

AUGUST 13-19, 2021

KANSASCITY CIO<sup>OF THE YEAR</sup>  
**ORBIE**  
AWARDS

**The 2021 Kansas City CIO of the Year® ORBIE® Awards** program honors chief information officers who have demonstrated excellence in technology leadership. Winners in the Large Enterprise, Enterprise, Large Corporate, Corporate and Public Sector categories will be announced on Friday, Aug. 27, at the virtual **CIO ORBIE® Awards**.



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

A CIO pioneer offers hard-won advice and 5 strategies that will make you a better CIO.

**BECKY BLALOCK, PAGE B5**

**CHAIR LETTER**

Since March 2020, CIOs everywhere have supported the largest work-from-home experiment in the history of the world.

**BRIAN SHIELD, PAGE B3**

**INAUGURAL AWARDS**

Meet the 19 finalists in the Kansas City area and read their success stories.

**PAGES B9-B15**



# CONGRATULATIONS 2021 KANSASCITYCIO AWARDS NOMINEES

**BRIAN ANDERSON**  
NIC

**KRISTEN GUILLAUME**  
North Kansas City Hospital

**ED LINK**  
Garmin International

**DR. JOE PHILLIPS**  
Kansas City Public Schools

**TANYA ARTHUR**  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of  
Kansas City

**KURT HADERMANN**  
Bluescope Buildings

**ALAN LOWDEN**  
H&R Block

**DAN PICHLER**  
Clinical Reference Laboratory

**JERRY ASHLEY**  
Ash Grove Cement  
Company

**BRIAN HANCOCK**  
Kansas City Southern

**SARAH MANNIX**  
UMB Financial

**GILLIAN POWER**  
Lathrop GPM

**MICHAEL BEATTIE**  
Lead Bank

**CHRIS HANSEN**  
The University of Kansas Health Sys-  
tem

**KEVIN MATTHIES**  
Spirit Aerosystems

**GARY PRATT**  
Kansas State University

**JARROD BENSON**  
Koch Business Solutions

**KEVIN HIGGINS**  
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**MATT HOSKINS**  
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Burns & McDonnell

**TONY SAGE**  
City of Overland Park, KS

**RICHARD COLVERT**  
Compass Health Network

**JEFF HURLEY**  
Dairy Farmers of America

**CHAD MILLS**  
Children's Mercy  
Kansas City

**MICHAEL SMITH**  
AM Academy of Family  
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**JUDY CORZINE**  
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**JOHN JACOBS**  
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**JAMIE PATEL**  
American Century Investments

**MARY WALSH**  
University of Kansas

**DEBE GASH**  
Saint Luke's Health System

**BOB LAPLANT**  
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**MICHAEL WILLIAMS**  
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**JEFF LAURO**  
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**RAVI PERU**  
CommunityAmerica Credit  
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**ROGER ZAREMBA**  
Saint Luke's Health System



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

## Pandemic elevates CIOs strategic role in 2021

Since last March Chief Information Officers everywhere have supported the largest work-from-home experiment in the history of the world. Thanks to these innovative technology leaders, most organizations have managed to continue operating through this pandemic disruption.

Technology has enabled our new virtual lives; provided access to entertainment, food, and products delivered to our homes; and connected us with colleagues, friends and loved ones. Technology has helped us adapt, adjust, and survive our new abnormal. Without the leadership, planning, and foresight of CIOs, conducting business would be impossible under these circumstances.

KansasCityCIO brings together leading CIOs of Greater Kansas City's largest organizations to

help CIOs maximize their leadership effectiveness, create value, reduce risk and share success. Through member-led, non-commercial programs, CIOs build meaningful professional relationships with colleagues facing similar challenges, solving problems and avoiding pitfalls.

Throughout this crisis, KansasCityCIO members have collaborated locally and nationally with CIOs from across industries. In any gathering of CIOs, the answer is in the room. The challenge one CIO is facing has likely been solved by another CIO. What was their experience? What did they learn? What would they do differently? How could other CIOs benefit from sharing their experiences?

