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DALLAS  
**BUSINESS JOURNAL**

2026

# DALLASCISO **ORBIE**<sup>®</sup> AWARDS

The annual DallasCISO ORBIE<sup>®</sup> Awards honors chief information security officers who have demonstrated excellence in security leadership. Winners in the Super Global, Global, Large Enterprise, Enterprise, Large Corporate & Corporate categories will be announced February 26 at Hyatt Regency Dallas.

 **DALLASCISO**



## **FROM THE CHAIR**

**48 Dallas CISOs beat executive  
isolation  
PG 3**

# CONGRATULATIONS 2026 DALLASCISO ORBIE NOMINEES

**BASHAR ABOUSEIDO**  
Charles Schwab

**JULI CUNNINGHAM**  
Vizient

**BRIAN HIGGINBOTHAM**  
SRS Distribution

**TONY LAKIN**  
UT Southwestern Medical  
Center

**ROBERT PACE**  
Invitation Homes

**JEFF SOWELL**  
Blue Radius Cyber

**DERRICK AGE**  
City of Dallas

**BYRON DAVIS**  
Tenet Health

**BRIAN HINTZE**  
Fujitsu

**SCOTT LEBREDO**  
JCPenney

**SAURIN PATEL**  
Lennar

**ERIC SPORRE**  
Caterpillar

**ZULFI AHMED**  
HP

**JOSH DAVIS**  
Toyota Motor North America

**JAMES HOLLEY**  
The Brinks Company

**EDWIN MARTINEZ**  
ADEC Innovations

**PEEYUSH PATEL**  
XPO

**CHRIS THOMPSON**  
Caris Life Sciences

**RICHARD ANDERSON**  
University of North Texas  
System

**RICHARD DOROUGH**  
Wawa

**SHANNON HOPKINS**  
Southern Glazer's Wine  
& Spirits

**ADAM MASLOW**  
Raising Cane's

**CECIL PINEDA**  
R1 RCM

**MICHAEL TIDY**  
BNSF Railway

**RYAN BACHMAN**  
GM Financial

**GUS DURAN**  
StandardAero

**STEVE HORSTMAN**  
TPG Global

**BRUCE MCDANIELS**  
Parkland Health

**MAURY PIPKIN**  
RealPage

**MAMTA TYAGI**  
Citi

**RICH BAICH**  
AT&T

**DANIEL ELLISTON**  
GDT

**NATHAN HUNSTABLE**  
CEC Entertainment

**RON MEHRING**  
Texas Health Resources  
Inc.

**MIKE PRIEST**  
Globe Life

**ALI WAEZZADAH**  
Frontier Communications

**RICHARD BALDUCCI**  
Integer Holdings

**TRAVIS FARRAL**  
Archaea Energy a bp company

**SHAWN IRVING**  
American Airlines

**JIMI MILLS**  
Texas Instruments

**ERIC PULEO**  
Commercial Metals  
Company

**MATT WALKER**  
Goosehead Insurance  
Agency

**DAVID BELL**  
CBRE

**MATT FEARIN**  
East West Bank

**JIM KASTLE**  
7-Eleven

**ALAN MITCHELL**  
Celanese

**JOEY RACHID**  
Xerox

**BOB WATTAM**  
Hendrick Medical Center

**ROBERT BERNARD**  
Sally Beauty Holdings

**RAGHURAM GATAMANENI**  
Triumph Financial

**MUSTAPHA KEBBEH**  
UKG

**PAUL MOCARSKI**  
Sammons Financial

**AARON RAUSCHE**  
Dallas County

**RICHARD WEISS**  
MRO

**MORGAN BJERKE**  
Thomson Reuters

**KATHRYN GERLOCK**  
Varsity Brands

**LEONARD KELLEY**  
GuideStone Financial  
