

TRIBALHUB

magazine

A PUBLICATION FOR TECHNOLOGY MINDED PROFESSIONALS IN TRIBAL GOVERNMENT
TRIBAL HEALTH, TRIBAL GAMING AND NON-GAMING TRIBAL ENTERPRISES



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TRIBALHUB magazine

FALL 2023



WELCOME

TO THE PAGES OF TRIBALHUB'S MAGAZINE

TribalHub keeps you informed and engaged all year-long with so many things. Our fall mag is one of my favorites on that long list of things!

If you couldn't tell already just by the amazing cover, this edition is elevated! If you have teenagers in your life they would use the word "bussin" to describe it. You're welcome, you can update your next generation cheat sheet of words you now know. It pretty much means "really good". In this issue you are going to love the content, the ads, the critical updates from federal entities, the graphics, the interaction, it's all here and just gets better and better with every issue. Read articles written by industry experts and people just like you in the day to day of operations at a tribe or tribal enterprise. Discover new products, services and the right points of contacts for vendors working specifically with tribal nations and enterprises. Of course get your dose of great updates from TribalHub and our team on what's happened this year and what's coming up that you MUST KNOW!

We can't wait for you to flip the pages and see all that's packed into this issue. As we round the corner at the end of 2023 and move into 2024, buckle up, it's going to be a great year ahead and we are by your side for the ride!

Shannon Bouschor

Director of Operations, TribalHub

The Largest Community of Technology Minded Professionals from Tribes Across the Country

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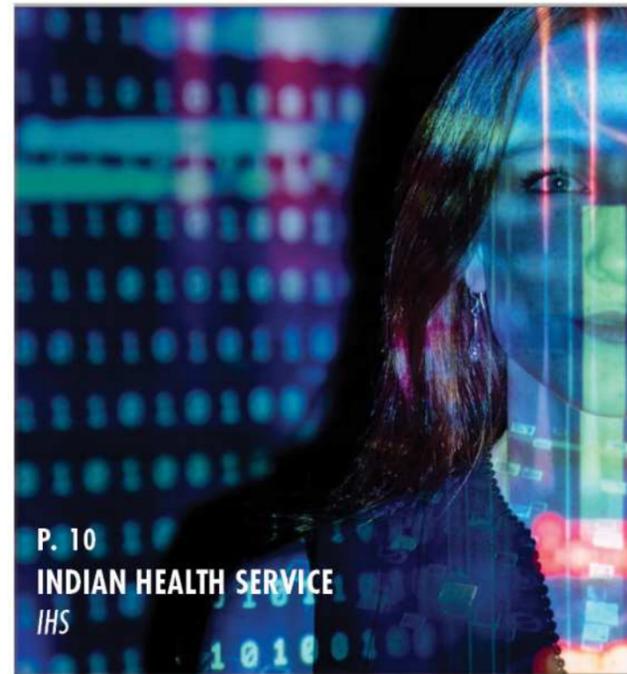
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by Renita DiStefano



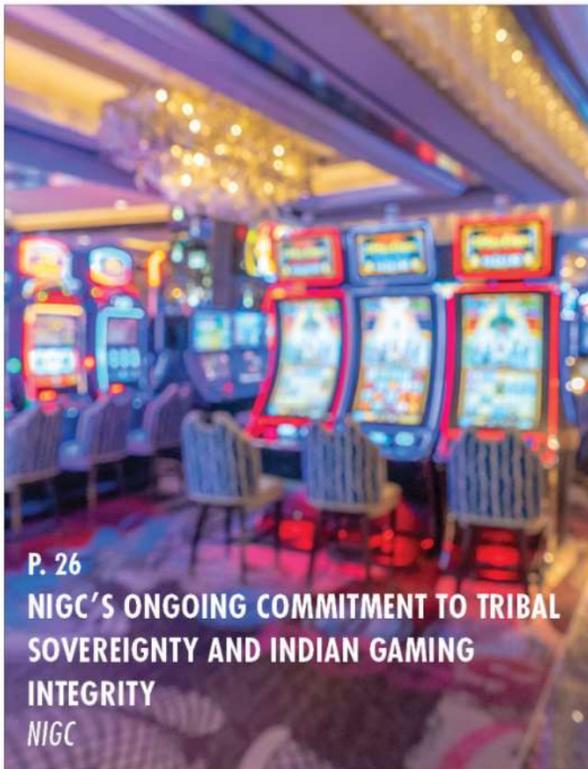
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TribalHub's Associate Members make a difference!



