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TRADEFLOCK

USA's Most Influential COOs 2024

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SPOTLIGHT

NOT SO FAST!

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BIG TAKE

WELLNESS AS A STRATEGY

The Secret to Improving Corporate Culture

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THE VISIONARIES BEHIND THE SCENES

As the corporate world evolves at an unprecedented pace, the role of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) in the United States has emerged as a keystone of strategic execution and innovation. Often operating behind the scenes, COOs are the architects of operational excellence, balancing the delicate act of optimizing daily operations while implementing transformative strategies that shape the future of their organizations.

Today's COOs are not merely executors of a company's vision but dynamic strategists who play a crucial role in driving growth, efficiency, and innovation. They are masters of agility, ready to pivot in response to market demands while ensuring the company's foundation remains robust and resilient. From spearheading technological advancements to building cultures of inclusivity and performance, COOs have evolved into multifaceted leaders who influence every corner of the business landscape.

The path to this influential role is as demanding as it is rewarding, often involving years of meticulous experience across diverse sectors. Many COOs are well-versed in cross-functional leadership, harnessing expertise that ranges from operational logistics to strategic foresight. What's more, the transition from COO to CEO is becoming increasingly common, as companies recognize the strategic acumen COOs bring to the table.

In this special edition, USA's Most Influential COOs 2024, we celebrate these unsung heroes who transform ambitious visions into reality. Their impact, both seen and unseen, propels companies forward in a world that values not just innovation but the flawless execution behind it. As we explore the stories of these trailblazing COOs, we invite you to delve into the heart of operations and meet the leaders who are redefining what it means to drive success in today's fast-paced business environment.

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UPCOMING ISSUES

Most Empowering Women Leaders from USA 2024

Most Inspiring Leaders in Finance USA 2025

Most Inspiring Business Leaders in USA 2025

Best HR Leaders from USA 2025

Real Estate Innovators from USA 2025

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journey of leaders

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USA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL COOs 2024

NAME	DESIGNATION	COMPANY
Amie Hibbins	Chief Operating Officer	LevelUP
Gregg Spratto	Chief Operating Officer	Sovos
Jeff Wadsworth	Chief Operating Officer	Sazerac
Kevin Kroll	Chief Operating Officer	RWE Clean Energy
Mark Bunnell	Chief Operating Officer	NUWAVE Communications
Matt Alley	Chief Operating Officer	Posterity Health
Scot McCallum	Chief Operating Officer	eTeam
Thomas Klein	Chief Operating Officer	Constructive Built Environment
William Corrigan	Chief Operating Officer	Alera Group
Xavier Joffre	Chief Operating Officer	P&P Imports LLC.

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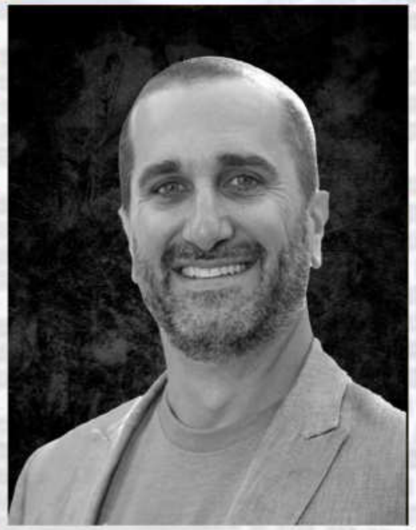
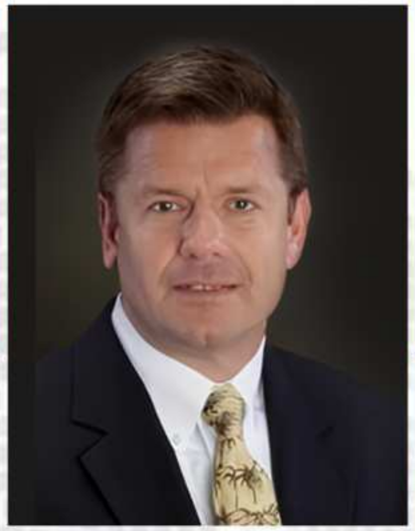
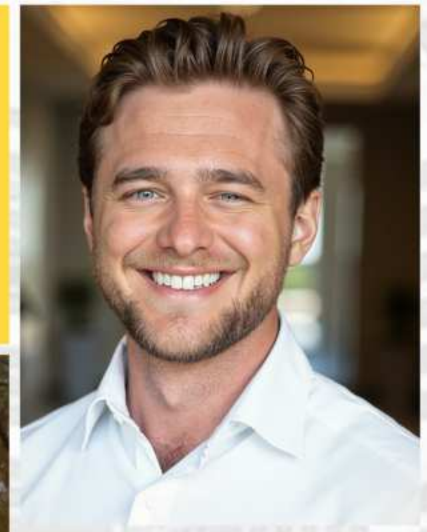
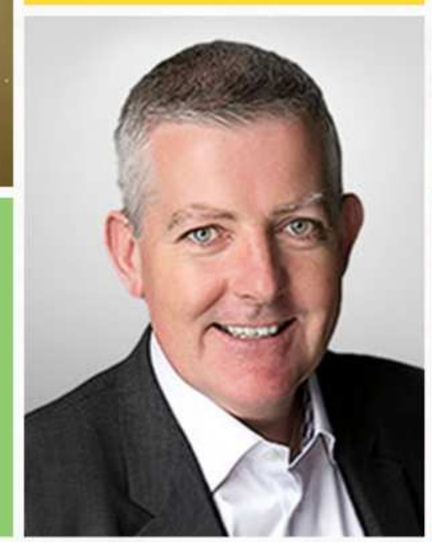


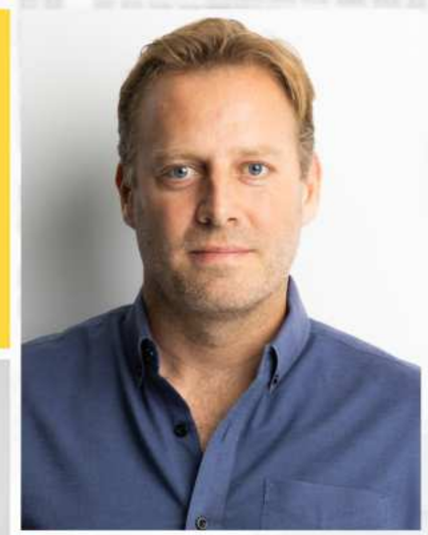




EDITOR'S PICK

SPOTLIGHT





BIG TAKE

IT ALL STARTED WITH A CRYSTAL

In 1954, scientists at Bell Laboratories developed the first practical silicon solar cell in New Jersey, United States, while exploring ways to use silicon to harness solar energy. This gave the USA a headstart in the renewable energy race. In 2010, Central Michigan led the world in solar polysilicon production. However, it was not long before America lost its hegemony to China.

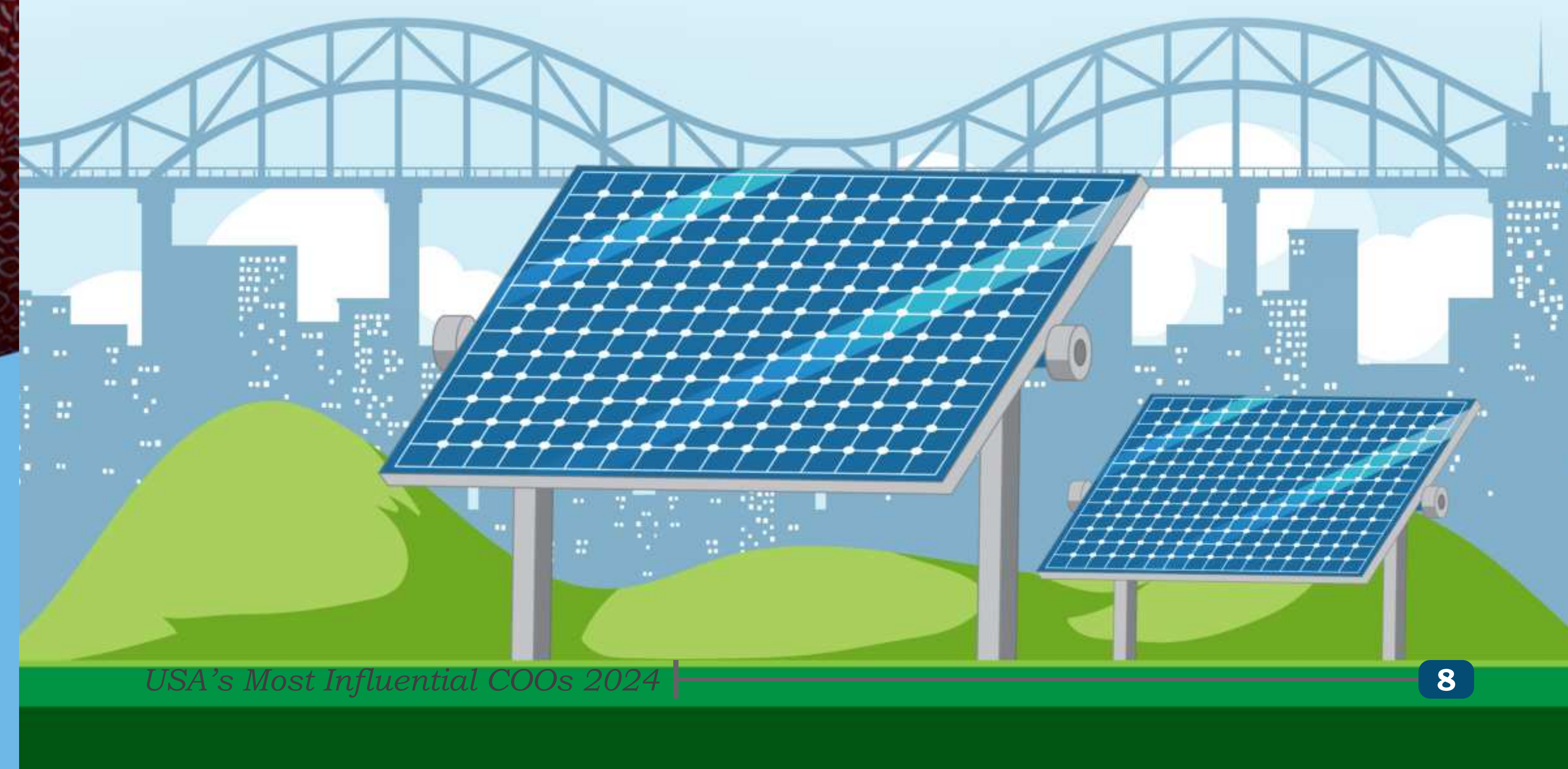
Today, the US plays a minor role, with over 90% of production now based in China. On May 14, President Joe Biden highlighted that China's clean-technology exports pose a significant threat to American workers, businesses, and communities, leading to the imposition of 50% tariffs on Chinese solar cells.

Tragedy Of Errors

Washington might blame China for “unfair trade practices” and its dominance in the solar industry. But all these blames are nothing more than comforting myths. America lost its hegemony because of a series of errors, including myopic corporate leadership, timid financing, and other factors that allowed it to sideline its clean tech industries.