There is no textbook for how to be a great CIO. The best way to sharpen your leadership acumen

is to join a peer leadership network with other leaders working on solving similar challenges. The industries and size may be different, but winning approaches to effective leadership and problem solving are transferrable. Every leader's perspective is valuable and contributes to the conversation - and everyone wins when leaders engage, share ideas, experiences and best practices.

For over twenty years, InspireCIO has been inspiring CIO success through the annual CIO of the Year ORBIE Awards - but this is just the tip of the iceberg. By joining KansasCityCIO, technology executives take their leadership to the next level through year-round, member-led programs and interaction. The power of CIOs working together - across public and private business, government, education,

healthcare and nonprofit organizations - creates enormous value for everyone.

Together, we are transforming our organizations with technology and enriching our region and our world. On behalf of KansasCityCIO, congratulations to the nominees and finalists on their accomplishments and thank you to the sponsors, underwriters and staff who make the ORBIE Awards possible.

Sincerely,




**Brian Shield**  
2021 Chair,  
National  
VP of IT -  
**Boston Red Sox**

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**ORBIE**  
AWARDS

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AWARDS

**Congratulations to the 2021  
Kansas City CIO of the Year  
Award Winners and Nominees**



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TriCom Technical Services is proud to be a Gold Sponsor of the 2021 ORBIE Awards, presented by InspireCIO. As a best-in-class IT workforce solutions firm with deep roots in Kansas City, we take pride in the wildly successful technology teams we've helped build in our area—and beyond. We salute the bold, forward-thinking CIOs that work tirelessly with us to usher their respective organizations into a new digital age. And we wish you all luck at the awards!

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## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

BECKY BLALOCK, IT THOUGHT LEADER AND FORMER CIO

## 5 strategies that will make you a better CIO

## Hard-won advice from a CIO pioneer

Becky Blalock had her share of skeptics when she became CIO of Southern Company, a Fortune 200 utility company, in 2002. At the time, her marketing and accounting leadership experience dwarfed her 10-month stint in IT—an even more heavily male-dominated field then than it is now.

That's why winning the Georgia Global ORBIE Award less than two years later proved so sweet.

"My CEO was so proud because he had taken some flak for putting me in this job," Blalock said, and he made sure the whole company recognized her achievement.

The ORBIE Award became the first of many external validations of Blalock's acumen. Under her leadership, Southern Company invested more than \$1 billion in technology initiatives and was recognized as one of the most innovative companies and best places to work in IT. The industry again honored her with the Georgia ORBIE Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011, when she retired from Southern.

Blalock's relationship with the ORBIE Awards has come full circle. She now is one of the regularly featured speakers at ORBIE Awards events throughout the country. Blalock will deliver the keynote address at the Kansas City ORBIE Awards held virtually on Aug. 27.

During her 33 years at Southern and many more years serving on public company boards, Blalock learned what it takes to succeed at the highest level of a company. The following are five key takeaways for CIOs.

**Know what you want**

First and most important, figure out what it is that you want. "If you can get clear about that, you can make it happen all day long, and it gives you the confidence to go out and take the risk to make it happen," Blalock said. "You have to be taking a certain amount of risk every day just to survive where you are because things are changing so fast."

**Stay current**

Courage to take risks comes from learning from the people who have come before. No textbook is going



SUBMITTED

Becky Blalock is the keynote speaker of the Kansas City ORBIE Awards to be held virtually Aug. 27.

As former senior vice president and chief information officer for Southern Company, Becky Blalock spent nearly a decade directing IT strategy and operations for the world's third-largest utility company. She is the managing partner at Advisory Capital, a strategic consulting firm providing insight and expertise to global companies in the energy and IT industries, and author of *DARE: Straight Talk on Confidence, Courage and Career for Women in Charge*. A sought-after speaker, Blalock is recognized as a thought leader in the energy, utility and IT sectors, and at women's leadership events.

to tell you how to run IT, Blalock said. IT is constantly changing. Build a network of at least five people in other companies who do what you do and talk to them regularly.

Attending events like the ORBIE Awards is another excellent way to stay up to date. "They bring you in contact with lots of other people who have already been down that path and can share their experience with you," Blalock said.

Blalock also recommends that CIOs expect vendors not only to share information about their products, but also about how other companies are using technology to solve problems. Vendors and suppliers are inside a multitude of companies, so nobody sees the landscape better than they do, she said. Leverage these partnerships.

