital Tools, BI, Analytics, Cloud, and Security. Managing a global team across 4 Regions, leading several global transformational projects partnering with his Global Business Partners supporting Mary Kay's Business Strategy.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Completed a digital and cloud transformation, rolling out new applications for our Independent Beauty Consultants including but not limited to e-commerce, smart reporting, CRM and a Community. Modernizing the user experience and feature set that was deployed to 24+ countries, positively impacting over 1.2 million IBCs. This was a complete Tech Stack replacement, moving us away from 100% custom dev shop for those applications and all done in record time, with a significant focus on Change Management. In the same time frame, we closed down 5 data centers worldwide wide, moving over 99% of our other applications to the Cloud.

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 DALLAS CIO

# LARGE CORPORATE FINALISTS

OVER \$500 MILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



**Srini Alagarsamy**  
CTO  
Lifespace Communities



As Chief Technology Officer at Lifespace Communities, Srini leads technology strategy and digital transformation with a vision to elevate customer experiences and strengthen operational excellence. With 25 years of technology leadership across financial services, healthcare, and senior living, he builds empowered, high-performing teams and brings disciplined execution to mission-driven organizations. He aligns technology with purpose - modernizing platforms, enhancing cybersecurity, and leveraging data and AI to drive growth, resilience, and meaningful impact.

**SUCCESS STORY:** At Lifespace Communities, we are redefining senior living through technology that strengthens connections, elevates care, and enriches the experiences that matter most to our customers. By rebuilding our digital foundation and embracing purposeful innovation, from intelligent networks and advanced cybersecurity to predictive insights and AI, we empower our teams to be more present, more responsive, and deliver truly human-centered care.



**Chris Fallon**  
CIO  
Wingstop



Chris Fallon is SVP and CIO at Wingstop. He previously served as CIO of Moen and spent 14 years at Starbucks in senior technology leadership roles spanning digital, retail and corporate areas. Chris has a proven track record of leading high-performing teams, creating and delivering transformative digital technology strategies that drive growth. And shameless plug, my favorite Wingstop flavor is Hot Honey Rub on classic or boneless wings accompanied by our amazing homemade Ranch dip!

**SUCCESS STORY:** I'm fortunate to lead a business digital technology team that has delivered major initiatives including the MyWingstop ecommerce+ platform, which helped drive digital sales to 72%. We're also launching a new loyalty and rewards program in 2026 and modernizing corporate systems through Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP and HCM. Beyond this, the team has built scalable technology to support rapid global expansion, strengthened brand partner (franchisee) engagement tools, and advanced our cybersecurity, engineering, and architecture capabilities to position Wingstop for long-term, technology-led growth.



**Russell Pearlman**  
CIO  
Dallas College



Russ Pearlman serves as CIO at Dallas College, leading technology strategy for one of the nation's largest community college systems serving over 135,000 students across 7 campuses. Previous roles include CTO at Toyota and CIO at Mekle, bringing decades of enterprise leadership to higher education. Russ also serves as Of Counsel at Hosch & Morris. He holds a J.D. from SMU School of Law and an M.S. in Artificial Intelligence from Washington University in St. Louis.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As CIO at Dallas College, Russ Pearlman has driven transformative change across the institution. Under his leadership, the college launched Workday Student, the largest implementation of its kind globally, now serving over 135,000 students with improved accessibility and efficiency. He has cultivated an IT culture centered on innovation and collaboration while implementing strategic cost controls that deliver better value for the college. His forward-thinking approach to AI, including pilot programs and a comprehensive risk management framework, positions Dallas College as a leader in responsible technology advancement.



**Jan Ross**  
CIO  
Ingenovis Health



Jan Ross, CIO at Ingenovis Health, leads enterprise IT, engineering, product, corporate applications, and security, aligning technology with business goals to deliver measurable value. She has driven platform integration, infrastructure optimization, and automation that improved speed-to-fill for critical healthcare roles while significantly reducing technology expenses. Known for fostering collaboration and building high-performing teams, Jan champions technology as a competitive advantage, enhancing clinician experience, strengthening security, and creating sustainable value for investors.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Under my leadership, the team delivered transformative initiatives that advanced operational excellence and elevated technology's strategic value. We modernized talent platforms to streamline candidate experience and improve conversion rates, implemented automation and AI tools to reduce manual workload and accelerate hiring, and integrated data across systems for better analytics and compliance. Advanced security protocols strengthened our posture, while infrastructure enhancements improved developer productivity and scalability. These achievements, realized in a condensed timeframe, have reduced friction, improved efficiency, and positioned the organization for long-term growth, agility, and continuous innovation.



