

MICHIGAN ORBIE AWARDS

The annual Michigan 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 December 4 at The Henry.



DARLENE TAYLOR
2025 MichiganCIO Chair



ANITA KLOPFENSTEIN
Leadership Award
Recipient



WHO'S WHO?
Meet the Advisory
Board & Members of
MichiganCIO
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MICHIGAN
ORBIE
AWARDS

A Special Section in Partnership with
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CONGRATULATIONS 2025 MICHIGAN ORBIE NOMINEES

RUSS AHLERS BDO	TONY DEAN Auto Owners Insurance	PANKAJ JAIN GM Financial	BRUCE MITCHELL Comerica	FRED SEIDELMAN MRM and Interpublic Group	ART THOMPSON City of Detroit
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THOMAS BARTOL Volkswagen	JODI DINES Real Estate One	KEVIN JOHNSON Clarience Technologies	EARL NEWSOME Cummins Inc.	MIKE SETERA Joyson Safety Systems	DANIEL WALTZ MyMichigan Health
DAN BEELER Boyne Resorts	ALAN DOUVILLE Stryker	BHAVANI KONERU Oakland University	AARON NILSSON Jet's Pizza	LANCE SHINABARGER Little Caesar Enterprises	PETE WAYNE Corrigan Oil
SCOTT BENNETT Lear Corporation	JOE GARZIA Galco Industrial Electronics	CRAIG LABOVITZ Nokia	RYAN OLIVIER Adient	JOSEPH SIMPSON Edward Rose & Sons	JOHN WEI Integreon
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MARK BUIKEMA BISSELL Homecare, Inc.	DENNIS HODGES Inteva Products	DWIGHT LEVENS Oakland Schools	PAT RINALDO Ally Financial, Inc.	DEE SLATER Wolverine Worldwide	NOHA WHITE Detroit Diesel, a Daimler Truck North America Company
JOHN CARNEY PVS Chemicals	MATT LOGAR PHINIA	MIKE ROGERS Nexteer Automotive	JEFFREY SMALL Great Lakes Water Authority	ERIK WILLE Cabinetworks Group	
STEVE COLLINS United Veterinary Care	ABE HONG Learning Care Group	STAN MAC Pet Supplies Plus	MAY RUSSELL Toyota Motor Corporation	RYAN SPENCER Yazaki	GERALD WINKLER Haworth
RICHARD CZARNECKI Michigan State University	CLARISSA HULLEZA Easterseals MORC	RAMAN MEHTA Johnson Electric	CHRIS SCOTT Great Expressions Dental Centers	RYAN TALBOTT BorgWarner	SCOTT WOOD Baker College

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2025 MichiganCIO Chair ►► Darlene Taylor

Great CIOs
Understand
How Connections
Drive Transformation



DARLENE TAYLOR

Connections with others facing similar challenges transform ideas into impact, plans into progress, and vision into reality.

MichiganCIO brings together preeminent Chief Information Officers from Michigan's largest organizations to strengthen leadership effectiveness, drive innovation, and create business value. Member-

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

Whether you're leading a large corporation or a nonprofit, there's no textbook for how to be great in a role that changes as rapidly as technology. That's why relationships create superpowers, driving personal and organizational transformation.

The Inspire Leadership Network connects CIOs with over 1,700 lifelong learners across more than 40 chapters. From public and private companies to government, education, healthcare, and nonprofits, we exist to help members navigate and thrive in a uniquely challenging executive role.

The leadership principles that have served CIOs for over 25 years are now available to communities serving CISOs as the Inspire Leadership Network expands in 2025.

The ORBIE® Awards recognizes the great leadership of CIOs in Michigan. On behalf of MichiganCIO, I congratulate the nominees and finalists for their remarkable achievements. A special thank you to the sponsors and underwriters for their foresight in making the Michigan ORBIE® Awards possible.

With the right connections and relationships, transformation is not only possible—it's happening today, as evidenced by the finalists you will meet throughout this special section.

