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MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL  
BUSINESS JOURNAL

2026

# MINNESOTA ORBIE® AWARDS

The annual Minnesota ORBIE® Awards honors chief information officers and chief information security officers who have demonstrated excellence in technology and security leadership. Winners in the Global, Large Enterprise, Enterprise, Large Corporate, Corporate, CISO Large Enterprise & CISO Enterprise categories will be announced July 17 at Minneapolis Marriott City Center.

 MINNESOTACIO |  MINNESOTACISO



#### CHAIRS

Great leaders never  
lead alone



#### LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT & KEYNOTE

John Avenson,  
SVP and CTO,  
Minnesota Twins

# CONGRATULATIONS 2026 MINNESOTA ORBIE NOMINEES

<b>BRAD ABBOTT</b> Medica	<b>CHRISTOPHER BUSE</b> Old Republic International	<b>SAMUEL GITHINJI</b> Childrens Minnesota	<b>NOAH KORBA</b> General Mills	<b>AARON NIELSEN</b> Mall of America & American Dream	<b>PHOEBE SODMAN</b> Optum
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<b>TONY ALSLEBEN</b> CentraCare	<b>JUSTIN BUTLER</b> Minnesota Timberwolves & Lynx	<b>CHAD HAGEDORN</b> SFM Mutual Insurance Company	<b>NICHOLAS KULENKAMP</b> Travelers	<b>MATT O'HARA</b> The Vomela Companies	<b>JEFFREY STRANG</b> Christensen Farms
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<b>WADE ANDERSON</b> Bay & Bay Transportation	<b>JIM CASSELL</b> Magellan Health	<b>BILL HOLMBERG</b> Wayne Transports, Inc	<b>JILL KUYKENDALL</b> Securian Financial Group	<b>BOB OLSON</b> Aon	<b>DAN STUSYNSKI</b> Patterson Companies, Inc
<b>MICHAEL ARULFO</b> Cadre	<b>CHRISTOPHER CHAPMAN</b> Thrivent	<b>JEFF HOLSCHUH</b> Sun Country Airlines	<b>HEIDI LARSON</b> Taylor Corporation	<b>TONY PELESKA</b> Kraus Anderson Companies	<b>ROHIT TANDON</b> Essentia Health
<b>KEVIN BAARTMAN</b> International Dairy Queen	<b>FRANCOIS CHARETTE</b> Optum Insight	<b>DAVID INGHAM</b> Allina Health	<b>JENNY LARSSON</b> Intact Insurance	<b>KATHY PERSIAN</b> Schwan's Company	<b>FAITH TANG</b> Mortenson
<b>RAMESH BABU</b> Digi-Key	<b>KELLIE CHRISTENSEN</b> Gray, Inc	<b>JOHN ISRAEL</b> State of Minnesota / Minnesota IT Services	<b>JASPER LI</b> Banner Engineering	<b>NATALIE PERSSON</b> The Toro Company	<b>KEITH TANSKI</b> Medica
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<b>JACQUELYN BAILEY</b> Minnesota State Colleges & Universities	<b>BRETT COOKSEY</b> Redwood Logistics	<b>STEVE JENSEN</b> Transamerica	<b>STEVE LOCKE</b> Ascentek	<b>MARK REIMEL</b> RDI	<b>BRAD REIMER</b> Sanford Health
<b>TK BALAJI</b> Post Consumer Brands	<b>IDRISSA DAVIS</b> LineaSecure	<b>ALLA JOHNSON</b> Liberty Diversified International	<b>DAVE LUNDAL</b> Children's Minnesota	<b>TRISHA RICHARDS</b> Smarte Carte	<b>RYKER RICHARDSON</b> Federated Mutual Insurance Company
<b>KEVIN BARND</b> Great Clips Inc	<b>BEN DE BONO</b> Sunrise Banks	<b>SHAWN JOHNSON</b> Benedictine Health System	<b>RYAN MACOMB</b> Ameriprise Financial	<b>MIKE ROGERS</b> Hormel Foods	<b>TIM ROLFING</b> Satellite Industries and Satellite Shelters
<b>JIM BARNES</b> Kodak	<b>BRIAN DELANEY</b> Brandt Holdings Agriculture	<b>STEVE JOHNSON</b> Nortech Systems, Inc	<b>CLIFF MANUEL</b> The Kinetic Group	<b>TIM ROLFING</b> Satellite Industries and Satellite Shelters	<b>DOMINIC VENTURO</b> US Bancorp
<b>RAJESH BHAT</b> APi Group	<b>ADAM DRESEN</b> AssistRx	<b>ASHOK KALLAM</b> Fairview Health Services	<b>GREG MATTHIAS</b> Agility Health	<b>WILLIAM SCANDRETT</b> Allina Health	<b>PARAM VIG</b> Solventum
<b>ANDREW BINGENHEIMER</b> US Bancorp	<b>BETTY ELLIOTT</b> Freddie Mac	<b>MATT KEEN</b> Old National Bank	<b>GEORGE MCNULTY</b> State of Minnesota	<b>THOMAS SCHAEFFER</b> Old Republic Title	<b>JAIME WASCALUS</b> City of Saint Paul
<b>DAVID BLACK</b> CHS Inc	<b>MATT EMMERICH</b> Ingersoll Rand Inc	<b>MARC KERMISCH</b> Protolabs	<b>HARSHAL MEHTA</b> CWT	<b>KATHRYN SCHOENROCK</b> Graco	<b>CHARLES WATSON</b> Essentia Health
<b>YOUSSEF B'LAL</b> Voya Financial	<b>SARAH ENGSTROM</b> CHS	<b>ADAM KINNARD</b> Royal Credit Union	<b>JUDY MOLENAAR</b> Surescripts	<b>TAMMY SCHUETTE</b> Datasite	<b>JOSH WOODRUM</b> UnitedHealth Care
<b>ANDREW BOMETT</b> Boston Scientific	<b>KYLE ERICKSON</b> Solventum	<b>GARY KINSEY JR.</b> Jerry's Enterprises	<b>FRANK MULLER</b> HealthPartners	<b>TAMER SELIM</b> Evereve	<b>GERALD WYNNE</b> Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota
<b>PATRICK BORES</b> Smart Data Solutions	<b>TREVOR FARNUM</b> Data Recognition Corporation	<b>BILL KLOSTER</b> Short-Elliott-Hendrickson, Incorporated	<b>CRAIG MUNSON</b> Minnesota State Colleges & Universities	<b>GERARD SMYTH</b> Ameriprise	
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## 2026 MINNESOTA ORBIE AWARDS | FROM THE CHAIRS

## Great leaders never lead alone

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

MinnesotaCIO and MinnesotaCISO bring together top CIOs and CISOs from Minnesota's 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 CIOs and CISOs with over 2,000 C-suite executives across more than 50 chapters,

spanning public, private, and nonprofit organizations across North America. Beyond technology and security executives, Inspire also serves communities for 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 Minnesota ORBIE Awards to meet and support these outstanding technology and security leaders.