We all want to have a deeper purpose and the opportunity to make a positive difference within a community. TribalHub Associate Members collectively contribute to TribalHub's initiative to support every tribe by providing ways for them to connect, grow, and gain new opportunities. With their support, TribalHub is able to expand the offerings of free and low cost events, research, resources and learning opportunities for tribes and tribal enterprises.

THANK YOU ASSOCIATE MEMBERS!

[Click here to view our current list of Associate Members.](#)



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NAVIGATING THE ROBOTICS REVOLUTION: A BRIEF GUIDE TO EVALUATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Gita Robots by Plagglo Fast Forward at Black Fire Innovation at UNLV



BY
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About the author: Dr. Robert Rippee is a distinguished technology, entertainment, and gaming figure. With extensive experience and expertise, he has contributed significantly to advancing innovation in the casino and hospitality industry. Dr. Rippee's work is characterized by a deep understanding of innovation and its impact on guest experiences, making him a prominent thought leader in technology adoption in hospitality and gaming.

The gaming industry is experiencing a technological revolution, and the integration of robotics is at the forefront of this transformation. As robots increasingly take center stage in guest services, security, and operations, it becomes paramount for stakeholders to make informed choices. In this article, we delve into the burgeoning role of robotics in gaming and underscore the critical need for careful evaluation and decision-making. Risk is reduced and technology benefits are realized by navigating this brave new world of automation with insight and precision.

The gaming industry is witnessing a dynamic shift in integrating robotics into daily operations. Robots have made their presence felt across various facets of the sector, transforming the way things work and how work gets done. Robots are becoming assets across hospitality, from welcoming guests to ensuring room cleanliness, enhancing security measures, and even assisting in food and beverage services.

For instance, at the forefront of guest services, robots like [Botlr](#) have made remarkable appearances in hotels, delivering items to guest rooms, including towels, toiletries, and other amenities. Meanwhile, robotic cleaners such as [Cardinal Robotics](#) are streamlining the cleaning process and increasing human productivity. Additionally, the adoption of security robots bolsters security and safety abilities, complementing human efforts by providing multimodal sensors to supplement and expand the range of human capacity.

Before embracing new robotic solutions, it is imperative to complete a thorough evaluation of each technology in order to

mitigate risk. By meticulously assessing the compatibility, scalability, and customizability of robotic innovations, stakeholders can substantially reduce the risk of technology failures and financial setbacks. Informed decision-making empowers establishments to harness the full potential of robotics and gives organizations the ability to enhance operational efficiency, elevate guest experiences, increase labor productivity, and build a brand reputation as a tech-forward company. When evaluating robotic solutions for your operation, a practical and real-world-focused approach is paramount to ensuring a seamless integration that maximizes benefits. Here are key considerations when assessing and making decisions on robotic solutions:

COMPATIBILITY

The need for compatibility of robotics with existing systems and processes cannot be overstated. Evaluate how seamlessly robots can integrate into your operations and network infrastructure. Robots that effortlessly complement your workflow are more likely to deliver tangible benefits. A robot stuck in an elevator due to loss of WIFI signal is useless to anyone. Additionally, query your vendor on the depth of their knowledge of casino and hospitality operations. For example, how well do they understand the tempo of business demands, the constraints in guest areas, the need for adoption by team members, or weak Wi-Fi signals in elevator cabs?

SCALABILITY

In a dynamic industry like gaming, scalability is a crucial factor. Can the robotic solution adapt to changing business demands, seasonal

fluctuations, and evolving guest preferences? Is the robot use limited to a single department or task or can the robot work with housekeeping on the day shift, engineering on the evening shift, and security overnight? Ensure your chosen robotics solution is flexible enough to scale with your business requirements and future growth.

CUSTOMIZATION

Customization is another vital aspect. Consider the unique requirements of your environment. A one-size-fits-all approach may not align with your specific needs. Look for robotics providers offering customization options that allow you to tailor their solutions to your establishment’s distinctive demands — or even constraints in your organizational capacity to support or maintain this advanced technology.

By carefully examining these factors, you can make a well-informed decision

that aligns with an enhanced potential for success. The aim is not just to embrace robotics but to do so in a way that seamlessly integrates with your operations and optimizes the potential for technology adoption.

In recent years, several operators have successfully integrated robotics into their operations, showcasing the transformative potential of these innovations. Here are notable examples:

ROBOTIC HOUSEKEEPING: The [Yotel](#) in New York City deploys the Yobot, a robotic luggage handler that efficiently stores guests’ luggage, improving check-in and check-out processes. It enhances convenience and streamlines operations.

SECURITY AND SURVEILLANCE: Security robots like the [Knightscope K5](#) have been employed in gaming to enhance safety. These robots use advanced

sensors and surveillance capabilities to monitor premises, complementing human security teams.