On the other hand, China aggressively tried to establish itself as the global leader in solar power. Between 2001 and 2013, the Chinese government invested billions in solar manufacturing, with subsidies that covered land, factory costs, and research, significantly reducing production costs for Chinese solar companies. By 2020, China produced 80% of the world’s solar panels, and by 2022, its market share increased to over 85%, while the U.S. held less than 5% of global production.

According to the International Energy Agency, China's continued growth in renewable technology is remarkable. In 2023, China installed as much solar PV capacity as the world did in 2022, and its wind energy installations increased by 66% compared to the previous year. Moreover, in the last five years, China has added 11 GW of nuclear power, the largest in the world. China’s dominance in solar power production and other renewable energy has implications beyond economics. It puts the country in a strong position to shape global renewable energy policies and limits the energy independence of other nations reliant on Chinese solar imports.



USA's Most Influential

COOs
2024

Driving Success Through Innovation and Inclusion

AMIE HIBBINS

Chief Operating Officer, **LevelUP**

"Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence."

This philosophy encapsulates the leadership journey of Amie Hibbins, Chief Operating Officer at LevelUP HCS. With a career spanning over 15 years in talent acquisition and workforce solutions, Hibbins has been instrumental in transforming LevelUP into a global leader in the industry. Her strategic vision, operational expertise, and commitment to innovation have not only elevated the company's performance but have also set new benchmarks in talent management.

Strategic Vision and Operational Excellence

Amie Hibbins joined LevelUP in 2014, bringing with her a wealth of experience from agency recruitment and a deep understanding of the talent acquisition landscape. Her initial focus was on optimizing operations and implementing standardized client delivery processes, which significantly enhanced the company's capabilities and services. Under her leadership, LevelUP expanded its global footprint, establishing a strong presence across the Americas, EMEA, and APAC regions.

Hibbins' strategic initiatives have been pivotal in driving the company's growth. She has overseen the implementation of innovative recruitment strategies tailored to diverse client needs, resulting in a 30% organic applicant pool growth. Her ability to align operational processes with strategic objectives has ensured that LevelUP consistently delivers high-quality talent solutions to its clients.

Championing Diversity and Inclusion

A staunch advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I), Hibbins has integrated these principles into LevelUP's core operations. She has spearheaded initiatives that promote diverse hiring practices and foster an inclusive workplace culture. By implementing DE&I best practices, Hibbins has not only enhanced the company's internal culture but also improved client outcomes by providing diverse talent pools that drive innovation and performance.

Her commitment to DE&I extends beyond the organization. Hibbins is an active member of Chief, a private network designed for women in senior leadership roles, where she collaborates with other leaders to promote gender diversity and empower women in the workplace.

Innovation in Talent Acquisition

Recognizing the transformative potential of technology in talent acquisition, Hibbins has led the adoption of advanced tools and platforms to enhance recruitment processes. She has been instrumental in recommending and managing the implementation of new applicant tracking systems for multiple Fortune 500 companies, enabling more efficient and effective talent sourcing.

She has been instrumental in recommending and managing the implementation of new applicant tracking systems for multiple Fortune 500 companies, enabling more efficient and effective talent sourcing.

Hibbins' focus on innovation is not limited to technology. She has developed professional development training programs at LevelUP, focusing on junior-level employees. This initiative has allowed the company to cultivate and retain talent, maintaining an industry-low attrition rate of 3.5%. By investing in employee growth, Hibbins ensures that LevelUP remains agile and responsive to the evolving needs of its clients.

Recognized Leadership and Industry Impact

Hibbins' contributions to the industry have been widely recognized. In 2021, she was honored with the Influential Woman in RPO Award by the Recruitment Process Outsourcing Association, acknowledging her thought leadership and success in talent acquisition strategies. Her insights and expertise have made her a sought-after speaker and advisor on topics related to workforce solutions and talent management.

Under her leadership, LevelUP has achieved significant milestones, including being recognized as a leading provider of talent solutions in the financial services sector. Hibbins' strategic direction has been instrumental in delivering exceptional results for the company's largest accounts, consistently exceeding client expectations.

A Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, Amie Hibbins remains committed to driving innovation and excellence in talent acquisition. She envisions a future where technology and human insight converge to create more efficient, inclusive, and effective workforce solutions. Her leadership continues to inspire her team and set new standards in the industry.

In an ever-evolving talent landscape, Hibbins' unwavering dedication to operational excellence, diversity, and innovation positions her as a transformative leader. Her impact on LevelUP and the broader industry serves as a testament to the power of visionary leadership in shaping the future of work.

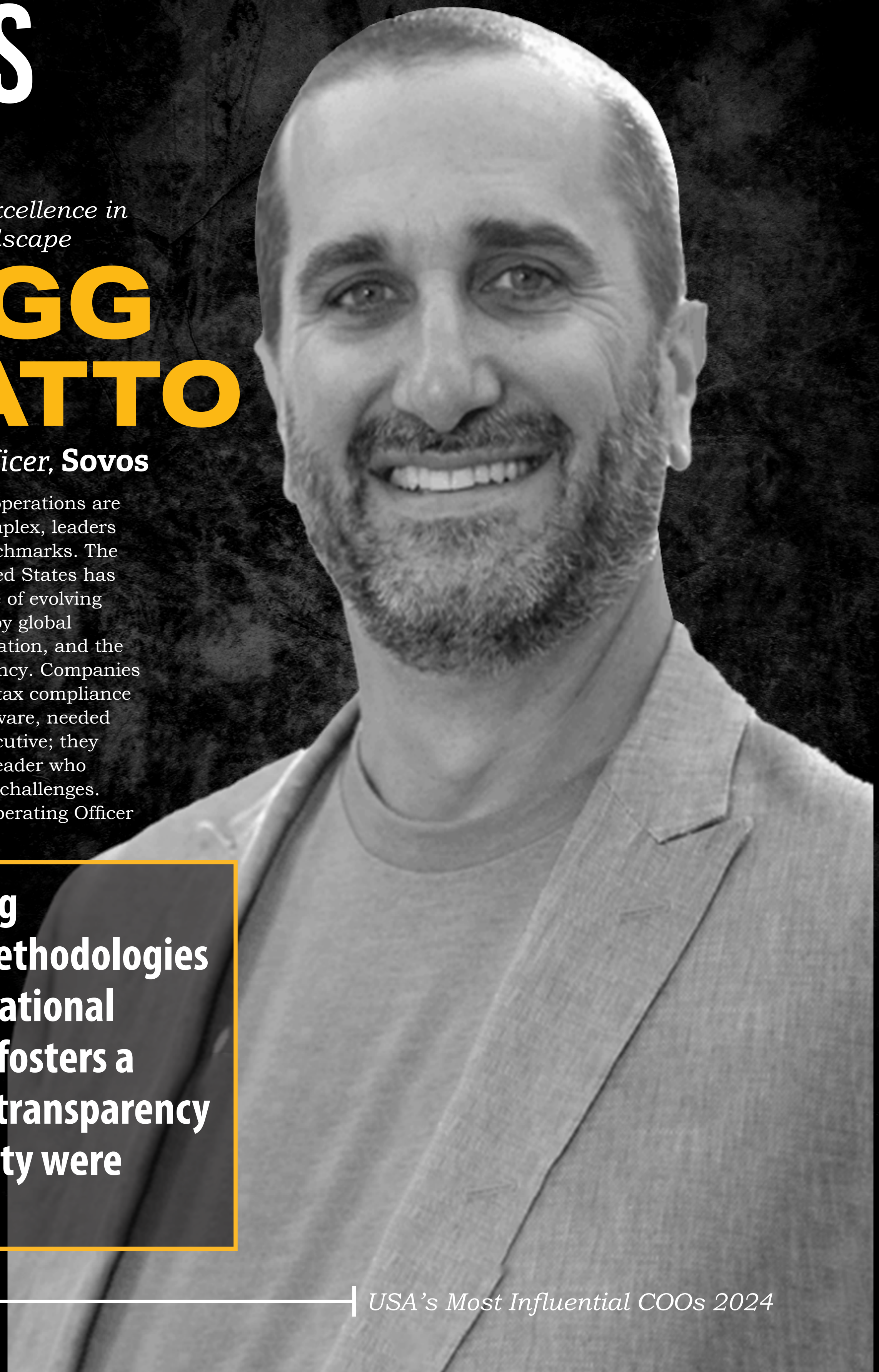
USA's Most Influential

COOs 2024

Driving Operational Excellence in a Changing Tech Landscape

GREGG SPRATTO

Chief Operating Officer, **Sovos**



In a world where software operations are becoming increasingly complex, leaders like Gregg Spratto set benchmarks. The software industry in the United States has faced a decade-long challenge of evolving operational demands driven by global regulations, digital transformation, and the relentless push toward efficiency. Companies like Sovos, a global leader in tax compliance and regulatory reporting software, needed more than just a capable executive; they required a transformational leader who could address these intricate challenges. Enter Gregg Spratto, Chief Operating Officer of Sovos, whose strategic, people-focused, and tech-savvy leadership has revolutionized the company's operations.

> "Implementing data-driven methodologies enhances operational efficiency and fosters a culture where transparency and adaptability were prioritized"

The Early Years: Foundations in Tech and Operations

Gregg Spratto's career journey began with roles that grounded him deeply in operational and technological management. His resume includes high-impact positions at Autodesk, where he was involved in key initiatives related to business efficiency and technology integration. At Autodesk, he navigated complex operational frameworks and played a pivotal role in leveraging emerging technologies to optimize processes. This experience built the foundation for his expertise in using technology to streamline operations.

Following his tenure at Autodesk, Spratto further sharpened his skills at companies like Cision and Magnit. These roles expanded his portfolio of accomplishments in mergers and acquisitions, an area where he displayed considerable acumen. Throughout his career, Gregg has been instrumental in over 25 acquisitions and has successfully managed the integration and efficiency-building processes these transitions entail. His ability to see beyond the numbers and strategically align operations with long-term goals has defined his professional ethos.

Transforming Sovos: A New Era of Operations

When Gregg Spratto took on the COO role at Sovos, he faced an ecosystem ripe with challenges. The company was already a leading tax and regulatory compliance player but required an operational overhaul to sustain growth and innovation. Spratto's approach was comprehensive and bold. He implemented data-driven methodologies to enhance operational efficiency and fostered a culture where transparency and adaptability were prioritized.

One of his major contributions at Sovos has been the application of robotic process automation (RPA) and artificial intelligence (AI) to revolutionize back-office functions. These technologies streamline repetitive tasks, minimize errors, and improve resource allocation, allowing teams to focus on more strategic objectives. Under Spratto's leadership, Sovos has enhanced its product offerings and solidified its market position by reducing inefficiencies and increasing agility.

Navigating Industry Challenges with Foresight

The global software landscape is fraught with evolving regulatory requirements and mounting competitive pressures. Spratto's strategic foresight has been critical in navigating these turbulent waters. He believes the key to sustained success is constant transformation and preparedness. At Sovos, he has championed initiatives that ensure compliance with international regulations while fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability among employees.

Spratto's leadership philosophy is deeply rooted in ethics and integrity. He sets high standards for himself and his team, focusing on accountability and results. However, he also values innovation and calculated risk-taking, which have enabled him to propel Sovos to new heights while mitigating potential pitfalls.

