Developing your workforce, either those currently in your group, those you want to entice to join, or those students that are critical to your future pipeline, requires an honest view of the type of career that I.T. represents, which in my opinion are embodied by Challenge, Change, and Creativity. In my 1970s college days, it was the Challenge that attracted me, and I had little idea that Change and Creativity would be just as impactful.

Your colleagues know how Challenging their career is on a day-to-day basis. They constantly solve complicated business and technical issues, with each day being different. They like, and perhaps love, that aspect of their job, arriving at work not knowing what the day will bring, but ready to tackle whatever comes their way. This may not be so true with lesser-experienced employees, so look for opportunities to get them involved in more Challenging projects, perhaps some that take them out of their wheelhouse and into a new direction. Get them involved in Technology First where they can get exposed to how other companies approach similar projects and develop new skills while volunteering their time. Stress to students that while this career is a Challenge, that will form their greatest sense of pride. Ask them what they have already accomplished that took a lot of effort, but after a while, the work seemed small and the accomplishments large. That’s the promise of a Challenging career in I.T.

In the early days of my career, I assumed I would be working on I.B.M. mainframes for most, if not all, my career, as there wasn’t much else available at the time. Then came the P.C., the Internet, E.R.P. applications, smartphones, tablets and watches, and “the cloud”, just to name a few.

The idea that I.T. is a Creative career is probably not one that’s commonly shared. But at the very roots of programming is the same Creative process that writers, musicians, and dancers enjoy. A former office mate told me that playing the bass, which he excelled at, and his daily job of handling Master Data for our E.R.P. system felt the same. I feel the same about writing my blogs, articles, and newsletters compared to my former working days. Just one example of Creativity at work involved moving a data center and our CIO emphatically told us we were not going to buy any new equipment, just move what was already in place 500 miles away over a long weekend as it seemed the cheapest way to go. But then our Creative I.T. team got to work identifying ways to speed up the move, dramatically reduce the risks involved, and save a good chunk of money. We ended up moving only a small fraction of the old data center equipment, with the CIO’s blessing. Everyone embraced it, figuring it now was “easy money” to accomplish. They embraced Change at a reasonable but constant pace, and more importantly, had a lot of say into what they wanted to do and where to take their career. Stress to students the excitement that comes from such a dynamic career, that they are not stuck doing the same thing every day, but knowing whole new worlds open up every day. A friend of mine likes to say that a specific technology students learn on day one of college is likely to be obsolete by the time they graduate, but the skills they develop will last a lifetime. That’s the exciting pace of I.T.

Those of a similar age know now that their journey to lifelong learning was not only required, but it was a lot of fun. For those current employees, help them along that path. Back when I was managing a technical group, I made sure that at least one of their yearly objectives was focused on learning a new skill. Since financial reward was tied to that, it was difficult to ignore as it would result in leaving money on the table. But after a few years of insisting, almost everyone embraced it, almost everyone embraced it, figuring it now was “easy money” to accomplish. They embraced Change at a reasonable but constant pace, and more importantly, had a lot of say into what they wanted to do and where to take their career. Stress to students the excitement that comes from such a dynamic career, that they are not stuck doing the same thing every day, but knowing whole new worlds open up every day. A friend of mine likes to say that a specific technology students learn on day one of college is likely to be obsolete by the time they graduate, but the skills they develop will last a lifetime. That’s the exciting pace of I.T.

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Developing your workforce is non-stop as new technologies emerge and old ones get forgotten. That constant Change fuels new Challenges, and the Creative thrive. I can’t think of a better career for people that embrace my brand of excitement.
SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

Virtual CIO Council Meeting

*Contactless Technology*
Chris Ciabarra CTO, Athena Security &
Charlie Stahl, Product Manager, Apex Supply Chain

**Thursday, Sept. 10 | 11:30am-1:00pm**

Register here for CIO

Virtual Women 4 Technology Meeting

**Leadership Panel: Embracing our Unique Selves in Unique Times**
Stephanie Singer, VP of Global Data Center & Network Services, RELX. Devon Valencia, CIO, CareSource and
Amy Walter, SVP of Emerging Technology and Collaboration, Synchrony.