These examples underscore how robotics can enhance efficiency and guest gaming experiences while achieving the stakeholders’ technology adoption goals. Robotic solutions present the potential for greater versatility and efficiency in our sector, but only when the insight of operators drives them. The early adoption of new and emergent technology has long characterized the hospitality and gaming industries. Today, robotics represents a new and emergent technology for operators. The potential for success is driven far less by the technology engineers than by the learned and expert application by operators.

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Tohono O’odham Utility Authority



Bricells
CASE STUDY



AGENCY UPDATE

IHS: Zero Trust Principles Will Improve the Indian Health Service's Cybersecurity

MITCHELL THORNBRUGH

Chief Information Officer, Office of Information Technology

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<https://www.ihs.gov/hit/>



Zero Trust Architecture (ZTA) is an important approach to cybersecurity in today's digital world. ZTA principles assume that all users, traffic, and networks are hostile and that an organization's trust in these should be eliminated. ZTA operates on the premise that all access must be re-verified over and over to better protect an organization from both internal and external threats and breaches.

On May 21, 2021, the Biden administration issued [Executive Order 14028, "Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity,"](#) that requires all Federal agencies to develop a plan to implement ZTA before the end of FY2024. This Executive Order will help to modernize and strengthen cybersecurity standards and detection across the federal government. The Indian Health Service takes cybersecurity very seriously, which is why our [Office of Information Technology](#) is focused on the full implementation of ZTA across the agency to fulfill the Executive Order.

The implementation of ZTA across IHS will help the agency (1) better protect against cybersecurity attacks and (2) help ensure only authorized users have access to information they need to conduct their job responsibilities. ZTA limits the scope of credentials and access paths of an attacker, which gives more time for systems and the agency to respond and address an attack. ZTA will also help the IHS prevent and handle complex attacks through the adoption of cloud technologies; implementation of strong identity verification practices; improvement of asset management and telemetry practices; application of least privilege access; and enforcement of ZTA policy alignment across the ecosystem, including third party providers. ZTA will also assure the strength of the IT supply chain across IHS.

While not directly a part of our [Health IT Modernization Program](#), the implementation of ZTA across IHS will support this major initiative. As we transition to an enterprise electronic health record system, which will both store and share health records for 2.8 million patients across Indian Country, security is at the Program's core. We know we must balance threat prevention with accessibility in order to deliver on our mission to provide a reliable and efficient health information system to support the delivery of health care across Indian Country.

The eventual adoption of ZTA principles will help better secure the electronic health records of millions of patients, protect our health care facilities from cybersecurity attacks, and ensure only authorized users have access to the information they need. To bring these benefits to life, the IHS will embrace the [National Institute of Standards and Technology](#) seven tenets of ZTA implementation:

- Authentication and authorization
- Behavioral access
- Asset knowledge
- Communication
- Non-persistent access
- Monitoring
- Data sources



These seven tenets illustrate the restriction of identity, access, system, and behaviors that help deliver an effective ZTA framework. Currently, IHS is in the preliminary stage of the implementation of ZTA. We also intend to use the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) Office of the Chief Information Officer [Zero Trust Score Card](#) to continually assess our maturity. This will assist with developing strategies to progress through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's defined stages of Zero Trust maturity that are categorized in succession as Traditional, Initial, Advanced and Optimal.

As part of this implementation effort, IHS is acquiring new technologies specifically geared toward establishing a Zero Trust network while maintaining compatibility with our existing network. Additionally, IHS has implemented systems to provide a more accurate inventory of IT assets and determine their individual security posture, from regular workstations to biomedical devices involved in patient care. We are also working to update or replace legacy systems that are currently incompatible with ZTA. I look forward to the realization of ZTA across the agency to increase cybersecurity and better secure the electronic health records of millions of patients while protecting our health care facilities.

HOW NATIVES RISING AND MICROSOFT ARE CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

As Co-Chair of the US chapter of the Indigenous at Microsoft employee resource group (ERG), I've had the opportunity to engage with rural and indigenous communities in multiple ways. However, one of my most impactful experiences to date has been founding and leading a series of indigenous STEM camps in collaboration with [Natives Rising](#).

Originally started in July 2022, these week-long STEM camps bring together indigenous high school students from across the country to gather in-person and learn about current career opportunities in technology. Students get hands-on experience in everything from operating drones, conducting a cybersecurity threat analysis, and learning about robotics programming to exploring data centers, visiting the Microsoft campus, and more. However, the real benefit is getting to meet and learn from a diverse representation of indigenous cybersecurity professionals who are just like them.

