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Crisis as an Innovation Catalyst

Mike Tyson once said, “everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth”. COVID-19 has been our punch in the month. The pandemic has forced organizations to look across their portfolio of services and develop new initiatives, accelerate or decelerate planned initiatives and abandon some efforts entirely. These times of crisis provide companies the decision point of building a defensive fortification and protecting existing business or using the situation as a catalyst to be offensive, prioritize the right initiatives and strengthen the organization. The choice to use a crisis as a catalyst brings innovation agendas into the forefront as a primary tool.

In a crisis situation, there is often a strong sense of urgency that can either galvanize an innovation effort or create confusion and misdirection. The difference is often rooted in having a clear strategic vision to align the innovation. The classic example is the Apollo 13 mission where the ground crew and astronauts had to develop innovative solutions to account for several life-threatening issues. Throughout the process of developing a way to get back to Earth while preserving power or reducing carbon dioxide in the space capsule, there was a consistent, clear and well-understood strategic goal – get the crew home alive. There was not a playbook describing the ‘how’ only an exceptional understanding of the ‘why’. For innovation to be a catalyst at any time, a well-understood strategic vision is critical. This is especially true during a crisis.

Throughout the pandemic, The Kroger Co. pivoted or innovated new solutions on a daily basis in order to react to a rapidly changing situation. With guidance from government agencies and customer sentiment constantly evolving, this required the organization to be flexible in developing solutions. This is especially challenging in a retail environment where you are accounting for store operations, technology, supply chain, and talent implications. However, there was a well-understood strategic alignment around a complex challenge: deliver a critical service that is safe for our customers and our associates. The safety of those – our associates, customers and communities – involved galvanizing the organization to rapidly expand pickup and delivery capacity, partner with third parties to rollout COVID testing centers, expand options for low-contact payment and hire over 100,000 associates in less than two weeks.

Innovation, in general, is not an exact science. It requires experimentation, and it requires failed attempts. This is the hard truth that holds many companies back from investing in innovation. As Stefan Thomke points out in “Building a Culture of Experimentation”, “in the eyes of many organizations that emphasize efficiency, predictability, and ‘winning’ those failures are wasteful”. There is always a risk to innovative investments. If there is a strong strategic vision, this can be minimized through smaller experiments. Achieving the big goal through small steps helps to better manage the overall cost of failed experiments. However, it is the learnings from these failed experiments that can create future differentiation across their landscape.

Change and disruption are constant across all industries, and the rate of this will, likely, continue to accelerate. The most successful companies will build models to drive experiments and innovation that progresses towards their strategic goal. This will better prepare them for the situation where crisis is the catalyst for innovation. It is that point where Peter Drucker’s famous declaration “innovate or die” will never be truer.
JULY & AUGUST EVENTS

JULY

Virtual CIO Council Meeting

**Doing Your Homework - Setting Up an Effective Work from Home Framework**
Facilitated by: Zachary S. Heck, Attorney, Taft Law
This presentation will provide helpful insight into the cybersecurity risks associated with telecommuting, including risks to privileged communications with attorneys and doctors, confidentiality, proprietary materials, and business operations. The talk will also identify industry and legal requirements and frameworks necessary to implement in order to reduce risk exposure and acquire defenses in the event of a data breach caused by heightened telecommuting risks.

**Thursday, July 9** | 11:30am-1:00pm

AUGUST

7th annual TECHIES Awards Celebration!

**Thursday, August 6, 2020** | 5:00-7:30pm
**Categories:**
- Outstanding Technology Team
- IT Project of the Year
- Best IT Services Company
- IT Executive of the Year
- Emerging Technology Leader
- Most Promising Startup
- Award of Excellence - Student Project

More information coming soon...

Virtual Women 4 Technology Meeting

**Work Life Balance**
Panel discussion

**Wednesday, August 12** | 8:30am-10:00am

Virtual CIO Council Meeting

**Talent Landscape & IT Market Analytics**

**Friday, August 14** | 11:30am-1:00pm

Virtual Data Analytics SIG Meeting

**TOPIC TBA**

**Friday, August 21** | 8:30am-10:00am

Virtual Infrastructure/Cloud SIG Meeting

**TOPIC TBA**

**Friday, August 28*** | 8:30am-10:00am
*Please note: DATE CHANGE!

Visit our events page for the latest event registration information!

Keep it on Your Radar...