**Keep track of how you add value—and then make sure you share that story**

One of the big roles of CIOs is to communicate how they and their teams contribute to a company's success. "Otherwise, people take the technology for granted," Blalock said. "So have a scorecard that keeps track of what kind of value you're adding. Because if you don't tell that story, nobody's going to."

CIOs also have to be the advocate for their team and spotlight what they do behind the scenes. Blalock used "Show me the money" as the motto for her team, a twist on the famous catchphrase from the movie *Jerry Maguire*. "I was trying to communicate that we needed to make clear what value we're adding. As long as we can demonstrate we are adding

value, we will get budget dollars to do what we need to to help this company be successful."

**Constantly be looking for talent and empower your team**

Blalock's career started in accounting and marketing. She did not have IT experience when the CEO of Southern Company asked her to become the regional CIO. A co-worker, who stayed with Blalock as she moved from accounting to marketing to IT, told her she was a much better leader as CIO. The co-worker explained that because Blalock was not the subject-matter expert, she had to delegate and listen to her team.

"That was a wakeup call for me," Blalock said. "It's all about who you surround yourself with. At that level, you don't do the work. In fact, if you're executing the work, you're not a very good CIO because your people aren't learning what they need to to one day have your job." If you can't delegate, you can't go up the corporate ladder, she said.

A CIO's No. 1 priority needs to be finding talent. Find the very best talent you can, listen to and support them, and communicate how valuable they are to others in the company, she said.

**Invest in relationships**

The job of CIO is so demanding that it's hard to find the time to make the investment in relationships, but those relationships are absolutely crucial, inside and outside your company, Blalock said.

During her extensive career, Blalock said she has rarely passed up an opportunity to mentor someone. She often shares the story of how a young reporter who was new to Atlanta approached her after one of her speaking events and asked Blalock to be her mentor. Even though Blalock was in the middle of writing her book, *DARE: Straight Talk on Confidence, Courage and Career for Women in Charge*, Blalock agreed and invited her to accompany her to a few events and met her for coffee a couple of times. A few years later, that young woman got a job at Forbes and decided to write an article about Blalock's book.

Relationships are built by what you do for somebody else. "Invariably, when you think you're helping somebody, it comes back tenfold to you," Blalock said.

## LEADERSHIP AWARD

ALAN LOWDEN, CIO | H&amp;R BLOCK

# Passion for tech, business and people propels CIO ORBIE winner

Alan Lowden followed an anything-but-typical path to becoming CIO of a global company. From actuary to consultant to entrepreneur, the psychology major worked in a variety of roles for several companies before assuming the top technology leadership position at H&R Block. He now directs all aspects of technology at six global development sites and 10,000 retail offices for one of the most recognized brands in the financial services industry.

"It was definitely a winding path," Lowden said. "I started my career as an actuary because I was good at math. But I learned that being good at something isn't enough. I had to find a career that fed my curiosity and helped me uncover a deeper passion for my work. My passion turned out to be building teams and leveraging technology to power business strategy."

During his 5-year tenure as CIO, Lowden has led the technology transformation of H&R Block, driving modern architecture, cloud computing, emerging technologies, and new ways to work through DevOps and pipeline automation. "People haven't historically thought about H&R Block as a technology company, but technology and data are central to our growth strategy," he said. "We've been digitally transforming every aspect of our business, which makes Block a pretty exciting place to be."

Lowden shared his views on leadership and lessons he has learned along the way.

## What's your main purpose as a CIO?

My primary purpose is to create a culture of innovation, which requires building nimble, high-performing teams that act boldly, crave tough problems, demand high standards and value winning.

It starts by setting strategy, defining key performance measures, and then empowering people and teams to develop and implement new products and services. This requires the right combination of leaders who empower others to run autonomous teams and bold individuals who accept the challenge to drive outcomes. If you're missing either side



SUBMITTED

Alan Lowden is receiving the Leadership Award for the Kansas City CIO ORBIE Awards to be held virtually Aug. 27.