COVID-19 had a massive impact on children's education, and this is especially true for tribal students. By introducing these kids to indigenous professionals at Microsoft and other major technology companies, we are enabling them to envision new possibilities for themselves, while also creating future pathways for economic development.

The [Microsoft Airband Initiative](#) is another example of the way in which we're working to address digital equity in the US. Internet access is a fundamental right, and indigenous people cannot keep pace with current educational and professional opportunities unless they have the same access to reliable high-speed internet connections. Airband works with internet

and energy providers, government agencies, nonprofits, and private sector companies to build digital infrastructure and provide access to skills training and devices. In doing so, we open up opportunities for tribal members to start their own businesses, seek out remote or hybrid jobs, pursue an education in STEM, and more.

Through my work with the Indigenous at Microsoft ERG, I've also had the opportunity to participate in [Microsoft's Technology Education and Learning Support \(TEALS\) program](#). This program works to provide high school and college-aged students with equitable access to computer science (CS) education by creating sustainable CS programs in schools.

Since its inception, TEALS has served over 100,000 students and 2,000 teachers across more than 1,300 partner schools. Last year alone, 47% of TEALS students were from racial groups that have been traditionally excluded from CS education—including indigenous and rural communities. I have had the opportunity to engage with some of these students directly thanks to my work with the Turtle Mountain Community College, located in the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indian Reservation, North Dakota.

I am hyper-focused on workforce skilling initiatives like TEALS and the Natives Rising STEM camps because I believe that socioeconomic disadvantages are one of the main underlying causes behind many of the disparity issues that we see in indigenous and rural communities. Technology is a primary driver for pulling people out of poverty and empowering them to pursue new economic opportunities, whether by starting their own businesses at home or pursuing a career with tech companies like

Microsoft. I'm passionate about introducing students to the technology field because I've seen firsthand the impact it can make.

This past July, Natives Rising and Microsoft hosted our second STEM camp for indigenous high school students. After that first camp in 2022, we were able to expand from 60 applicants across five different tribes to 320 applicants across 21 different tribes—and that number will only continue to grow. As we work to raise awareness of these camps, I'm excited to see more indigenous professionals discover a future in technology.



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For more information on Microsoft's indigenous and native workforce skilling initiatives, please contact the Microsoft Tribal Team at MS TribalTeam@Microsoft.com.

Empowering Tribal Communities to Achieve More

Whether it's creating sustainable computer science programs in schools through [Microsoft TEALS](#), partnering with [Natives Rising](#) to host STEM camps for indigenous high schoolers, or building digital infrastructure through the [Microsoft Airband Initiative](#), we empower Tribal communities to pursue new opportunities through technology.



Over 100k students served

Since its inception, TEALS has served over 100,000 students and 2,000 teachers across more than 1,300 partner schools.

433% increase in applicants

From 2022 to 2023, Natives Rising and Microsoft expanded awareness of its STEM camp for indigenous high schoolers by 433%, reaching 320 applicants across 21 different tribes.

More than 51M people reached

Airband has helped more than 51 million people globally gain access to the internet, including over 4 million in the United States alone.

We do this by serving Tribal nations across five key areas:



Hospitality & Gaming



Healthcare



Government



Education



Federal Contracting

Want to learn more about Microsoft's indigenous and native workforce skilling initiatives?

Contact the Microsoft Tribal Team at MS TribalTeam@Microsoft.com



[Microsoft Tribal site](#)



[Microsoft Tribal LinkedIn](#)

AGENCY UPDATE

CISA: Cyber Funds and Resources

VISIT [CISA.GOV](https://www.cisa.gov) FOR MORE
INFORMATION AND FOLLOW US
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As the nation's cyber defense agency and national coordinator for critical infrastructure security, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency leads the national effort to understand, manage, and reduce risk to the digital and physical infrastructure Americans rely on every hour of every day.



The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has a couple of exciting opportunities for tribal communities that were announced this fall! The Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program (TCGP) was launched to help tribal governments address cybersecurity risks and threats. Additionally, CISA's new cybersecurity awareness program Secure Our World was created to educate the public on how to stay safe online.

CISA in collaboration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced the opening of the application process for the TCGP. The cyber grant program is an innovative program established by the State and Local Cybersecurity Improvement Act, part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, to help address the unique challenges tribal governments face when defending against cyber threats.

Digital threats impacting Native American and Alaska Native tribes are increasing and becoming more complex. Tribal sovereignty creates unique cybersecurity challenges for these groups that often lack or can't easily access resources needed to address them.

With the release of a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), CISA and FEMA have opened the application process for the grant program. Applicants have until **January 10, 2024** to apply for a grant, which can be used to fund new or existing cybersecurity programs.