Resources

**DEREK MORTON**  
Alcon

**WAYNE REYNOLDS**  
Capital One

**NICK WHITNEY**  
MTX Group Inc

**ERIC BOWERMAN**  
DFW International Airport

**DAVID GINN**  
Johnson Controls

**ABID KHAN**  
Citi

**JIM MOTES**  
Ryan

**NATHAN ROUTEN**  
Southwestern Health  
Resources

**STEVE WILLIAMS**  
NTT DATA, Inc.

**ELIAZAR CAVAZOS**  
Hillwood Development Corp

**JOSEPH GREENE**  
First United Bank

**RAYMOND KING**  
Dallas Cowboys

**AARON MUNOZ**  
Texas Christian University

**STAN SCOTT**  
Cappgemini

**LANCE WILLINGHAM**  
Meriton

**MIGNONA COTE**  
Infor

**AJAY GUPTA**  
Cencora

**SAILAJA KOTRA-TURNER**  
Brown-Forman

**RUSS MURRELL**  
Texas Capital Bank

**JEFF SHAFFER**  
Ben E. Keith

**AARON WISHON**  
Cook Children's Health Care  
System

**JASON COWLISHAW**  
Veritone

**SONJA HAMMOND**  
National Veterinary Associates

**JON KRUEGER**  
NEC Corporation of  
America

**BRIAN OWENS**  
Murphy USA

**JEFF SMITH**  
Exeter Finance

**NATHAN WRIGHT**  
Textron

## 48 Dallas CISOs beat executive isolation

Even the strongest executives can feel isolated at times. When chief information security officers (CISOs) face challenges with trusted peers, isolation transforms into clarity and confidence.

DallasCISO brings together top CISOs from Dallas' leading organizations to build meaningful relationships, share what's working, and create real business value. While industries and organization sizes may differ, the challenges of leadership—and the power of connection—are universal.

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

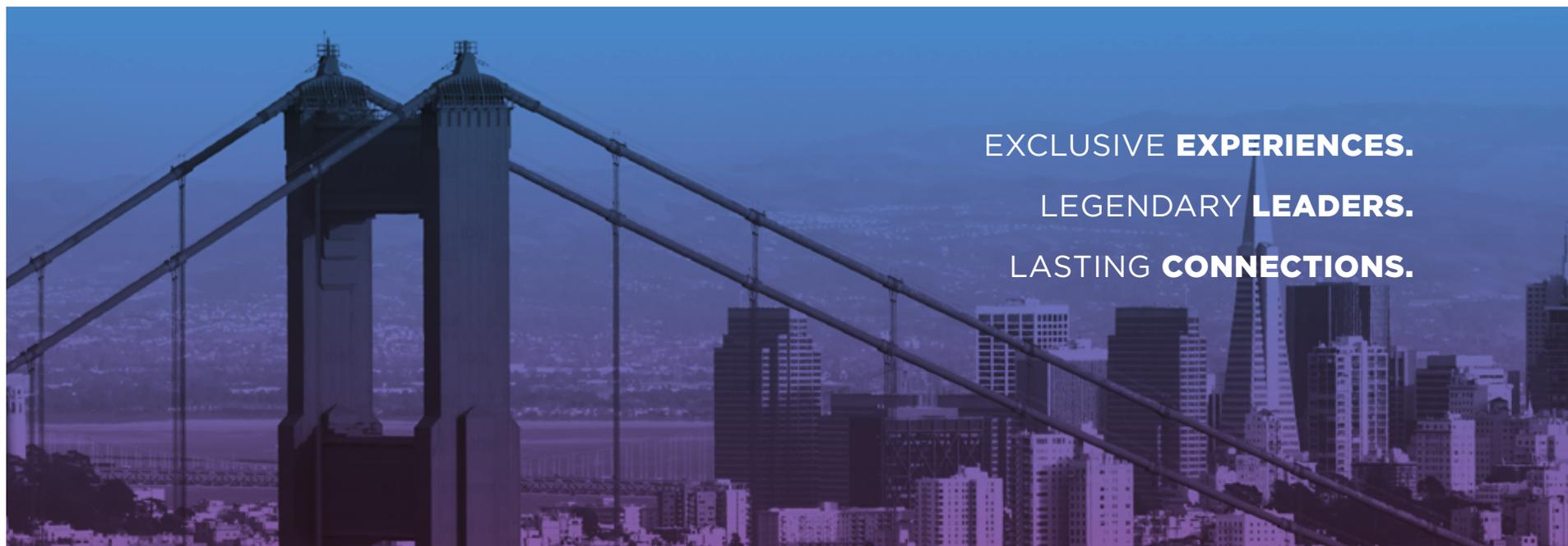
For more than 25 years, the ORBIE Awards have honored C-suite executives for leadership, innovation, and excellence. I encourage you to attend the 2026 Dallas ORBIE Awards to meet and support these outstanding security leaders.

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

Sincerely,



**Ian Schneller**  
2026 Chair, DallasCISO



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# SUPER GLOBAL FINALISTS

OVER \$10 BILLION ANNUAL REVENUE &  
MULTI-NATIONAL OPERATIONS



**Zulfi  
Ahmed**

SVP & Global CISO  
HP



Zulfi has extensive experience protecting Fortune 100 companies against an intense and emerging global threat landscape. He has served as CISO for HP Inc., CVS, PepsiCo, and MetLife—where his program was recognized by Forbes. Zulfi has taught at UT Dallas, published articles in the Dallas Morning News and technical publications, and holds CISM, CRISC, CC, and UNIX certifications. He has also served in volunteer leadership roles at a homeless shelter and women's abuse shelter.