Alan Lowden is chief information officer at H&R Block and responsible for all aspects of technology, information security, and support across six global development sites and 11,000 global retail offices. Lowden has more than 20 years of leadership experience in product development, software engineering, mobile development and cloud-based solutions across multiple industries. Before joining H&R Block, he was vice president of enterprise government for Lexmark Enterprise Software, started a management and technology consulting firm and held strategic roles at Accenture.

of that combination, you're not going to achieve the results you need.

## How do you do foster a culture of boldness?

It's easier said than done. There is a lot of talk in innovation circles about the importance of failing fast and failing forward. But most people don't naturally embrace failure.

The key is having enough people who are willing to act boldly and put themselves out there. Some see this as individual risk, so it's important for the leadership team to recognize when people take calculated risks and to support them when those attempts fail.

People learn from every failure. This is a muscle we need to continue to build in more people. At Block, we've seen some great progress over the past few years, and I believe it's going to exponentially improve as more people realize the benefits in speed to market and customer experience by iterating quickly and taking bold actions.

## What advice do you have for people who are new to the industry or for those who aspire to be a CIO?

There was a point that I pivoted from being heads down and very focused on my direct job to looking up and actively working to serve my

community. My community involvement pushed me to grow in ways I hadn't imagined. As an example, I got involved with KC Rising, where I co-chaired the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee.

A topic as broad as innovation and entrepreneurship allowed us to tackle virtually any challenge. We chose to focus on improving supplier diversity as something tangible where we could drive meaningful change for the betterment of our whole community.

We assembled a diverse, dedicated team of professionals and advocates from across our community to develop a playbook and a program to help corporations and historically disadvantaged entrepreneurs work together. We approached the CEOs of Kansas City companies to accept a challenge to dramatically expand the amount they spend with diverse suppliers.

Block is just one of many companies that accepted the challenge. In turn, we are challenging other company CEOs across the metro to make similar pledges, which will help many diverse entrepreneurs thrive. Our collective efforts can make a big difference in our community.

My community involvement has also helped broaden my perspective in ways that have made me think differently about how to improve customer experiences, and it has made me a better leader. I would definitely recommend that aspiring leaders get involved in their communities early in their careers.

## How can CIOs help make their companies more inclusive to women, people of color and other underrepresented communities in IT and the C-suite?

Inclusivity and belonging are hugely important, not just for the betterment of our society, but for the health of every company. Diverse and inclusive workforces lead to a better understanding your customers, which leads to better products and service offerings.

The first step is to declare the importance of diversity, inclusivity and belonging. It starts at the top, and we treat it as a core value. But the declaration alone won't drive change.



At Block, we tackled this challenge by enlisting the help of a diverse set of volunteers to serve on cross-functional teams who identified where we get it right and where we need to improve. These teams, along with other leaders, helped bake structural changes into many aspects of our processes to help institutionalize improved diversity and inclusivity.

There is a wide range of processes to target, such as where we source talent, how we evaluate and interview candidates, how we procure supplies and services, and many others.

For example, continuing with the supplier diversity example, if there isn't a big enough pool of diverse suppliers for a particular RFP, we have created new processes to do more outreach so additional diverse suppliers compete for the RFP.

Similarly, on the employee side, we strive for a more diverse and inclusive employee base. We created targeted programs to broaden our candidate pool, and we build awareness of our inclusivity goals to drive adoption. We take similar approaches in talent management to provide advancement opportunities for diverse leaders.

#### When do you feel like you've been effective as a leader?

When I see change scaled. Transformation is about scaling changes across an organization and seeing the results drive positive business outcomes.

The journey is never over. But it is richly rewarding to see others who are empowering their teams, acting boldly, running quickly and seeing their teams doing the same. I love to see the aggregate impact of these teams all working in concert, embracing behaviors that you know are necessary to drive change, and then seeing the network effect further accelerate progress across other teams and individuals.

#### What's next in IT for Kansas City?

Kansas City continues to transform into a bigger tech hub. COVID may have helped reveal Kansas City as a hidden gem as more companies on the coasts have seen success in hiring remote workers from the Kansas City region.

I'm really excited about our future and the work that many KC organizations are doing to attract more tech talent and companies to the area.