CISA encourages all eligible entities to apply for grant funds to protect our critical infrastructure and communities from malicious cyber activity. To learn more about the Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program, visit cisa.gov/cyber-grants.

The **Secure Our World** cybersecurity awareness program seeks to drive behavioral change around core cybersecurity habits by providing people with necessary knowledge and tools.

CISA challenges everyone to help secure our world by adopting four simple steps to stay safe online:

- **Use strong passwords** that are long, random, and unique to each account, and use a password manager to generate them and to save them.
- **Turn on multi-factor authentication** on all accounts that offer it. We need more than a password on our most important accounts, like email, social media, and financial accounts.
- **Recognize and report phishing**, as we like to say, think before you click. Be cautious of unsolicited emails or texts or calls asking you for personal information, and don't click on links or open attachments from unknown sources.
- **Update software.** In fact, enable automatic updates on software so the latest security patches keep the devices we are connected to continuously up to date.

To learn more about the Secure Our World program, please visit cisa.gov/secureourworld.

“Digital threats impacting Native American and Alaska Native tribes are increasing and becoming more complex. Tribal sovereignty creates unique cybersecurity challenges for these groups that often lack or can't easily access resources needed to address them.”



BUILDING CYBER *READINESS* AND *RESILIENCE* IN TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS

The persistent and increasingly sophisticated threat of cyberattacks is an unwelcome reality of our connected world. These attacks can leave impacted entities without critical resources and sever a link in the chain that bonds communities together. Cyber readiness and resilience isn't simply a concern for information security teams, it is an imperative for public interest and tribal security.

For these compelling reasons, President Biden prioritized the defense of critical infrastructure as the very first pillar of the [National Cybersecurity Strategy](#) published in March 2023. The new Strategy proposes "a model of cyber defense that emulates the distributed

structure of the Internet." Where earlier paradigms of critical infrastructure cybersecurity viewed attacks on a single operator as a weak link, this newer vision suggests a model of networks that are fortified, rather than weakened, by their connectedness. Under this reimagined model, critical infrastructure operators, "enabled by the automated exchange of data, information, and knowledge," rise to the challenges posed by determined and sophisticated threat actors and a volatile geopolitical landscape. But this strategy isn't self-executing. It demands a collective outlook on cybersecurity strategy, strong public-private partnerships and coordination across tribal governments.

In an encouraging sign that the administration will follow through with these ambitious goals, in September 2023 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the [Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program \(TCGP\)](#), which will make \$18 million available to tribal governments to address cybersecurity risks. The TCGP will be jointly administered by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and will fund projects to meet four key objectives: (1) establishing cyber governance and planning; (2) undertaking assessment and evaluation of systems and capabilities; (3)



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implementing security protections commensurate with risk; and (4) building and training a cybersecurity workforce. To apply for funding, a tribal government must establish a Cybersecurity Planning Committee and prepare and submit a Cybersecurity Plan that meets certain key criteria.

What then should tribal leaders and information security teams do to prepare their sovereign nations – and even more importantly – promote resilience in the wake of a cyber-attack?

CYBER READINESS: An ounce of prevention. Maya Angelou once said “if we know better, we do better.” The first step in building a cyber governance program is identifying the data, systems and people. If we know what data and systems exist, the people responsible for managing those systems, and the people we are protecting, we can formulate a strategy for governing the associated risk. Data and network diagrams can also provide a roadmap to identify and mitigate vulnerabilities. The second step in preparation is empowering and training the internal and external stakeholders to assess, plan and mitigate cybersecurity threats. The

responsibilities of this team should include forming and executing the organization’s cybersecurity strategy, implementing security by design and data minimization principles, managing vendor risk, maintaining awareness of cybersecurity threats, responding to incidents, and coordination with partner organizations like vendors, industry peers and government agencies. After the cyber readiness strategy is prepared, then the information and resources should be shared with all users in the environment through training and exercises – cybersecurity and readiness is every individual’s responsibility.

INCIDENT RESPONSE: Putting cyber resilience into practice. Resilience is not measured by what happens to you – it is how you react, respond and recover that demonstrates the grit of cyber resilience. The most resilient teams follow an actionable and tested incident response plan that incorporates technical and procedural actions. Response plans include checklists that manage and prioritize operational continuity, secure restoration, communications, escalation procedures, notice obligations,

alternative communications processes, and legal workstreams. The people responsible for orchestrating and carrying out these workstreams maintain clear communications across the response team. Depending on the business conducted, tribal nations may also have contractual reporting obligations to report to third parties, regulators or government agencies. Achieving cyber resilience requires organizations to take a concerted and collaborative approach. Knowing your incident response team and the external vendors that will support during a crisis is critical so precious time is not wasted building contracts and trust.