14th annual Taste of IT Conference
**Wednesday, November 18, 2020** | Southwest, OH
Agenda Announcement coming August 2020
Sponsorship Opportunities here

18th annual Ohio Information Security Conference (OISC)
**Wednesday, March 10, 2021** | Southwest, OH
Call for Presentations open August 2020

Tech First Conference Updates here

Visit our events page for the latest event registration information!
“Knowing you know” may be a big part of why many leaders, teams, and entire companies can remain stuck and struggle to develop new ideas, products, or services. Companies of all sizes will invest hundreds of thousands of dollars this year trying to be better prepared for what is ahead and for many it will have served as a fruitless endeavor. The reality I believe all too often is that many teams and companies are just not focused on the right internal environment to provide the opportunity to be innovative and look back from their future. Given the speed and scale of the disruptions many are facing within their industries makes this topic even more relative today. Much has been written about this subject, from large organizations that are being disrupted to small teams trying to re-invent themselves. What has been interesting to learn over the last twenty-five-plus years is how many of these companies will tell you the answer was often right in front of them, whether they found it or not. Specifically, many were simply overlooking the paths to future innovations and allowed rigid thinking to blind them in some way from better navigating, innovating or just better understanding what lay ahead. This seldom had anything to do with their actual ability or the amount of any investments made or not made, but very potentially how certain they were in their own thinking. Psychologists call the urgent need for finding solutions cognitive closure and it can often lure anyone into simplistic logic that confuses clarity and certainty and can hamper the ability to truly innovate.

It took me a little while to understand this idea and I am still very much learning but starting with a baseline understanding of the difference between clarity and certainty may be helpful. Bob Johansen’s has done some great work in this area and here are his thoughts from his book “The New Leadership Literacies”.

“Clarity is usually expressed in stories, while certainty is usually expressed in rules. Rigid rules can get leaders in a lot of trouble…, while stories encourage people to engage. Clarity is lucid and coherent; certainty is definite and brittle. Great stories invite people to add color within the boundaries of the story. Rules punish people who violate them. Stories Sing. Rules shout.”

At this point you may be saying to yourself “but my boss pays me to be certain about my decisions!” All too often you are right, executives or boards of directors all too often will instill the belief (or fear) that your job is to create certainty. We would also all agree that showing high levels of uncertainty has plenty of downside as someone that is looked to for leadership. What is needed may be for more leaders to be clear about where they want the company or team to go, but much more flexible about how they get there. In technology, it may be the binary world of 1’s and 0’s that we have built that also binds us tightly to this desire for certainty. The quicker we can discover that there are spectrums of choice and having precision in certain situations may not even be possible, it is then that the dreaded “good enough” is truly great and we potentially find the clarity that many teams need. That said, dilemmas like the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to take its toll on people’s lives, and few companies and leaders were truly prepared. It is in times like this that the longing for creating certainty may feel among the most important tasks you have and in some areas that may be true, but staying aware of the trap this certainty can create I would argue is as important. Again, being clear about where a company is going, but flexible about how it gets there may be as important.

So, does your team or company feel stuck in its current way of thinking about business dilemmas or problems? Why not invest some time understanding the difference between clarity and certainty and ensure you are evaluating the balance of how much clarity you’re providing compared to the certainty you are putting into the organization? This may help open your team and company to a wider spectrum of choice, innovation, and options to move forward. What you may also find out in your journey is what you thought you knew, may have been blinding you to what is.

Why Certainty May Be Holding Your Team Back
Don Kennedy, Practice Lead
Smart Data
Cyber for the Common Good

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Center for Cybersecurity & Data Intelligence
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Cyber for the Common Good
Gary Ginter
Systems Vice President, CIO
Premier Health

What was your first job?
First job was in high school working for a landscaping company. First IT job was as a co-op in college for an aircraft parts company as a programmer/analyst.

Did you always want to work in IT?
Yes, my interest in IT started in high school doing BASIC programming.

Tell us about your career path.
My co-op job turned into a permanent position for the company. Worked there several years before moving to Healthcare as a programmer/analyst, then through several leadership positions before taking over the CIO role.

We’re proud to support Technology First
The data services landscape has changed so much the last few years – are you still doing things the hard way?

This is a new industry, with rapid improvements constantly arising. Remember the cell phone boom in the early 2000s? In only ten years, we moved from flip phones to Blackberries with mobile data to super smartphones like the iPhone. The data services industry is similar – if you aren’t keeping up and checking in, you might miss easy fixes to frustrating daily problems. Onebridge’s Andrew Bittermann, Senior Director of Analytics Solution Development & Strategic Alliances, lists his favorite partner platforms for 2020 that offer simple solutions for complex needs:

**Profisee**

Profisee is the only Master Data Management (MDM) platform that offers a fast, affordable, and scalable path to building a trusted data foundation. Their solution complements Microsoft-focused companies well and offers a very competitive pricing structure. Touted by Gartner as having an impressive time-to-value, Profisee implementations are faster and less expensive from both a software and services perspective.