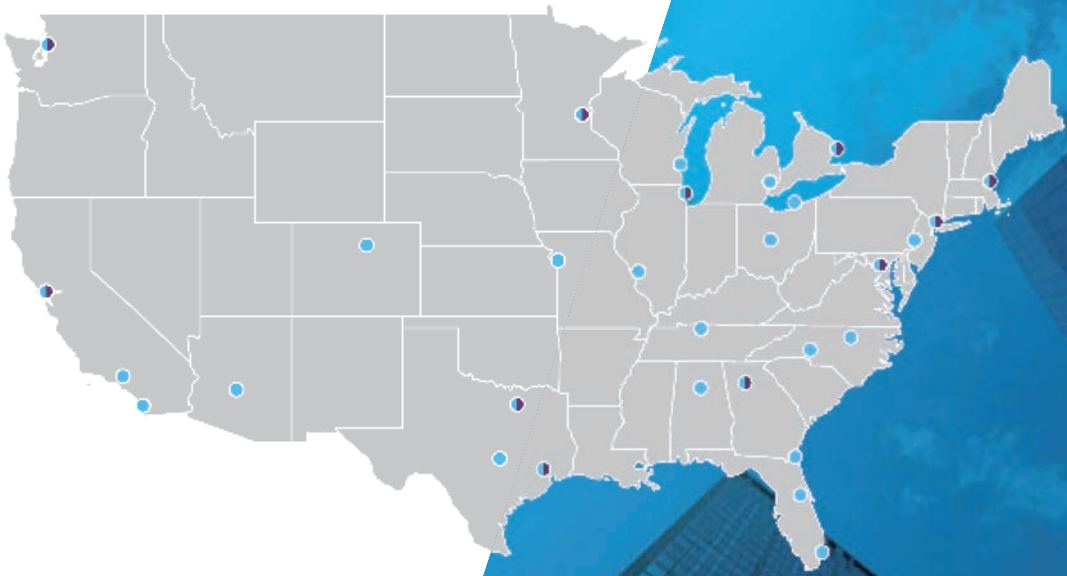
Sincerely,

Darlene Taylor
MichiganCIO Member



THE ANSWER
IS IN THE ROOM.
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● CISO CHAPTERS



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community
near you.



Congratulations
Richard Czarnecki

ON BEING A
Finalist for the 2025
Michigan CIO of the Year
ORBIE Awards.

Thank you for your leadership,
dedication, and innovation in
empowering Spartan success
through technology.



Leadership Award Recipient ▶▶ Anita Klopfenstein

Super Global Finalists ▶▶ Over \$15 billion annual revenue & multi-national operations



ANITA KLOPFENSTEIN

Anita Klopfenstein is the Global Chief Information and Digital Officer for Little Caesars and Ilitch Owned Companies. She oversees the strategic direction, development, deployment, and maintenance of technology across all ten Ilitch Holdings companies, including Little Caesars, the Detroit Red Wings, the Detroit Tigers, Little Caesars Arena, and Champion Foods.

Prior to joining Little Caesars, Klopfenstein served as vice president of eCommerce and consumer systems at Panera Bread, where she led consumer systems product development and the integration of commerce and marketing platforms. With more than 35 years of experience building high-performing IT organizations in competitive markets, she is recognized for her leadership in software development, enterprise operations, and digital transformation. She holds a B.S. in computer science and radio/TV/film from Indiana State University and an M.B.A. from Liberty University.

Klopfenstein has earned several industry honors, including Top Innovator at the Women in Foodservice Technology Awards (2017), Michigan Global CIO of the Year from InspireCIO (2021), CIO of the Year in the Enterprise category (2022), the HMG Strategy CIO of the Year in the Large Cap division (2023), and the CIO 100 Award, recognizing CIOs who drive digital business growth through technology innovation.

Klopfenstein is active in community and industry organizations. She serves as vice president on the board of the Michigan Council of Women in Technology, supporting initiatives that grow Michigan's community of women in tech through mentoring, leadership development, scholarships, and youth programs. She also sits on the advisory boards for Tech United, which expands STEM opportunities for students, and Wayne State University's Technology, Information Systems and Analytics program.

Outside of work, Klopfenstein and her husband, Lynn, live with their 12 children. For more than 30 years, they have provided foster care and have been recognized multiple times as foster parents of the year in Illinois. She plays the clarinet, practices martial arts, and has completed more than 30 marathons.

Leading through service

Anita Klopfenstein, CIO Little Caesars Enterprises and Ilitch Owned Companies

With more than 30 years of experience in the tech industry, Anita Klopfenstein is a seasoned leader known for building high-performance teams. Having led tech for major consumer brands, she excels at strategic planning and hands-on problem solving.

As the 2025 ORBIE Leadership Award winner, Klopfenstein recently reflected on her career journey and shared her insights on leading tech teams to ensure business growth.

Q: How did you get interested in technology?

Klopfenstein: I went to Indiana State University and majored in radio & TV. I was also a news producer at WTHI-TV. It was about the same time that the Apple II came out. We had one at the TV station and I got really interested in technology. I started taking classes in computer science and ended up with a double major. Ever since, I feel like I use both degrees. I think my success comes from my ability to communicate and explain technical concepts to business people and business concepts to IT people.

Q: What would you say the highlight of your career has been so far?

Klopfenstein: At Little Caesars, we completely rebuilt our restaurant platform from the ground up. It operates in the cloud with an offline backup system so if the internet goes down the restaurants can still operate. It was a very difficult project. Our team had to learn what the stores needed to improve the customer experience while also building an online order taking platform. COVID hit mid-project. We were all remote, forcing us to figure out how to navigate those waters. But we launched the system and it's been very successful. We're rolling it out internationally. It's a testament to what brilliant IT folks can do working together.