**SUCCESS STORY:** I have had to persevere, ask many questions, and operate from a position of integrity and transparency to achieve what I have. There is no greater success though than taking other people along with you on the journey. One of my proudest achievements is mentoring and fostering the development of future leaders. It is my hope that like me they will prioritize empathy, respect for others, and openness to diverse perspectives. It is my belief that through fostering collaborative relationships and teamwork, we can accomplish more together than alone.



**Alan Mitchell**

VP & CISO  
Celanese



Alan is known as a transformational executive and technical leader, with more than 30 years of experience in the information technology industry, including technology, defense, health care, finance and manufacturing. He is a certified information systems security professional and has a National Security Agency IAM certification. Alan previously served on the board of directors of the Industry Consortium for Advancement of Security on the Internet (ICASI) and advisory boards/boards of technology startups.

**SUCCESS STORY:** We have matured our Celanese security programs, established a sustainable operating model, and built resilient, industry-standard frameworks and infrastructure that promote business innovation through creative thinking: Our AI-powered digital assistant "Chemille" helps engineers quickly and accurately select appropriate materials for their projects. Celanese achieved TISAX automotive supply chain compliance in record time. Our corporate operating model empowers people and drives execution, all while meeting or exceeding industry standard security frameworks. We actively educate our employees and keep information security top-of-mind by regularly conducting harmless phishing "tests" that help them identify real-life bad actors before they infiltrate our network.



**Derek  
Morton**

CISO  
Alcon



Derek Morton is Vice President and Chief Information Security Officer at Alcon, where he leads the global enterprise cybersecurity program. With more than 30 years of experience in technology and leadership, Derek has driven the development and modernization of Alcon's security strategy, optimizing processes and organizational structure to deliver business-focused outcomes. He holds a degree from Tarleton State University and serves as an active Advisory Board member for the Mayfield College of Engineering.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As CISO at Alcon, I drove a global digital transformation to strengthen security while enabling innovation. By aligning IT Security with business objectives, we supported initiatives like AI-driven services, digital commerce, and smart surgical solutions—creating a connected ecosystem that enhances customer trust and outcomes. Our strategy focused on People (building future-ready talent), Process (extending enterprise security governance), and Technology (implementing continuous compliance and scalable platforms). This cultural shift positioned security as a catalyst for growth, business enabler and ensured resilience in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.



**Nathan  
Wright**

CISO  
Textron



Chief Information Security Officer at Textron, leading global cybersecurity strategy across Information Technology, Operational Technology, and Security Operations. Former Director of Product Cybersecurity for Bell Helicopter and Textron Systems, focused on secure aircraft design. Joined Textron in 2008 after roles as Russian linguist and IT specialist supporting US Federal law enforcement. Passionate about people, innovation, story telling and family.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Cybersecurity professionals are most effective when they drive collaboration. I am most proud of the coalitions I've been able to form. I've built strong partnerships across IT, business units, and industry leaders, fostering transparency and collaboration to address evolving regulations and business demands. By engaging cross-functional partnerships, we have created a unified and collaborative approach to risk management. These coalitions enable proactive risk mitigation strategies, improved communication, and organizational readiness. Our teams now identify zero-day vulnerabilities, contribute to collective defense, and innovate with AI—driving resilience and trust across Textron.

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## How busy executives build exceptional leaders

Designed by executives, Inspire Leadership Academy develops top talent through world-class leadership training, so teams go further, faster.



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**tcs** TATA  
CONSULTANCY  
SERVICES



## When resilience is built in, risk stays out

With AI-led intelligence and adaptive defense built into every layer, we ensure that protection is not an afterthought but a design principle.

Lead with cyber confidence

# GLOBAL FINALISTS

OVER \$1 BILLION ANNUAL REVENUE & MULTI-NATIONAL OPERATIONS



## Mignona Cote

SVP & Chief Security Officer  
Infor



Mignona Cote, a world leader in cloud security with over three decades of experience, has protected companies including AWS, AIG, Aetna, Bank of America, PepsiCo, NetApp, and Verizon. Mignona delivers stellar security programs and embeds security into market ready products. Currently the SVP, CISO at Infor, she focuses on security across both ERP/SAAS products and cyber security showcasing rapid cloud-based advancements. She has received numerous awards including the 2025 CSO Hall of Fame Induction.