Recognition and a Glimpse into the Personal Side

The industry has noticed Gregg Spratto's impactful leadership. He is regarded as a pioneer in using RPA and AI to reshape business operations, earning him a reputation as a creative operational strategist. His strategic mind and ability to drive successful outcomes from complex projects have made him a respected tech and software community figure.

Besides his professional responsibilities, Gregg enjoys spending time with his family, exploring new cultures, and indulging in his passion for sports, especially golf. This balance between personal fulfilment and professional commitment adds depth to his profile as a leader who drives success and embodies a holistic approach to life.

The Legacy of an Operations Innovator

Gregg Spratto's story is more than a tale of career advancement; it's a narrative of operational innovation, resilience, and a forward-thinking approach. His work at Sovos exemplifies how the right leadership can turn operational challenges into opportunities. In an industry where change is the only constant, Spratto has proven that embracing technology and nurturing an adaptive, high-integrity culture is the formula for enduring success.

Lessons for Aspiring COOs

Gregg Spratto's career trajectory offers valuable insights for those aspiring to similar leadership roles. His story underscores the importance of adaptability and a willingness to embrace change. It also highlights how a strategic, data-driven mindset can transform not just a company's operations but its culture and market performance as well.

When software companies must navigate the dual pressures of innovation and compliance, Spratto exemplifies how effective leadership can create a lasting impact. Through his thoughtful, results-oriented strategies at Sovos, he has demonstrated that success is driven by the ability to anticipate challenges, foster a culture of continuous improvement, and lead with a vision for the future.

SPOTLIGHT

Not So Fast!

Why Are Retirement Dreams Being Put on Hold?

Americans are now fearing retiring more than death and getting divorced. According to the survey conducted by Livecareer, more than 82% of the respondents claimed to delay their retirement, and 92% of them mentioned they had to work longer than they had planned. Moreover, according to the F&G Annuities & Life Inc. survey, 33% of the retirees considered rejoining the workforce, while 68% of the pre-retirees were willing to push back their retirements.

If we look at the women's workforce, there is also the trend of delaying their retirement or rejoining the workforce. According to the Alliance for Lifetime Income, more than half of the women nearing retirement age have less than $100,000 in assets, out of which 67% are single women.

Rising Cost of Living and Inflation

The cost of living in the United States has been rising consistently over the past few decades, affecting retirees' financial security. According to Statista, the annual inflation rate in America grew from 3.2% in 2011 to 8.3% in 2022, one of the highest rates in recent years. However, the inflation rate fell to 3.3 % in 2024. This ongoing inflation remains the number one reason for Americans to delay their retirement. Even those who saved diligently for decades may find that their nest egg isn't sufficient in the face of ongoing inflation, especially when factoring in a possible retirement period of 20 to 30 years.

Healthcare Costs and Medical Expenses

Medical expenses are one of the most significant financial burdens for retirees. A 2023 report from Fidelity Investments estimated that a 65-year-old couple retiring today would need approximately $157,500 on Health Care, even with Medicare Coverage. This is a daunting figure for many, especially when health insurance premiums, out-of-pocket costs, and long-term care expenses are included.

As more Americans grapple with these potential expenses, delaying retirement becomes a practical solution. Working longer allows individuals to remain covered by employer-sponsored health insurance, which can be significantly more affordable than Medicare Advantage or other private health insurance options. Additionally, continuing to work can prevent early retirement savings withdrawal, which can compound and grow over time.

Lack of Sufficient Retirement Savings

Another critical factor postponing Americans' retirement plans is insufficient retirement planning. According to Benjamin F. Edwards, more than 25% of Americans don't have any retirement savings, whereas approximately 40% do not feel they are on track for retirement.

In addition, the 401(k) model has proven insufficient for many. While employer-sponsored pensions were more common, today's workforce largely relies on defined-contribution plans like 401(k)s and IRAs. These plans depend heavily on individual contributions and investment returns, which can be unpredictable. For those who experienced market downturns, such as the 2008 financial crisis or the COVID-19 pandemic, retirement savings can be even further diminished.

Beyond Financial concerns

F&G stated that 45% of retirees who are rejoining the workforce claim to enjoy the intellectual challenges of the job. Moreover, the gig economy, remote work, and flexible job opportunities have provided alternatives for retirees who want to continue working. Many retirees work part-time or freelance to stay active, connected, and financially secure.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work, making it possible for older adults to continue working without the physical demands of commuting or traditional office work. This shift has enabled retirees to supplement their income while enjoying the flexibility to balance work with personal pursuits.

Psychological and Social Factors

For some, retirement presents psychological and social challenges. Work can be a source of purpose, social connection, and identity, making the transition to retirement difficult. For these individuals, staying in the workforce—even part-time—offers a sense of fulfillment and connection that retirement may not provide. This trend has led to an increased interest in "phased retirement" programs, which allow older workers to reduce their hours and gradually transition to retirement over time.

A Changing Retirement Landscape

With more Americans rethinking what retirement means, policymakers and employers may need to consider ways to support this evolving demographic. Retirement savings programs, ensuring healthcare affordability, and offering flexible work options can all contribute to a healthier, more financially secure aging population. As Americans navigate these challenges, one thing is clear: retirement no longer means an abrupt end to work but an evolving stage of life where financial independence and personal fulfillment remain top priorities.

USA's Most Influential

COOs

2024

Whiskey, Wisdom, and Wadsworth: A COO's Spirited Journey

JEFF WADSWORTH

Chief Operating Officer, **Sazerac**

Imagine standing behind the scenes of one of America's most iconic spirits companies, where every drop of whiskey, bourbon, and rum must flow seamlessly from distillation to distribution. In a world where operational hiccups can cost millions, Jeff Wadsworth, the Chief Operating Officer at Sazerac, isn't just keeping the wheels turning—he's revolutionizing how they spin. From orchestrating supply chain innovations to tackling the industry's biggest challenges head-on, Wadsworth's journey is a masterclass in precision, creativity, and adaptability. But how did he evolve into the architect of one of the most robust operational systems in the beverage world? It's a story woven through years of dynamic leadership, spanning different sectors and seasoned with a knack for turning complexity into opportunity.

Jeff is a pivotal figure in navigating the rapidly changing landscape of the U.S. alcoholic beverage industry. As COO, Wadsworth has played a critical role in tackling the challenges of increased consumer demand, evolving regulatory frameworks, and supply chain constraints—all key hurdles the sector faces. His strategic approaches have helped Sazerac maintain operational efficiency while driving innovation.

A Humble Beginning that Led to the Top Spot

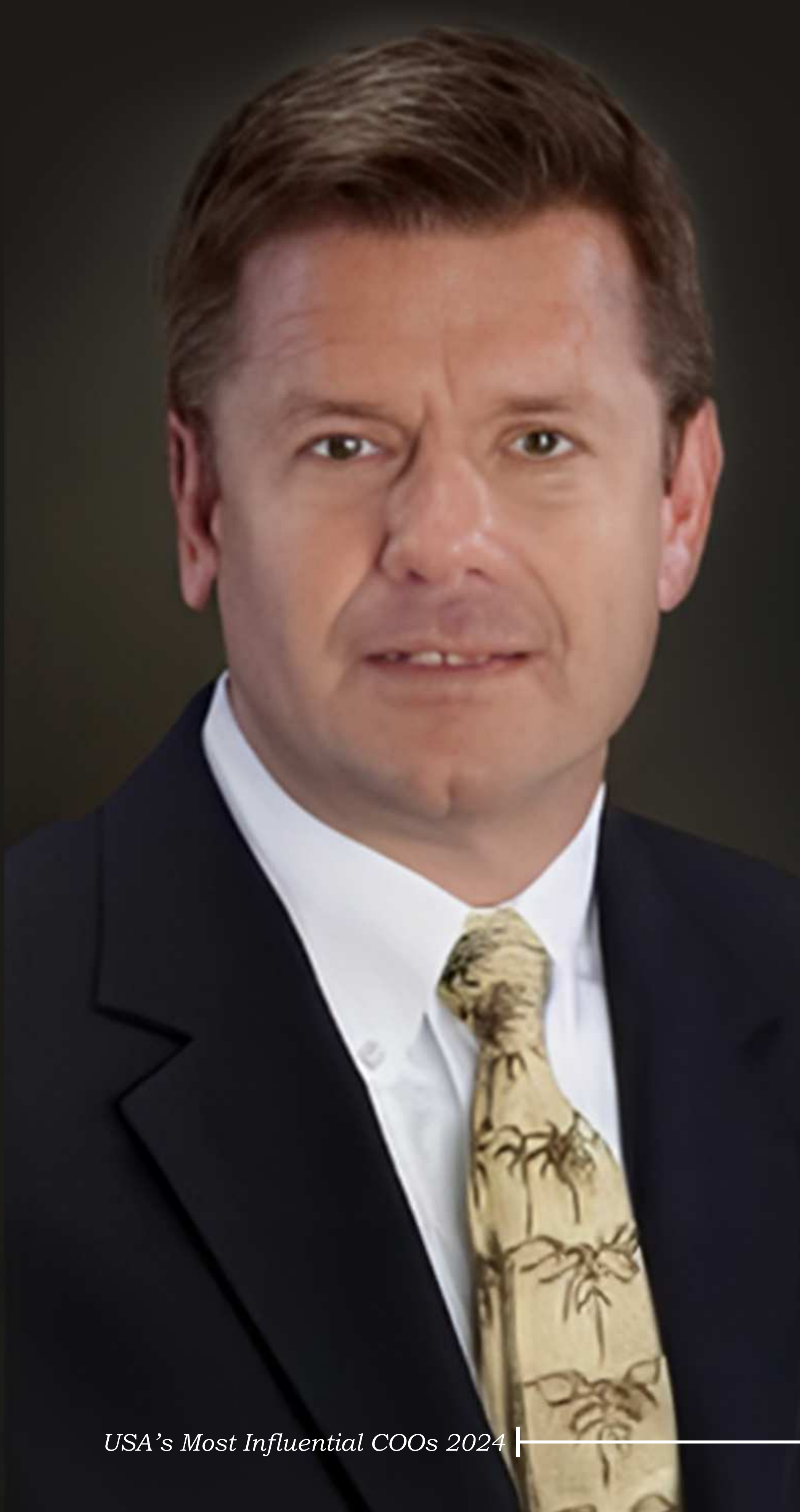
Jeff's journey to becoming a top executive in one of America's leading spirits companies is inspiring and instructive. He didn't just stumble upon this role; it culminated in years of diligent work and strategic leadership across several notable organisations. Wadsworth has garnered a reputation for being both a visionary and a problem-solver, traits honed over decades of experience.

Before his tenure at Sazerac, Jeff held significant roles in various industries, which helped him build a diverse portfolio of skills. These positions enabled him to understand the nuances of different operational systems and apply these insights to streamline processes and improve profitability. His time at these previous companies contributed to his robust knowledge of operational mechanics and customer-focused service.

A Remarkable Tenure at Sazerac Continues

Upon joining Sazerac, Wadsworth quickly made his mark. He has been instrumental in optimizing the company's production and distribution operations, making them more agile and resilient in market shifts. For instance, he has overseen advancements in digital transformation within the company's supply chain, making it more transparent and adaptive. His leadership has not only enhanced efficiency but has also allowed Sazerac to capitalize on emerging market trends.