## Congratulations Andrea!

Your leadership helps our patients, team members and community feel whole.



Andrea Trillo,  
Regional CIO

  
**Advent Health**



## CONGRATS!

Concord is a proud sponsor and underwriter of the Kansas City CIO of the Year ORBIE Awards and would like to extend our congratulations to all the nominees.

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**Bill Graff**  
SVP & CIO | **Cerner Corporation**

Cerner's software and services support the healthcare management of millions of lives around the world. My contribution has been making improvements in the way we deliver and maintain the infrastructure supporting these life-critical systems. We made major investments, relieving the burden on our clients to provide the technology needed to operate their healthcare systems, allowing them to focus solely on delivering care. I'm proud to have been part of the digitization of healthcare records over the last 16+ years and am looking forward to delivering solutions that democratize that data, allowing for deeper insights and the improvement of care.



**Jeff Hurley**  
CIO | **Dairy Farmers of America**

Created the organizational structure within IT to effectively support the business strategy and align the IT strategy.



**Ravi Peru**  
CIO | **CommunityAmerica Credit Union**

To pursue a vision, it is important to have the right platform from which to execute it. The platform includes the right organization and a clearly defined vision that is well aligned to the CEO, peers and the board of directors. The greatest accomplishment in the current role is establishing the platform with clarity and being well on our way to initiating our multiyear journey successfully. The strategy has been approved by all key stakeholders, and it has been funded appropriately to ensure our success. The right talent has been hired and efficient processes have been established.



**Andrea Trillo**  
Regional CIO | **MidAmerica | AdventHealth**

My greatest accomplishment has been our COVID response. Initially we worked to quickly expand telehealth, send nonessential employees home and get our caregivers the tools they needed to take care of patients. Our crisis then turned to hope, and we enabled technology for the mass vaccine clinics. The technology was key to getting people signed up and through events efficiently. Through a partnership with COR, we vaccinated 40k+ people. It was so rewarding to see the relief the vaccine provided families, and working at the clinics was incredibly emotional.



*Congratulations,*

**LONNIE JOHNSON**, on being a finalist for CIO of the Year! Your leadership enables us to strengthen families, prevent child abuse and neglect, and help people achieve mental health wellness.



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**Byron Clymer**  
SVP & CIO | **Lockton**

Prior to 2019, Lockton did not have a way to support a 100% remote workforce. Everyone came into the office. In 2019, IT created a new infrastructure for scale and resiliency, and enabled our associates to work from wherever they wanted. Little did we know, the convenience of work-from-anywhere would be reality in March when the business closed offices and people worked from home. Because IT thought ahead, our associates didn't have to drive into offices. They could work from wherever they felt safe.



**Deborah Gash**  
Senior Vice President and Chief Digital Officer |  
**Saint Luke's Health System**

Debe Gash is currently the Senior Vice President and Chief Digital Officer for Saint Luke's Health System. In this role, she leads a broad range of digital initiatives and solutions across the health system, including developing and implementing IT strategies and fostering a digital culture. She is responsible for updating the necessary standards, infrastructure, and security policies to protect the system's information assets. Debe also ensures quality IT support for the Health System and provides guidance in cost-effective clinical and business solutions."



**John Jacobs**  
SVP & CIO | **JE Dunn Construction**

JE Dunn is recognized as a construction industry leader in the areas of digital innovation, collaboration and data analytics. When our builders pursue new work, they highlight how they will leverage technology to become an indispensable business partner for our clients. The significance of one of the nation's largest commercial general contractors highlighting digital innovation as a core strength is groundbreaking. All of the credit for achieving this level of corporate respect and strategic relevance goes to the incredibly talented IT team for delivering not just technology potential, but also actual business value.



**Chad Mills**  
SVP & Chief Information and Digital Officer |  
**Children's Mercy Kansas City**

Since my arrival, I have worked to rightsize and realign our organization, modernize and stabilize our technology infrastructure, enhance governance and efficiency, and continue elevating our organizational and cyber resilience. I have focused on building a strong and trusted relationship with all areas of our organization through improved and transparent service, responsiveness, communication and engagement. Our goal is to fundamentally shift from a function that delivers a service to a partnership with our business and clinical heroes. All members of our team believe in and work toward a common purpose: to improve the health and well-being of all children.