**SUCCESS STORY:** My success lies in tapping into talent and maximizing the potential of new ways to simplify and manage risks. Establishing mechanisms for each person to be heard, contribute, and drive solutions creates commitment to excellence and innovation. I take pride in my ability to bring people together and give them power. Embracing the wealth of knowledge from my team and vast network enables me to continue embarking on new ways to advance security. Creating ways to cultivate the unprecedented speed of AI initiatives.



## Daniel Elliston

VP & CISO  
GDT



With over 18 years in cybersecurity across financial services and other regulated industries, I serve as Chief Information Security Officer at GDT, leading a diverse team in driving transformational security programs. Under my leadership, we have modernized infrastructure, consolidated data-centers into the cloud, and enhanced security controls aligned with best-in-class frameworks. Emphasizing a business-value approach, I partner with stakeholders to enable innovation, reduce risk, and showcase cybersecurity as a strategic, revenue-supporting function.

**SUCCESS STORY:** In my time with GDT, we have led a complete cybersecurity transformation built on “GDT-on-GDT.” My team has revitalized policies, enabled datacenter consolidation and migration into Azure, and reduced exposure. We implemented best-in-class solutions—CrowdStrike, Rubrik, Abnormal Security, Palo Alto, Cisco—and cultivated trusted relationships across the organization. By treating ourselves as “customer zero,” we fostered trust, accelerated transformation, and integrated security into revenue generation. Today, cybersecurity is a driver of business value, instilling confidence in customers and partners. We have proven that security investments yield measurable returns and transform a traditional cost center into a business-aligned, value-generating innovation engine.



## Sailaja Kotra-Turner

VP, CISO & Director Infrastructure and Operations  
Brown-Forman



Over her 20-year career, Sailaja Kotra-Turner has led global teams across IT Operations, Enterprise Applications, and Cybersecurity. As CISO and VP of Global Infrastructure at Brown-Forman, Sailaja is responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of controls and procedures to ensure the availability, integrity and security for all computer-based systems and networks across all technical platforms.

**SUCCESS STORY:** My security philosophy has been to integrate security within infrastructure teams. By embedding security early in system design and empowering infrastructure professionals to become security-aware, we built a culture of proactive defense. This approach transformed our team from reactive responders to strategic enablers, aligning cybersecurity with business outcomes and resilience.



## Jim Motes

SVP & CISO  
Ryan, LLC



Jim Motes is the Senior Vice President and Chief Information Security Officer at Ryan LLC, where he leads global cybersecurity, risk, and governance programs. He oversees a hybrid security organization focused on outcome based protection, AI enabled defense, and business aligned strategy. With over twenty years of security leadership experience, Jim has built and matured enterprise security functions across multiple global industries, earning recognition for innovation, operational excellence, and talent development.

**SUCCESS STORY:** My leadership philosophy is to stay engaged, accessible, and hands on. We run lean, so I work directly with my team and expect leaders to understand the work, not manage from a distance. With a mostly remote team, I hold daily meetings to keep people connected and use Microsoft Teams and AI outputs to stay involved in threat activity. I encourage open discussion and expect people to challenge ideas. When AI risks emerged, I built our incident response GPT and our AI assessment process myself, showing the team how to approach new technology with confidence and responsibility.



## Maury Pipkin

CISO  
RealPage, Inc.



Maury Pipkin is a transformative technology leader with over 32 years of experience architecting and elevating world-class security and IT organizations. As Chief Information Security Officer at RealPage, he has reimagined enterprise security—advancing Zero-Trust principles, AI-driven automation, and establishing a comprehensive AI security practice to safeguard RealPage emerging technologies. His strategic vision fuses innovation with disciplined risk management, empowering RealPage to scale confidently while delivering secure, industry-defining solutions to the real estate market.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Over the past four years, I have modernized RealPage’s enterprise security posture through advanced IAM, a unified 24x7x365 SOC/NOC model, and the creation of a purple team that expanded into AI red-teaming as AI adoption accelerated. I implemented Zero-Trust and cybersecurity-mesh architectures, integrating generative and agentic AI to automate analysis and response. I strengthened risk-based vulnerability management, expanded Security Engineering and Architecture functions, and grew the Security Champions program to 100+ engineers. Additionally, I enhanced technology rationalization, improved oversight of 475+ vendors, and increased organizational resilience through more than 100 annual BIAs and tailored continuity plans.



# Detect. Disrupt. Defeat Ransomware.™



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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2026 DALLAS CISO FINALISTS AND WINNERS.