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



Sincerely,

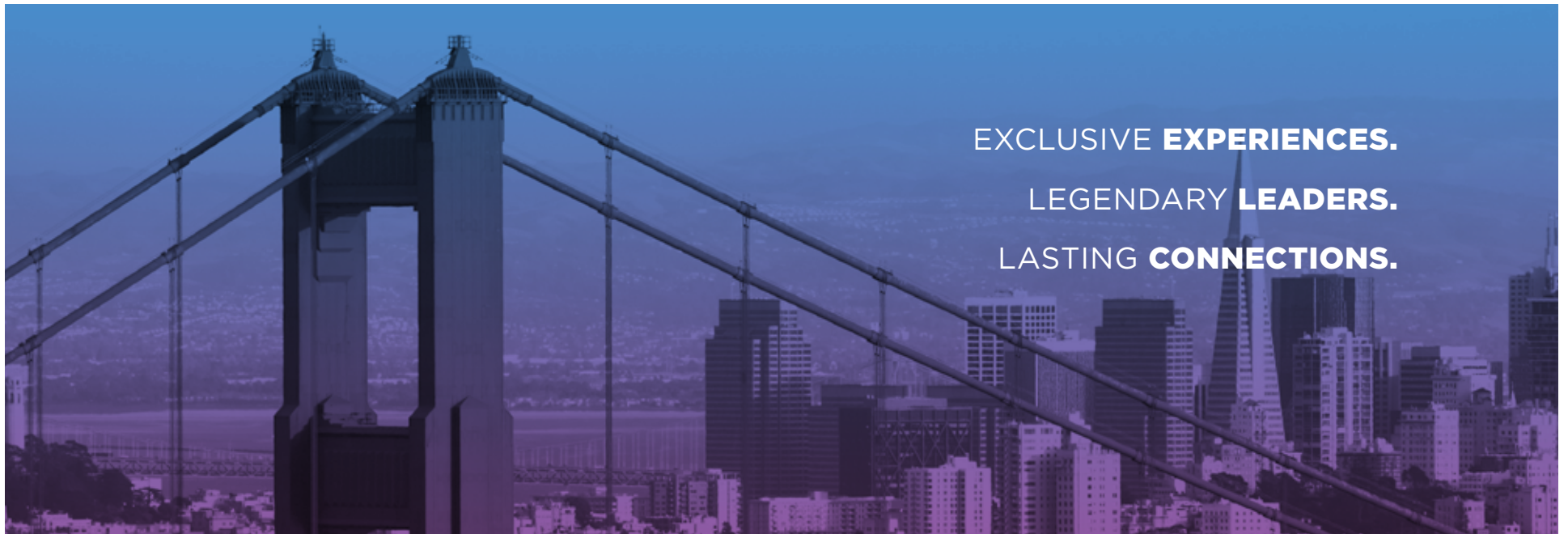
### Tony Peleska

2026 Chair, MinnesotaCIO  
CIO and Head of Digital  
Transformation, Kraus-Anderson



### Tony Taylor

2026 Chair, MinnesotaCISO  
Chief Information Security Officer,  
Land O'Lakes



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## 2026 MINNESOTA ORBIE AWARDS | LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT &amp; KEYNOTE



# John Avenson

SVP and CTO | Minnesota Twins

## Minnesota Twins exec receives tech leadership award

By The Business Journals Content Studio

John Avenson, who began his 33rd season with the Twins in 2026, was elevated to senior vice president, chief technology officer in January 2021. Prior to being promoted to vice president in December 2006, Avenson served as director of Baseball IS/Network.

Avenson oversees and manages the purposes of technology for all disciplines of the organization. He and his team develop and deliver baseball, business and broadcast solutions that elevate the fan experience and team performance. His group creates, implements and operates innovative technology solutions at Target Field, the Lee Health Sports Complex and the Twins' Dominican Republic Development Academy.

Avenson was named a Chief Information Officer of the Year in 2013 by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal and in 2018 by the MinnesotaCIO ORBIE Awards.

In 2021, Avenson's collaboration with the Large Venue Tech Collective was recognized with a Minnesota Technology Association Tekne award in the Vibrant Tech Ecosystem/Partnership category. In 2024, his Baseball Systems group won the Tekne award for Outstanding Achievements in Data Analytics. He currently serves on the Advisory Board of MinnesotaCIO, St. Thomas Software Strategic Advisory Board, and the Carlson Information and Decision Science Board at the University of Minnesota. He regularly supports mntech's Aspirations in Computing program and is a member of the CIOs Against Cancer organization.

A veteran of the Persian Gulf War, Avenson served with the United States Marine Corps where he maintained aircraft information for multiple fixed wing squadrons in the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

A graduate of the University of Minnesota with a degree in computer science, Avenson and his family reside in Minnetonka, Minnesota.

In recognition of these achievements, Avenson will be presented with the Leadership Award as part of the Minnesota ORBIE Awards live event on July 17 at

Marriott Minneapolis City Center. The program honors CIOs who have demonstrated excellence in technology leadership.

Avenson provided insights below about the challenges facing CIOs, and the evolution of the role in recent years.

### What does the Leadership Award honor mean to you?

**JOHN AVENSON:** I am naturally humbled by this honor.

Teddy Bekele, SVP & CTO of Land O'Lakes, called to inform me I was the recipient of the 2026 ORBIE Leadership Award. It felt like I took a call to find out I was inducted into MLB's Hall of Fame. In many ways, it is a Hall of Fame.

My career has been dependent on trust that exists within authentic relationships. As a young Marine, I would have described that trusting teamwork as "Espirit de Corps." Another way to describe my success is with the Ubuntu philosophy: "I am because we are."

While my name will be attached to the Award in 2026, an honor like this is not about me as an individual. This award is about community. The Leadership Award is a meaningful reflection that spotlights relationships which continue to empower my entire technology team and the unique and complex corners of our organization.

The Leadership Award is also a reflection of the value of many technology leaders who I depend on. I have been lucky to shape my own strategies from MinnesotaCIO peers - an amalgamation of technology leadership that acts as a common denominator which benefits the business health of our state. So, the Award also highlights the ballroom full of technology leaders where this year's ORBIEs will occur.