Congrats to

Ravi Peru!

Our Game Changing  
Chief Information Officer

CIO of the Year ORBIE Awards –  
Large Enterprise Finalist





*Congratulations to Dan Pichler on being  
named as a 2021 Kansas City CIO of the Year  
ORBIE Awards finalist.*

*Thank you for your continued commitment  
to CRL and our community!*



**Dan Pichler**  
Chief Information Officer  
Clinical Reference Laboratory



*Congratulations*



**Debe Gash**

Senior Vice President and Chief Digital Officer,  
Saint Luke's Health System

**2021 CIO of the Year  
Orbie Award Nominee**

Thank you for all you do for Saint Luke's.  
We're honored and grateful for your leadership.

 **Saint Luke's**

From everyone at SelectQuote,

**Congrats, Floyd!**

**Floyd May III**

Kansas City Business Journal  
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FINALIST



Terracon congratulates Jason Kephart for being recognized as a finalist in the Large Corporate category for the CIO of the Year ORBIE Awards.

As Chief Information Officer, Jason has demonstrated excellence in technology, strategic direction, and leadership of people, which have contributed to Terracon becoming a market leader.

On behalf of our clients and more than 5,000 employee-owners, Terracon thanks you!

**Jason Kephart**  
Chief Information Officer



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## CONGRATULATIONS ON BEING NAMED CIO OF THE YEAR!

On behalf of  
the team at  
Children's  
Mercy,  
thanks for  
all you do!



LOVE WILL.

**Chad Mills**  
Senior Vice President, Chief  
Information and Digital Officer



## CONGRATULATIONS JEFF HURLEY

for being named an  
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**Kurt Hadermann**  
VP Technology | **Bluescope Buildings**

Through focused initiatives and detailed strategic planning, the BlueScope IT team systematically upgraded infrastructure. Over a two-year period, systems and services were evaluated based on age, technology, fit for use, etc. An implementation plan was developed, and systems were updated within budget and on time. The result was a significant decrease in user issues, increased employee satisfaction, increased redundancy and more system resiliency. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic put these upgrades to the ultimate test. The IT team shifted the 1,200 office staff to 100% virtual in less than a week, while keeping the business flowing.



**Jason Kephart**  
CIO | **Terracon Consultants Inc.**

Improved partnership with the business is my greatest accomplishment. During my tenure as CIO, I have transformed the relationship the Information Technology group has with the business, migrating from an order-taker to a trusted partner and business enabler. The information technology services our team provides are now perceived by organizational leadership as a competitive advantage to be leveraged to be best at people, lead innovation and be dominant in our markets.



**Floyd O. May III**  
CIO | **SelectQuote, Inc.**

SelectQuote achieved significant growth during a time when COVID-19 devastated many businesses. To protect employees and sustain business continuity, the company went 100% remote in March 2020. Concurrently, IT made certain all employees had remote use of required technology. By the end of September, staff doubled and IT still secured enough resources to support the entire business. My team and I safeguarded the infrastructure and ensured sales applications could handle 4,000+ employees working remotely simultaneously, while developing new applications to keep employees efficient. SelectQuote experienced the most successful sales season leading to \$358 million in revenue (YoY increase of 103%).



**DiAnna Thimjon**  
VP of IT, Chief Technology & Information Officer | **Cherokee Federal**

CFED IT has delivered powerful technology that positively impacts our frontline teams through a M365 launch across 29 countries, a PM enablement program, CMMC certification and the replacement of obsolete technology. Together, this work removes hundreds of barriers to exceeding client expectations while saving the company millions of dollars. Importantly, the revenue gains we enable invest into our global 384,000+ Cherokee citizens. Anyone can deliver technology; few CIOs have the chance to do it in a company whose profits build hospitals and schools and improve the quality of life for a nation's people — my definition of success.