His influence extends beyond Sazerac's boardroom, positively affecting the broader spirits industry. By advocating for sustainable production practices and smart resource management, Jeff has encouraged a more environmentally friendly approach to alcohol production—a vital shift given growing concerns about climate change. His operational management approach is analytical and people-oriented, recognizing that a company's greatest asset is its workforce.



A Journey that will Continue to Inspire the Future

Jeff's contributions have not gone unnoticed. He has received several accolades and has been featured in industry publications celebrating top operational leaders in the country. Colleagues and peers often highlight his knack for fostering a collaborative work culture that drives innovation without sacrificing efficiency. Jeff believes in empowering his teams, and this has been reflected in the high employee satisfaction and retention rates at Sazerac.

Perhaps Jeff's story is engaging because of his professional acumen and human approach to leadership. He balances the demands of a high-pressure industry with genuine care for the people who make Sazerac thrive. His strategic foresight and ability to turn challenges into opportunities have set him apart as a leader to watch, one whose work will continue to influence the future of the alcoholic beverage sector.

Through Jeff Wadsworth's journey, it becomes clear that successful leadership in operations requires a blend of foresight, adaptability, and a deep understanding of market and people dynamics. His story serves as a masterclass in operational excellence and a reminder of the power of innovation when combined with a human touch.

USA's Most Influential

COOs 2024

Mastering the Tides of Renewable Transformation

KEVIN KROLL

Chief Operating Officer,
RWE Clean Energy

The U.S. renewable energy sector has been riding a wave of both opportunity and challenge. As demand for clean energy surges, so does the complexity of execution, from logistical hurdles to integrating innovative technology and ensuring reliable performance. Enter Kevin Kroll, Chief Operating Officer at RWE Clean Energy, who has become a central figure in steering one of North America's largest portfolios of renewable energy assets, overseeing more than 130 operating projects across the country. His approach reshapes how operational excellence is defined in this rapidly evolving landscape.

> "In one case, when a critical component shortage threatened the completion timeline of a major wind project, Kevin spearheaded a cross-functional response team. His strategic intervention minimized delays and identified alternative suppliers, proving that operational crises could be mitigated through decisive and well-informed leadership."

From Analytical Beginnings to Industry Leadership

Kevin Kroll's professional journey is marked by a unique combination of analytical rigor and a passion for sustainable solutions. Before entering the renewable energy sector, he built a foundation in strategic thinking at McKinsey & Company, where he spent nearly a decade as a partner. There, he specialized in advising organizations—both in the public and private sectors—on complex sustainability and decarbonization strategies. This role honed his expertise in transforming large-scale initiatives into actionable frameworks, which has proven invaluable at RWE Clean Energy.

His tenure at McKinsey shaped his approach to problem-solving and deepened his commitment to the energy transition. Kevin advised on transformative projects across multiple continents, navigating geopolitical, economic, and technological variables. The global perspective he gained has since informed his strategic oversight at RWE, where he tackles operational challenges with agility and foresight.

Innovative Leadership at RWE Clean Energy

Taking on the role of COO at RWE Clean Energy in August 2024, Kevin Kroll immediately faced the industry's critical imperatives: scalability, efficiency, and technological integration. His leadership style embodies a tactical and forward-looking approach in a sector driven by rapid innovation and market shifts. Kevin has made it a priority to optimize engineering processes, streamline project execution, and elevate asset management—all while maintaining a focus on the future of decarbonized infrastructure.

His standout achievements include enhancing performance management systems for RWE's extensive renewable assets. He has implemented data-driven strategies that increase the reliability and output of these assets, addressing pain points common in renewable energy operations, such as variability in energy production and the complexities of grid integration. His strategies have boosted efficiency and ensured that projects align with RWE's long-term growth objectives and environmental commitments.

Overcoming Industry Challenges with Agility

Kevin's time in the energy industry has not been without obstacles. The renewable energy landscape in the U.S. is fraught with challenges, from regulatory hurdles to the technical demands of integrating solar, wind, and battery storage into the national grid. One of the more significant issues has been mitigating the risks associated with supply chain disruptions, a reality exacerbated by global events. Kevin's approach emphasizes resilient supply chain management and proactive risk assessment, leveraging his experience to anticipate and adapt to market conditions.

In one case, when a critical component shortage threatened the completion timeline of a major wind project, Kevin spearheaded a cross-functional response team. His strategic intervention minimized delays and identified alternative suppliers, proving that operational crises could be mitigated through decisive and well-informed leadership.

Recognition and an Eye on the Future

Although relatively new to RWE Clean Energy, Kevin's impact has not gone unnoticed. Industry insiders commend his ability to balance today's operational demands with tomorrow's strategic planning. His accolades are more than just professional; they symbolize a broader vision of what a COO in the clean energy sector can achieve.

Kevin is committed to exploring the potential of emerging technologies like AI-driven energy management systems and smart grid innovations. He believes these advancements will be crucial in enabling the renewable sector to meet ambitious national and global climate goals.

Humanizing the Role of a COO

Beyond the boardroom, Kevin is known for fostering a collaborative and inclusive culture within his teams. His background in consulting has made him a proponent of knowledge-sharing and mentorship. By investing in the people around him, he ensures the workforce is as dynamic and adaptable as the industry demands.

In many ways, Kevin Kroll exemplifies a new breed of COO—one who is not only a master of operations but also a forward-thinking strategist committed to sustainability. His leadership is a beacon for what is possible when operational excellence meets a passion for environmental impact. As RWE Clean Energy continues to grow, Kevin's influence will undoubtedly shape the future of renewable energy, setting a high standard for operational leaders across the globe.

SPOTLIGHT

GLOBAL VC FUNDING LANDSCAPE HIT ROCK BOTTOM

Can AI and Emerging Markets Lead a Rebound?

In a striking downturn for the venture capital landscape, global VC investment has plunged to its lowest level in the last seven years. According to KPMG Private Enterprise's latest Venture Pulse report, investments fell from $95.5 billion in Q2 2024 to just $70.1 billion in Q3 2024. This decline reflects a combination of geopolitical tensions like ongoing exit drought, anticipated seasonal lulls in investment across key jurisdictions, and increasing uncertainty surrounding the upcoming U.S. presidential election.

The Resilience of AI

Despite the overall slump in VC investment, the artificial intelligence (AI) sector remains somewhat afloat. It accounted for six of the ten largest deals globally in Q3 2024, highlighting sustained investor interest in emerging technologies like AI. The standout deals included a remarkable $1.5 billion raise by Anduril Industries, followed closely by a $1 billion investment in Safe Superintelligence. These high-profile deals not only showcase the potential of AI but also underline a strategic shift among investors focusing on highly specialised applications rather than broader, more generic AI solutions.

Conor Moore, Global Head of KPMG Private Enterprise, said, "*AI investments drove the lion's share of VC investment activity in Q3 2024.*" Yet, he cautioned that many AI deals were smaller than in previous quarters. Moreover, a trend is emerging where investors are leaning toward funding companies with targeted industry solutions, particularly in defense technology and biotech. This is because these two fields are some of the fastest-growing fields on the planet.

Regional Investment Trends: A Diverse Landscape

The USA continued to dominate global VC investment, capturing nearly 60% of the total investment deals in Q3 2024 with $41.4 billion. However, this figure represents a substantial decline from the previous quarter's $58.6 billion, almost a 30% decline. With that being said, the Canadian market defied the downward trend, doubling its VC investment from $1.2 billion to $2.7 billion—its highest level in ten quarters—largely fueled by significant raises from legal tech firm Clio and AI company Cohere.

In Europe, the trend continued as VC investment fell sharply, plummeting to $12.5 billion, the lowest figure since Q2 2020. Historically a strong performer, the UK saw its investment nearly halved from $7.1 billion to $3.4 billion in the last quarter. In contrast, Germany stood out as a rare success story, with VC investment increasing from $2 billion to $2.4 billion, bolstered by major deals in AI and aerospace industries.

Asia experienced a similar decline, with investment dropping from $18.5 billion to $15.6 billion. China, the region's largest market, reported its lowest VC investment in over a decade, totalling $6.1 billion. However, Japan bucked this trend, achieving a twelve-quarter high in VC investment at $1.8 billion. This was largely propelled by emerging tech companies, including a notable $214 million raise by Sakana AI.

The Dwindling Exit Landscape

The exit environment for venture capital has also been severely impacted. Global exit values dropped to a six-quarter low of $39.2 billion, primarily driven by a significant reduction in U.S.-based exit activity. Exit values in the U.S. plummeted from $25.2 billion to $11.2 billion, while the total number of exits fell to a seventeen-quarter low of 244. This means that most investors did not consider this time the right time to exit their investment. In contrast, Asia experienced a rebound in exit values, rising from $11.2 billion to $18.2 billion, suggesting that the region may be gearing up for a recovery.

Francois Chadwick, a Partner at KPMG in the U.S., expressed cautious optimism about future market conditions, stating, "We've had a long dry spell on the exit front globally, but market conditions are improving." He emphasised that with interest rates dropping, mergers and acquisitions (M&A) activities are expected to pick up, presenting new opportunities for investors and companies. However, it's worth noting that exiting from an investment is a big deal for many investors as it allows them to cash in their checks whenever they want. So, in most cases, investors look for companies that can exit within a few days, if they have to.