### What are some of the biggest challenges facing CIOs?

**AVENSON:** Our modern digitally connected worlds are getting very noisy. For the CIO in particular, noise levels continue to rise with increasing decibels from disjointed subject compositions. Time also seems to be

working differently. Time speeds up when separated beats of advancing technologies exponentially change. Volume builds (and not just with AI). While the underlying notes of fundamental technology building blocks are speeding up change at different rates, the CIO is challenged to find resonance that syncopates often competing global momentums.

### How has the role of the CIO evolved in recent years?

**AVENSON:** The role of the CIO is that of a business leader. While still responsible for keeping a business technically running (and protected), it has become increasingly strategic.

In this environment, it is a challenge to be a constant and consistent translator. It is difficult to advocate for your business using language, technical details, and a sense of urgency that the organization might not be ready for or aligned with.

We regularly talk about our responsibility to speak the language of business inside of our technology communities. Conversely, businesses that consider themselves to be innovative need to adapt to the languages of technology. For example, today's business leaders need to fully grasp how data works. They need to understand where Language Models impact the legitimacy of their decision-making using AI. Tomorrow's business leaders will need to become technologists as much as technology leaders are continuing to become business leaders.

### Do you have any advice for future generations of CIOs?

**AVENSON:** Seek and protect authenticity. Challenge your team to think critically. Build trust. Don't let context erode. Build adaptive resilience into every function of your business -you will discover opportunities. Encourage curiosity. Seek and unpack countering and challenging points of view.

Remember AI is an aggregated echo chamber from recorded human intelligence. Don't let human intelligence plateau. Don't become AI's robot. Wield it as a tool to expand your reach and capacity.

Keep it all about people.

*Congratulations*  
**Tony Peleska**



MINNESOTA CIO OF THE YEAR  
**ORBIE AWARDS**

**2026 Enterprise  
 ORBIE Finalist**



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Congratulations to our CIO, **Melissa Flicek**, on being named an ORBIE Award finalist.

Thank you for your leadership in advancing technology solutions that help pave the way for everyone to achieve their healthiest lives.

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# Congratulations, 2026 ORBIE Award Winners & Nominees

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**David Finkelstein, CISO**  
 St. Luke's University Health Network



## GLOBAL FINALISTS

OVER \$6 BILLION ANNUAL REVENUE &amp; MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS



**Kevin Baartman**

EVP, IT,  
International Dairy  
Queen



The DQ franchisee experience was fragmented and inconsistent across our 5,000 DQ restaurants in the U.S. and Canada. There were multiple POS platforms and back-office, and corporate systems. Over the past five years, IDQ embarked on a digital transformation, including a new cloud-based POS platform and corporate support platform. During that time we focused on stability, modernization and optimization. We now have 85% of restaurants on the new Integrated Technology Platform. Additionally, we have deployed a modern technology platform within our Franchisee Support Center in pursuit of our strategic ambitions and desire to be a data-driven organization.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Business Executive with comprehensive experience in directing IT organizations through strategic planning and effective management of staff and budgets. Strategic thinker adept in developing and launching strategies that make operations more efficient and revenues stronger, improving profit margins and performance. A proven leader, mentor, motivator and visionary to diverse business IT organizations, including Retail/Restaurant, Healthcare, Telecommunications and Finance.



**Amanda Jack**

CTO,  
ManpowerGroup



Amanda Jack led a decisive transformation that reshaped ManpowerGroup's technology foundation and operating model. By replacing fragmentation with global discipline and embedding responsible AI at scale, she positioned technology as a direct driver of business value. The work strengthened resilience, improved productivity, and established a repeatable blueprint for responsible innovation in a complex global enterprise—demonstrating that strong governance and advanced digital capability are not in tension, but mutually reinforcing.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Amanda has over 20 years of experience within multiple areas of focus, including workforce solutions, retail, travel & leisure, data standards, and supply chain. Amanda began her career at Target, where she led improvements through technology and process reinvention. Amanda joined SmarteCarte in 2016, where she was CTO over customer products, corporate systems, cyber security, and supply chain. In 2021, Amanda joined ManpowerGroup, where she leads technology globally across four regions, including shared infrastructure and applications.



**Rashmi Kumar**

SVP & CIO,  
Medtronic



Under my leadership, Global IT delivered a bold digital transformation that shifted Medtronic from incremental improvement to end-to-end value creation. Anchored in a disciplined Digital Business Transformation strategy, we delivered \$79 million in annualized value, reduced technology debt from 60% to 15%, cut a Minneapolis data center footprint by 62% to realize over \$2.5 million in annual savings, refreshed 55 global networks, upgraded 200+ apps, and secured over 1 million files. Global IT also enabled flawless MiniMed divestiture execution with 100% operational readiness, zero disruption, and successful separation of 54 systems, 170+ key decisions executed, and 220+ risks resolved.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Rashmi Kumar is the Senior Vice President and CIO of Medtronic, leading global digital transformation across the \$33.5B medical technology company. With over 30 years of expertise in AI/ML, data analytics, and large-scale business transformations, she has held CIO and CTO roles at Fortune 50 companies, including McKesson, Toyota, and HPE. Rashmi also serves on the Board of Directors for Myriad Genetics and holds a bachelor's in engineering and an MBA from UC Irvine.



**Dan Stusynski**

CTO,  
Patterson Companies, Inc



With more than 20 years of experience as a technology and product leader, Dan has a proven track record for transformation, growth and innovation. His vision and leadership have set the stage for the introduction of modern technologies, a digital-first approach and improvements in operational efficiencies. Dan's experience includes leadership roles at Target, Pearson VUE and SPS Commerce, in addition to other companies before joining Patterson. As Chief Technology Officer, Dan brings insight, strategy and energy to his leadership role at Patterson. Dan holds a Bachelor of Science in computer information systems, as well as a Master of Science in computer science from Metropolitan State University, in St. Paul, Minnesota.



**Josh Woodrum**

CIO, UnitedHealth Care  
Technology, Global Capabilities Office,  
UnitedHealth Care



The advancement in AI-Enablement and Automation has created significant opportunities to streamline our Contact Center capabilities at scale to better assist our Consumers, Members, and Providers to drive improved experiences in digital, chat, email, and IVR channels. Highlighted by the delivery of Advocate Proactive Assist, Workflow and Research Automation, Conversational Insights, and Desktop Experience of the Future, we are implementing a Contact Center Transformation that will improve the experiences of our advocates and all constituents to ensure more time/energy is focused on care of our members and less on the health care administrative practices to support.

**SUCCESS STORY:** CIO, UnitedHealth Care Technology, Global Capabilities Office (GCO) supporting our Contact Centers that strive to provide our Members, Consumers, and Providers with experiences that will lead to strong health and wellness outcomes for our members. With ~\$65M in annualized spend in this domain, we continue to evolve the experience for the 50K+ advocates globally that support our membership and implemented feedback loops that allow our people/process/technology to continually evolve to best align to these outcomes.