**Wednesday, Sept. 16 | 8:30am-10:00am**

Register here for W4T

Virtual Tech Thursday

**Happy Hour Event - Mixing Drinks!**
Featuring Brian Petro, Mixologist
**Thursday, Sept. 17 | 5:00pm-7:00pm**

Register here for Tech Thursday

OCTOBER

Virtual Data Analytics

**Save the Date!**
**Friday, Oct. 2 | 8:30am-10:00am**

Virtual CIO Council Meeting

**Save the Date - Security Panel Event**
**Thursday, Oct. 8 | 11:30am-1:00pm**

Virtual Infrastructure/Cloud

**Save the Date!**
**Friday, Oct. 9 | 8:30am-10:00am**

Virtual Tech Thursday

**Happy Hour Event - Team Trivia!**
Featuring Trivia Host Dave Fuentes, TEKsystems
**Thursday, Oct. 15 | 5:00pm-7:00pm**

Register here for Tech Thursday

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**Wednesday, November 18, 2020 | Southwest, OH**

Agenda Announcement coming August 2020

Sponsorship Opportunities here

Event Registration here

18th annual Ohio Information Security Conference (OISC)

**Wednesday, March 10, 2021 | Southwest, OH**

Call for Presentations open until October 30th

Visit our events page for the latest event registration information!
Managing Teams (and Yourself) Effectively During Times of Crisis

Christina Nash, Chief People Officer
Onebridge

Even in the best of times, anxiety is a major factor in many employees’ personal and professional lives. Anxiety is the most common mental illness in the United States, affecting more than 40 million adults each year. The Institute of Mental Health reported that about 30% of Americans experience clinical anxiety. According to a 2019 report by Mind Share Partners, 86% of American job seekers thought it was important for an employer’s culture to support mental health, but only 37% of employees said that their company leaders advocated for better mental health.

Now that we are living through one of the most uncertain times in modern history, it is more important than ever to identify and effectively cope with anxiety – both our own and that of the people around us.

Everyone is experiencing some version of the fight-or-flight response resulting from the anxiety and stress we now have regarding the health of ourselves and those around us, as well as our job security and ability to support our families. But how do you proactively cope? Many of us can identify and acknowledge our anxiety, but what tangible steps can we take to make it easier to handle, especially with a team looking to us for leadership? Read below for some suggestions for how to lead during a crisis.

Four Steps to Maintaining Effective Leadership During a Crisis

You’ve probably already heard that anxiety can serve as motivation toward greater resourcefulness, productivity, and creativity, but using anxiety to your advantage is easier said than done. It requires a plan of action, which requires confronting your anxiety head-on. This is not easy, but it can transform the way you lead others and improve your life in innumerable ways.

Based on research from experts, here are four steps to nurturing your ability to cope with anxiety and supporting your team. Below, we’ll walk you through identifying and facing your anxiety, taking proactive steps to manage it, preventing it from negatively impacting your decision-making and leadership style, and creating a support system to help you cope.

Step One: Acknowledge Your Anxiety

Rather than simply overcoming your anxious emotions, you can turn them into a tool to help you thrive. To do this, you have to acknowledge and accept your anxiety as a fact of life. The data on emotional intelligence shows that understanding your own feelings undoubtedly makes you a better leader.

Acknowledging your anxiety doesn’t magically fix it, but it can help you get through it successfully. The key is to be generous (but honest) with yourself and give yourself credit for even the smallest wins.

Try to be mindful of your anxiety level throughout the day. When heightened anxiety appears, notice and try to identify what triggered it. It may take you some time to do this because our responses to anxiety are often habitual and we perform them without much thought.

Once you’ve identified a triggering event, take note of your reaction both behavioral and physical. Ask yourself if the behavioral response was useful or not. Did it make your anxiety better or worse? Some behaviors may not be negative. Some people find comfort in cleaning or organizing when they are anxious. Identifying those positive behaviors is the first step to using them to replace counterproductive behaviors.

Focusing on worst-case scenarios is a common response to anxiety. If you find yourself doing this, try to remember that the worst-case scenario is possible, but not necessarily most likely to happen.

Pay attention to physical responses, like clenching your jaw or tapping your foot. This is important to note because there are proven ways to give you relief from physical symptoms of anxiety, like breathing into areas of muscle stiffness.

Step Two: Take Action to Manage Your Anxiety

Now that you’ve identified some of your triggers and responses to stress, you can try some coping mechanisms that can help you on a long-term basis as well as in moments of heightened anxiety.