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FOR BEING CIO OF THE YEAR

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**Sean Jennings**  
EVP & CTO | **UnitedLex**

UnitedLex first created customer-facing technology in 2020. I was asked to build the CTO organization (OCTO) and create software that enables customers to digitally transform law departments. We built a team of nearly 150 employees and contractors in Q1-Q2. That team conceived, designed, built and delivered an innovative legal automation platform – UnitedLex Vantage – without holding a single in-person meeting from February onward. Vantage defines a new category of legal technology and services that empowers the legal function to move as quickly as business, if not faster. Vantage accomplished our mission to make legal a first-class digital citizen.



**Lonnie Johnson**  
CIO | **KVC Health Systems**

My greatest accomplishment was to implement and sustain a digital transformation roadmap 20 years ago. This was before digital transformation was even a buzzword. Our company started with one software developer, and the only digital information we had was a DOS-based flat file that was updated once every couple of days. We would fax a printout of that info to the roughly 10 offices we had then. Today we have several applications, databases and tools, and a network that connects over 30 offices nationwide. That includes mobile apps, analytics and cloud access.



**Dan Pichler**  
CIO | **Clinical Reference Laboratory**

Prior to COVID-19, CRL was predominantly a “work from work” environment. Within two weeks, IT expanded our infrastructure to transition the eligible workforce to “work from home” to keep workers safe.

During the pandemic, CRL created a COVID-19 saliva-based test. IT partnered with all CRL divisions to enable this new line of business, including the lab, sales teams, external businesses, customer services and accounting. Together, we made what would have been a very down financial year into a growing organization, all while helping our country, communities and individuals be safe and to know more about where they stood with COVID-19.



**Michael Smith**  
VP & CIO | **American Academy of Family Physicians**

The AAFP successfully implemented an end-to-end digital and operational transformation that focused on replacing disparate and disconnected applications, data and systems, including migrating from a Novell infrastructure to a more scalable and integrated environment using Active Directory and Azure. This has driven the opportunity for the AAFP to accelerate business processes and innovation focusing on a personalized digital experience for our members. The future is bright and optimistic for the AAFP to further enhance the world-class value and service that our members have come to expect from the AAFP for the past 74 years.



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## PUBLIC SECTOR

### Government & education organizations



#### Rob Dickson

CIO | **Wichita Public Schools**

Prior to my arrival in 2019, WPS had a noticeable digital divide among students, lacked professional development on existing technologies and a strong sense of skepticism regarding the cloud. I began by adopting Microsoft 365 and using Microsoft Azure for key resources. After reviewing device inventory, we planned for device obsolescence and achieving a 1:1 model. With resources in the cloud and device standardization underway, we integrated other aspects of Microsoft 365's ecosystem in response to the pandemic. Rather than teaching students in a controlled classroom environment, we supported 50,000 kids in different environments, effectively turning the model inside out.



#### Bill Nixon

CIO, Director of the Department of Technology & Innovation | **Johnson County, KS**

My greatest accomplishment has been the county's joint response to the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing to serve our 600,000+ residents and entities that do business with the county. This includes enabling a secure remote workforce almost overnight in March 2020, adapting public meetings to allow virtual resident engagement, supporting the Department of Health and Environment and others in COVID testing, PPE distribution and vaccination response, and delivering world-class COVID-19 Analytics and Dashboard. This emergency response occurred while ensuring the business of the county stayed secure, including the 2020 election cycle.



#### Dr. Joe Phillips

Director of Technology & CIO |  
**Kansas City Public Schools**

My greatest success has always come from leading amazing people. The passion, talent and grit of our team members are what make projects turn into successes and problems transform into solutions. I am very proud of the digital transformation I have been able to lead for Kansas City Public Schools, including an infrastructure overhaul, the creation of innovation management, numerous new solutions, interoperability standards, cybersecurity standards, technology purchasing protocols, and the effective integration of technology across all educational and business units. However, what I am most proud of is the team that I have had the honor to lead.



#### Tony Sage

CIO | **City of Overland Park, KS**

As CIO of the City of Overland Park, I have a tremendous opportunity to serve my community in a very impactful way that can improve the quality of life for our residents. Information technology is a fundamental service that impacts every aspect of public service delivery. Continuing to strategically align the goals of the city while delivering high-quality services is a fundamental leadership objective for me personally. The city's recent response to COVID-19 and the operational adjustments made by IT staff were testament to the dedication of delivering high-quality services to our community.

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