## LARGE ENTERPRISE FINALISTS

OVER \$4 BILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE**TK  
Balaji**CIO,  
Post Consumer Brands

In a high-growth consumer foods business, our IT organization delivered stability and transformation at the same time: integrating acquisitions while keeping manufacturing, supply chain, commercial, and corporate platforms highly available and secure. We built repeatable integration patterns and modernized with best-of-breed SaaS, a stronger data/analytics foundation, and improved service management—enabling faster, better decisions across thousands of SKUs. With disciplined spend below peer medians, we protected margins, reduced manual work through automation, and reinforced confidence that IT can absorb change without becoming a bottleneck.

**SUCCESS STORY:** TK Balaji is Chief Information Officer at Post Consumer Brands, leading technology strategy across corporate, manufacturing, supply chain, commercial, data and digital, including AI. With 30+ years of IT leadership, he has delivered large-scale modernization and M&A integrations, building high-trust teams and disciplined governance that balances innovation with financial performance. Previously, he spent 18 years at Target in leadership roles. He holds an M.S. in Statistics and is PMP certified.

**Marc  
Carlson**CIO,  
Land O'Lakes, Inc.

I am most proud of transforming our technology organization into a business-embedded, product-based partner accountable for enterprise outcomes and executing an industry award winning ERP transformation in our Animal Nutrition business. By aligning cross-functional teams directly to strategic priorities, we have improved execution speed, strengthened decision-making, and delivered measurable gains in growth, efficiency, and resilience. This evolution has redefined the role of IT—from service provider to a driver of business performance—positioning technology as a core enabler of enterprise success.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Marc Carlson is Chief Information Officer at Land O'Lakes, Inc., where he leads enterprise technology strategy, delivery, and operations. He oversees a global organization advancing business performance through digital, data, and platform capabilities. Under his leadership, technology has evolved into a strategic partner embedded across the enterprise, driving growth, efficiency, and resilience. Marc is also actively engaged in industry and community efforts to develop future technology leadership.

**Kellie  
Christensen**CIO,  
Gray, Inc

Since joining Gray in late 2021, I led the transformation for Technology Services from a 12-person team into a 53-person, full-service organization supporting rapid company growth of 14–26% annually while only growing budget spend by .04% of revenue. I established new capabilities in cybersecurity, application development and support, AI, data governance, and analytics while unifying previously siloed systems and companies. This enabled the enterprise to have critical business capabilities that were not previously possible while maintaining budget requirements. Despite significant change and growth, we maintained top-five employee satisfaction rankings in the department with a highly engaged, high-performing team.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Kellie Christensen is CIO of Gray, Inc., bringing more than 30 years of technology leadership across multiple industries. As a member of the senior leadership team, she oversees IT strategy, delivery, development, support, security, and infrastructure. She previously built her career in manufacturing, optimizing global operations, strengthening connections with customers and distributors, and leading initiatives from global system implementations to R&D-driven product development. She is known for aligning technology with business outcomes and driving transformation.

**Melissa  
Flicek**CIO,  
Blue Cross Blue Shield  
of Minnesota

I went through my own health journey in 2020, removing a benign brain tumor and battling kidney cancer. I spent 21 days in the Neuro ICU. I was “in” the healthcare system and personally experienced all the fragmentation, complexity and costs associated with getting care and recovering; which drove me to commit myself to improving the patient experience. I keep the customer in the center of every discussion, developing ideas and solutions that positively impact the U.S. healthcare system. My personal mission aligns with our company mission to ‘pave the way for everyone to achieve their healthiest life.’

**SUCCESS STORY:** Leads the strategic direction of technology, cybersecurity, AI, data and analytics. Previously at UHG I served as CTO, consumer experiences, overseeing product and engineering for enterprise digital initiatives. At Medtronic, I had global accountability for digital technology; at Target, led digital experiences for target.com and mobile. I am Vice-Chair for CIO's Against Cancer, member of the MN Tech board and was recognized as a Notable Leader in Healthcare by Twin Cities Business magazine in 2/2026.

**George  
McNulty**Chief Business  
Technology Officer,  
State of Minnesota

George led the launch of one of the nation's first Medicaid pre-payment integrity platforms, delivering approximately \$660M in annualized savings within its first quarter by preventing improper payments before they occur. Directed enterprise IT strategy supporting a \$40B health and human services portfolio, including a complex multi-agency reorganization with no disruption to services. Modernized eligibility and digital platforms to improve access and user experience. Recognized nationally for cross-boundary collaboration and delivery excellence, demonstrating how technology can drive financial stewardship, operational efficiency, and better outcomes at scale.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Chief Business Technology Officer for Minnesota IT Services and serves as CIO for the Department of Human Services and MNsure. He leads enterprise technology strategy, operations, and modernization across a \$45B health and human services ecosystem. With more than 20 years of experience, he specializes in large-scale transformation, digital platforms, and data-driven innovation, driving improved outcomes, operational efficiency, and service delivery. He is a 2026 recipient of the University of Chicago Leadership and Society Fellowship.

**Brad  
Reimer**CIO,  
Sanford Health

Under Brad Reimer's leadership, Sanford Health has become a catalyst for innovation, resilience, and access across the nation's largest rural health system. The team modernized core technology and cybersecurity while building trust and operational discipline at enterprise scale. By strengthening infrastructure and digital platforms, IT enabled a leading virtual care program, bringing high-quality care to patients across vast rural geographies. A disciplined, responsible approach to artificial intelligence delivered practical improvements in patient and physician experience. Together, these efforts positioned Sanford Health to operate and innovate with confidence, demonstrating how technology can expand access and advance care in rural America.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Brad Reimer is Senior Vice President and Chief Technology and Digital Officer at Sanford Health, the nation's largest rural health system. He leads enterprise technology, digital experience, cybersecurity, data, and AI implementation across a multi-state footprint. Brad is known for modernizing technology at scale while strengthening operational discipline, trust, and mission alignment, advancing access to care, clinician experience, and sustainable innovation across rural healthcare communities.

# ENTERPRISE FINALISTS

OVER \$1 BILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



## Jacquelyn Malcolm Bailey

Vice Chancellor of IT  
& CIO (fmr),  
Minnesota State Colleges  
and Universities



My greatest accomplishment thus far is leading a multi-million dollar ERP implementation. Minnesota State has chosen to acknowledge and rise to the challenge of how we support the changing needs of our students by implementing a bold and innovative technology solution, grounded in the principles of equity and access. We believe we will be used as a strong use case for higher education IT systems to support the onboarding of Cloud, SAAS-based software solutions, in a multi-institutional based format. Upon complete implementation, this will be the first-ever ERP implemented in higher education of this scale and complexity on this platform.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Dr. Bailey brings over 20 years of distinctive higher education experience and has been a leader at the campus and system levels. She is committed to delivering complex information systems that support access to aordable, equitable education and increase the economic viability of students. Dr. Bailey is an active thought leader in the higher education technology space through her engagement with EDUCAUSE and other IT community organizations and teaches a graduate course in crisis communications.