Q: How big is your team?

Klopfenstein: We have over 500 IT professionals. We support Little Caesars and all of the Ilitch Companies, which

include the Detroit Tigers, the Detroit Red Wings, Olympia Development, and other companies along with venues such as Little Caesars Arena.

Q: What's the biggest technology challenge that companies face today?

Klopfenstein: Understanding where AI fits. A CIO must set realistic expectations around what AI can and can't do, and identify how it can add value. As tech professionals, we must have a strong understanding of the business and how it operates. I ask my team to work in the restaurants to learn the business firsthand. That way, they can actually offer up solutions that drive improvement.

"I think my success comes from my ability to communicate and explain technical concepts to business people and business concepts to IT people."

Q: How are you using AI at your company?

Klopfenstein: Our high-volume business generates a lot of data. We're looking at how to quickly turn that data into insights for our restaurants. For example, AI may be able to answer basic help desk questions so our call center representatives can focus on detailed problems and troubleshooting. Like most companies, we've formed a cross-functional task force to explore how AI can help us move forward.

Q: What risks are involved with AI?

Klopfenstein: Any software tool has risks. AI can make mistakes and have hallucinations. As we say: Trust, but verify the information. AI also introduces more risk from a cybersecurity perspective, so we need guardrails around it.

Q: What is your leadership style?

Klopfenstein: I'm a servant leader. I work for my team. As CIO, it's my job to ensure that they have the tools and training they need to succeed and grow their careers and their knowledge.

Q: How has the role of the CIO changed?

Klopfenstein: The CIO was originally thought of as an operational expense. We had to keep servers up and running. But as technology has become more critical to organizations, we're now considered a valued partner, driving business efficiency and innovation.

Q: What would you advise CIOs or aspiring CIOs?

Klopfenstein: It's really important to learn the different aspects of the business. I also have an MBA which has allowed me to understand financial and operational goals. When I'm at the table, I can speak logically on the information being presented and add value. CIOs can help find solutions and move the business forward.

Q: What does the ORBIE Leadership Award mean to you?

Klopfenstein: I'm very thankful and appreciative to receive the award. The award is voted on by our peers. It's meaningful that my peers in Michigan have acknowledged my leadership style. Ultimately, the award is a testament to my team and the great work they do. I continue to be impressed by what they build and deliver to our company, our colleagues, and our guests every day.



SCOTT BENNETT
CIO
Lear Corporation

Lear Corporation, is responsible for the company's global IT strategy, Information Security, and IT assets. In this role, he manages all aspects of the company's global IT, including technology and business transformations, global applications, global infrastructure, information security, artificial intelligence, and advanced automation technologies. As CIO, Scott is responsible for enabling IT assets and solutions across Lear's 300 manufacturing plants in 40 countries.



Success Story: Scott and his team drive global transformation through a proven, unmatched ability to scale IT investments—powering enterprise-wide innovation with relentless speed, precision and agility. Over 650 major shop floor projects and rollouts executed annually; more than 45 ERP installations or major upgrades completed each year; global deployment of Palantir's Foundry platform, enabling Business Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence capabilities across the enterprise, with over 13,000 active users and over 190 active projects.



PANKAJ JAIN
CIO
International Operations
GM Financial

Pankaj Jain is CIO of International Operations at GM Financial, where he leads global technology strategy to enable growth in international markets. Previously, at Charles Schwab, JPMorgan Chase, Nationwide Insurance, and Silicon Valley Bank, he delivered scalable platforms, modernized legacy systems, built high-performing teams, and advanced enterprise agility. Guided by principles of balance and impact, Pankaj treasures family time, enjoys reading, cooking, and the outdoors, and is active in community service.



Success Story: Pankaj has built and led global technology organizations across banking and financial services, including JPMorgan Chase, Charles Schwab, Silicon Valley Bank, and GM Financial. He shaped new divisions from the ground up and scaled teams across the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. A lifelong learner with advanced academic and professional credentials, he is a role model for continuous growth. A sought-after mentor, he fosters communities of excellence and contributes at industry events. He is most proud of the early career talent pipelines he established, a legacy that is producing the technology leaders of tomorrow.



EARL NEWSOME
VP & CIO
Cummins Inc.

As CIO of Cummins, Inc., Earl Newsome has revitalized IT strategy, driving agility, resiliency, and business value. His leadership delivered major savings, boosted customer satisfaction, and enabled digital transformation across industries. At Linde, he pioneered smart cabinet innovation; at TE Connectivity, he improved energy efficiency. His career spans Estée Lauder and Owens-Illinois, with a foundation from West Point and U.S. Army service. A recognized thought leader, Earl inspires excellence and impact in IT.