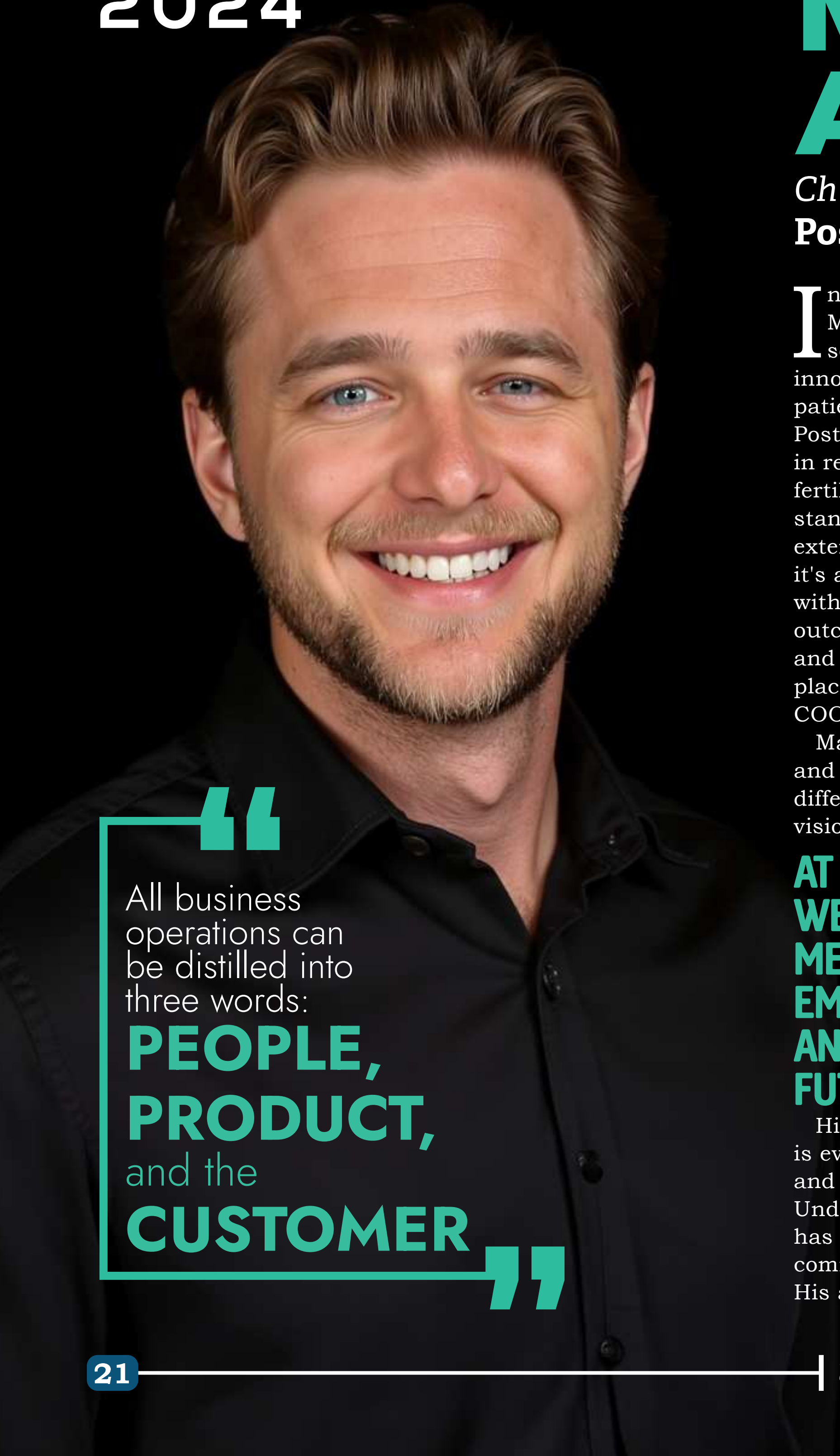
Looking Ahead: A Wait-and-See Approach

As we approach Q4 2024, the venture capital landscape is clouded with uncertainty about the market. The looming U.S. election will likely keep investors on the sidelines, adopting a wait-and-see approach until the political landscape stabilises in the country. Nevertheless, sectors such as AI and defence technology are poised to attract ongoing interest due to the pressing need for innovation.

While Q3 of 2024 marked a significant downturn in global VC investment, emerging trends—particularly in AI and certain regional markets—indicate that growth opportunities still exist. Investors and stakeholders will closely monitor these developments as they prepare for a pivotal year in 2025, depending on various factors. With potential signs of recovery in exit activity, the venture capital community remains hopeful that the sector can rebound, driven by evolving market dynamics and innovative technologies.

While the current VC landscape presents challenges, investors' adaptability and the resilience of certain sectors suggest a complex but potentially profitable and favourable future ahead.

USA's Most Influential
COOs
2024



> All business operations can be distilled into three words:
> **PEOPLE, PRODUCT,** and the **CUSTOMER**

A Visionary Leader Driving Innovation with Technology in Healthcare

MATT ALLEY

Chief Operating Officer,
Posterity Health

In an era of rapidly transforming healthcare, Matt Alley emerges as a visionary leader, seamlessly blending technological innovation with a deep commitment to patient care. As the Chief Operating Officer of Posterity Health, Matt has been instrumental in revolutionizing the approach to male fertility and reproductive health, setting new standards in the industry. His leadership extends far beyond operational excellence—it's about reshaping the future of healthcare with a relentless focus on improving patient outcomes. This dedication to both innovation and compassion has rightfully earned him a place in TradeFlock's "USA's Most Influential COOs 2024."

Matt's leadership is defined by a clear and compelling mission: to make a tangible difference in people's lives. He articulates this vision with passion, stating,

AT POSTERITY HEALTH, WE'RE NOT JUST ADDRESSING MEDICAL CONDITIONS—WE'RE EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES TO BUILD THEIR FUTURES.

His ability to inspire and lead with purpose is evident in the company's rapid growth and its profound impact on its patients. Under Matt's guidance, Posterity Health has expanded its reach and deepened its commitment to the communities it serves. His ability to navigate the complexities of a growing company while maintaining a steadfast focus on patient care distinguishes him as a leader of rare caliber.

In our conversation with Matt, he shared his guiding philosophy: "All business operations can be distilled into three words: People, Product, and the Customer." This belief underpins his approach to leadership, where he prioritizes cultivating talent, fostering innovation, and always keeping the patient at the heart of every decision. Matt's leadership style is empowering, creating an environment where challenges are transformed into opportunities for exceptional growth.

In this interview, Matt offers invaluable insights into the strategies that have driven Posterity Health's success and his forward-looking vision for the future of healthcare. He is not just leading a company—he is shaping an industry and making a lasting impact on countless lives.

What key experiences have shaped your approach to leading operations at Posterity Health?

My leadership journey through Alto, Truepill, HelloFresh, and Amazon has been instrumental in shaping the impactful work I do at Posterity Health. At Alto, I discovered the transformative power of a patient-centric approach, where integrating technology with pharmacy operations redefined the standard of care. Truepill honed my ability to scale digital health solutions efficiently, emphasizing the importance of agility and innovation in a rapidly evolving industry. My time at Amazon instilled in me a deep commitment to data-driven decision-making and process optimization, providing a robust foundation for leading diverse teams in complex environments.

These experiences have uniquely positioned me to develop and implement a patient-first, data-driven operational model at Posterity Health, where exceptional care is seamlessly balanced with financial sustainability.

What strategies have you implemented to prioritize patient care while meeting financial goals?

At Posterity Health, I've spearheaded a range of innovative strategies that prioritize patient care while consistently meeting our financial goals. Leveraging data analytics to optimize resource allocation and investing in cutting-edge digital health tools like telemedicine have enhanced our patient experience. Moreover, forging strategic partnerships with leading fertility brands has enabled us to broaden our reach and deliver comprehensive, high-quality care, all while driving sustainable growth.

What are the biggest opportunities and risks for specialized healthcare companies like Posterity Health in the next five years?

My journey through leading innovative teams at Alto, Truepill, Hellofresh, and Amazon taught me that the key to success in healthcare is a patient-centered, data-driven approach that balances exceptional care with financial sustainability. The biggest opportunities for specialized healthcare companies like Posterity Health lie in the continued adoption of personalized medicine and the integration of advanced technologies like AI and machine learning into clinical practice. These advancements will enable us to deliver more tailored and effective care. However, they also bring risks, such as increased regulatory scrutiny and the need to protect patient data in an increasingly digital world. Staying agile and proactive in addressing these risks will be key.

How do you plan for organizational growth to ensure Posterity Health is future-ready?

Planning for growth at Posterity Health involves a strategic balance of foresight and operational flexibility. We focus on scaling our services while maintaining the quality of care by investing in technology, building strong partnerships, and ensuring our team is equipped with the necessary skills and resources. By closely monitoring industry trends and patient needs, we adapt our strategy to remain at the forefront of reproductive healthcare.

What are your core strengths in leading Posterity Health, and what areas are you looking to improve?

My strengths in strategic thinking, data-driven decision-making, and team leadership have played a key role in driving the growth and success of Posterity Health. However, I recognize that there's always room for improvement, particularly in navigating the complexities of healthcare regulations and enhancing our organizational agility. As the healthcare landscape evolves, I remain committed to fostering a culture of continuous improvement—not just for myself, but for the entire Posterity Health team. I believe that by staying focused on our patients and remaining focused on continuous improvement, we can continue to adapt and excel in delivering exceptional care.

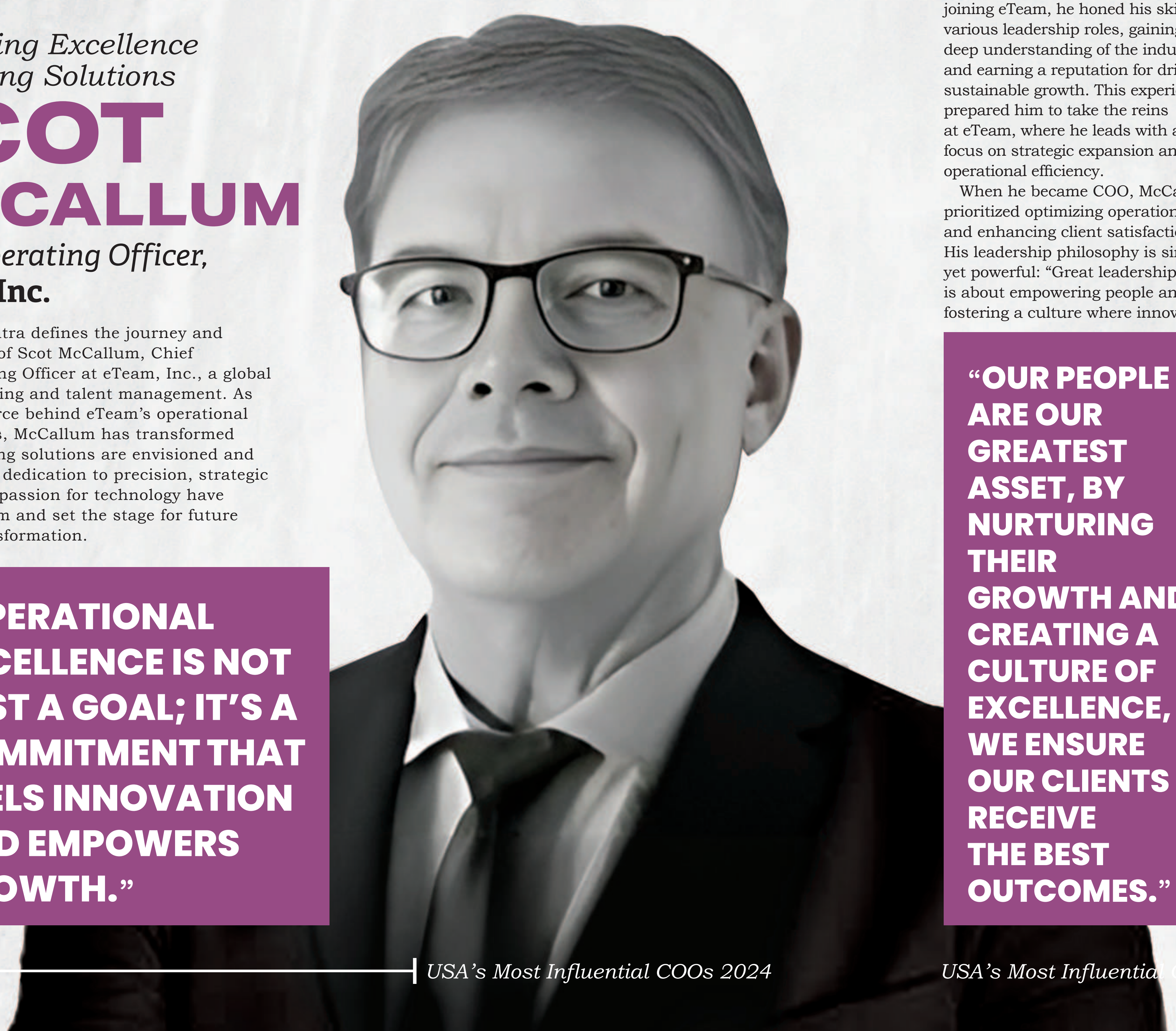
USA's Most Influential

COOs 2024

Redefining Excellence in Staffing Solutions

SCOT MCCALLUM

Chief Operating Officer,
eTeam, Inc.