## Robin Brown

SVP, IT,  
Cirrus Aircraft



Since joining Cirrus in 2023, we've transformed how IT was perceived into strategic partners, taking the organization on a 3-year digital and business transformation. We reshaped our organization to enable product focused teams to launch a suite of new digital products, representing a pivotal shift in delivering AI technology offerings. We deployed a centralized customer portal from 17 disparate platforms, launched Cirrus IQ Pro providing customers with mobile landing scores and aircraft metrics, digitally enabled our Customer Experience Team through Salesforce cloud rollouts, launched digital technical publications helping service technicians serve customers seamlessly, and digitalized pilot training through Cirrus Approach.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Robin is the SVP, Information Technology at Cirrus Aircraft. She has 30+ years of IT experience in the aviation, agriculture, construction, healthcare, government, consulting, retail and financial sectors. Previously, she was the CIO for Cargill Protein North America, VP & CIO at Mortenson Construction and held other senior leadership roles at UnitedHealth Group, Accenture, Best Buy and Arcadia Financial. She is recognized as a transformational leader and is known for driving technology-enabled innovation and business transformation.



## Matt Keen

CIO,  
Old National Bank



One talent success story is creating our Transformation Office. This is a new function within the bank that recognizes our next phase of growth requires a dedicated team focused on ambiguous, enterprise-wide opportunities where technology, operations, risk, and business strategy intersect. We appointed a new executive to lead this, giving him a platform to expand from product and innovation leadership into enterprise transformation. The office now advances our AI Center of Excellence, AI-first solution design, digital assets exploration, and cross-functional innovation. Our AI approach has been transformational and widely regarded as far exceeding the typical AI approaches in the industry.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Matthew Keen is Chief Information Officer, EVP at Old National Bank, where he leads enterprise technology strategy, modernization, operations, and innovation. He joined Old National in 2025 after serving as CIO for Bremer Bank, and previously held technology leadership roles through PricewaterhouseCoopers, American Express, Ameriprise Financial, and Two Harbors Investments. He brings more than 20 years of financial services technology experience, with expertise in cloud, data, AI, digital transformation, client experience, and operating model execution.



## Cliff Manuel

VP, IT,  
The Kinetic Group



Over the past year, I led an IT Team through a highly complex separation and transaction period, ensuring business continuity while managing risk across infrastructure, applications, contracts, and user environments. I also advanced our multi-year ERP modernization strategy by formalizing the roadmap, launching a competitive RFP, and positioning the business for greater standardization, visibility, and scalability. In parallel, I strengthened governance over enterprise technology contracts, licensing, and invoicing to improve accountability and reduce ambiguity. Overall, I elevated IT from a support function to a trusted strategic partner during a period of major change.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Cliff Manuel, VP of IT at The Kinetic Group, where he leads technology strategy with a focus on business transformation, operational stability, and long-term scalability. He has led complex separation and transaction support efforts, advanced ERP modernization to reduce technical debt and improve manufacturing visibility. Known for aligning technology with business outcomes, he has built a track record of using IT to reduce complexity, strengthen governance, and enable growth through periods of significant change.



## Tony Peleska

CIO,  
Kraus Anderson  
Companies



Innovation and transformation are central to how KA's IT organization delivers measurable business value. We identified a critical industry gap in the transition from construction to ownership, where building owners lacked a centralized system for data, communication, and maintenance. In response, we developed a subscription-based digital platform that spans the entire building lifecycle. Leveraging strategic partnerships and early SDK access, our team delivered two patented solutions creating a comprehensive digital twin and management system. Adoption is near 100%, generating a new revenue stream annually and unlocking new licensing opportunities—while significantly enhancing customer experience through seamless, data-driven facility management.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Anthony "Tony" Peleska is a visionary technology executive with 28+ years of experience aligning digital strategy to measurable business outcomes. As CIO and Head of Digital Transformation at Kraus Anderson, he drives enterprise technology, innovation, and growth. Known for blending strategic foresight with operational discipline, he builds high-performing, business-aligned teams. Tony is an active industry leader, board member, and 2025 HMG Global CIO of the Year, committed to advancing organizations and developing future leaders.



**Congratulations**  
to Kevin Baartman for being  
selected as a 2026 Minnesota  
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**Congratulations, Matt!**



**Finalist for the 2026  
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**Matthew T. Keen**  
Chief Information Officer  
Old National Bank

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# LARGE CORPORATE FINALISTS

OVER \$550 MILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



## Eric Hanson

VP of Digital & IT,  
Trystar



As Vice President of Digital & IT at Trystar, Eric Hanson transformed the organization from a traditional IT function into a scalable digital execution engine. By aligning leaders around a shared customer journey and building modern platforms in data, AI, and cybersecurity, his team enabled faster growth, improved margins, and a materially better customer experience. These efforts allowed Trystar to scale rapidly through acquisitions, establish a durable organic growth engine, strengthen enterprise resilience, and build teams capable of sustaining transformation. Today, Digital & IT is trusted as a strategic growth partner across the business.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Eric Hanson is Vice President of Digital & IT at Trystar, where he leads enterprise digital strategy, data and AI platforms, cybersecurity, and transformation initiatives. A first-team executive and trusted partner to the CEO, Eric has built a scalable digital execution engine that accelerates growth, improves margins, and strengthens enterprise resilience. He is known for aligning technology to business outcomes, building high-performing teams, and turning innovation into measurable results.



## Tim Rolwing

CIO,  
Satellite Industries  
and Satellite Shelters



Over the past year, I led the Satellite team through major changes to expand our footprint and deliver stronger technological capabilities. As the Satellite business expanded globally, I ensured technology kept pace. In the last year, my team integrated acquisitions in Denmark, Poland, and the Netherlands. My team also enabled a technological transition for three hundred employees into a newly built Minnesota office and a manufacturing plant in Georgia. I also sharpened our security posture and pushed our data and AI capabilities forward to improve resilience and decision making. Each initiative was complex and landed successfully, strengthening the business scalability.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Tim joined Satellite in 2023 and serves as the first executive technology leader for Satellite Industries and Satellite Shelters. This role is a shared leadership resource for two companies with two distinct executive teams under the same family ownership. He previously held technology leadership roles at Hub International, Western National Insurance, and Allianz Life. Tim holds a BBA with an MIS Major from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and an MBA from Marquette University.