The disruption to critical infrastructure and our way of life caused by cyber-attacks requires us to think and plan differently. Cyber is no longer just about stolen or encrypted data – it is about the security and privacy of people and resources. A team that leverages the right people, processes and technologies will be better prepared and resilient to adapt to the continuously changing threat environment.



PODCAST

Check out our podcast session with Justine!



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BY

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How's the cybersecurity awareness and training program at your tribe? Are your users hip to cyber hygiene or do they frequently fall for phishing? Do you have a mature program that regularly holds training sessions and shares awareness refreshers and reminders? Or do you constantly chase careless clickers?

At Tribal-ISAC, we help members with security awareness efforts. Each month we provide an easily digestible, single-page handout for members to pass along directly to their users. Each handout covers relevant and current cyber threats on what to look for and cyber hygiene behaviors on what to do. This handout is not meant as a replacement for a cybersecurity awareness program, but it's an effortless way for members to keep users aware of the threats designed to attack them.

ATTENTION!! EASY BUTTON AHEAD...



TEMPLATE FOR NEW HIRES- BASIC SECURITY AWARENESS

Welcome to XXX! We hope you're proud to be here and your career with us is fruitful. Part of that fruitfulness involves protecting our valuable data and computer systems. Our TRIBE/ENTERPRISE promotes a positive cybersecurity culture. Therefore, as part of your successful onboarding (and tenure), here are a few cybersecurity basics we expect everyone to be aware of. However, awareness doesn't stop here! In addition to ongoing training, our door is always open. Reach out anytime you have a question, comment, or concern, and definitely when you need to report suspicious activity!

Basic cyber terms you should know (or ask about):

Social engineering: in the context of cyber, it's the manipulation of the human tendency to trust through cleverly crafted pretexts designed to trick us into acting hastily, typically due to a perceived sense of fear or urgency.

Phishing: an email, text (smishing), or phone call (vishing or voice phishing) with the objective of tricking the recipient into performing a specific action. The action may be clicking a link that leads to a malicious website or downloads malware.

Business Email Compromise (BEC): an email phishing tactic designed to take advantage of trusted relationships. BEC involves the impersonation of people or things we trust, such as our tribal executives, trusted vendors, or familiar brands.

Ransomware: a type of malware that encrypts files on a computer system, making them inaccessible to the user.

CYBERSECURITY AND YOU, NOT JUST THE IT DEPARTMENT

There are aspects of cybersecurity that are technical and complex, and we don't expect you to know those parts – that's why we have IT and cybersecurity staff. However, many threat actors today are more likely to focus their attacks toward the human aspects rather than the technical aspects, making cybersecurity everyone's responsibility. This targeting of humans is called social engineering. For instance, many social engineering threats and scams find their way into our email inboxes with the intent to trick us into clicking or otherwise hastily acting on something malicious. Other social engineering attacks may involve someone casually walking in the door behind you.

5 SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS TO PROTECT OUR TRIBE/ENTERPRISE AND YOURSELF:

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- **Access badges.** We hope you're proud to work here, but when you leave the office, please tuck your badge in a pocket or purse so the wrong person doesn't use the information. Badges can tell a lot about a person, including information that bad guys find highly valuable for gaining unauthorized access to work computers, physical property, personal accounts, or even use for personal identity theft.
- **Social media.** While you may be excited about your new role, please use discretion on social media. Be very careful not to post any sensitive or identifiable information that could be used against you or our tribe.
- **Passwords.** Shorter passwords/passphrases are easily guessed or cracked. Create longer/stronger passwords/passphrases by combining upper and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols in a non-predictable way to reduce the risk of them being cracked. Use a password manager to securely store them. Finally, enable multifactor authentication (MFA) wherever possible!
- **Automatic Replies/Out-of-Office notifications.** While it may be a minute before you're able to take vacation or otherwise schedule time out of the office, when you do, carefully consider who needs to know and how much information they really need in your Automatic Reply. Scammers frequently send emails in bulk as an attempt to trigger automatic replies for reconnaissance during customary seasons of known out-of-office time like vacations and holidays.



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ASIMOV'S TEACHINGS



BY

JOHN CASH FILIPPE
DIRECTOR OF IT
ROLLING HILLS CASINO

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Cash Filippe is an accomplished Casino Executive with over 25 years of Casino IT experience. He has worked nationally and internationally for several properties, across many types of gaming, from commercial to tribal, and riverboat entertainment facilities. He is also the author of *Soulbraider*, and *Soulbraider AD*, two science fiction books that are getting great reviews in the literary community. Recently awarded Outstanding Showhost 2023 for his work on *Gaming & Leisure Voice*. He continues to write for several industry magazines focusing on leadership and trends, as well as authoring a weekly humorous blog titled *Vegas in the Morning*.