Here are two things you can do each day to lessen your stress:

- Structure your time.
  - Better time management has an undeniably positive impact on how you feel. Make to-do lists and try to schedule your day in 30-minute increments. If 30 minutes of a task seems overwhelming, try 15 – it’s all about making the day feel more manageable. Don’t overschedule yourself or rely on being extraordinarily productive. Just focus on what must be done today and build time in to take care of yourself.

- Break tasks into smaller chunks.
  - Anxiety can make even the most reasonably sized tasks seem overwhelming and getting started is often the most difficult part of any project. Break the task into smaller, more manageable portions and tackle one at a time. Focus on what can be done right now, and don’t worry about the next task until the current one is completed.

Those last two tips are centered around things you can control. What do you do when situations arise that you didn’t plan for or can’t control?

Experiment with different mindfulness techniques until you find one that helps you calm down during particularly stressful moments.

- Breathing more slowly sends a message from your brain to your body to calm down, which can decrease heart rate and blood pressure.
- If you have a lot of pent-up nervous anxiety, try exercising for 15 minutes.
- If these methods don’t work, don’t give up – there are many methods to try and you will eventually find something that works. Once you do, it’s well worth the effort to have it in your toolbox.

If the worry is interfering with your ability to function, try setting it aside in a tangible way.

- Say out loud, “I will deal with this anxiety after I take care of this task.”
- You can also try writing it down with a note to address it at a specific time.

Reach out and make connections.

- Check in with friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues. Ask how they’re doing and if they need anything. Focusing outwardly on others can be a great distraction and builds relationships that can offer support in the future.

...continued on page 5
• Don’t forget that everyone is in the same boat right now and turning to virtual methods to connect. Look for online social groups of people within your industry or with similar interests. Making new friends over a hobby or cause you’re passionate about can offer a calming distraction and an opportunity to combat the feeling of isolation so many of us are experiencing.

Consider consulting with a therapist or other mental health professional. Reaching out to someone with training can be invaluable and offer tailored support you may not be able to find elsewhere.

Step Three: Limit Anxiety’s Impact on Your Leadership Style
Once you’ve identified what triggers your own anxiety and begin taking active steps to manage it, you can start examining how it may impact your leadership style. To ensure that you maintain effective leadership during stressful times, focus on healthy decision-making and communication strategies.

Anxiety can cause a person to behave in uncharacteristic ways — you may get tunnel vision and focus only on certain aspects of a situation, or misinterpret facts in a way that causes you to jump to erroneous conclusions. In other words, it can distort our thinking and judgment, and sometimes postponing a decision until we’re feeling more stable isn’t an option.

To combat this, identify times when your emotions may impact your decision-making. Find someone you trust who can evaluate a decision you’re considering and offer honest and constructive feedback. Surrounding yourself with people you trust who will tell you the truth is critical to effective leadership in any situation.

When it comes to communicating with your team, right now it can be difficult to gauge what is appropriate to share. How honest or emotional should you be?

One way to let your team know that you understand and sympathize with their anxiety is to acknowledge your own. This transparency helps to normalize the situation and offer them the confidence to reach out to you knowing that you will be receptive to hearing about the struggles they are facing.

It isn’t necessary to share details about why you feel anxious or expand on all the ways it’s affecting you. Simply acknowledging the feeling creates an emotional connection and inspires trust. Aim for a calm tone, indicative of strength and warmth. They are looking to you to lead with both stability and empathy, and it can be comforting for them to know that they don’t have to fake a sunny disposition and pretend everything is great when asked. Try sharing coping methods that work for you and encourage others to share their own strategies to create a feeling of supportive team camaraderie. Regularly meet one-on-one with each team member to let them know they don’t have to cope alone and that you care about how they’re doing.

Step Four: Build a Support System
Making sure you not only have the right people around but also are engaging in healthy daily routines can create a solid foundation for better mental health. It also sets you up for success in responding to unexpectedly stressful moments.

Curate a group of people around you that you can confide in when you have overwhelming stress or negative thoughts you can’t seem to escape. Therapists, coaches, mentors, spouses/partners, and friends are all great options — just make sure your friends have the mental bandwidth to be that sounding board and make sure you are available to them for the same.

Take self-care as seriously as a prescription. Right now, this is not optional for leaders because how well you take care of yourself directly affects how helpful you can be to others. Plus, when you model good self-care behaviors, you create a culture in which your team feels it’s appropriate for them to do the same. Inspiring others with your behavior is a great reason to take that guilt-free time for yourself.