## Tammy Schuette

CIO,  
Datasite



As CIO, I led a multi-year transformation of Datasite's global Quote-to-Cash and back-office operations to scale growth and improve customer experience. We standardized end-to-end processes, realigned organizational structure, and modernized architecture moving from on-premise to cloud, and dramatically increased automation. This program had a 336% ROI and a 2.5 yr payback. This was a significant EV creator for our owners and delivered material cost savings and new revenue while reducing friction for sales, finance, and customers.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Tammy Schuette is Chief Information Officer at Datasite, a global portfolio of businesses that help dealmakers collect and process data, securely using AI-powered solutions to make strategic decisions. She leads enterprise technology strategies across IT, data management, and operational enablement, aligning innovations across platforms and processes to create sustainable business value. Prior to Datasite, Tammy held senior executive roles at GE Capital and TCF Financial, overseeing technology, operations, finance, risk management, quality/EPMO, and M&A integrations.



## Jeffrey Strang

Director, IT,  
Christensen Farms  
and Feedlots, Inc



Christensen Farms is continuing its legacy of innovative pork production. We are modernizing technology, data, and business processes to better support employees, contract growers, and operations. Jeffrey Strang is proud to lead these efforts, which include upgraded networks, modern systems, and stronger cybersecurity. These improvements enhance communication, efficiency, and day-to-day work for teams both in the office and on the farm. Christensen Farms' SHIFTUP program is transforming how data and artificial intelligence are used to support food production, reinforcing a long-standing commitment to innovation, sustainability, and feeding a growing world.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Jeffrey brings more than 27 years of experience leading cross-functional teams to deliver industry innovation and organizational value. Raised on a family farm in rural North Dakota, he learned early the hard work required to produce the food we depend on every day. He takes pride in helping ensure that effort reaches dinner tables worldwide. An optimist, futurist, and musician, Jeffrey holds a bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems from North Dakota State University.



## Jaime Wascalus

CIO and Director of the  
Office of Technology &  
Communications,  
City of Saint Paul



Last July, Saint Paul faced a ransomware attack that impacted technology systems across the city. Under my leadership, and in collaboration with the dedicated leaders and staff in Saint Paul, as well as local, state, and national agencies, we accomplished a rapid, coordinated response. We contained the threat and restored critical systems in a matter of weeks. And our effective response was validated externally: S&P Global affirmed the City's AAA bond rating without further investigation, and the State of Minnesota's Legislative Commission for Cyber Security commended our actions. I am so proud to be part of Team Saint Paul!

**SUCCESS STORY:** Jaime Wascalus serves as Director of the Office of Technology and Communications and Chief Information Officer for the City of Saint Paul, where she leads citywide technology strategy, cybersecurity, and digital transformation. Since joining the City in 2022, she has directed modernization initiatives that strengthen municipal service delivery and improve system resilience. Jaime is a founding board member of the GovAI Coalition, supporting safe and community-focused AI adoption across the public sector.

## CORPORATE FINALISTS

UP TO \$500 MILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE

## Heather Anderson

CTO,  
Northmarq



Heather Anderson has led a multi-year technology transformation that positioned Northmarq for growth, resilience, and innovation. Under her leadership, IT became a trusted strategic partner—driving new revenue through custom loan servicing platforms, delivering multimillion-dollar cost savings, and enabling enterprise-wide integrations following major acquisitions. Her focus on product-centric delivery, automation, AI, and security has improved client experience, accelerated decision-making, and strengthened the firm's operational foundation. By empowering high-performing teams and aligning technology to business priorities, Heather has positioned Northmarq for sustained growth.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Heather Anderson is Chief Technology Officer at Northmarq, where she leads digital transformation across application development, cloud strategy, data, cybersecurity, and business process integration. Since joining Northmarq in 2020, she has driven modernization, scaling platforms, and embedding innovation in support of business strategy. With more than two decades of experience across financial services, healthcare, and consumer goods, Heather is recognized for delivering secure, scalable solutions that accelerate growth and elevate client experience.



## Adam Clarke

Sr. Director, Global IT,  
Zinpro Corporation



At Zinpro, Adam has led a broad transformation of IT into a stronger strategic driver of the business. He has reorganized and developed the leadership team, improved engagement within IT, supported global expansion through major system and infrastructure initiatives, built a modern cloud-based data and analytics foundation, strengthened cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing and supply chain technology, and delivered major cost savings through network and telecom modernization. His leadership has helped make IT more scalable, resilient, and business-focused while enabling growth, improving operational performance, and creating a better experience for both employees and customers.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Adam is a global technology executive with CIO-level leadership experience spanning enterprise systems, infrastructure, data, cybersecurity, and digital marketing. As Senior Director of Global IT at Zinpro, he has strengthened IT's role as a strategic business partner through modernization, analytics, AI, and global expansion initiatives. Previously, he held technology leadership roles at Quality Bicycle Products, where he led major cloud, security, and innovation programs. Adam also serves as a nonprofit board leader and technology advisor.



## Trevor Farnum

CTO,  
Data Recognition  
Corporation



My success story is built on trust, and trust is built on credibility. Throughout my career, I have stayed close to technology, keeping my technical acumen sharp so that the strategies I bring to executive leaders are grounded in reality. That combination of deep technical understanding paired with the ability to partner at the highest levels of the business has allowed me to step into complex, high-stakes situations and lead organizations with confidence. The measure of success is not the technology delivered, but the outcomes earned.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Trevor Farnum is Chief Technology Officer at Data Recognition Corporation, where he leads the teams responsible for the platforms, infrastructure, and services that power DRC's nationwide offerings. With more than 25 years of experience spanning engineering, healthcare, and education, Trevor has built his career on driving innovation and transforming technology organizations into strategic business partners. Beyond DRC, he contributes to the technology leadership community, mentoring and teaching leaders how to align strategy with business outcomes.



## Chad Hagedorn

SVP & CIO,  
SFM Mutual Insurance  
Company



In my role as Chief Information Officer, I ensure that our workforce has the technology, resources, and support needed to deliver exceptional service to our customers and each other. In partnership with senior leadership, I work to remove technical barriers and enable productivity. Our in-house Information Services team develops and supports a comprehensive enterprise insurance platform, customer-facing digital solutions, and a mature cybersecurity program. I also lead project governance, disaster recovery, and facilities, successfully supporting major transformations like hybrid work, while consistently delivering high customer service, security, and business value.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Chad Hagedorn is Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer at SFM. He joined the company in 2003 as a Systems Administrator and advanced through multiple Information Services leadership roles, becoming Director in 2016, CIO in 2019, and Senior Vice President in 2023. Previously, Chad managed global infrastructure at Chart Industries. He holds a B.S. in Business and Information Technology and serves on the WCRA IT Advisory Committee, bringing pragmatic technology leadership to the organization.