Profisee is extremely fast to implement and requires configuration only – no coding. You can scale up or down easily, managing 1K or 1B records without adding complexity. They offer a solution called “Accelerator” which creates a self-sufficient MDM team according to cutting-edge industry standards within weeks. They kick off the process with a knowledge transfer, conducting Administrator Training to begin working toward self-sufficiency within teams. Once provided with a system that meets minimum hardware and software requirements, they assist with the installation of the initial environment for training and prototype development. Finally, they work to configure computing and training facilities, scheduling, logistics, and finalize the prototype scope with you. With Profisee covering installation and configuration, design and development, and progress monitoring, it’s really a one-stop MDM shop that can get you up in running with world-class MDM in a fraction of the time it might normally take.

For example, creating a Golden Record, or single source of truth, becomes exponentially easier. If you have a customer with multiple records on file in different databases across your company, it can be difficult to figure out which contact information in which database is the best to use. A full-service MDM solution like Profisee allows you to pick and choose which fields you want to bring together from which databases to create a solid Golden Record, eliminating daily guesswork around which data is best to use.

**Snowflake**

Snowflake offers a modern data platform designed from the ground up for the cloud. Its patented architecture creates a centerpiece for data pipelines, data warehousing, data lakes, data application development, and building data exchanges to share governed data easily and securely.

Snowflake is the only platform offering data warehousing as a service – they manage everything for you. The ability to use and manipulate data as if it were on your own machine (without affecting the original data source in any way) makes it easy to query databases from anywhere. There are no security issues, and no rogue copies floating around.

Snowflake allows separate scaling of compute and storage. While you pay for your storage, users who query your data pay for that, and every query earns money toward paying your Snowflake storage costs. If you’ve created a great data set, you can let others query your data and that can help pay for your instance of Snowflake. Available in AWS, Azure, and GCP, Snowflake allows you to back up data across cloud providers. That way, if something happens to one cloud, you have an instance protected in another cloud. That also makes it easy to share data with others who want to query it from a different cloud. For many years, storing a TB of data was around $18K a year. Storing that much data with Snowflake costs around $360 a year.

**Alteryx**

Alteryx is a leader in the self-service data analytics movement. They offer a platform that can discover, prep, and analyze all your data, ad deployment and sharing analytics at scale for deeper insights faster than you ever thought possible, enabling business users to develop complex no-code analytics applications.

If you want to operationalize machine learning models in a supportable way, Alteryx is perfect for you. They offer a completeness of vision unparalleled in the analytics space and can solve a lot of day-to-day problems for your business.

If you’re doing a lot of manual data preparation or wrangling, it allows you to do that in a more efficient and repeatable manner, so once you create a workflow you can schedule it to run again. It also provides more automated documentation, so not only can you do these transformations on your data, you can allow people to automate their ETL processes, make it repeatable and have it meticulously documented much faster than could happen manually.

Alteryx also offers built-in functions to handle things that would normally be very complex. Their no-code solutions can handle, manage, and do analytics on geospatial data. Questions like “how many stores do I have within this delivery area?” Or “Within this delivery area, where do I need more drivers?” can be answered much easier and faster.

One of the most critical aspects of what Alteryx offers is that they allow for no-code advanced analytics and machine learning, automatically generating behind-the-scenes R code to do advanced algorithms. For example, DevOps for machine learning is very challenging and time-consuming to set up. Promote from Alteryx handles versioning, monitoring, deployment, approval, workflow, rollback, etc. All of the things associated with deploying a machine learning model are covered with Promote. Alteryx offers another easy button for data cataloging. It will pull your data sources to ingest metadata and catalog data assets in the process. If you’re curious about what data assets you have, where they are, what’s the technical metadata, what’s the lineage of other things that use those as a source, you can easily access all of that information. Alteryx allows you to curate a business glossary with all of this information readily available and up-to-date. If you want to easily know which data sources you can trust, it enables that. It also has a search engine called Data Asset Discovery for all your data assets.

...continued on page 7
WhereScape

WhereScape is an accelerated Data Warehousing Development and ETL platform. It generates optimized Data Definition Language (DDL) for multiple platforms based on a logical model. This is also the only platform for building data warehouses that has been recommended by the creator of Data Vault. Combined with Snowflake, WhereScape becomes especially powerful in quickly creating a Data Vault 2.0-compliant warehouse in the cloud.