This mantra defines the journey and impact of Scot McCallum, Chief Operating Officer at eTeam, Inc., a global leader in staffing and talent management. As the driving force behind eTeam's operational advancements, McCallum has transformed the way staffing solutions are envisioned and delivered. His dedication to precision, strategic insights, and passion for technology have elevated eTeam and set the stage for future industry transformation.

"OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE IS NOT JUST A GOAL; IT'S A COMMITMENT THAT FUELS INNOVATION AND EMPOWERS GROWTH."

Visionary Beginnings and Industry Mastery

Scot McCallum's professional journey is one of ambition and adaptability. With over two decades in the staffing and talent management sector, he has established himself as a forward-thinking leader who thrives in dynamic environments. Before joining eTeam, he honed his skills in various leadership roles, gaining a deep understanding of the industry and earning a reputation for driving sustainable growth. This experience prepared him to take the reins at eTeam, where he leads with a focus on strategic expansion and operational efficiency.

When he became COO, McCallum prioritized optimizing operations and enhancing client satisfaction. His leadership philosophy is simple yet powerful: "Great leadership is about empowering people and fostering a culture where innovation thrives." This belief has inspired his teams to embrace agility and creativity in addressing challenges and delivering impactful results.

"OUR PEOPLE ARE OUR GREATEST ASSET, BY NURTURING THEIR GROWTH AND CREATING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE, WE ENSURE OUR CLIENTS RECEIVE THE BEST OUTCOMES."

Global Expansion and Technological Innovation

Under McCallum's leadership, eTeam has expanded its global footprint, establishing offices in Europe, Canada, and the Asia-Pacific region. This strategic growth highlights his dedication to offering customized solutions across diverse markets. Recognizing the importance of evolving with the industry, McCallum led the integration of cutting-edge technologies to streamline processes and improve outcomes.

He introduced advanced digital platforms to optimize recruitment and talent management, enhancing efficiency and the client experience. "We're in the business of connecting talent with opportunity," McCallum explains. "Leveraging technology ensures we do this faster, more effectively, and with precision." His commitment to innovation has solidified eTeam's position as an industry leader and earned widespread recognition.

Operational Excellence and Team Empowerment

Beyond technology, McCallum is committed to fostering a culture of continuous improvement and team empowerment. He believes investing in people is crucial to organizational success. At eTeam, he champions professional development programs that encourage employees to expand their skills and pursue growth. This commitment has created a motivated workforce capable of delivering exceptional service.

"Our people are our greatest asset," McCallum emphasizes. "By nurturing their growth and creating a culture of excellence, we ensure our clients receive the best outcomes." His people-centric approach has improved retention and employee satisfaction, making eTeam more resilient and adaptable to changing market demands.

Building Trust and Client Success

McCallum's strategy includes a strong emphasis on building trust-based relationships with clients. He understands that in the staffing industry, reliability and transparency are essential. By prioritizing open communication and consistent performance, he has strengthened eTeam's partnerships and driven mutual success.

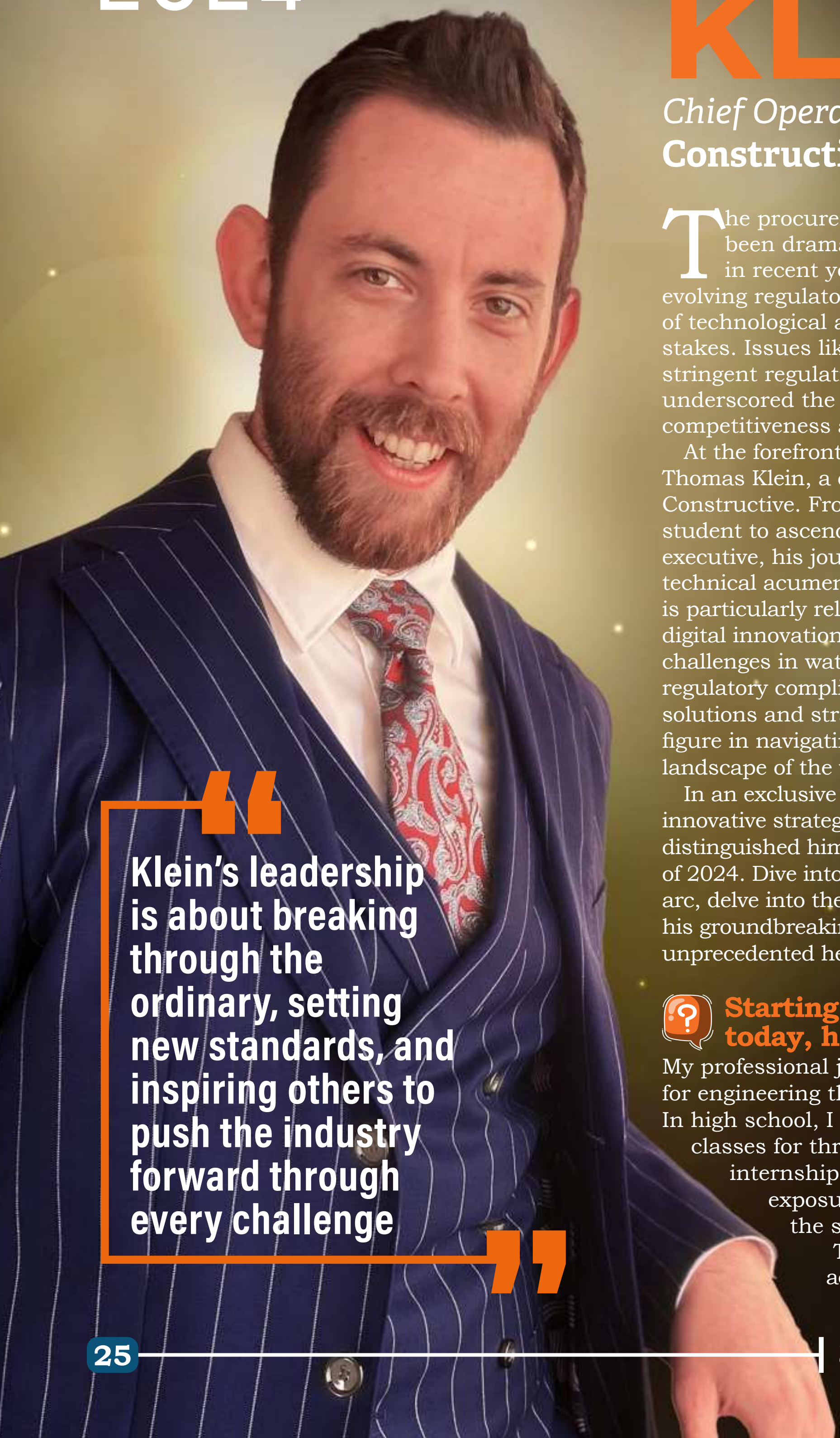
Clients appreciate McCallum's hands-on approach and dedication to understanding their needs. His focus on delivering tailored, high-quality solutions has resulted in numerous successful collaborations. "Our clients need to know we are as invested in their success as they are," he asserts. "We measure our success by the impact we have on their businesses." This client-first mindset has set eTeam apart as a dependable and trusted partner.

The Future: Innovation and Continued Growth

Looking forward, McCallum envisions eTeam continuing to lead through innovation and adaptability. He remains focused on leveraging new technologies and evolving practices to keep eTeam at the forefront of the staffing industry. His strategic foresight and commitment to excellence ensure that eTeam will continue to thrive in an ever-changing landscape.

As the industry evolves, McCallum's influence stands as a model of impactful leadership. His unwavering dedication to his team, clients, and operational excellence exemplifies what it means to be a transformative COO. Scot McCallum is more than an operations executive; he's a visionary whose work will continue to shape the future of staffing and talent management for years to come.

USA's Most Influential
COOs
2024



Transforming Utility Operations with Technology and Expertise

THOMAS KLEIN

Chief Operating Officer,
Constructive, Inc.

The procurement landscape in the water sector has been dramatically reshaped by a series of challenges in recent years. Global supply chain disruptions, evolving regulatory environments, and the accelerating pace of technological advancements have significantly raised the stakes. Issues like aging infrastructure, climate change, and stringent regulations on contaminants such as PFAS have underscored the critical role of procurement in sustaining competitiveness and driving value.

At the forefront of these transformative waves stands Thomas Klein, a dynamic COO and Co-founder of Constructive. From his beginnings as a high school vocational student to ascending the ranks to become a celebrated executive, his journey is a perfect example of blending technical acumen and visionary leadership. Klein's expertise is particularly relevant as the water sector increasingly adopts digital innovations and advanced technologies to address challenges in water quality, supply chain management, and regulatory compliance. His leadership in fostering innovative solutions and strategic initiatives makes him a pivotal figure in navigating the complex and evolving procurement landscape of the water industry

In an exclusive interview with TradeFlock, Klein reveals the innovative strategies and pioneering approaches that have distinguished him as one of the USA's Most Influential COOs of 2024. Dive into our discussion as we trace Klein's leadership arc, delve into the secrets of his success, and discover how his groundbreaking initiatives are propelling the industry to unprecedented heights.

> Klein's leadership is about breaking through the ordinary, setting new standards, and inspiring others to push the industry forward through every challenge

Starting as an engineering intern to COO today, how has your journey been so far?

My professional journey began with a deep-seated passion for engineering that took root even before my internships. In high school, I immersed myself in drafting and design classes for three years, which paved the way for my first internship with a local pump manufacturer. This early exposure provided invaluable experience and set the stage for my career.

Throughout college, I continued to intern, accumulating substantial hands-on experience.

After graduation, I began my career as a product engineer with a valve company. My expertise in pump and valve manufacturing soon led to a project manager role at a major water/wastewater utility. In this position, I not only managed capital projects but also delved into customer experience, data analytics, mergers and acquisitions, and program management. During this period, I pursued a master's in business management, which expanded my understanding of utility operations and enhanced my strategic acumen.

This diverse professional background opened doors to a role at a software company specializing in the water/wastewater sector. There, I played a crucial role in expanding design software into the drinking water arena, merging product development with commercial strategy.

Today, as COO at Constructive, I draw upon my entire career journey. Our innovative software modernizes procurement in the water/wastewater industry, creating a dynamic marketplace for utilities to discover and acquire cutting-edge services and technologies. It's incredibly fulfilling to see my varied experiences come together to drive meaningful advancements in this vital sector.

Can you elaborate on how you develop and execute strategic go-to-market plans to build strong relationships with key industry players?

Building an online marketplace for utilities and their vendors requires a deep understanding of both sides' needs. Often, I serve in a consultative role, helping vendors revise or create go-to-market strategies tailored to utilities' needs.

A recent example of this strategic work is the creation of a joint venture for a new company. This venture introduced several patent-pending PFAS treatment systems with a unique business model. This approach not only enhances our platform but also fosters strong relationships with key industry players.

What industry trends do you foresee having the most impact on the utility procurement sector in the next five years?

Water and wastewater utilities have typically lagged in technology adoption. However, there's a shift now with increasing demand for technologies that enhance operations and turnkey services. In the US, both technology and turnkey offerings have historically been difficult to procure due to competitive bid requirements. Our platform addresses these challenges by simplifying the identification, evaluation, and procurement of trusted technologies and turnkey services.