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## Fortify Your Network Through the Convergence of Networking and Security



Congratulations to the 2026  
Dallas CISO of the Year Award  
Winners and Nominees

# LARGE ENTERPRISE FINALISTS

OVER \$6.5 BILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



**Juli Cunningham**

CISO  
Vizient



Juli Rhoden Cunningham is the CISO at Vizient, where she leads the security organization with clarity, candor, and a data-driven approach. She reshaped the security organization into a modern, domain-focused practice and helped make cybersecurity a shared responsibility across the company. Known for cutting through complexity and aligning people around what matters, Juli ensures Vizient can innovate securely while reminding everyone that security is not a department. It's a culture.

**SUCCESS STORY:** When I became CISO, I stepped into a role held by one person for 22 years - big shoes, big shadow. My proudest accomplishment isn't a metric; it's the people. I laid out a new vision, restructured the team, raised expectations, and stayed unapologetically myself...and not one person quit! That matters in an industry where talent can leave anytime. Together, we shifted security from "the team that says no" to a company-wide responsibility. We built continuity, clarity, and a culture where everyone understands their role in protecting our data. That transformation - earned, not mandated - is our true success story.



**Richard Dorough**

CISO  
Wawa



Richard Dorough is a senior technology executive with 25+ years of experience, including 20 in cybersecurity leadership. He pioneered the Global CISO role at Textron, built breach response expertise at PwC, and refined his broad CISO capacity at Zyston before joining Wawa, where he now serves as CISO. Richard continues to drive innovation in cybersecurity and resilience, while giving back to the community through volunteering, mentoring, and educating.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Being a CISO for more than 20 years has been a rewarding journey filled with challenges, triumphs, and growth. Along the way, I have had the privilege of working with outstanding teams and leaders who empowered me to push boundaries, innovate, and take calculated risks. Exceptional mentors also shaped my approach, instilling in me a deep sense of responsibility and strategic thinking. These influences have guided my leadership style and fueled my commitment to building resilient security programs that protect organizations while enabling them to thrive with confidence in an ever-changing digital landscape.



**Brian Higginbotham**

CISO  
SRS Distribution



Brian is an enterprise Cybersecurity leader known for transforming organizations and building strategic, business-aligned security programs. At SRS Distribution, he established a modern Cybersecurity and Fraud function, expanded team capabilities, and strengthened resilience through a people-first approach. He works closely with executives to align security with business goals, enhance operational reliability, and reduce risk. Brian's focus on talent development and scalable program design positions Cybersecurity as a true enabler of the enterprise.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Under Brian's leadership, SRS Distribution's Cybersecurity program transformed from a small, reactive team into a strategic, business-aligned function. He established structure, developed a five-year roadmap, and partnered with executives to enhance compliance, resilience, and operational reliability while significantly reducing enterprise risk. His "People over Technology" approach expanded the team and cultivated internal talent into high-performing security associates. This transformation strengthened security capabilities while enabling the business to innovate and grow with confidence.



**Paul MocarSKI**

VP, IT Infrastructure & CISO  
Sammons Financial Group



Paul J. MocarSKI is Vice President, IT Infrastructure and Chief Information Security Officer at Sammons Financial Group. He leads enterprise infrastructure and cybersecurity as shared services, delivering secure, resilient operations and digital experiences. Previously, he led global security programs at Valspar and Sherwin-Williams. A retired Army National Guard Colonel with 30+ years in technology and security, Paul holds an MBA, a Master of Strategic Studies, an MS in Physics, and credentials including CISSP-ISSAP and CISM.

**SUCCESS STORY:** In eight years at Sammons Financial Group, I am most proud of credibility, trust, and partnership. We shifted security from gatekeeper to proactive partner by hiring and growing leaders and empowering the team. Today we are embedded across IT and the enterprise, including risk, legal, privacy, compliance, and core businesses. Recent outcomes include a secure M365 rollout that met business needs, responsible enterprise GenAI adoption, the Mighty Oak awareness series that drives engagement, and modern controls that reduce risk and improve employee experience. Teams now seek us out first, which is the clearest sign of success.

# The trusted network for AI



Lumen congratulates the DallasCISO of the Year ORBIE Award winners.

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Discover what's new at  
[g.co/cloud](https://g.co/cloud)





## Richard Anderson

Associate Vice Chancellor  
& CISO  
University of North Texas  
System



Dt. Richard Anderson is the Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Information Security Officer for the University of North Texas System. Dr. Anderson holds a Ph.D. in Information Science from the University of North Texas and has over 30 years of experience in higher education as a cybersecurity professional, researcher, and professor.