Success Story: Earl has led the transformation of IT at Cummins into a strategic business enabler focused on agility, digitization and service excellence. By shifting from a tech-centered to a business-driven approach, they've boosted customer satisfaction, enhanced cyber safety and improved operational resilience. Initiatives like Learning Mat and Agile delivery have elevated performance and engagement. His leadership is rooted in innovation, inclusion and purpose—driving meaningful change at scale.



RYAN OLIVIER
SVP & CIO
Adient

Adient, has over 25 years of experience in leadership roles across Purchasing, Supply Chain Management, and IT. He has a passion for leveraging technology to achieve business outcomes. Previously, he was CIO at American Axle & Manufacturing and Meritor Inc. Ryan holds a BS in Logistics, Materials, and Supply Chain Management from Michigan State University and an MBA in Finance from Oakland University.



Success Story: As a strategic partner to the business, Adient IT delivers technology solutions that are secure, scalable and cost-efficient—driving innovation and supporting growth across the automotive market. This commitment was evident in the recent infrastructure services transformation initiative, which re-envisioned how Adient managed its infrastructure functions of Service Management, Network Services, Delivery/Hosting, and Enterprise platforms/endpoints. The result was a more efficient model, delivering significant cost savings, improved automation, enhanced user experience, and increased scalability/innovation capabilities. Setting the foundation upon which Adient IT will continue to deliver its services to meet the ever-changing demands of the automotive industry.

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MICHIGAN
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AWARDS

Congratulations to the 2025 Michigan CIO of the Year Award Winners and Nominees

Global Finalists ▶▶ Over \$1.5 billion annual revenue & multi-national operations



KEVIN JOHNSON
VP & CIO
Clariance Technologies

leads the Global Corporate IT function for Clariance Technologies, overseeing all aspects of Information Technology. With 35 years of IT experience in various industries, Kevin is a dedicated leader & mentor. He holds a bachelor's in management information systems & an MBA in finance and entrepreneurial management, both with Beta Gamma Sigma honors from Wayne State University.



Success Story: Clariance Technologies is a global leader of visibility, safety and digital technologies for transportation. Since 2020, Kevin has led having built a high-performing team, strengthened cybersecurity and launched a unified analytics platform that delivers daily insights across dozens of companies. He partnered with leadership to drive commercial excellence through custom tools & analytics, fueling measurable revenue growth. By modernizing infrastructure & enabling data-driven decisions, IT now enables efficiency, fuels growth, and creates lasting value.



MATT LOGAR
VP & CIO
PHINIA

Matt Logar is the Vice President and Chief Information Officer for PHINIA (NYSE: PHIN), leading a team of 170 employees across eleven countries. Since joining in July 2023, he successfully led the separation from BorgWarner and continues to transform PHINIA's IT organization. Previously, he was CIO at Gentherm and began his career at GE. Logar holds a business degree from Indiana University and an MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.



Success Story: Matt was hired to be PHINIA's first Chief Information Officer, directly prior to PHINIA's public company spin in July of 2023. With a team consisting of new hires, and others with change fatigue from prior M&A transactions, along with his new leadership team, they built a highly effective operating model and a global team with an agile, strong can-do culture. They exceeded expectations completing their separation ahead of schedule, with zero business disruption and established credibility and trust throughout the PHINIA organization as a strong business partner.



RAJ SINGH
Global CIO
Visteon

Raj Singh is CIO of Visteon, leading global IT strategy, operations, & digital transformation. With 28+ years of experience at Fortune companies, he drives innovation through ERP transformation, infrastructure modernization, & advanced analytics. Raj champions trust, accountability, and continuous improvement. His strategic vision & disciplined execution have positioned IT as a business enabler, delivering measurable value & aligning technology with long-term growth & competitive advantage.



Success Story: At Visteon, Raj led IT transformation from foundational stabilization to strategic execution. Key achievements include the SAP launch at Palmela, global data center migration, analytics modernization, cybersecurity advancements & GenAI adoption—improving uptime, reducing costs and enhancing resilience. Generative AI pilots streamlined operations & boosted productivity. Raj also launched an AI upskilling initiative for all IT employees. His leadership philosophy—clarity, accountability and empowerment—fostered a high-performing culture. By aligning IT with business strategy, he delivered measurable value and positioned technology as a strategic enabler of growth.



ANDREA SIUDARA
SVP & Global CIO
Dana Inc.

Andrea is SVP & CIO at Dana Inc., a Fortune 300 manufacturer of drivetrain & e-propulsion systems for light vehicle, commercial vehicle, & off-highway markets. Andrea leads Dana's digital strategy as well all aspects of IT. She is a permanent management representative to the Board of Directors to provide Technology & Audit committee updates on digital and cybersecurity. Andrea also serves on the Board of Directors for Bocar Group.