> In today's digital era, the ability to leverage AI in daily tasks has become as essential as spreadsheet skills were fifteen years ago. Mastering AI is now a fundamental skill that drives efficiency and innovation across all levels of an organization

What industry trends do you foresee having the most impact on the utility procurement sector in the next five years?

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Who has been the most influential person in your professional journey, and why?

Behind every successful leader is a story of guidance, mentorship, and inspiration. In my life, two individuals stand out as pivotal influences in his remarkable career.

Firstly, my father, Ed Klein, the CFO of a water & wastewater utility, taught me the intricacies of utility financing, including balancing rates and capital improvements. His insights into the most valuable ways vendors can serve utilities have been invaluable, even in my current role.

Secondly, Ari Raivetz, the CEO of Transcend, has greatly influenced me. At Transcend, a software company for utilities, vendors, and engineering consultants, I gained experience working with diverse water/wastewater companies. Ari coached me on everything from customer collaboration to team motivation, which has proven critical in my success at Constructive.

How do you leverage technology to enhance operational efficiency and drive innovation? Can you share a few examples of them?

At Constructive, I believe AI usage is a mandatory digital skill for all team members thus we use large language models (LLMs) for various tasks, including product roadmap strategy. By combining feedback from in-person product interviews with simulated feedback from AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini, we enhance our product team's effectiveness and decision-making.

LLMs also aid in researching service lines, technologies, vendors, and informational content for our platform. Building a marketplace for industrial-grade technologies and services requires a deep understanding of both market sides. LLMs speed up our research efforts, leading to faster operational speeds and better service for our customers.

BIG TAKE

WELLNESS AS A STRATEGY

THE SECRET TO IMPROVING CORPORATE CULTURE

Shaunna Lee
Founder, Shaunna Lee LLC and the Brilliance Unleashed Method

The culture within your organization can improve your company's overall success metrics or be the key factor in its slow decline. Most leaders still don't prioritize employed mental health despite the emerging data showing a direct connection between employee well-being and company performance. In my two decades of corporate consulting and project management in the tech industry, I have seen the evolution of remote work, flexible time off policies, and parental leave programs. While times are changing, we are still a far cry from utilizing the wellness of your employees as a strategic lever to company success.

While the workplace has drastically changed with remote/hybrid work environments pre- and post-pandemic, it has introduced new mental health challenges. Stress and burnout continue to be top concerns. Social isolation and loneliness coupled with less daily movement and blurred boundaries between work and home life are major factors for employee mental health now more than ever. Employee Assistance Programs have been an excellent start, but there is still much work to be done in the area of integrating mental health into your corporate culture and taking these new considerations into effect.

Take the technology industry, as an example. Despite having the second-best offerings when it comes to mental health solutions, according to the Calm Business 2023 Workplace Mental Health Trends Report, 40% of employees expressed a desire for mental health solutions to address stress, anxiety, and sleep challenges. Over half of employees are still experiencing at least moderate levels of burnout, but resolving this concern doesn't require a large budget adjustment. Employers are both a part of the problem and the solution when it comes to workplace stress. This same research shows that a 1% investment in preventative measures such as workshops on employee resilience, coping strategies, and mindful manager training, results in a 4% savings in reactive healthcare costs.

Much of my recent strategic consulting experience has focused on empowering professionals to create meaningful careers and fulfilling personal lives. This is the ultimate work/life balance that stems from making one's mental health the top priority. The most successful tactic having the biggest impact on employee mental health is Employee Wellness Workshops. Additionally, recognizing a manager's influence on their team's morale, using a top-down approach with executive training programs has been an excellent strategy for improving company culture.

These types of wellness-focused strategies can improve the mental health of employees and the overall performance of your company. Creating a mentally healthy workplace is deeply personal and it starts with our leaders creating open communication, inviting healthy conversations, and setting the example for prioritizing mental health during the work day and in the workplace. After all, it's not just business. It's personal.

USA's Most Influential

COOs 2024

Infusing the Human Factor in Operations

WILLIAM (BILLY) CORRIGAN

Chief Operating Officer, **Alera Group**

In a landscape where insurance and employee benefits firms face increasing complexities and competitive pressures, operational excellence isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. Alera Group, a formidable player in this industry, has found a steady guiding force in William (Billy) Corrigan, its Chief Operating Officer. William's tenure at Alera Group is marked by strategic foresight and a commitment to efficiency that's not just reactive but deeply proactive, aiming to future-proof the organization. His story, rooted in a blend of finance and operations, provides a blueprint for leadership in an industry that must balance tradition with innovation.

Early Foundations and Career Trajectory

William Corrigan's professional journey began in the UK, where he completed a Bachelor of Arts in Business Studies at Glasgow Caledonian University in 1986. His early career choices laid the foundation for his future leadership. William's knack for finance and operational management became evident during his roles at Marsh, where he served as Chief Financial Officer, and at Kinloch, another key financial position that shaped his strategic outlook.

Transforming Challenges into Opportunities at Alera Group

When William joined Alera Group in 2017, first as Chief Financial Officer, the company was navigating the intricacies of consolidating and optimizing its rapidly growing operations across multiple offices and sectors. His expertise in aligning financial discipline with operational execution made a significant impact. In his current role as COO, Corrigan has been instrumental in scaling operations, integrating acquired firms seamlessly, and enhancing service delivery models to improve customer experience and efficiency.

The insurance industry is increasingly shaped by regulatory changes, digital transformation, and heightened client expectations for customization and transparency. William tackled these challenges head-on. For example, he played a critical role in streamlining processes that allowed Alera Group to stay agile amid evolving market demands. His leadership has improved internal efficiencies and reinforced the firm's reputation as a reliable and forward-thinking player.

A Strategic Approach to Overcoming Industry Challenges

One of William's key strengths is his ability to anticipate market shifts and prepare the organization accordingly. His strategy focuses on leveraging data analytics to drive better decision-making. By embracing innovative technology solutions, William ensured that Alera Group could handle regulatory compliance's complexities while enhancing service offerings.

Rapid technological advancements compound the insurance sector's operational challenges. William has led initiatives to modernize Alera Group's infrastructure, enhancing digital capabilities and integrating cutting-edge software to optimize workflows. His commitment to innovation extends to fostering a company culture that values continuous improvement and employee empowerment.

Recognition and Industry Influence

William Corrigan's impact hasn't gone unnoticed. His leadership has contributed to Alera Group's continued success and growth, further solidifying its position as a market leader. While specific awards and formal recognitions highlight organizational achievements, William's true legacy lies in the operational resilience and adaptability he has embedded into the company.

Beyond his internal contributions, William is also a thought leader in the broader industry. His insights on the balance between operational efficiency and human capital investment have influenced peers and competitors, making him a respected voice in operational strategy discussions.

A Holistic Vision for the Future

William's vision for Alera Group is clear: to continue driving operational excellence while positioning the company as a leader in innovative insurance solutions. He remains committed to nurturing a high-performance culture supporting client needs and employee growth.

What sets William apart is his emphasis on empathy and mentorship. He is known for his people-first approach, understanding that engaged and motivated teams ultimately drive operational success. His leadership philosophy combines rigorous data-based decision-making with an authentic appreciation for the human element of business.

William Corrigan's professional journey is a masterclass in navigating the complexities of the insurance industry. From his early days in finance to his strategic leadership as COO of Alera Group, Corrigan exemplifies what it means to be a transformative operations leader. His story is of strategic foresight, innovative thinking, and a relentless drive to create value for the company and its people. Leaders like William Corrigan prove that the right blend of precision and empathy can turn obstacles into opportunities for lasting impact in a world of ever-shifting challenges.

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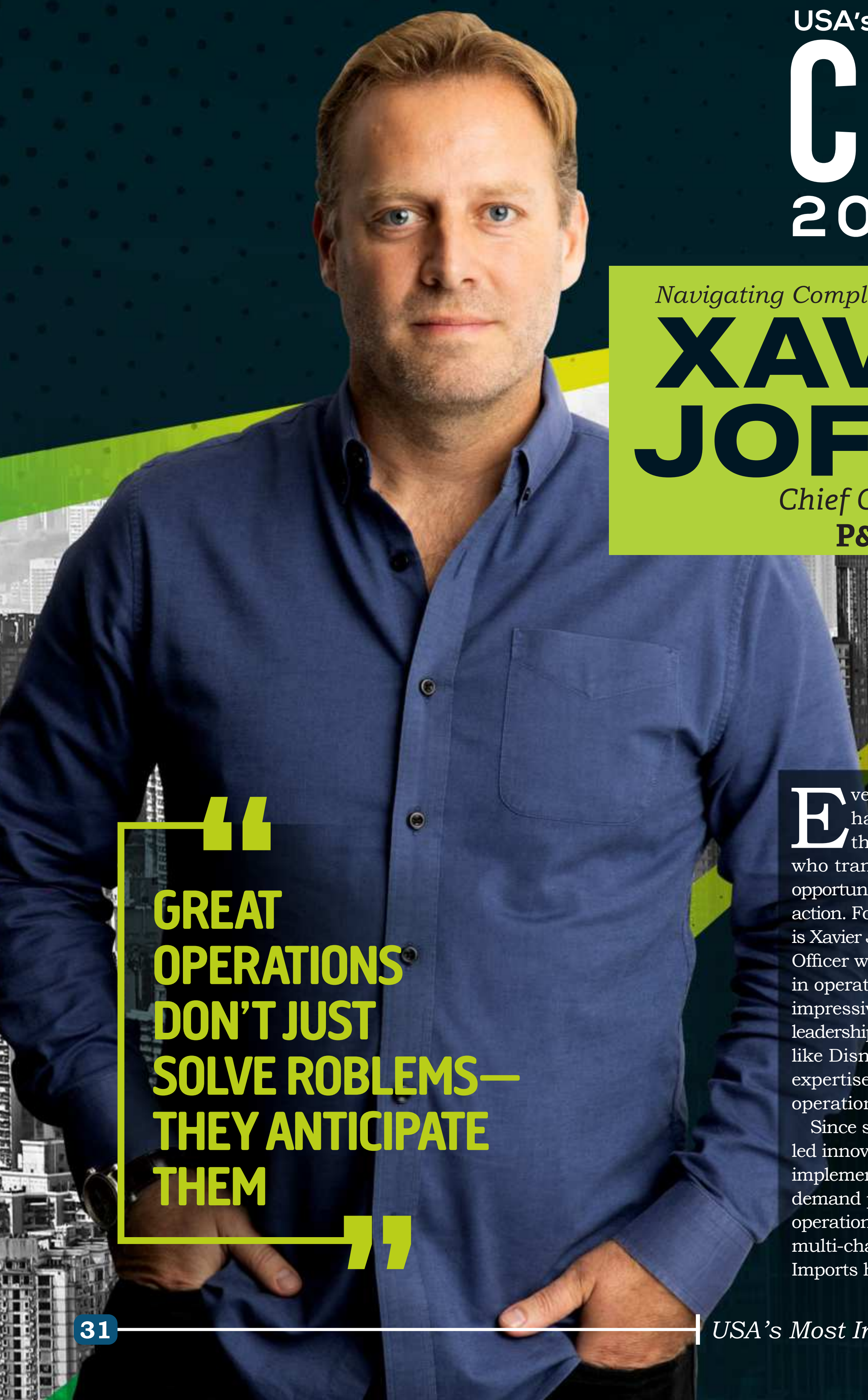
TRADEFLOCK
JOURNEY OF LEADERS

USA's Most Influential

COOs 2024



Navigating Complexity with Precision

XAVIER JOFFRE

Chief Operating Officer,
P&P Imports LLC.