**SUCCESS STORY:** A key achievement of my work at UNT System is the multi-year effort to design and implement a consistent and mature security program across the UNT System. This work required much more than technical expertise. It involved understanding the culture of a diverse enterprise, building trust with our community, and shaping a program that met their needs while reducing risk. It also required creating a unified security team with the skills and stability to sustain the program. Through this effort, we moved from a fragmented model to a coordinated enterprise program that supports UNT System's mission and values.



## Sonja Hammond

VP, IT Architecture and  
Engineering & CISO  
National Veterinary  
Associates



Sonja Hammond is Chief Information Security Officer and Vice President of IT Architecture and Engineering at National Veterinary Associates (NVA). With 17 years of experience in cybersecurity and risk management, she champions a "defense in depth" approach to safeguard businesses while enabling growth. Sonja has held leadership roles at EssilorLuxottica, Hewlett-Packard, and Callaway Golf Company, and is a recognized industry mentor, speaker, and author.

**SUCCESS STORY:** I led the transformation of our cybersecurity posture from zero to world-class—building a multi-layered defense that protects 1,300 hospitals and 40,000 employees. When I joined in 2020, there was no security team and one failing tool. Today, we deliver advanced programs in threat hunting, risk management, identity governance, and security awareness, while embedding a defense-in-depth culture through real-time teaching bots, creative education campaigns, and collaborative engineering. The result: a scalable, resilient security foundation that drives trust, accountability, and business growth.



## Robert Pace

VP & CISO  
Invitation Homes



Robert is the Vice President, Information Security and CISO for Invitation Homes. He is responsible for leading the Information Security Program for Invitation Homes. Responsibilities include establishing and maintaining a sound security strategy, governance, operations, service delivery, business integration and end-user awareness training. Robert's career spans over 25 years in leading global teams in the delivery of Cybersecurity Operations. Degrees from Michigan State University & Walsh College. Certifications obtained CISSP, CISM, CICISO, ITILv3 & Six-Sigma Green Belt.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Our cybersecurity program has matured from isolated, task-based activities into a strategic, programmatic approach centered on risk management and resilience. This evolution ensures sustainable processes and minimizes business disruption while delivering phased implementations that strengthen security posture and operational continuity. Guided by our core value, Embrace the Journey, we recognize that cybersecurity is an ongoing process, not a destination. Our focus remains on delivering business-aligned solutions that anticipate and mitigate complex risks. This philosophy drives innovation, fosters collaboration across the enterprise, and positions security as a trusted enabler of organizational success.



## Ali Waezzadah

SVP & CISO  
Frontier Communications



Ali is an executive leader with over 20 years of experience in information technology, cybersecurity, data privacy, and risk management across public and private sectors with roles in highly security-oriented organizations and industries. Currently, as the SVP, CISO for Frontier Communications, he is leading the execution of a multiyear cybersecurity transformation and upcoming integration with Verizon. Before Frontier, he served as the SVP of Information security for Paramount and CISO for Kroll.

**SUCCESS STORY:** After emerging from Chapter 11 in 2021, Frontier faced the challenge of rebuilding a fragmented and compliance focused cybersecurity fast. The transformation began with establishing three simple principles that cybersecurity must be business focused, risk based, and technology driven. We put in place a new management team that accomplished the following within 18 months:-Established governance, updated policies, formed of an executive security council, and built a practical risk management framework-Rebuilt the team that included upskilling talent across all areas-Simplified security tools by consolidating overlapping technologies-Transitioned operations from fully in-house to a scalable hybrid model

# INSPIRE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

## How busy executives build exceptional leaders

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Designed by executives, Inspire Leadership Academy develops top talent through world-class leadership training, so teams go further, faster.

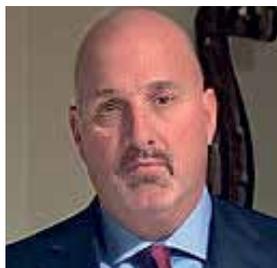


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# LARGE CORPORATE FINALISTS

OVER \$900 MILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



**Derrick Age**  
CISO  
City of Dallas



Derrick Age serves as Chief Information Security Officer for the City of Dallas, overseeing cybersecurity strategy, risk management, and compliance across city operations. He leads initiatives in identity and access management, incident response, and secure IT architecture. Derrick has driven citywide adoption of security best practices, strengthened governance, and enhanced resilience, ensuring that technology services remain secure, reliable, and aligned with the city's mission.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As CISO of the City of Dallas, my success story is transforming the city's cybersecurity culture. We replaced legacy practices like unrestricted local admin accounts and unchecked elevated access with privileged access management, MFA across all sites, and secure remote access. We enforced best practices such as avoiding browser favorites and preventing connections with exposed credentials. By leveraging PAM solutions, we provide just-in-time access for contractors and temporary staff, creating a secure, auditable, and scalable framework that strengthens city operations, reduces risk.