How Onebridge is Supporting Our Teams
Here are a few ways that Onebridge has chosen to support our teams during this difficult time:

Encouraging Flexibility
We have spent a good deal of effort working with our teams to ensure they are adapting their work schedules to fit their new needs. We are sensitive to the fact that most of our employees are caretakers of some sort and need to be able to do work at different times. We aren’t concerned with what hours our employees use to get work done, we just want our people to take care of themselves and their families. We know we’ll still be able to continue to provide quality service to our clients.

Promoting the Use of Our Unlimited PTO Policy
It was tempting for our team not to take time off in the beginning of this pandemic because there wasn’t anywhere to go. We quickly realized we had to nudge people to take time off to recharge their batteries, now more than ever, even if it meant simply unplugging from home. We did this on an individual and corporate level.

Work-From-Home Resource Center
We’ve created a collaboration space filled with resources on how to manage remote work from home. We are looking to make this a more long-term and viable way to work even after restrictions ease up, so it was important to us to think this way and provide the technology infrastructure and suggestions on how we can be most effective working from anywhere.

Increased Communication
We have also published consistent memos to the company regarding specific plans around how to manage through this crisis and given plenty of notice and instruction as to what we plan to do when we return to the office. We want our team to feel comfortable and safe as we know that will help them manage their anxiety better and be better able to do their work. Communication works two ways, so we have increased our survey activity to gauge how people are doing and what they want to see happen. Giving people a voice helps them feel empowered and reduces anxiety to feel a sense of control over workplace activities.

Training and Infrastructure Investments
We have had more training and discussions with leaders to assist them with helping their teams through this crisis. We have made infrastructure investments to ensure our facility is extremely safe once we return. Many of these investments were guided by employee suggestions.

More Fun
We know these times are incredibly taxing, so we have planned some safe and virtual team-building activities including Bingo and trivia. We have to stay connected and enjoy each other.

These are unprecedented times. Dedicating effort to nurturing our mental health and that of our teams is a necessity, especially for leaders who are looked to for guidance and reassurance. This is an opportunity to address the need for greater workplace focus on positive mental health practices — with a little work and mindfulness, you can be the leader that your company needs right now and in the future.
The IT world in many ways has a very serious leg-up on other industries as we all experiment with new ways to be remote during social distancing.

That said, those of us who strictly follow the Agile Manifesto know that co-located teams are a core component of Agile and Scrum.

So, what are some ways we can be as co-located as possible while still respecting social distancing? In this article we explore some tips and tricks on how to remain close without being physically next to each other.

We hope this inspires you and motivates your team during an otherwise uncertain time.

Tip one: Daily Stand-up. If you aren’t already running a daily stand-up, you’re missing out on an opportunity to touch base with everyone before beginning work for the day. Stand-ups are a great opportunity to prioritize urgent tasks, check in with everyone to see what blockers might still be in place, or pass out motivational news to the rest of the team. On that last point, motivation is a key component in a good stand-up, and building energy for the rest of the day begins with a cheerleading exercise. As crazy as it sounds, next time you run a daily stand-up in your Zoom or Skype call try getting creative with a motivational chant. A la “The Wolf of Wall Street” or perhaps try implementing what Home Depot does for its associates each day – everyone yells out the company (or team) name followed by, “What are we gonna do!? …Kick Ass!!” -repeated 3 or 4 times for effect.

Tip two: Daily Stand-down. They’re so few teams out there that actually have a stand-down meeting. Just as important as stand-ups, they’re the part of the daily process where you capture outcomes and lessons learned. Especially now that we can’t physically be next to each other, it’s important to capture what was done that day for each team member and get a sense of where everyone is before leaving work.

Pro Tip: Stand-downs are also important because they’re a divider between work and family time. Normally this is separated by a commute, but now that we’re all remote there’s the temptation to continue working into the evening and night.

Over time this will lead to burnout, and it’ll affect your team and its ability to focus and drive quality results in the long-term. By offering your team a stand-down, it acts as a demarcation point in the day between what’s considered work and what should be considered family time.

Second Pro Tip: It’s our sincere wish that your family looks back on this time in ten years as the few months where Mommy or Daddy didn’t have to wake up early and was home for dinner every night. Look at this as an opportunity to not just do a great job for your work, but also enjoy watching your family grow up a little bit more than you usually would be able to.

Tip three: Cameras On. Communication is about more than just spoken words, and now that you’re not in-person at an office, it can be challenging to read body language and facial expressions. That’s why we recommend asking your team to have cameras on during video chat meetings. It allows for team members to collaborate with one another and stay more engaged, rather than sitting off camera on mute.