**Marlon Shears**  
CIO  
IDEA Public Schools (frmrr)



Marlon Shears is a seasoned technology executive with over twenty years of experience leading digital transformation in complex organizations. As CIO of IDEA Public Schools (frmrr), he drives strategic alignment, innovation, and operational excellence across enterprise systems, data platforms, and cybersecurity. Known for his servant-leadership approach, Marlon builds high-performing teams, modernizes legacy environments, and leverages AI/ML to improve efficiency and student outcomes. His career spans roles in large-scale technology operations, where he has delivered impactful solutions.

**SUCCESS STORY:** One of our most significant technology success stories is the implementation of AI-generated lesson plans for over 3,000 teachers. Teachers previously spent up to 10 hours weekly creating plans; AI now produces customizable, student-specific lessons instantly. This innovation returned thousands of instructional hours, improved consistency, and allowed teachers to focus more on student engagement. The impact has been transformative improving both efficiency and instructional quality across the organization.



**Tadd Tobkin**  
EVP & CTO  
First United Bank



Tadd Tobkin is EVP and Chief Technology Officer, known for clarity, steadiness, and helping organizations turn complexity into growth. He leads enterprise technology, digital experience, data strategy, and modernization efforts that strengthen resilience and elevate customer experience. With experience across consulting, private equity, fintech, and transformation leadership, he has shaped major partnerships, enterprise platforms, and cultural shifts. He holds degrees in engineering, law, and business, and is recognized with national awards for leadership and service.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Our team transformed technology into a catalyst for clarity, confidence, and growth. We rebuilt onboarding into a top-rated customer experience, strengthened our digital and data foundations, improved resiliency, and delivered meaningful efficiency gains. Most importantly, we elevated people. We have seen employees become respected enterprise leaders by owning the new onboarding capability, mastering new skills, and partnering seamlessly with technology. Their stories reflect our larger transformation: people stepping into ownership, teams moving with confidence, and technology becoming a strategic accelerant.



**Tony Wilkins**  
CIO & CISO  
Cantex Continuing Care Network LLC



Tony Wilkins serves as CIO and CISO for Cantex Continuing Care Network LLC, driving enterprise technology, cybersecurity, and data strategy across diverse business lines. He has spearheaded infrastructure modernization, advanced cybersecurity, and real-time analytics to enhance business decision-making and operational performance. Recognized for fostering strong teams and a culture of accountability and execution, Tony has transformed IT into a strategic partner that delivers innovation, stability, and sustainable growth.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As CIO and CISO, my greatest accomplishment has been leading a cultural and operational transformation that restored confidence in technology across our organization. I unified teams on a reliable and secure communication platform, strengthened cybersecurity, and brought structure and clarity to IT through ITIL v4 practices. I introduced real-time dashboards that help leaders make stronger financial, operational, and clinical decisions. We also built a culture of ownership, responsiveness, and compassion. IT now stands as a strategic force that drives innovation, elevates performance, and shapes the future of our organization.



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# CORPORATE FINALISTS

UP TO \$500 MILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



## Chris Boult

CIO  
U.S. Urology Partners LLC



At US Urology Partners, I lead the information technology strategy and innovation for one of the nation's largest independent providers of urological and related specialty services. Overseeing more than 80 locations across the East Coast and Midwest, I focus on delivering technology solutions and business differentiators that empower physicians and their practices, driving the integration and growth of the clinical network, advancing best-in-class care and operational excellence throughout the organization.

**SUCCESS STORY:** I have transformed IT from a back-office cost center into a strategic growth partner for US Urology Partners. By restoring trust through consistent wins, transparency, and accountability, we have built a high-performing, agile team and launched a forward-looking IT strategy. With a new focus on AI, data, and service delivery, this has now positioned us for rapid growth, both organic and through complex M&A integrations. Combining executive leadership thinking with daily operations has enabled our technology to drive clinical and operational excellence, driving measurable improvements in provider and patient experience.