On June 10, WhereScape held a webinar in which they raced the clock to create a fully functional Data Vault in just 30 minutes. This may sound like hyperbole, but WhereScape truly reduces the amount of time to warehouse deployment from months to hours.

WhereScape lets you design your data warehouse logically, and then you decide “I want to push this out to Oracle” or “I want to make this an SQL server” and it automatically generates all the needed code. The code is clean and documented, and what could take a year to develop might take about 3 months instead.

With the growing popularity of Data Vault 2.0 solving new types of data management challenges, users needed a quick and easy way to implement this methodology. It can be difficult because it’s very new, very different looking, and to do it right is complex. WhereScape automates that process. Provide it with some metadata, hit a button, and it manifests a Data Vault model. Click another button, and it substantiates it for you. If you need help building a data warehouse and implementing Data Vault 2.0, WhereScape is a great solution. It’s also great for storing data, adding new data, and situations that arise with mergers and acquisitions. And when you need to move the data into another platform to do BI work and reporting, WhereScape automates that too.

With more and more of these innovations becoming available, you never know when one of your daily problems acquires a new solution. Having a data services team on your side gives you the advantage of finding out where you can save money, save time, and give your BI and analytics efforts a boost. Onebridge is partnered with all of the services and platforms listed above – get in touch with us to learn how we can make them work for you.

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7th Annual

The Technology First Leadership Awards recognize the contributions of information technology students and professionals ensuring a vibrant Southwest Ohio IT community. Recognizing Individuals and Teams exemplifying Technology First Values: Creating a community to share knowledge, grow business, and build for the future.

Finalists will be recognized and Winners will be announced on Thursday, August 6th, 5:00 – 7:30pm at the Mandalay Event and Banquet Center

Does your company want to support the IT Community? Sponsorships are available!

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OUTSTANDING TECHNOLOGY TEAM

An IT department that has impacted the efficiency, productivity, and performance of their company.

Sponsored by:

And the Finalists are:

Heidelberg Distributing IT Team
Application Administration Team at Sinclair College
Silfex IT Team

BEST IT SERVICES COMPANY

An IT company that has increased its investment in the Dayton region through revenue, jobs, or capacity.

Sponsored by:

And the Finalists are:

Advanced Technology Consulting (ATC)
Cincinnati Bell
TEKsystems Dayton Team
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IT EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR
A senior-level professional responsible for influencing progress and developing teams through leadership excellence.

Support Excellence in Innovation… Sponsor this category!

And the Finalists are:

Rene Carter, IT Director, Heidelberg Distributing
David Goodwin, Partner, Advanced Technology Consulting
Christopher Kuhl, CISO, Dayton Children's

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY LEADER
An IT professional that has exhibited excellence and technical leadership within their organization.

Support Excellence in Innovation… Sponsor this category!

And the Finalists are:

Nick Enger, CTO, Advanced Technology Consulting
Jonathan Sparks, CTO, Expedient Technology Solutions
Shawn Waldman, CEO, Secure Cyber Defense
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IT PROJECT OF THE YEAR
A technical or business project that made a significant contribution, in terms of product/service; process; or people, to achieve company’s strategic goals and exhibited excellence in management of the project.

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And the Winner is:
Hobart Service

MOST PROMISING STARTUP COMPANY
A technology startup that has shown great innovation and promise in the Dayton and SW Ohio region.

Support Excellence in Innovation… Sponsor this category!

And the Winner is:
Recless Tech

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE - STUDENT PROJECT
An IT college student or team that exhibited excellence while delivering a capstone project.

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And the Finalists are:
David Appleby, Sinclair College
"Adrift" Computer Science Team, Cedarville University
Timothy Haas, Wright State University

Finalists will be recognized and Winners will be announced on Thursday, August 6th, 5:00 – 7:30pm at the Mandalay Event and Banquet Center
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Technology First | JULY-AUGUST 2020
Technology First COVID-19 Response Panel Roundup

Tim Upton
Edge Webware, Inc.

Technology First recently assembled a COVID-19 response panel to discuss the many obstacles businesses are facing during the pandemic. We hosted a webinar, sponsored by Franklin Computer Services Group, where the participants addressed business challenges, solutions, and ideas for moving forward as the economy begins to reopen.

Our diverse panel included companies from various sectors of the technology field. We gained a lot of insight into what these businesses faced over the past few months and highlight some key takeaways in this article.

**The move to working remotely**

The challenges of moving to a remote working environment were mixed across our panelists. Several businesses already had some employees working remotely before COVID-19, while other companies faced major issues sourcing enough hardware for their personnel.