Success Story: Andrea's IT team played a crucial role in deploying a new strategic foundation for net new green technology business. The systems implemented enabled seamless connectivity & efficient management of various machinery and new highly connected plant floor & engineering devices in record time. Highlights: Modernized & secure network & wireless network for automated vehicles; advanced & centralized system for monitoring & managing machinery & warehouse operations; tools for tracking performance & generating reports. Integration with other systems for smooth operations and data sharing. Cloud-based Data-lake connectivity.



NOHA WHITE
CIO
Detroit Deisel, a Daimler Truck North America Company

With over 35 years of IT leadership, Noha has driven complex global initiatives—from system development and enterprise migrations to corporate transformations. A strategic team leader, Noha has supported every business function and held pivotal IT roles. Backed by multiple degrees and advanced technical training, Noha is also a passionate advocate for diversity, mentoring women to elevate female leadership in technology.



Success Story: Noha's team successfully consolidated their diverse product portfolio into a single, integrated supply chain & logistics framework within a unified SAP environment. This transition enabled real-time visibility, reduced operational redundancies and drove significant cost efficiencies. They also migrated critical engineering systems to a modern client-server architecture, ensuring zero business disruption. They managed complex carveout initiatives due to their separation from Mercedes, maintaining business continuity throughout. Lastly, they launched a startup with joint venture partners, excelling in strategic alliances and fostering innovation.

Large Enterprise Finalists ▶▶ Over \$3 billion annual revenue



RICHARD CZARNECKI
CIO
Michigan State University

Rich Czarnecki serves as Chief Information Officer at Michigan State University, where he leads strategic direction and execution of enterprise-wide IT services. A member of the Big Ten Academic Alliance and board member for Merit Network, Rich brings over 14 years of progressive leadership in higher education. He began his career developing award-winning K-12 edtech solutions. Rich holds a B.S. in Computer Science from MSU and executive credentials from EDUCAUSE and MOR Associates.



Success Story: As CIO of Michigan State University, Rich led the design and implementation of MSU's Federated IT transformation program to improve delivery of services across research, teaching, and administration. By working with campus leaders, Rich implemented dedicated unit-level support paired with enterprise services and governance. This model has modernized infrastructure, enabled solution co-creation, reduced duplication, and improved cybersecurity. The federated IT model empowers colleges and units while strengthening alignment to enterprise strategy, enabling impactful innovation and institutional risk management. This collaborative approach positioned IT as a strategic partner, driving measurable efficiencies and MSU's mission of advancing knowledge and transforming lives.

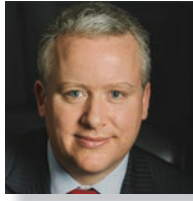


SEAN LEMON
CIO
UFP Industries

From intern to CIO, Sean's 20-year journey at UFP Industries reflects a commitment to growth, innovation and leadership. Starting in 2005 as an intern, he embraced opportunities that shaped his expertise in technology and business strategy. Today, as Chief Information Officer, he leads enterprise-wide digital transformation, cybersecurity and technological excellence across 220+ facilities. His passion is building high-performing teams that align technology with business outcomes, empowering people to achieve more in a rapidly evolving landscape.



Success Story: Sean's story is one about the power of people. In a world where talk of AI reigns supreme, he has built a team who sees emerging tech and if primed and ready to fit those tools into a human-powered world. They don't talk about replacement—they talk about how new tools help turn difficult jobs into stable, high-quality long-term employment. He has succeeded because character came first and technical expertise second. He has prioritized leadership and building leaders over simple reward resumes and tenure. Their results are different because we think differently.



BRUCE MITCHELL
EVP & CIO
Comerica Bank

Bruce Mitchell is a transformational Chief Information Officer leading Comerica through deep platform transformation and delivering innovative digital and data driven customer experiences. Mitchell also leads strategic initiatives across enterprise technology to simplify processes, optimize cost structures, modernize program delivery, and build a world class technology team. He joined Comerica in November 2020 as the enterprise Chief Information Officer. Prior to Comerica Bank, he held technology leadership roles in Canada, UK, China, and India.



Success Story: Comerica's Technology team has helped build Comerica's future by engineering next generation foundational capabilities to modernize our customer and colleague experiences. Leveraging the power of automation, they have accelerated customer outcomes while reducing risk and improving cost efficiencies. Their refreshed digital and data capabilities drove new, innovative payment and treasury management solutions. Migrating their workloads to the cloud, they unlocked opportunities to innovate and execute with greater speed, agility and resilience.