## Chris Chiancone

CIO  
City of Carrollton, TX



Chris Chiancone serves as Chief Information Officer for the City of Carrollton, Texas, leading technology strategy for a \$450 million municipal operation serving 140,000 residents. He oversees a \$30.7 million IT budget and 45-member team across 40 locations. Under his leadership, Carrollton transformed from cyber-attack victim to AI-first city, implementing revolutionary public safety and operational technologies. A CISSP-certified professional, Chris supports the Epilepsy Foundation, Daughters of the American Revolution, and Kidney Cancer Association.

**SUCCESS STORY:** After Carrollton suffered a major cyberattack in 2019, we rebuilt IT from the ground up, transforming from outsourced to in-house operations. In 18 months, we implemented five enterprise systems while deploying 90 miles of fiber infrastructure. Through AI innovations—including automated P-card auditing, intelligent voice bots, and a virtual detective system—we've saved millions annually while improving citizen services. Our team now receives perfect audit scores from HIPAA, PCI, and FBI assessments. Most importantly, we've shifted culture: IT evolved from being avoided to being sought as a strategic partner, with each team member tasked to save their salary through efficiency innovations.



## Sunil Dudi

CIO  
Neenah Foundry



A transformative CIO, Sunil is known for modernizing technology organizations with clarity, purpose, and a people-first leadership style. His leadership turns complexity into opportunity—simplifying systems, elevating cybersecurity, and strengthening business performance. Across manufacturing and global enterprises, he has built high-performing teams, restored confidence in IT, and championed innovations that enhance customer and employee experience. His career reflects a deep belief in service, collaboration, and the power of technology to accelerate organizational success.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Our IT organization has delivered transformational improvements that strengthened operations, enhanced security, and accelerated growth. We introduced AI-driven tools that improved sales effectiveness, we are modernizing our application landscape by retiring hundreds of outdated systems, and implemented a unified maintenance platform that increased plant uptime and operational visibility. We also standardized IT services to improve quality and user experience. Through a focused cybersecurity uplift, we reduced vulnerabilities dramatically and maintained a fully incident-free year. These achievements demonstrate how technology is now a strategic driver of efficiency, resilience, and innovation across the company.



## Aravind Kashyap

CIO  
Riddell



Aravind Kashyap is a seasoned technology executive and the Chief Information Officer at Riddell Sports. With over 30 years of global IT leadership, he is at the forefront of digital transformation, leveraging technology to drive business innovation, enhance operational efficiency, and reinforce player safety. He champions automation and innovation as a mentor and distinguished speaker at technology forums. Aravind holds a Bachelor's in Computer Science and an MBA.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Under my leadership, Riddell's technology organization is becoming a strategic engine for innovation, efficiency, and growth. We are building a digitally ready Riddell by modernizing core systems, elevating user experiences, and harnessing intelligence to accelerate decision-making across the company. These efforts have reduced downtime, improved productivity, and unlocked new ways to deliver greater value to athletes, customers, and employees. At the same time, I've raised team engagement to its highest levels through clear goals, stronger collaboration, and a culture rooted in accountability and growth. This blend of disciplined execution and people-centered leadership is driving meaningful impact across the organization.



## Suresh Oleti

CIO, Lodging Payments, a  
Corpay division  
Corpay



Suresh Oleti is a purpose-driven Product and Technology leader with deep expertise scaling platforms, modernizing enterprise IT, and leading global teams across fintech, travel, e-commerce, and cloud infrastructure. He champions customer-centered design, agile organizational models, and high-performing, self-organized teams. His leadership has delivered multimillion-dollar savings, new revenue streams, and major transformations—including serving as CIO of a \$500M turnaround, CPTO of a high-growth fintech, and engineering leader scaling a venture from \$100M to \$3B.

**SUCCESS STORY:** One of my most formative achievements was at a joint venture, where our mandate was to disrupt the infrastructure market and deliver aggressive quarterly sales. We began with a 15-person team defined by discipline, learning agility, and a passion to win, and scaled to 300 in three years. By fostering a culture of fail-fast engineering, predictable quarterly planning, team-level decision-making, and continuous user feedback, we delivered and operated lead-to-cash systems. This enabled accelerated revenue growth to \$3B. That experience shaped my leadership playbook, which I now apply to complex transformations and multi-acquisition integration at Corpay.



## Bryan Rakowski

CTO  
Willow Bridge Property  
Company





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