**Some initial obstacles**

- Training employees quickly on collaboration tools
- Lack of hardware to outfit the entire staff
- Employee resistance to new software and procedures

Most small businesses were positioned well to adapt rapidly, having fewer workers and minimal hardware requirements. The businesses paying close attention to Ohio’s day-to-day guidelines and restrictions were able to pivot and get their teams set up quickly. The smaller staff sizes helped with communication and employee buy-in for new procedures.

Larger companies had enormous pressure to immediately provide their workforce with the necessary hardware and software to work remotely. Many faced supply chain issues as the stock for laptops and similar equipment was in extremely high demand. To give you an idea of the scope, Tim Wells, Manager of IT Development for Speedway, told us his in-house team built and distributed 1,000 laptops in one week.

**Positive aspects from the start**

- Employee safety and peace of mind
- More productive workday
- Flexibility of schedules

Transitioning employees to working remotely was a challenge for some, but ultimately viewed as a success by our panel. Many businesses said their employees were more productive due to fewer interruptions and the lack of a commute.

Our speakers agree that the option to work remotely will stay in place after the pandemic has passed. Maintaining a remote work policy will be a practical approach in keeping workers safe during the possibility of subsequent outbreaks and other seasonal viruses.

**Key Takeaway**

Be proactive in setting up your remote work policies. Take time to train your staff so you will not experience interruptions in the workflow if you have to implement these procedures.

**Embracing collaboration software**

The need for employee buy-in was paramount when it came to the successful rollout of collaboration software. Larger companies faced more pushback than smaller ones as the skill level across their workers had more variation. This reluctance quickly subsided as employees gained experience and learned the platforms.

One unforeseen benefit is that many businesses now have a majority of their workforce skilled in using collaboration tools. This has the potential to pay off in terms of increased future productivity.

**Key Takeaway**

Determine what collaboration software is the best fit for your company’s day-to-day operational needs. Throughout the year, schedule time for employees to review using this software to ensure they stay comfortable with the platform.

**Supply chain limitations**

The biggest bottleneck in transitioning employees to working remotely was the availability of stock in the supply chain. Most businesses never anticipated the need to have the majority, if not all, of their employees working from home. The demand for hardware was high, and laptops were almost impossible to find.

To address this issue, some businesses allowed employees to take home their desktop systems. Other companies set up remote access, giving employees the ability to connect to their work computers using their home systems.

**Key Takeaway**

Take a periodic assessment of what hardware and software are required to keep your essential staff up and running at all times. Make room in your budget for regular upgrades and the purchase of new systems to insulate your business from high-demand periods within the supply chain.

**The effect on customer relations**

Another major adjustment that took place was client interaction. Many of our speakers traditionally work with clients face-to-face and moving to video conferencing presented its own set of challenges. Some clients did not have any experience with video meetings, and employees found themselves conducting impromptu onboarding sessions. These barriers were eventually overcome through screen sharing and some gentle guidance.

...continued on page 13
This method of communication actually helped strengthen many customer relationships. Clients were able to interact with employees in a “behind the scenes” setting, allowing them to see and connect with a more personal side of their company representative.

**Key Takeaway**

Leverage the personal connections you have made with your clients to further solidify future business. Go a step further and have a plan to train customers who are not familiar with remote communication.

**Continuity plan**

One of the biggest lessons for many businesses during this time is the need for a continuity plan. This is your company’s playbook for disaster recovery. It contains the procedures your business will implement in times of abnormal interruption to daily operations.

In its basic form, it is a document that outlines how your business will continue to operate and allocate resources during a major interruption. Businesses that did not have a continuity playbook were scrambling to put procedures in place to keep day-to-day operations going. The pandemic made it glaringly apparent of any gaps in processes and breakdowns in business transactions.

Jon Scruggs, Infrastructure Manager at Hobart Service, explained that the fallout from the 2019 Memorial Day tornadoes essentially wrote the playbook that Hobart uses for disaster recovery. This left the business positioned well when the pandemic hit, as they had procedures in place that were applicable to the changes needed for COVID-19.

**Key Takeaway**

The need for a continuity playbook is paramount. For businesses, it is arguably the most important takeaway from the pandemic. If your company does not currently have a continuity plan, you should start creating one as soon as possible. Review your plan often to ensure the procedures are applicable and will allow your business to continue to operate in the face of any disaster.

While our panel consisted of a diverse group of businesses, they all felt similar challenges at various scales. We hope you will consider the topics outlined in this article and explore them further as they relate to your business.