ERIK WILLE
CTO
Cabinetworks Group

Erik Wille is the SVP and CTO for Cabinetworks Group. He is a people driven leader passionate about transforming IT operations into a trusted partner that empowers organizations to dream boldly, build seamlessly, and delight consistently. Prior to Cabinetworks, Erik was the global CISO for American Axle and Head of Information Security for Penske Automotive Group. He holds a bachelor's and master's degree from Walsh College and an Executive MBA from the University of Michigan.



Success Story: The greatest success has been transforming IT from a technology-focused group into a customer-centric partner. By prioritizing business problems over tools, they've built stronger partnerships with functional leaders, unlocking new capabilities and driving enterprise growth. This shift has positioned IT as a trusted advisor, delivering solutions that are simple, seamless and accessible helping build life into Cabinetworks Group through technology that empowers lasting change.

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Enterprise Finalists Over \$1 billion annual revenue



JOHN CARNEY
EVP &
CIO
PVS
Chemicals

John Carney is a senior IT executive based in Michigan with extensive experience leading technology teams in manufacturing, automotive, and software industries. As Chief Information Officer at PVS Chemicals, John specializes in ERP implementations, cybersecurity, and IT strategy, driving innovation and operational efficiency. He holds a Master's in Business Information Technology from Walsh College and a Bachelor's in Mathematics/Computer Science from Lawrence Technological University



Success Story: Working with their executive leadership, John developed an Enterprise Application Plan in 2022 to update and modernize our application portfolio. Since that time, they've executed on the following: Migrated the entire organization to Office 365, multiple ERP implementations (2 completed, 2 in process, more to follow), implemented a full cyber security program, implemented an HCM system, implemented an Financial Consolidation application. His IT organization has also supported multiple M&A activities that have helped more than double our company's revenue.



ABE HONG
EVP &
CTO
Learning
Care Group





RAJ POLANKI
US
CIO
Wacker
Chemical

Raj Polanki is a technology leader with 25+ years of experience. He serves as Americas CIO and Global AI & Digital Strategy Leader at Wacker, overseeing IT strategy across the U.S., Brazil, and Mexico. Known for transforming IT into a strategic enabler, Raj champions GenAI adoption and digital innovation. He holds an MBA from Michigan Ross, is an MIT Sloan alumnus, and mentors future tech leaders through the AI & Digital Leadership Club.

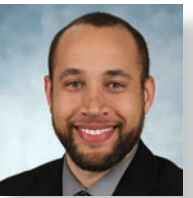




JEFFREY SMALL
CIO
Great Lakes
Water
Authority

Jeffrey Small has served as CIO for the Great Lakes Water Authority since 2016, providing IT leadership, innovation and cybersecurity. With 30 years' experience, including roles at Wayne County and global firms, he excels in leveraging technology to improve utility operations. A graduate from George Washington University and Baker College, he serves on nonprofit tech boards and was honored as MI-GMIS IT Professional of the Year and a Government Technology Innovation Award winner.





ART THOMPSON
CIO
City of Detroit

Art fell into IT to put himself through college. Working in emergency services doing tech support and learning the ropes. Moving into the role of IT Manager for Detroit's Public Safety team, he worked his way over years to gain respect of his peers and superiors. Quickly he took over a Director role and started to oversee Cyber Security. Then after the pandemic led to become CIO and CISO.



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Ryan Talbott
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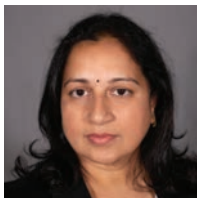
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Erik Wille
Cabinetworks Group

Large Corporate Finalists Over \$350 million annual revenue

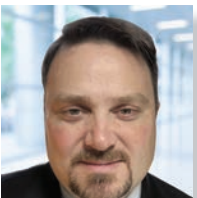


BHAVANI KONERU
CIO
Oakland University

Technology executive with 25+ years specializing in strategic IT planning, digital transformation, leveraging emerging technologies to drive performance and operational excellence. As the Chief Information Officer at Oakland University, she delivers secure and innovative solutions that support student success and operational efficiency. Previously, she served as CIO at Ferris State University and held senior IT roles at Wayne State University. She holds an MS in Computer Science and an MBA.



Success Story: Oakland University faced significant challenges with siloed data across disparate systems, limiting access and hindering effective performance monitoring. Bhavani led the development of a comprehensive data strategy and the creation of a centralized data repository, consolidating data from various sources. They implemented analytical platforms with self-service capabilities, enabling departments to independently build and monitor their KPIs. This initiative fostered data-driven decision-making, enhanced collaboration and improved operational efficiency. By empowering business units with real-time insights, the university strengthened its ability to track progress, optimize resources and achieve strategic goals.



AARON NILSSON
CIO
Jet's Pizza

Aaron Nilsson is the CIO of Jet's Pizza. Since 2019 he has used his skill set to build Jet's Pizza's digital experiences for customers and in-store operations. Under his leadership Jet's saw more than a 581% increase in digital sales in his first 6 years. He launched some of the most innovative digital products in the category. Nilsson was previously associated with brands such as Carhartt, Domino's, and General Motors.