> GREAT OPERATIONS DON'T JUST SOLVE ROBLEMS—THEY ANTICIPATE THEM

Every thriving business has a driving force behind the scenes—someone who transforms obstacles into opportunities, turning strategy into action. For P&P Imports LLC, that force is Xavier Joffre, the Chief Operating Officer whose career is a masterclass in operational excellence. With an impressive portfolio that includes leadership stints at global powerhouses like Disney and Fox Racing, his expertise goes beyond maintaining operations—he redefines them.

Since stepping into the role, he has led innovative product expansions, implemented automation in demand planning, and streamlined operations to power the company's multi-channel growth. With P&P Imports hitting the $100M revenue mark, Xavier's unwavering focus on efficiency and profitability is securing its place as a market leader.

Recognized as one of USA's Most Influential COOs of 2024, his impact is louder than words. In an exclusive interview with TradeFlock, he shares insights into his leadership philosophy, strategic approach, and vision for the future of operations in a dynamic business landscape.

What is your core philosophy in managing relationships with manufacturers and 3PLs?

At the core of my approach is a simple belief: ***Great partnerships don't just happen—they're built, nurtured, and fine-tuned like any well-oiled machine.*** I've been fortunate to learn this firsthand in some incredible roles. At Disney, Sony manufactured our Blu-ray discs. At Fox Racing, I spearheaded the launch of a bonded 3PL in Shenzhen with Expeditors. At Aqualung, I managed diving gear production lines while outsourcing warehousing to NFI. And now, at P&P, we run a newly remodeled 135K SQF storage facility, but we outsource 100% of the manufacturing.

I have a simple philosophy: Treat every partner like part of your own team—expect nothing less, but recognize that they have their own priorities, goals, and P&L to manage. Clear communication is essential, and, as I like to say, "trust isn't given, it's earned—over emails, meetings, and Quarterly Business Reviews." That's why I ensure we have a rigorous RFP process to find the right partners and schedule regular QBRs to stay aligned and agile as the business evolves.

With technology playing an ever-larger role in operations, how do you incorporate digital transformation into your operational strategies?

"In today's world, if you're not evolving, you're falling behind." That belief has driven how I've approached digital transformation in operations. This year, I implemented game-changing software with an overnight programming interface integrated directly into our ERP and the Amazon Vendor Central platform. Now, we have a fully automated, real-time digital system that provides seamless oversight of inventory levels across multiple locations, 1P sell-through, vendor PO demand, and goods in transit.

With this solution, we update forecasts, review site and Amazon inventory, and quickly determine when to issue new production orders. It wasn't a plug-and-play setup—finding the right technology partner took time and effort. My advice? Don't just stick with the big names; look for emerging disruptors who are open to tailoring their technology to meet your unique needs. Those are often the partners who will go the extra mile to help you succeed.

As COO, you oversee a diverse product portfolio. How do you prioritize product innovation while maintaining operational excellence across P&P Imports' different brands?

"Innovation without structure is no more than just a good idea." Thus, at P&P Imports, I rely on a robust Go-To-Market calendar to keep everything on track. Each product has clear milestones, with development, marketing, and operations teams aligned from ideation to launch. With 1,200 SKUs across GoSports, GoFloat, and GoPong—half introduced since I joined four years ago—our innovation engine is running fast.

But it's not just about creating more products; it's about creating the right ones. We carefully analyze each new launch to ensure it drives incremental growth, not just slices the revenue pie thinner. That's how we keep the momentum going without sacrificing operational excellence.

What's your approach to managing operational risks while driving growth?

Managing risk while driving growth is like walking a tightrope—it takes constant balance. With products ranging from $4.99 to $1,199.99, lead times between 5 to 10 weeks, and margins swinging from 30% to 80%, "every decision is a calculated bet." Some orders fit on a single pallet, while others fill two 40 HQ containers, so I tailor our inventory strategy to match the situation.

I also track retail trends closely to spot whether a product is climbing, flat, or dipping, adjusting risks as needed. For new launches, we rely on a revenue model that lets us act quickly on opportunities, and I always keep an eye on net margins after ads and promotions to ensure we're growing smart, not just fast.

What does a typical day in your role look like, and how do you prioritize tasks across various departments?

My day starts with lots of coffee and plenty of open threads on TEAMS, each tied to different parts of the business. "Amid the noise, it's all about knowing what moves the needle." I juggle constant communication with a handful of core supply chains and FP&A templates I've developed, reviewing them with my team at a regular cadence.

These tools help us manage inventory, seize new opportunities, and mitigate financial risks efficiently. With over $100M in income driven by a steep Pareto curve across products and channels, I focus my attention where it matters most, balancing priorities to keep everything moving smoothly.

From Burnout to Breakthrough

Managers Can Find Joy in the Most Chaotic of Times

Today, the stakes are high in the business landscape, and managers bear the brunt. From project delays to team dynamics, managers have to deal with everything. So, it becomes easy for the weight of responsibility to overshadow the joy of leadership. However, embracing the tough days can transform even the toughest days into opportunities for growth and connection.

According to a 2023 Gallup report, only 35% of managers feel engaged. The disengagement felt by the rest impacts their mental health and can also affect their team, resulting in decreased productivity and morale for the team members. It might seem far-fetched to some managers, but they can cultivate joy amidst chaos and uncertainty.

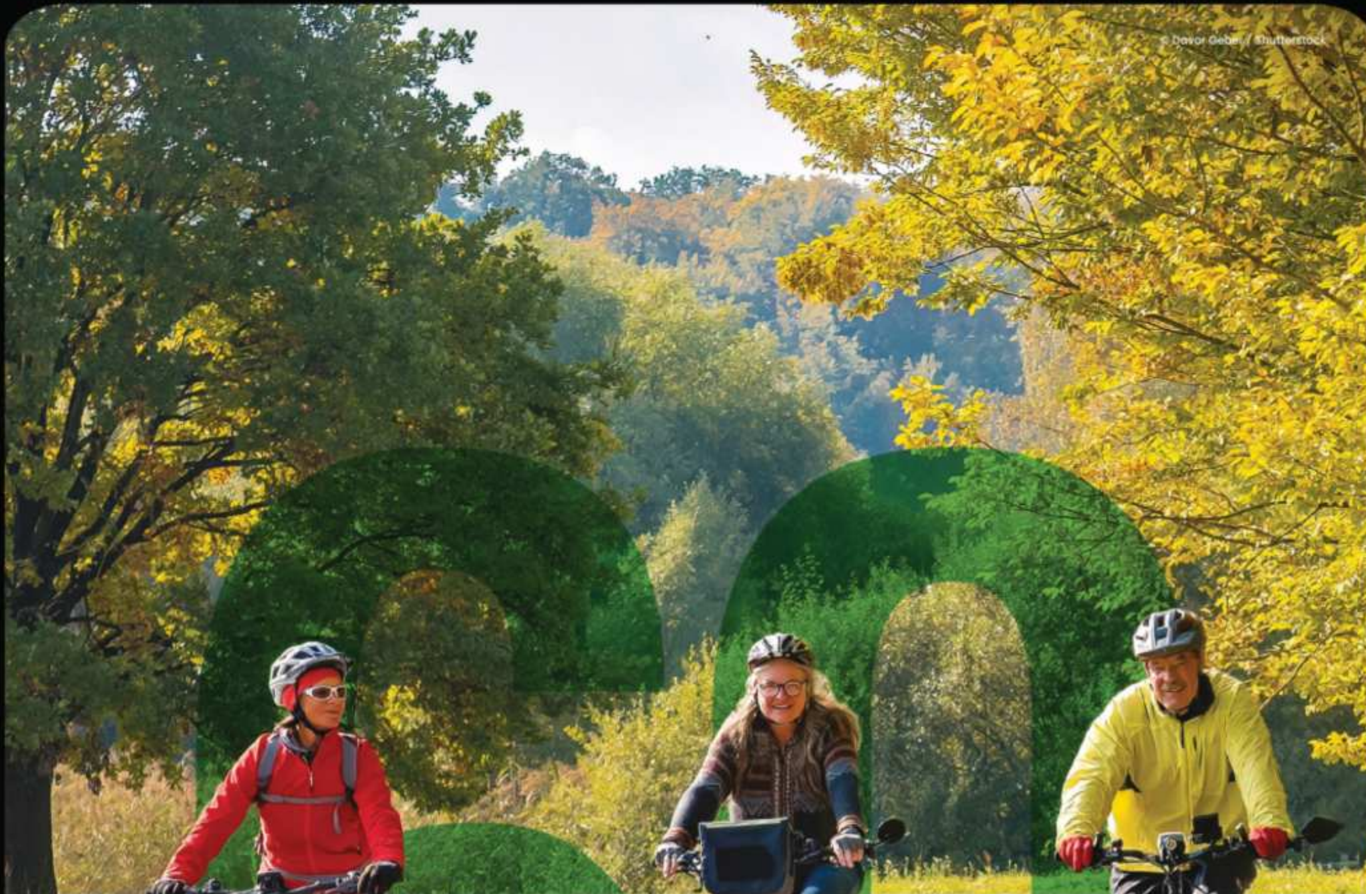
Practice Gratitude Daily

Research shows that gratitude can significantly enhance well-being. A simple daily practice of writing down three things you're thankful for can shift your focus from problems to possibilities. When you acknowledge the positive aspects of your role, it becomes easier to navigate challenges efficiently. Just remember that your choice can make a difference. Moreover, many people forget to celebrate small wins that make the bigger difference. In a fast-paced environment, it's easy to overlook minor achievements. Celebrating small wins helps develop a sense of accomplishment and boosts team morale. Whether completing a project milestone or receiving positive feedback, acknowledging these moments can reignite passion and enthusiasm.

Building strong relationships with your team can also create a supportive work atmosphere. A 2022 Harvard Business Review study found that managers prioritising team bonding see a 25% increase in employee satisfaction. Schedule regular one-on-ones, team outings, or casual coffee breaks to strengthen these connections. Feeling supported can make even the most challenging days manageable. These one-on-ones can also help you with other things. For instance, you can show your team that you, their manager, are also vulnerable. As a leader, showing vulnerability helps you develop trust and openness within your team. Acknowledging that you, too, face difficulties can encourage a culture where everyone feels safe sharing their struggles and not being judged for them. This transparency can lead to collaborative problem-solving and strengthen team bonds. To spell it out, this can help you streamline your business process and result in high profitability.

This might seem counterintuitive, but amidst all the chaos, you have to be positive and healthy, and a healthy manager is a happy manager. Make time for self-care practices that recharge your batteries, such as exercising, meditation, or pursuing a hobby. A 2023 study from the American Psychological Association found that self-care improves resilience and reduces burnout.

In conclusion, finding joy as a manager, even on tough days, is not only possible but essential. Managers can create a more positive work environment by cultivating gratitude, celebrating wins, fostering connections, embracing vulnerability, and prioritising self-care. Remember, your attitude sets the tone, so choose joy and watch it improve your team.



Give an Hour for Earth

Do something positive for the planet

worldwildlife.org/hour

60 EARTH HOUR

WWF