**Eric Bowerman**  
AVP, Cybersecurity  
DFW International  
Airport



Eric Bowerman is a seasoned Chief Information Security Officer with more than 27 years of experience in Cybersecurity. Eric has excelled working in Health-care, Manufacturing, Defense, Technology, and currently the Transportation sector at DFW International Airport. Eric holds a Bachelor degree in Management Information Systems and Ethics from Mid-America Christian University, as well as CISSP and CISM professional certifications.

**SUCCESS STORY:** We proved that cybersecurity is not just policy but practice by operationalizing resilience across DFW's most critical systems. We ran dozens of live failovers and tabletop exercises across Tier-0 and Tier-1 assets ensuring that resilience was tested, not assumed. We advanced outcome-driven metrics that make risk tangible and actionable. By tracking measures such as CISA KEV remediation, OT visibility, and USB encryption posture, we gave executives and operators a clear view of cybersecurity as a business enabler. We also shared policies and playbooks with smaller airports, mentored peers, and partnered with law enforcement and industry across the aviation sector.



**Travis Farral**  
VP & CISO  
Archaea Energy a bp  
company



Travis Farral has been working in technology and cybersecurity for over 30 years, spanning stretches at Nokia, XTO Energy, ExxonMobil, and others. He is currently the VP and CISO for Archaea Energy, a bp company, a role he has held since 2021. He has done everything from international speaking, to building Security Operation Centers, driving forklifts, writing for internationally recognized security publications, and mentoring future generations of cybersecurity professionals.

**SUCCESS STORY:** The journey at Archaea Energy has been both fun and challenging. When I joined the company, it had just over 30 people, but it had planned to go public, so much had to be done in a short time. The last four and a half years since then have been a blur, but looking back, it's hard to imagine all the things we have accomplished: we stood up an enterprise IT environment from nothing, built out NIST 800-53 aligned policies and procedures, went public, bought several other companies, got acquired by bp, and built dozens of new plants.



**Nathan Hunstable**  
VP, IT Infrastructure & CISO  
CEC Entertainment



Nathan Hunstable is the Vice President of IT Infrastructure and Chief Information Security Officer for Chuck E. Cheese, overseeing technology operations and cybersecurity for more than 500 locations. He leads a team responsible for enterprise networks, cloud platforms, store systems, and risk management. Known for his direct, hands-on leadership style, Nathan focuses on building resilient infrastructure, strengthening security maturity, and developing high-performing teams that enable operational stability, business growth, and long-term technology modernization.

**SUCCESS STORY:** One of my best success stories is an engineer I hired into a mid-level role who quickly showed a talent for seeing patterns others missed. Instead of limiting him to his job description, I encouraged him to lead a root-cause effort on our recurring store outages. He uncovered systemic issues that had gone unnoticed for years and coordinated the fixes across regions. That project not only stabilized our stores but also accelerated his growth—he's now a senior manager running key reliability initiatives. His progression is a direct result of giving someone ownership and backing them fully.



**Joey Rachid**  
CISO  
Xerox



Joey Rachid is the Chief Information Security Officer for Xerox, overseeing cybersecurity strategy, risk management, and compliance across Xerox operations. He leads initiatives in identity and access management, incident response, and secure IT architecture. Joey has driven citywide adoption of security best practices, strengthened governance, and enhanced resilience, ensuring that technology services remain secure, reliable, and aligned with the city's mission.

# CORPORATE FINALISTS

UP TO \$900 MILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



## Raghuram Gatamaneni

CISO  
Triumph Financial



Raghu Gatamaneni is the Chief Information Security Officer at Triumph Financial, a publicly traded fintech company. With decades of experience in cybersecurity, Raghu built Triumph's enterprise Information Security Office, aligning security with business growth and innovation. A certified CISSP, CISA, CRISC, and CISO, he champions risk-based strategies, talent development, and secure adoption of emerging technologies. His leadership philosophy emphasizes transparency, adaptability, and collaboration, positioning Triumph to "Transact Confidently" in a technology driven future.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Since joining Triumph Financial as CISO in 2022, I led the development of an enterprise Information Security Office aligned with our mantra to "Transact Confidently." By embedding security into product development, implementing MFA, and maturing vendor risk management, we strengthened resilience and enabled secure growth. Our improved security posture, validated by external assessments, is helping to drive new client acquisition and revenue. My leadership philosophy—rooted in transparency, adaptability, and talent development—has fostered a high-performing team.