Success Story: In 6 years, the team went 5x on digital sales. They leveraged Artificial Intelligence tools to allow texting of pizza orders and redesigning customer experiences. They helped customers understand our products on a deeper level with incredible HD video that lets you virtually feel the cheese pull and sense the steam rising off the fresh baked crust. They saved countless stores from having to close when the labor shortage was at its worst by implementing phone based AI tools that took kept their valuable employees on the pizza make line instead of answering phones, which now, never had a busy signal.



DR. CHRIS SCOTT, PH.D.
CIO
Great
Expressions
Dental
Centers

Chris Scott, Ph.D. is a 30+ year IT veteran and 4x CIO/CISO. He has worked in multiple Fortune 100 companies, as well as many small and mid-sized PE owned companies. Chris uses a combination of experience and education to effectively lead his teams. His passion of IT and IT Security always shine through and allows him to be a great Sr Executive leader with business stability, security, and scalability at the core.



Success Story: Chris drove complete enterprise network infrastructure standardization across all 230 offices, including standard Fortinet Firewalls, Switches, Wireless Access Points and network extenders. In addition, he outfitted all offices with dual circuits to ensure business continuity regardless of single ISP outage. Chris and his team deployed Square payment terminals to all offices, integrated it with their Practice Management System and delighted all patients who want to pay with modern methods like ApplePay, GooglePay, Tap n go, chip dip, etc. Chris drove the integration of multiple new vendors which functionality will drive revenue up by more than \$10M per year.



JOSEPH SIMPSON
CIO
Edward Rose & Sons

Joe Simpson is Chief Information Officer at Edward Rose & Sons, where he has led enterprise technology transformation for more than a decade. With over 30 years of IT leadership experience, including senior roles at Quicken Loans, he has overseen large-scale ERP, HR, and cloud migrations, identity automation, and AI innovations. A former U.S. Marine, Joe is recognized for building high-performing, long-tenured teams and aligning technology strategy with business growth, resilience, and operational excellence.



Success Story: Joe led the transformation of a century-old company from paper-based processes to a fully digital, cloud-first enterprise. Over the past decade, he grew the IT team from 3 to over 40 professionals and unified operations across 18 states through a modern ERP platform. They also pioneered AI innovation: Rosie, their virtual leasing agent, generated more than 23,000 leases, while AskSheldon, their internal AI bot, helped address thousands of support calls. By combining resilience, efficiency and innovation, they created a scalable technology blueprint that fuels sustained growth and enhances both customer and employee experiences.

Corporate Finalists ▶▶ Up to \$350 million annual revenue



JOE GARZIA
CIO
Galco
Industrial
Electronics

Throughout his 30-year career, Joe has been a strategic IT leader focused on building and transforming technology organizations to drive business value. He has translated business goals into a clear technical vision, led successful digital transformations and integrated numerous mergers and acquisitions. His expertise in optimizing IT budgets, improving operational efficiency and developing teams has enabled him to positively impact company performance.



Success Story: As Galco's first CIO, Joe a strategic overhaul and successful migration of all legacy systems to modern, cloud-based solutions. This enabled the company to grow revenue organically and through the acquisition of four companies. Joe built a high-performing IT team, optimized contracts for over \$1 million in savings and engineered a robust cybersecurity framework to combat modern threats.



CLARISSA HULLEZA
CIO
Easterseals
MORC

Clarissa Hulleza is an innovative CIO, based in Auburn Hills, MI. She is a visionary leader in digital transformation and champions inclusive technology strategies, fosters high-performing teams, and drives enterprise-wide impact through collaboration and forward-thinking solutions. Clarissa earned her B.A. from Oakland University and has worked with Easterseals MORC for 25 years, leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities.



Success Story: Through strategic collaboration with leaders and key stakeholders, Clarissa had the privilege of modernizing Easterseals MORC's operations by enhancing EHRs and migrating to cloud services. Together, they transformed behavioral healthcare by being the first in Michigan to integrate Eleos AI into clinical documentation. They ensured uninterrupted services during the COVID-19 pandemic through telehealth, launched Salesforce to deepen community engagement and fortified enterprise security across platforms. These achievements reflect Easterseals MORC's commitment to innovation, resilience and excellence in service that Clarissa is honored to be a part of.



DWIGHT LEVENS
CTO & CIO
Oakland
Schools

Dwight Levens serves as Chief Technology & Information Officer for Oakland Schools, leading a 175-member team that supports 28 districts and more than 175,000 students across Oakland County, Michigan. His team founded the Oakland Schools AI Collective, which advances the adoption of ethical AI in education. A CoSN Volunteer Hall of Fame inductee, Dwight is nationally recognized for service, innovation, and building technology systems that are secure, equitable, and future-ready.