Tip Four: People over Process. In keeping with the theme of the Agile Manifesto let’s speak directly to the tenant of “people over process”.

When we’re all bottled up next to each other in adjacent desks, if anything goes wrong, we can literally come together to troubleshoot the problem. However, because we’re all working on our own, it’s essential to have some kind of capability to overcome the fact that we’re not colocated. Whether it’s via a tool or a communication process, don’t forget to check in with your people, more-so than you did before.

Tip Five: Have fun! This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and you would be crazy not to have fun while we go through this misery together. Try out having a virtual happy hour one afternoon, or a virtual lunch. Even better, try throwing a motivational event like crazy hat day or dress like a superhero day. Humor is an amazing motivational tool, and through motivation we know you’ll see higher quality code and more productive teams.

About the Authors

Lighthouse Technologies is a software quality assurance and testing delivery team. They help companies create, implement, and optimize quality within their software development work.

You can get in contact with them here.

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9/16 Leadership Panel: Embracing our Unique Selves in Unique Times

Stephanie Singer
VP of Global Data Center & Network Services, RELX

Devon Valencia
CIO, CareSource

Amy Walter
SVP of Emerging Technology and Collaboration, Synchrony
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Analytics Track
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- Why Cybersecurity Is Not an Arms Race

Cloud & Collaboration Track
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- How to Prepare for the Future of Multi-Cloud
- Is Good Enough good enough? Obtaining Governance and Operational Excellence in Azure
- Journey to the Cloud – Where to start and where to end up
- Microsoft Teams’ Direct Routing Opens Door to UCaaS and CPaaS

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- Company recognition before keynote speakers
- Social Media recognition prior to event
- Banner ad
- Virtual Booth
- Game challenge
  Profile in Sponsor feature with a link to sponsor’s website
  Sponsored session Titled (brought to you by "Sponsor") and internal links to Sponsor profile
- 3 company participants

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Greg Frimming
Director of Information Technology
Innomark Communications

Did you always want to work in IT?
When I started college, I was unsure which path I wanted to take. I was always interested in computers growing up but hadn’t considered as a career until I was offered a job at a computer store. During this time my path became much more clear to me— I enjoyed working with, discussing and selling computers and software so much that I couldn’t imagine doing something else with my career. Each job that I moved to from there helped to lay the groundwork for where I am today.

What’s the best career advice you ever received?
In my current role I was told to expect requests, issues, projects to come at me out of many directions. Collecting, prioritizing and directing like a traffic cop will keep things flowing smoothly and when/if there is downtime; take a breath and document what worked well and not so well to build a knowledge base for the future.

What advice would you give to aspiring IT leaders?
My advice is this- Get to know as many aspects of the business that you can. Having an understanding of current processes will help you to align with the business side when discussing improvements and efficiencies as well as anticipating future requests. Get to know your staff well, it will benefit you to know what motivates them and what thoughts they may have about workflow and processes, building strong relationships makes the team that much stronger. A strong team communicates effectively and is willing to go above and beyond to finish a project or solve a problem. Take every opportunity you can to grow as an IT leader and as a crucial part of the business. And finally; relish what you learn during a trial or obstacle as it will help shape your decisions and character.
Sharonda Huggins
Director, IT Administration
Verso Corporation

What was your first job?
My first job was with Mead Corporation as an IT Auditor in the Internal Audit department. Being in Internal Audit, I had the opportunity also to work on business process and financial audits. This proved to be an invaluable experience that had a significant impact on my career path and performance as a leader. It enhanced my business acumen and helped me to develop effective relationships with business partners because I had a better understanding of their processes and the challenges they were facing.

What business or technology initiatives will be most significant in driving IT investments in your organization in the coming year?
A continued focus for our Board of Directors and the IT organization is mitigating IT Security Risks and Ransomware vulnerabilities. The “bad guys” are smart and are leveraging leading edge technology which forces a continuous investment in this area for many organizations.

What’s the best career advice you ever received?
One of the best pieces of advice that I received in my career, was that it’s not so much about the mistake you made, but HOW YOU RECOVER. We all make mistakes. That is inevitable. However, what you do next to recover is what makes the difference in how people remember the mistake.