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**Webinar Sponsor**

**Franklin Computer Services Group**

**Our Panelists**

From Data Analytics: **Tim Wells**, Manager IT Development, Speedway

From Women 4 Technology: **Danielle Chaney**, Account Manager—Network Infrastructure and Information Security, TEKsystems

From Women 4 Technology & the CEO Council: **Lisa Couture**, VP of Operations, Edge Webware with **Jerritte Couture**, President, Edge Webware

From the CIO Council: **Treg Gilstorf**, CIO, Yaskawa Motoman Robotics

From the Infrastructure/Cloud SIG & Security: **Jon Scruggs**, Infrastructure Manager, Hobart Service

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**Collaboration Software Resources**

**Instant Messaging**

- Microsoft Teams
  - microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software
- Flock
  - flock.com

**Phone and Video Conferencing**

- Zoom
  - zoom.us
- Webex
  - webex.com
- Uberconference
  - uberconference.com

**CRM Systems**

- Salesforce
  - salesforce.com
- Pipedrive
  - pipedrive.com

**Project Management**

- Wrike
  - wrike.com

**Cloud-based Office Applications**

- Microsoft 365
  - microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365
The conversation started along the lines of a request for help. There was surplus inventory, food was going bad, restaurants were closed, fine dining had all but disappeared. The surplus inventory was sitting in a warehouse, manufacturers were still churning out more and more goods, but no one was buying. It had to go somewhere, and it couldn’t be the trash.

This sounds like the start of a post-apocalyptic novel, but unfortunately, it is part of the harsh reality we lived through during the first 6 months of this year. Even as businesses start to reopen and states kick the economy back into high gear, the reality of things is that we may be faced with the same scenario yet again, likely before the year is over.

The food had to be sent somewhere, someone was likely to buy it, after all, who would want to see a beautiful tuna steak or marbled cheesecake go to waste? Enter the idea – how can perishable gourmet food be connected with those who want to continue experiencing fine dining quality meals at home? *It needed to be sold online, to a different audience than the manufacturers usually sold to.* A B2B bulk sales distributor had to find a way to get smaller quantities of the products to a consumer crowd – and fast. B2B sales done offline now had to be transformed into B2C sales done online.

Halfway across the Atlantic, a similar situation was playing out: local grocery stores that relied heavily on foot traffic were now closed, with tens of thousands of pounds of food which would go to waste within days if they weren’t consumed. Somehow, grocery items had to get to the consumers. People were forced to stay indoors. Surely, there had to be a way to distribute this food to the crowd somehow. Large grocery chains forced to close their doors were being faced with a looming challenge: *start selling online or face losing money on wasted goods.* The option? Find a way to let local consumers place orders online and engage drivers to deliver the goods door to door. Fast.

Back in America, a cleaning supplies shop and small distributor was facing yet another, albeit similar challenge. Amazon had banned the third party sale of sanitizing products to prevent price gouging and the brick-and-mortar location was closed. Consumers were desperately looking for these products, there was inventory to be distributed to these consumers, but there was no channel for distribution.

Again and again, businesses have faced a similar challenge over the past months, if they wanted to reopen their doors once the health crisis settled, business had to continue one way or another. The need to sell their goods and the consumer’s need to purchase the goods didn’t dissipate through closures, people were, and still are, looking to buy things they need. *The shift from brick and mortar to online channels was already gaining traction, and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic only sped up the inevitable: Businesses had to get online, start selling online and retain their customer base to prevent future financial damage – and fast.*

There was only one small problem: most people were not prepared to pivot to online sales in the blink of an eye and worst yet, it was unlikely they could find a developer who could deploy an online store in less than a few weeks at best.

Sometime between late 2019 and early 2020, before the pandemic was on anyone’s radar, a few people across multiple teams had an idea to start developing some solution which could shave time off custom eCommerce application development, some Accelerator program. Having mainly worked with Magento as a platform, teams were no strangers to complicated deployment scripts and command creation.

By design, every new environment required some configuration file creation, some set of commands for data, code, configuration, theme, design, graphics and static content installation. DevOps engineers could spend anywhere from 3-4 days per environment up to 17, yes, 17 days. For anyone keeping track, that is nearly a full month of work for one environment. Now, if an application had multiple collaborators, multiple testing environments to support multiple stakeholder changes and version tracking, creating any type of automation was not even remotely possible. A normal project on Magento could take a minimum of 3-4 months at best to get to production and quite likely, upwards of $50,000 or more, oftentimes reaching 6-digit figures for MVP was, well, normal.

Enter the crazy idea to bring some time savings to the environment creation. There was no sponsor, this had to be done internally and internally financed. When everyone is an indispensable resource, finding time for innovation outside of customer projects’ work is never easy. Eventually, little by little, the DevOps engineering team was coming together with a few hours here and there to get a less-than-ready-to-pilot solution.