Success Story: Dwight is proud to lead a 175-member Technology Services team that supports 28 districts and 175,000+ students across Oakland County. Together, they've strengthened resilience through countywide cybersecurity services, including a managed SIEM provided at no cost to local districts. They also launched the Oakland Schools AI Collective, uniting educators to shape how AI is used ethically to support learning while keeping people at the center of innovation. From scalable networks to equitable device access, their work reflects a deep commitment to service, equity and long-term impact—making technology not just secure and reliable, but truly transformative for every learner.



PAUL RAPIER
VP, IT
Detroit Pistons

Paul Rapier is Vice President of Information Technology for the Detroit Pistons, where he oversees all aspects of technology strategy, cybersecurity, and innovation. He has led transformative initiatives including the move to Little Caesars Arena, the launch of the Pistons Performance Center, and the adoption of AI-driven tools across the organization. A mentor and team builder, Paul has developed award-winning IT talent while driving modernization, resilience, and growth both on and off the court.



Success Story: Under Paul's leadership, the Detroit Pistons IT team has transformed technology into a strategic driver of success. He guided the seamless move from the Palace of Auburn Hills to Little Caesars Arena and spearheaded the launch of the Pistons Performance Center, building state-of-the-art infrastructure with near-zero downtime. By modernizing cybersecurity, migrating services to the cloud and rolling out AI-driven tools, IT has increased efficiency, reduced costs and safeguarded operations. Paul has mentored a passionate team—two earning "Employees of the Year"—showing that investing in people delivers lasting organizational impact.



JOSH SERBA
CIO
AHC
Hospitality

Josh Serba serves as the VP of Information Technology and CIO at AHC Hospitality. He leads a skilled team of IT professionals that provide technical services for managed hotels and restaurants. With over 25 years of experience in IT, he advises on all technology initiatives and decisions to ensure reliability and performance in the systems implemented and managed by him and his team.

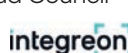


Success Story: Josh is proud of the culture that he has built within our IT department. His management team has been with him almost as long as I've been with AHC, and the culture of hard work, teamwork, respect for each other and doing things the right way every time is something that everyone on his team subscribes to. It's a true family, and one he can say he's very proud to be lead.



JOHN WEI
EVP &
CTO
Integreon

John Wei is EVP & CTO of Integreon, a global leader in AI-enabled legal, compliance, creative, and business solutions. He partners with business units to drive double-digit growth, global expansion, and award-winning AI innovation. With prior CTO roles at Comerica Bank, Emergent Holdings, and DXC/HP, he has deep expertise in AI/ML, cloud, cybersecurity and digital transformation. John serves on the APACC Board and IBM Financial Services Cloud Council and is a Harvard Business School alumnus.



Success Story: Partnering with IT and business units, John's team transformed Integreon's technology into a driver of client value. Their award-winning AI solutions delivered faster, more efficient services, with 1,700+ AI agent instances deployed by August 2025 and rapidly scaling. Clients achieved 99.99% uptime, zero breaches and certified ISO 27001 and SOC 2 Type II security. These innovations fueled double-digit revenue growth, 100% client retention, and one of the industry's highest NPS scores. Supported by global delivery hubs and a strong AI talent bench, they ensured scale, resilience and sustained client success.

Congratulations
John Wei



2025 Michigan
CIO of the Year
ORBIE Award
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and relentless focus on
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CONGRATULATIONS!
JEFF SMALL

The Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) congratulates our Chief Information Officer Jeff Small on his nomination for the 2025 Michigan CIO Orbie Awards.

Jeff is a consummate leader, who during his nine years as CIO for GLWA has dramatically shifted our IT Group from reactive "firefighting" to being a proactive, trusted business partner.

As CIO, Jeff has built a top-notch, capable team and instituted a robust cybersecurity program, as well as a cloud-first, mobile enabled strategy founded on a resilient infrastructure. And recognizing the importance of future proofing GLWA's technology capabilities, he has introduced an emerging technology function to explore innovations and foster continuous improvement.

Your GLWA family is proud of you and all that you have accomplished!



Jeff Small
Chief Information Officer



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Michigan
chief
information
officers.



**Congratulations,
Kevin Johnson!**

We congratulate Clariance Technologies Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Kevin Johnson for being named a 2025 Michigan CIO ORBIE® Global Finalist. We applaud his vision, leadership and unwavering commitment to excellence.



clariancetechnologies.com

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so much more.**

Congratulations, Erik Wille

2025 Michigan CIO of the Year ORBIE Award finalist

Your leadership, vision, integrity, and forward-thinking approach continue to elevate and inspire our entire team. We're grateful for all you do—and proud to celebrate the difference you make each and every day.