What advice would you give to aspiring IT leaders?
I often say, if leadership was easy, then anyone/everyone could do it. It can be challenging for some IT professionals (or professionals in general) to transition from managing work tasks to leading people. People are multifaceted and as a result, we must have multiple tools in our leadership toolkit as we interact with, influence and lead PEOPLE. We must also strike a balance and be careful not to overuse the skills and traits that leaders often possess. There is a leadership quote by entrepreneur Jim Rohn that resonated with me. He said “The challenge of leadership is to be strong but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not a bully; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; have humor, but without folly”.

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Cyber for the Common Good
How to Develop Your Workforce in the Virtual World

Cassie Barlow and Patty Buddelmeyer
Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE)

COVID-19 changed the world overnight. The news reports daily about the difficult decisions companies must make to ensure their financial success. Unfortunately, these decisions often include staff reductions that add additional pressure on remaining employees, requiring them to perform at unsustainable productivity levels without enough “bandwidth”. Meanwhile, the workforce has become remote, which makes managing stressed or unsatisfied employees increasingly challenging.

For traditionally-minded managers, switching to managing remote employees requires a mental leap to transition supervisor to employee relationships successfully. Managers can no longer evaluate efficiency as “more desk time = more productivity”. Fortunately, four proven remote supervising strategies empower both management and employees to thrive in the new virtual environment.

1. Communication
   • Establish structured daily check-ins
   • Provide opportunities for remote social interaction with colleagues
   • Set clear expectations and objectives with deadlines
   • Establish “rules of engagement” for team interaction
   • Communicate organizational values, goals, and mission

2. Flexibility
   • Understand environmental distractions
   • Set core work hours, but allow for coordinated flexibility
   • Focus on output - not processes
   • Set clear remote work productivity standards

3. Tools
   • Identify and provide the right tools needed to perform the job
   • Provide several different communication options
   • Eliminate technology breakdowns and bottlenecks
   • Encourage the use of mental health tools

4. Trust
   • Hold employees accountable
   • Encourage innovation and offer encouragement and emotional support
   • Focus on output, not daily hours work

These strategies will help you manage your current workforce but will not resolve companies’ growing bandwidth concerns. The average cost to hire a new employee is $4,129, according to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and innovative companies have quickly discovered the value of experiential learning opportunities. Whether internships, co-ops, or apprenticeships, experiential learning is a primary avenue for recruiting and developing future staff. Resourceful companies have found that hiring through established internship programs is an inexpensive and beneficial strategy for finding their next employees, whether for permanent or short-term projects. Interns provide value through their involvement across the spectrum of hiring opportunities and can assist with the existing workload or a unique “one-off” project. Ultimately, an internship offers a company insight into students’ skills, abilities, and compatibility at an affordable price.

Today’s internships are not just for trade careers or in-person experiences; instead, companies utilize interns as an economically viable and strategic way to develop the next generation of their workforce. They pursue students seeking degrees to work in high-demand careers such as engineering, computer science, cybersecurity, information technology, environmental science, chemistry, biology, and business-focused fields like marketing, graphic design, communications, accounting, finance, and project management. Creative leadership has found that:

• Interns have higher retention rates in companies, compared to non-interns.
• Companies can try potential new employees before hiring them as full-time.
• The 58.6% conversion rate for interns to full-time hires is an all-time high.
• Interns enhance innovation and creative thinking.
• Interns encourage hard work and foster leadership skills in current employees.
• Internships provide low-cost labor that closes critical skill and task demand gaps.

Progressive companies that adapt to the new virtual work world and adjust traditional workforce strategies will be the most successful in sustaining their business in the future.

Non-profit organizations like Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE), https://www.soche.org/, are dedicated to helping companies build the next generation of their workforce through experiential learning programs and maintaining the current workforce. Every year, SOCHE attracts over 600 students to apply for paid experiential learning opportunities in the Miami Valley Region. Students work for many employers, including government organizations, high-tech companies, and service providers. With SOCHE, internships vary in type and time frame, with interns working full-time, part-time, short-term (micro internship), in-person, and virtually. For more information about how SOCHE can assist your company in tackling workforce issues, contact SOCHE@Soche.org.