All of a sudden, it was March 8th, 2020 and our CEO was visiting our office in the US, planning meetings throughout the week with customers Stateside. On the morning news, all that was being said was how Italy was about to close their borders and fear eventually set in, he may not be able to return home to Poland if Europe announced border closures. In less than 7 days half of the many eCommerce stores our company was supporting in Development or Service Level Maintenance lifecycles halted the projects.
New businesses were screaming for help, phones off their hooks in the US and Europe. **Was the Accelerator ready?** Could it actually be possible to use it in a real scenario for a billable project? We were about to find out.

The food distributor with surplus inventory was begging for help. It had to be fast, it had to be cheap and it had to sell. From a Friday call to a Monday Customer agreement signed with a Work Order in place, by Tuesday there was a store which only needed a catalog, images and to connect payment gateways to collect money for goods sold.

The grocery store with local delivery was able to collect a first order within 2 weeks including a legal battle to prevent impact to potential competitors. Somehow, miraculously, within the short time, even custom logic for no payment collection and sending messages to drivers for order pickup was developed. And it worked.

A sanitizing products company was able to bypass Amazon’s restrictions. A day to deploy, a few hours to add some images, get a catalog up. Another day for testing. It was done. **Less than a week.**

**The Accelerator worked. It was a solid foundation.**

Built on Azure with a containerized setup and deployed through with Docker Image, it was proving to have way more value than saving 17 days off of an environment deployment script. It was a new way of working, it proved that there was a way to help customers not only get online fast but save valuable dollars when it mattered the most.

**Remember those 3-4 months? Now it was less than 2 weeks. Those $50,000 to more than $100,000? Now it was less than $20,000 in the worst-case scenario.** Business owners had to worry about not letting their employees go and how to make the next payroll, not about paying a steep development bill as part of their Digitization Program. **With a global pandemic ravaging every corner of the world with no end in sight, digitization was inevitable. At least it doesn’t have to be as expensive and time consuming as it has been believed to be, and it is no longer only for the big guys.** We have to get used to living in our new normal, we don’t know what this will be, but one thing is for sure, eCommerce is here to stay whether business owners are ready for it or not.

If you would like to more about projects such as this – please contact us at info@orba.co (no “m” at the end)

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"What I get most out of Technology First is due to our culture that we are all very open, interactive and transparent, more so than any other organization I am or have been a part of. I highly value all of the relevant connections, relationships and friendships that I have made here. The CIO Council and the Data Analytics SIG have helped me with education and growth or even confirmation that others have the same issues and are handling them the same way or better."

- **VP of IT**

"Technology First is 'the' Miami Valley information technology professional resource. Their events are always well attended by a variety of knowledge holders, and I enjoy them immensely."

- **CEO, Owner**

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14th Annual Taste of IT Conference
November 18, 2020 | Southwest Ohio

400+ Participants | 30+ Speakers | 40+ Sponsors | Virtual Access

**Diamond** = $5,000, $5,500 nonmember (Exclusive, 1 company only)
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- A dedicated, exclusive feature icon
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Includes:
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- Social Media recognition prior to event
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Technology First would like to thank and recognize its Board of Directors. They provide input into the strategic direction of the organization and actively lead working committees that drive our programs and services.
CREATING A COMMUNITY TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE, GROW BUSINESS AND BUILD FOR THE FUTURE.

Established in 1997

20 BOARD MEMBERS
- 4 Quarterly Meetings

175+ CORPORATE MEMBERS
12 ANNUAL PARTNERS

SHARE KNOWLEDGE

DATA ANALYTICS
- 20+ Attendees Each Session
- 7x/year
- Artificial Intelligence / Machine Learning
- Analytical Algorithms
- Data Strategy & Analysis Tools
- IoT Applications

INFRASTRUCUTURE/CLOUD
- 15+ Attendees Each Session
- 7x/year
- Trending Infrastructure and Cloud Topics
- Maintenance & Security

WEB SITE
- 26,000+ Unique Annual Visitors

TECH SOURCE
- Helps IT Buyers find Suppliers
- Locate Resources in our Region
- RFP & Referral Requests

TECHNOLOGY FIRST MAGAZINE
- Expert Articles contributed by Members
- 1,000+ Mailed to IT Professionals
- 70,000+ readers

E-NEWSLETTER
- 4000+ Subscribers
- Event News
- Job Opportunities
- Member Highlights
- Annual Partner Recognition

SCAN TO SIGN-UP FOR EMAILS

SOCIAL MEDIA

2 ANNUAL CONFERENCES

TASTE OF IT
- 14th Annual 11/18/20
- Tracks: Executive, Strategy, Security, Analytics, Infrastructure/Cloud, Dev/Programmers
- 400+ Participants
- 30+ Speakers
- 40+ Exhibitors