Here I am, sitting in a leadership conference about strategy – not a bad thing. It’s a good thing, even a great thing. Getting everyone together to talk about the future is always a positive step toward growing a company. One question that inevitably comes up in a setting like this is “What is the operational focus of the technology strategy?”

The answer? — Artificial Intelligence, cloud, robotics, and, of course, cybersecurity.

The response from everyone in the meeting: we should do that. The response from IT: we are already working on each of these initiatives in some form or another. The difference? We get the opportunity to apply these innovations to the operational strategy, which is a significant step forward.

That is the beauty of being a geek — we have been living in this future since we picked up our first Asimov novel. We are so hyper-tuned to the changes in technology that to us, it sounds like the distant drumbeat from the far back of the charge. We can see the world changing because we have been the group that has either been making the changes or applying the changes to everything at every step along the way.

Among these changes is the cloud. If you are not aware of the cloud, well, you must be walking around with your head in the, well ... clouds. Where did the cloud come from? Well, the internet got a bad reputation for being insecure in the early days, so we rebranded to something a bit more marketable. Thus, we now have a secure cloud instead of putting your data on the insecure internet. There is more to it than that, but that is essentially what happened. Additionally, with some major investors and tweaks to the technology, the cloud has

become a more secure option than being on premises.

Next, there is robotics. Let me start by saying I LOVE ROBOTS! Mostly because I am an Asimov fan, but also because I hate small repetitive tasks that take away from the human ability to create and use our minds for their intended purpose — higher-level thinking.

Single-use robots have been around forever. Large areas like assembly lines were always seen as amazing examples of robotics in action, but no one thinks about small things like a dishwasher. A dishwasher is a single-use robot. It is something that frees a human to do other tasks while it does the dishes. Just because it doesn’t look like Rosie from “The Jetsons” doesn’t mean it isn’t a robot. The technology has become infinitely better, but we have been groomed to accept robots of all sorts for decades now. Artificial Intelligence — sorry to say, not new. Everyone has been talking about AI for years, and now that it is mainstream, many have been talking about it like it was invented yesterday. We all dreamed about it since the 80’s when Arnold uttered those words, “I’ll be back.” But many didn’t realize just how far the geeks had come with bringing AI to life. Asimov’s largest battle and cardinal concepts were all based on keeping AI in check with the three laws of robotics. I won’t write them out here, but you can Google them.

But what is AI? The 1’s and 0’s of computing are a simple yes and no statement. When creating an algorithm, essentially a decision chain of a bunch of 1’s and 0’s, you have what looks like human thought, or AI. We see life as a series of choices. Do I speed up or slow

down? Do I walk or run? Do I press send on this email and take a risk, or do I delete this email and live safely? Yet, we know that the binary processes of 1's and 0's don't account for the millions of options that each simple human thought process brings to light. The algorithm of the human brain is still unmatched and will be for quite some time. Why? Because we are organic creatures, and as organic creatures, neural pathways and synapses evolve exponentially. Our own "I" is getting better almost as fast as the AI that we are creating. At least, I hope so. If not, I want to take this all back and pay homage to our new robotic AI overlords. Hopefully, I will get a cushy job in the matrix.

Cybersecurity is a tough nut to crack. We have been trying to protect our systems for years, and we look like the little Dutch boy plugging the dam with every finger and toe. The recent hacks in our world

have taken us by surprise, especially since they are being carried out by kids. Sad to say, the new gangs are here. They are violent and predatory on a level that is surprising, even to the geeks of the world. This is another example of how Asimov was correct in his writings. He believed that a single person couldn't turn the tide of the future. Thus, these gangs of children were an inevitable result of our societal progress. We handed them metaphorical guns and trained them in their use through a society bent on information sharing with people of all ages.

I don't mean to sound like a defeatist because I am not. I think it is important to make the proper distinction, especially for my generation, as to what these groups are: street gangs that use the internet as their street - pure and simple. Now here we are, the geeks, trying to be policemen and clean up these filthy streets. And so

we are all learning a new set of street smarts and branding them "cybersecurity." I think I want a badge that says Cyber Sheriff or something cool like that to wear around the office.

What is the bow I want to wrap around this Ted Talk?

We need to remember how fortunate we are to be invited to leadership meetings and conferences where leaders understand that when gazing into the crystal ball of the future, they should talk to the people who spend their lives dreaming about it.