A college intern working virtually helping her company meet their mission and deadlines.
Fall 2020 Virtual Career Fair Week
September 14-17, 2020 | 2:00 - 5:00 PM
Registration is available through Handshake for four virtual fairs. The fairs are organized by industry groups, not student majors. You may make your selection based on your organization's industry or based on the majors you're targeting. The fairs will be hosted within the Handshake system.
Monday, Sept. 14 - Science, Information Technology, and Healthcare
Tuesday, Sept. 15 - Engineering, Research, and Sustainability
Wednesday, Sept. 16 - Social Services, Government and Public Service
Thursday, Sept. 17 - Communication, Business Services, and Creative

Registration Fee:
• Corporate: $300
• Government Rate: $100
• Non-Profit Rate: $50
Includes:
• Opportunity to connect with University of Dayton students and alumni
• Variety of communication options: Video, audio, and text-based chat
• Meeting options: 1:1 appointments, Group sessions

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Cooperative Education is a unique form of education that integrates classroom study with paid, planned and supervised work experiences. It allows students to acquire essential practical skills by being exposed to the reality of the world of work beyond the classroom experience. Clark State will provide the employer with highly-qualified students who have completed their first year of an associate degree. The students you hire for co-op positions will be your employees and under your guidance.

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• Ability to tailor 15-week job assignments to meet your workforce needs (10-week during the Summer Semester)
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• Test potential employees in your actual workplace
• Release of your professional staff from routine tasks
• Students offer a new perspective and fresh ideas to the organization
• The opportunity to give Clark State input on the preparation of your future employees
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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
There is a looming skills shortage in the data centre industry, and it is about to get significantly worse. Businesses struggle finding the right candidates and hiring issues are exacerbated by the fact that half of existing staff will retire by 2025. With a crisis point looming, the data centre industry must act now in order to maintain and strengthen its talent pool for the future.

Vertiv's Data Centre 2025 research, exploring the future of the sector, highlights some important truths around the struggle for talent. About 20 percent of respondents identified difficulty in retaining staff as a key issue - up from 17 percent in 2018. In addition, more than 40 percent of respondents also reported difficulty in finding qualified graduates - up from 38 percent in 2018. These figures prompt us to ask what are the causes of the data centre skills gap and the factors behind its escalation?

What is causing the skills gap?
There are a number of factors affecting the skills gap in the long-term. Today's STEM graduates are in a strong position as there is such a range of opportunities on their doorstep. But this also means businesses are left fighting for the top graduate talent. A recent Engineering UK report stated that the UK required about 80,000 new engineering graduates in 2018. In line with this projection, the UK needs about 90,000 in 2020. The demand for STEM graduates is growing at an accelerated rate and put simply, there just aren’t enough people in the pipeline to meet demand.

In addition to the talent gap, the obscurity of the data centre industry also plays into this crisis. Today’s graduates have grown up in the world next to tech giants like Netflix, Uber, and Airbnb. These companies have built a reputation for being the ‘cool players’ in the technology industry. To attract top talent, the data centre industry needs to grab the attention of graduates and people at school and help them understand the relationship between the digital world that they live in and the fact that it’s data centres that are underpinning it all.

Broadening the talent pool
Another way to address the skills gap is by looking more broadly at sourcing talent. The lack of gender diversity, in particular, is causing long-term detriment to the sector. Last year, the Uptime Institute published a report on privately owned enterprise data centres, revealing that 25% of managers surveyed had no women among their design or operational staff and only 5% of respondents said women represented 50% or more of their workforce.

Employers must accommodate for a more inclusive workforce. From committing to flexible working terms to support women getting into STEM roles or creating a mentor programme to support women in a male-dominated workplace. The challenge in fostering a diverse talent pool is not necessarily recruiting the diverse talent, but retaining it. In addition to attracting and retaining a more equal workforce, it is critical to look at recruiting people outside of the data centre sector who are familiar with critical industries such as pharmaceuticals and petrochemicals. These potential candidates have a similar skillset to data centre professionals due to their experience in working in a critical environment, but can apply their knowledge and experience to a whole new industry in the data centre sector. Business leaders must demonstrate the support they can offer these candidates and highlight the immense value they can bring to the industry.

Turning to tech?
Another solution to tackle the escalating skills gap is using technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence to automate tasks. Many companies are already using automation, AI and machine learning to mitigate the skills gaps. Google, for example, is using robots to destroy or decommission hard drives. While these emerging technologies have an important role to play, they are not the ultimate solution. As digital transformation escalates, the data centre industry, and indeed the technology industry at large, will rely on highly skilled people to drive innovation and respond to fast-changing market dynamics. In the shorter-term, businesses are increasingly relying on outsourcing in order to obtain the specialist skills required.