OHIO INFORMATION SECURITY CONFERENCE
- 17th Annual 3/11/20
- Tracks: Executive, Technical, Operations, Resiliency, Governance, and Workforce
- 350+ Participants
- 30+ Speakers including Expert Panels
- 30+ Exhibitors

BUILD FOR THE FUTURE

DIGITAL MIXER
- Annual Casual Career and Networking Night (February)
- 35+ Employers
- 200+ Students
- Local Colleges and Universities

WORKFORCE FORECAST & SALARY SURVEY

TECH FIRST SCHOLARSHIPS
- $5,000 in Scholarship Money to 5 students
- 2019 Winners from Sinclair College, Wright State University, and Cedarville University

TECH THURSDAYS
- Casual After Hours Networking
- 5x/yr

WOMEN 4 TECHNOLOGY
- Both in Dayton and Cincinnati (7x/yr)
- Four Areas of Focus
- Leadership
- Networking
- Professional Development
- Mentoring

MUNICIPALITY IT
- IT Leaders, City Managers, and MSP’s
- Smart Cities and Leading Edge Topics

GROW BUSINESS

BUILD FOR THE FUTURE

TECH FIRST LEADERSHIP AWARDS
- Recognizes contributions of Technology professionals (each May)
  - Outstanding Technology Team
  - Best IT Services Company
  - IT Executive of the Year
  - Emerging Tech Leader
  - Most Promising Startup
  - Award of Excellence - Student Project

TECHNOLOGY FIRST BOARD OF DIRECTORS
- 2020
- 20 BOARD MEMBERS
- 4 Quarterly Meetings

TECHNOLOGY FIRST AWARDS
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Technology First | JULY-AUGUST 2020
2020 EVENTS

CIO COUNCIL
(Executive Leadership Only - 11:30-1pm)
January 16 - Tech Forum (Open Event)
   Annual CIO Forecast Panel: Dayton Children’s,
   Speedway, Central State University, WPAFB
February 20 - Bracketology: March Madness Analytics
April 14 - virtual: CIO Strategies in COVID-19
May 7 - virtual: ALL SIGS: COVID-19 Response Panel
May 21 - virtual: Digital Customer/Employee Experience
June 12 - Tech Forum (Open Event) virtual: Data Panel
July 9 - virtual: Effective Work from Home Framework
August 14 - virtual: Talent & IT Market Analytics
September 10
October 8 - Tech Forum (Open Event) CISO Panel
December 3

DATA ANALYTICS
(Open to ALL - 8:30-10am)
January 10 - Sports Analytics
February 28 - Jupyter Notebooks
May 7 - virtual: ALL SIGS: COVID-19 Response Panel
May 15 - virtual: Optimization Recommendation Engine
August 21
October 2
December 4

CONFERENCES
(Open to ALL)
OISC (Security) - March 11
Taste of IT - November 18
(ToIT Call for Presentations open until June 30)

INFRASTRUCTURE/CLOUD
(Open to ALL - 8:30-10:30am)
January 10 - Trends in Cloud Native Approaches for
   New App Development & Legacy Production Apps
February 28 - Agile Methodology in Infrastructure
May 7 - virtual: ALL SIGS: COVID-19 Response Panel
May 15 - virtual: Journeys to the Cloud
August 28 (NOTE DATE & TIME CHANGE)
October 9 (NOTE DATE & TIME CHANGE)

SPECIAL EVENTS
(Open to ALL)
Digital Mixer - February 12,
Leadership Awards - August 6

TECH THURSDAYS
(Open to ALL - 5-7pm)
February 13 - Firebirds @ Austin Landing
June 11 - cancelled due to COVID-19
July 9 - cancelled due to COVID-19
August 27
November 5

WOMEN 4 TECHNOLOGY
DAYTON:
January 22 - Meaningful Mentoring
May 7 - virtual: ALL SIGS: COVID-19 Response Panel
August 12 - virtual: Work-Life Balance Panel
September 16
CINCY:
February 5 - Roadmaps to Mentoring
May 7 - virtual: ALL SIGS: COVID-19 Response Panel
August 12 - virtual: Work-Life Balance Panel
December 9

MUNICIPALITY IT
City Managers & Muni IT Leaders
Spring meeting cancelled due to COVID-19
September 24
December 10

CISO COUNCIL * SMALL-MEDIUM BUSINESS * DEVELOPERS
For Registration and Membership information, visit www.technologyfirst.org or call 937-229-0054

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