## Joseph Greene

CISO  
First United Bank and  
Trust



Joe Greene is a seasoned cybersecurity leader with 20+ years of experience building teams and delivering strategic security programs that reduce risk and drive innovation. A recognized thought leader, author, and speaker, Joe is passionate about mentoring and helping others achieve their goals. He currently serves as CISO at First United Bank & Trust in Dallas, TX, where he champions secure innovation and a mission to inspire and empower others to Spend Life Wisely.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Over the past three years, we've transformed cybersecurity and accelerated innovation at First United Bank & Trust. A highlight: stopping a simulated ransomware attack and destroying the malicious code so it could never be reused. We also cut account opening time by 20+ minutes and introduced AI tools that deliver faster, smarter customer responses. These wins showcase our commitment to security, efficiency, and exceptional experiences.



## Chris Thompson

CISO  
Caris Life Sciences



Chris Thompson has been in security his entire career, most recently running the North Texas Cyber Task Force at the FBI. Chris is now CISO at Caris Life Sciences. SA Thompson was on the FBI's highly trained Cyber Action Team and was a Firearms Instructor, Tactical Instructor, and SWAT leader. Chris holds a B.S. in Industrial Engineering and a B.A. in History from Texas A&M University and also earned a M.S. in Information Security Engineering.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As the first CISO of Caris Life Sciences, I established the Security Department from the ground up, expanding it by more than 500% in my first year while closing critical capability gaps and implementing a company-wide governance strategy. I shifted the organization to a risk-focused security posture, prioritizing meaningful risk reduction over reactive vulnerability management. I supported the company's successful June 2025 IPO by ensuring cybersecurity SOX readiness, and we are on track to achieve SOC 2 Type II compliance by the end of 2026, significantly strengthening Caris's overall security maturity.



## Charles Valdes

CISO  
Leon Capital Group



Charles Valdes is the founding CISO at Leon Capital Group, where he built and leads their first global cybersecurity and data privacy program. With extensive experience in financial services, healthcare, and technology, Charles held leadership roles at Trellix, The US Bank, DTCC, and Kubota. A servant leader and trusted advisor, he specializes in aligning security strategies with business growth. Charles holds many security certifications and earned his degree from The University of Texas at Austin.

**SUCCESS STORY:** As Leon Capital Group's founding CISO, I built and implemented the company's first enterprise-wide cybersecurity and data privacy program in just eight months. Aligned with NIST and SEC standards, the program embeds security into executive decision-making and safeguards operations for our 9,000+ employees and millions of customers. By establishing governance, risk, and compliance frameworks and upgrading technology and controls to world-class standards, I positioned cybersecurity as a strategic enabler of innovation and growth. Partnering with executive leadership, I transformed security from reactive defense into a proactive foundation for trust, resilience, and enterprise value.



## Matt Walker

Managing Director, IT  
Security & Compliance (CISO)  
Goosehead Insurance (fmr.)



Mr. Walker joined Goosehead in 2023 as Managing Director of IT Security & Compliance. In this role, he is responsible for overseeing Goosehead's continuing evolution of digital security and governance. Matt brings to Goosehead over 15 years of experience, previously working with Bain & Company in the Security Architecture and Engineering realm. Matt holds multiple computer security industry certifications as well as a Masters in Cybersecurity and Information Assurance.

**SUCCESS STORY:** The Goosehead Cybersecurity team has built success in the past year by taking on technically challenging initiatives that have contributed to the company's security maturity. We're excited to continue to build on the program and demonstrate world-class excellence in cybersecurity through the coming years.



## Richard Weiss

CISO  
MRO Corp



Richard Weiss is a cybersecurity executive with 20+ years' experience, including 15 in healthcare. As CISO, he leads programs that safeguard critical data, strengthen defenses, and ensure resilient operations. His achievements span incident response, cloud security, robust data protection, and a culture of awareness that measurably improves posture and stakeholder trust. He holds the CISSP certification and a Bachelor of Science from the University of North Texas, concentrating in Information Management and Health Informatics.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Under my leadership, we strengthened security and improved agility. We reduced vulnerabilities through targeted remediation, automated scanning, and streamlined patching. Additionally, we expanded multi-factor authentication across critical systems, enhanced access security and aligned with modern threat models. Operational efficiency improved as we cut turnaround time for security reviews by 50%, enabling faster business decisions without sacrificing risk oversight. We deployed advanced endpoint protection, cloud security tools, and proactive monitoring to build resilience. Beyond technology, I invested in team development—cross-training staff and fostering collaboration across functions—creating a culture where security is embedded in daily operations and drives business success.

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