Combating the skills gap is one of the data centre sector’s biggest challenges. However, if businesses commit to changing their attitudes and taking the right actions, there are huge opportunities for the industry’s future. This change starts with increasing understanding about the data centre industry, why it is important and how it underpins the technology solutions which power daily life. If there’s one thing for sure, with the pace of change increasing at a ferocious rate, we’re going to need to take a fresh approach to attracting and retaining a diverse talent pool in the future.

As part of Vertiv’s efforts to address the data centre skills gap, Vertiv has created a new and exciting graduate programme, Vertiv Next Generation, an 18-month programme structured around core business functions. This programme was promoted at Vertiv’s recent virtual career fair (22nd April), where 387 people registered and participants joined from 38 countries. This is the first of a series of events from Vertiv, which aim to provide advice and guidance for future careers in the digital world. And for those of you already well established in the industry interested to see what your future career role might be, take the Datacentre Career Simulator and get a real-time video and PDF to find out.

This data center skills gap article was originally posted on the Vertiv site. Learn more about Vertiv here.
7th Annual Technology First Leadership Awards

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.

OUTSTANDING TECHNOLOGY TEAM
An IT department that has impacted the efficiency, productivity, and performance of their company.
Application Administration Team at Sinclair College

IT EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR (left)
A senior-level professional responsible for influencing progress and developing teams through leadership excellence.
David Goodwin, Partner, Advanced Technology Consulting

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY LEADER (right)
An IT professional that has exhibited excellence and technical leadership within their organization.
Nick Enger, CTO, Advanced Technology Consulting

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

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE - STUDENT PROJECT
An IT college student or team that exhibited excellence while delivering a capstone project.
Adam Haas, Wright State University

BEST IT SERVICES COMPANY
An IT company that has increased its investment in the Dayton region
TEKsystems Dayton Team

THANK YOU SPONSORS:
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

11 ANNUAL PARTNERS

SHARE KNOWLEDGE

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

INFRASTRUCTURE/CLOUD
- 15+ Attendees Each Session
- 4x/year
- Trending Infrastructure and Cloud Topics
- Maintenance & Security

TECH FORUMS
- 50+ Attendees Each Session
- CIO Council open to all of membership
- 3x/year (January, April, October)
- Recognized Thought Leaders

TECH NIGHTS
- Casual After Hours Networking
- 5x/year

TECH THURSDAYS
- Leadership
- Networking
- Professional Development
- Mentoring

WOMEN 4 TECHNOLOGY
- IT Leaders, City Managers, and MSP’s of Municipalities
- Smart Cities and Leading Edge Topics

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

GROW BUSINESS

2 ANNUAL CONFERENCES

TASTE OF IT
- 14th Annual 11/18/20
- Tracks: Executive, Security, Analytics, Cloud & Collaboration, Dev/Programmers
- 400+ Participants
- 30+ Sessions
- 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

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

WORKFORCE FORECAST & SALARY SURVEY

BUILDING 2020

SCANNING THE FUTURE

TECHNOLOGY 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
- IT Project of the Year

WEB SURVEY
- 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
- 4,000+ Subscribers
- Event News
- Job Opportunities
- Member Highlights
- Annual Partner Recognition

SCAN TO SIGN-UP FOR EMAILS

SOCIAL MEDIA

Technology First | SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 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 - virtual: Contactless Technology
October 8 - Tech Forum (Open Event) CISO Panel
December 3 - virtual

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

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
September 17 - virtual: Mixology Class!
October 15 - virtual: Team Trivia

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 27 - virtual: Google Analytics
October 2 - virtual
December 4 - virtual

INFRASTRUCTURE/CLOUD
(Open to ALL - 8:30-10am)
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 - virtual: Post-Pandemic Digital Transform.
October 9 (NOTE DATE & TIME CHANGE)

WOMEN 4 TECHNOLOGY
DAYTON:
January 22 - Meaningful Mentoring
May 7 - virtual: ALL SIGS: COVID-19 Response Panel
September 16 - virtual

CINCY:
February 5 - Roadmaps to Mentoring
May 7 - virtual: ALL SIGS: COVID-19 Response Panel
August 26 - virtual: Moonshot Thinking Gender Equality
December 9 - virtual

SECURITY & DEVELOPERS SIGS
STARTING 2021

For Registration and Membership information, visit www.technologyfirst.org or call 937-229-0054

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Read our Tech First Magazine at issuu.com/technologyfirstdayton

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