## Bill Kloster

CIO,  
Short-Elliott-Hendrickson,  
Incorporated



Over the past decade, Bill Kloster led a comprehensive modernization of SEH's digital landscape. The organization successfully migrated from legacy systems to cloud solutions, enhancing flexibility and operational resilience. A robust Information Security Program, was established, significantly strengthening cybersecurity measures and fostering a culture of security awareness across all levels. Most recently, SEH embraced Artificial Intelligence through the implementation of an ethical and compliant AI Strategy. Today, over one-third of the organization actively leverages AI tools, driving notable gains in efficiency and quality. These accomplishments positioned SEH as a forward-thinking leader, committed to innovation, security, and sustainable growth.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Bill Kloster is Chief Information Officer at Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH), an employee-owned professional services firm with more than 900 employees across the United States. He leads enterprise technology strategy, cybersecurity, and digital transformation initiatives supporting a highly distributed workforce. Under his leadership, SEH has modernized its technology environment, strengthened security governance, and responsibly adopted emerging technologies. Bill is a trusted advisor to executive leadership and the Board of Directors.

## CISO LARGE ENTERPRISE FINALISTS

OVER \$9 BILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE**Kyle  
Erickson**VP & Product CISO,  
Solventum

Following Solventum's separation from 3M, I led the build of product security and key enterprise security capabilities while the company continued to operate globally. My focus was embedding security into product development, manufacturing, and digital platforms so critical operations could run without disruption. We strengthened visibility across production environments, integrated security into engineering workflows, and enabled the company to operate independently on day one. This work supports patient safety, protects product availability, and allows the business to move forward with confidence.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Kyle Erickson is Vice President of Product Security at Solventum, where he leads product security and key enterprise security capabilities across a global healthcare organization. He focuses on embedding security into product development, manufacturing, and digital platforms to support patient safety and business continuity. Kyle has led the establishment of security programs during complex organizational change and is known for aligning security to business outcomes and building strong, business aligned teams.

**Mary Elizabeth  
Faulkner**VP & CISO,  
Thrivent

Operating in a highly regulated financial services environment, Mary has transformed Thrivent's information security organization from a reactive control function into a strategic enabler of digital transformation. Under her leadership, cybersecurity is embedded throughout the organization, shaping how teams design products, operate systems, manage risk, and serve clients. By implementing data-driven, financially grounded risk analysis, Mary's team has enabled leaders to make confident decisions that balance innovation, resilience, and investment. This approach ensures cybersecurity is not only a safeguard, but a foundational capability that fuels secure growth and strengthens Thrivent's technology-driven future.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Mary Faulkner is Thrivent's CISO, leading the enterprise information security and cyber risk strategy for the Fortune 500 financial services company. With more than 25 years of experience across consulting and multiple industries, she has led global security and IT organizations and driven improvements in cyber risk maturity. Mary serves as a co-chair on Gartner's Minneapolis CISO Governing Body and holds a master's degree from Georgetown University, and CRISC and CDPSE certifications.

**John  
Israel**Assistant Commissioner  
& State CISO,  
State of Minnesota /  
Minnesota IT Services

As Minnesota's State Chief Information Security Officer, John Israel led a statewide cybersecurity transformation that expanded protection beyond state government to communities, schools, counties, and Tribal Nations. He founded Minnesota's Cybersecurity Task Force and launched the first Whole-of-State Cybersecurity Plan, enabling nearly 250 local entities to share enterprise-grade defenses and prevent an estimated \$300 million in annual cyber losses. He strengthened statewide collaboration through Business Information Security Officers and Cyber Navigators, increasing trust, participation, and incident reporting. He also led implementation of LoginMN and modernized security operations, risk management, and compliance to create a proactive, resilient, future-ready cybersecurity program.

**SUCCESS STORY:** John Israel serves as Minnesota's chief information security officer and assistant commissioner at Minnesota IT Services, leading executive branch cybersecurity operations and chairing the Minnesota Cybersecurity Task Force. With over 25 years of public-sector IT and cybersecurity experience, he has helped strengthen Minnesota's cybersecurity capabilities by leading the Security Operations Center and advancing threat intelligence sharing through the Minnesota Fusion Center. John holds degrees from Concordia and Norwich universities and a CISSP certification from ISC(2).

**Steve  
Jensen**Global CISO,  
Transamerica

The team's greatest accomplishment has been delivering a unified, risk-based security transformation across the enterprise. We aligned 12 core security initiatives—including identity, cloud, AI, data, endpoint, resiliency, and SOC modernization—under a single strategy, prioritizing high-risk assets and measuring progress through an integrated metrics program. We standardized on NIST CSF, implemented a CMM-based maturity model, and achieved independent validation that our capabilities exceed peer and financial services benchmarks. This work elevated service quality, built a highly respected global team, and enabled the business to grow and transform with confidence, knowing safeguards were in place to move fast while managing risk responsibly.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Steve Jensen is the Global Chief Information Security Officer for Aegon, responsible for enterprise cybersecurity strategy, risk management, and resilience worldwide. He brings decades of executive leadership across financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, and global services, having served as CISO for U.S. Bank, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Ecolab, CWT, Ameriprise, and Scottrade, and previously as CEO of SunStream Business Services. Steve is recognized for building high-performing security organizations and developing the next generation of security leaders.

**Cam  
Kracke**VP & CISO,  
Prime Therapeutics

In 2025, I led Prime Therapeutics' security strategy through its most mature and unified year to date, guided by a strong leadership team and a clear "yes and" philosophy: protect the business while enabling it. We unified Physical and Information Security, modernized monitoring and incident response, and advanced identity, cloud, application, and threat response capabilities. In parallel, as Executive Chair of Prime's AI Working Group, I established governance that enabled responsible AI adoption without slowing innovation. The result was a confident, collaborative security organization that reduced risk, avoided disruption, and quietly helped the business move faster—exactly as security should.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Cam Kracke is vice president and chief information security officer at Prime Therapeutics, where he leads enterprise-wide security programs that protect critical systems, data and facilities while enabling business innovation and growth. With over 30 years of experience across healthcare, retail, and consulting—including a career start in the U.S. Navy—he is known for a collaborative leadership style that emphasizes clarity and creative solutions to ensure security is a business enabler, not an inhibitor.

**Mike  
Rogers**CISO, Director IS  
& Compliance,  
Hormel Foods

Mike Rogers believes cybersecurity's job is to enable the business, not slow it down. At Hormel Foods, that philosophy is reflected in how his team operates. They build resiliency by stress-testing assumptions before a real incident occurs, invest in developing talent, and strive to stay ahead of emerging risks. Mike recently published an article on agentic AI security, sparking industry conversation. His team is technically strong, strategically aligned, and built to grow with the business.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Michael Rogers is a cybersecurity executive who believes security exists to enable business, not constrain it. He has led teams across engineering, architecture, compliance and cyber defense, and currently serves as CISO at Hormel Foods. He holds an MBA from the Carlson School of Management and a CISSP certification and is an active contributor to the CISO community through charitable initiatives, speaking opportunities, and mentorship.

**Congratulations**  
**TIM ROLFING**

For being named a 2026 Minnesota ORBIE Award finalist. We are fortunate to have you on our team.



**Chad Hagedorn**

Senior VP & Chief Information Officer

*Recognized as a finalist for the 2026 Minnesota Orbie awards*

**Congratulations, Chad!**

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# CISO ENTERPRISE FINALISTS

UP TO \$9 BILLION  
ANNUAL REVENUE



**Brad Abbott**

CISO,  
Medica



Over the past four years, I've led a major modernization of Medica's security program to support rapid growth and complexity. This included integrating security teams and tools after multiple acquisitions, scaling the organization from 15 to 40 professionals, and developing strong internal leaders. We advanced detection and response using AI, repositioned security as a business enabler, and successfully supported secure, AI-driven member platforms. We also standardized on best-in-class vendors, consolidated SOC operations, and strengthened crisis management and executive communications—resulting in a scalable, resilient, and business-aligned security program.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Brad Abbott is CISO at Medica, where he leads efforts to keep data secure and operations resilient. With a strong background in cybersecurity and risk strategy, Brad works across teams to align security with business goals. He's passionate about building a culture of awareness and accountability, and is known for making complex security topics approachable. Brad enjoys collaborating with leaders to drive smart, secure innovation.



**Anthony Alsleben**

Executive Director of IS  
& CISO,  
CentraCare



With a small five-person Information Security team, we transformed CentraCare's cybersecurity posture by aligning to NIST and CIS controls and scaling our capabilities through strong governance, policy development, and strategic partnerships. We implemented a SOC coupled with our EDR technology, now ingesting billions of events annually, enabling rapid detection, automated response, and achieving over 90% MITRE ATT&CK coverage. These efforts increased our third-party risk assessment score by 26% and reduced annual cyber insurance costs significantly, demonstrating measurable risk reduction, operational resilience, and financial impact.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Anthony (Tony) Alsleben, MBA, is Executive Director of Information Security and CISO at CentraCare, where he leads enterprise cybersecurity and risk management for a \$2.1B healthcare system. With over 25 years in technology and 17 in healthcare security leadership, he has built a mature, team-driven Security Operations program—enhancing threat detection, response, and resilience—while aligning security to patient safety, operational performance, and strategic growth.



**Jeff Holschuh**

CISO,  
Sun Country Airlines



During my time as CISO at Sun Country, the company decided to initiate an IPO (Initial Public Offering). In addition to the valuation Q&A related to cybersecurity, I was tasked with creating a SOX program to comply with the requirements that come with being publicly traded. After hiring the right resources, I led the team through standing up the program and achieving compliance. Going through an IPO was something on my career bucket-list, and being able to experience it from the position of CISO was something I will never forget.

**SUCCESS STORY:** I graduated from Carleton College with a Computer Science Degree and joined Target's Technology Leadership Program. After this rotational program concluded, I joined their networking team as an engineer. I obtained an MBA from the Carlson School of Management and shifted to people leader. Next, I switched companies to Code42 to build their internal IAM practice and pursued a CISSP certification. Now, I am proud to say I am the CISO of Sun Country Airlines!



**Ashok Kallam**

CISO,  
Fairview Health Services



With the unwavering support from the Executive Leadership team and a talented group of deeply committed cyber and risk management team, I am honored to help our organization in upholding the trust our community and patients have placed in us to protect their data and privacy while providing world-class patient care. Fairview continues to achieve meaningful progress in enhancing its security posture every single day. While the journey is ongoing, I am profoundly grateful to be surrounded by such an exceptionally skilled and dedicated team and partners at Fairview. I wouldn't be where I am today without them!

**SUCCESS STORY:** Ashok Kallam serves as the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) at Fairview Health Services, leading cybersecurity strategy, operations, and risk management. He focuses on enhancing security capabilities, responding swiftly to threats, and fostering a security-conscious culture in healthcare. His mission includes implementing adaptive controls, strengthening resilience, and contributing to patient safety through collaboration and readiness, while ensuring a seamless user experience and aligning security measures with the ever-evolving demands of modern healthcare.



**Greg Matthias**

VP & CISO,  
Agiliti Health



I was hired to transform a function led by a single individual with limited controls and an underutilized external service into a scalable security program. Through intentional investment, the team grew by over 600%, establishing clear roles across security engineering, risk, and operations. This expansion enabled the implementation of robust technical and procedural controls, supported by an integrated hybrid SOC model. The program now operates with strong governance and accountability, and its maturity is demonstrated through successful third-party validation, culminating in a SOC 2 Type II attestation that confirms the design and operating effectiveness of controls.

**SUCCESS STORY:** Chief Information Security Officer and experienced IT executive with a proven track record of building and leading enterprise cybersecurity and risk management programs. Brings deep experience across government, financial services, and healthcare, aligning security strategy with business objectives to protect critical systems and data. Known for developing high-performing teams, driving security transformation, and enabling organizational resilience in complex, mission-critical environments.



**John Strasser**

Sr. Director of  
Infrastructure Security  
& IT Compliance,  
Apogee Enterprises, Inc.



Over the past year at Apogee, my team delivered multiple high-impact initiatives that strengthened IT capabilities and advanced strategic goals. We launched a company-wide IT communications program, which we used to guide a major password-policy overhaul to full adoption in two weeks—half the expected time. We also migrated our endpoint protection platform and MDR vendor, expanding coverage from 50% to 100% in 48 hours while generating \$160K in annual cost savings through vendor optimization. Additionally, we established Apogee's Generative AI Policy and evaluation framework, enabling secure, scalable, and responsible AI innovation across the organization.

**SUCCESS STORY:** John Strasser, CISSP, CISM is a senior cybersecurity and IT compliance leader with deep expertise in enterprise security transformation, risk management, and global program governance. Currently Senior Director at Apogee Enterprises, he has built and scaled security programs across highly regulated organizations, leading large global teams and multimillion-dollar budgets. Known for people-centered leadership, John aligns security strategy with business goals to enable innovation, resilience, and measurable risk reduction.



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