For all of you non-geeks, when you think about how the future is being shaped, remember to hug someone from our little group of Asimov-reading geeks. We don't get a lot of that.

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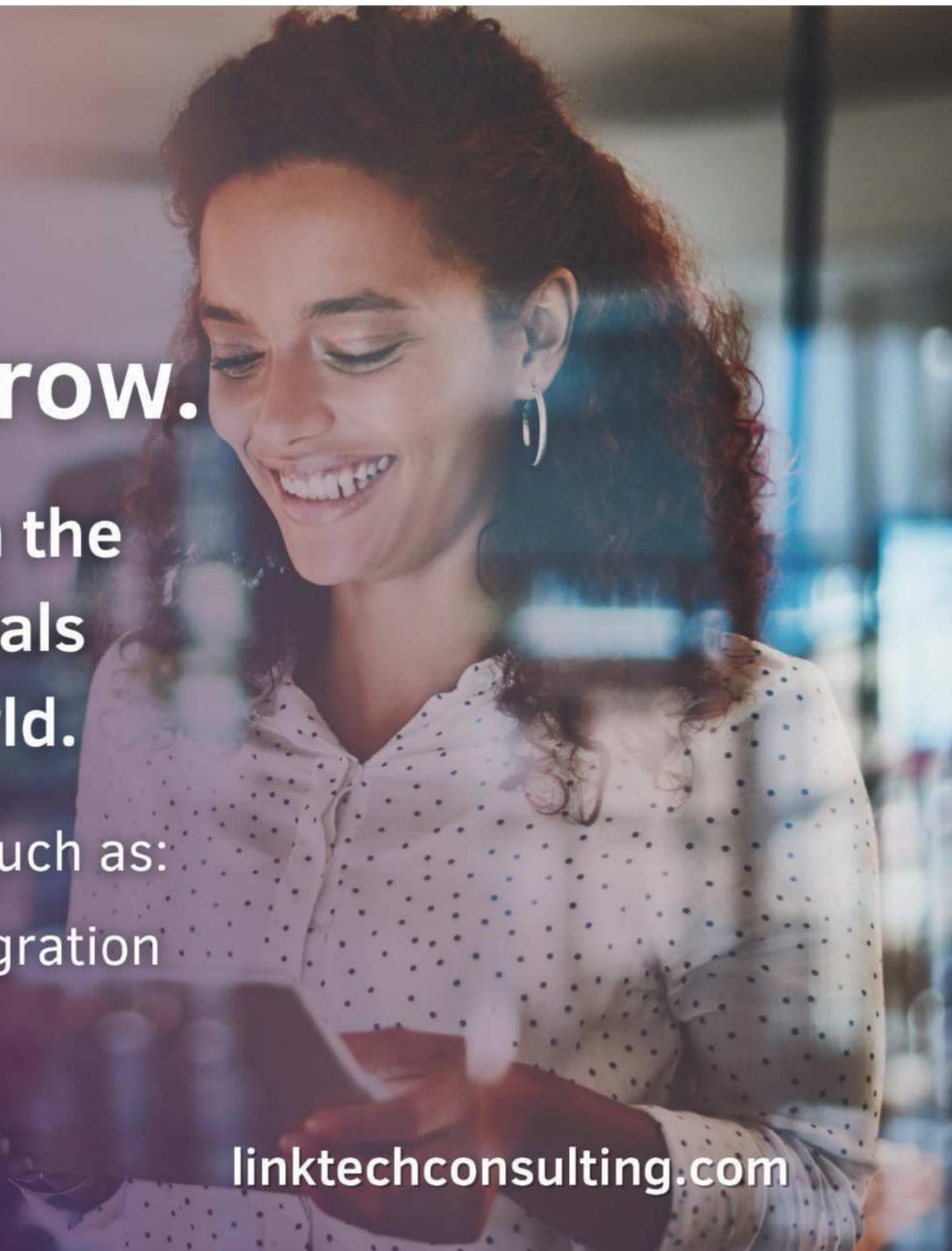
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DATA TRANSFORMATION – EMBRACING & IMPROVING

BETTING ON AI: HOW CASINOS CAN PREP TO CASH IN ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

If you've attended a conference, joined a webinar, or sat in a boardroom over the past year, I can almost guarantee you haven't escaped the topic of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It's been the buzziest of buzzwords this year, and I don't see it slowing down.

The acceleration and proliferation of Artificial Intelligence capabilities and use cases have permeated academia, government, and every business industry — and guess what? Gaming is a category ripe to reap the benefits. AI can enhance customer experiences, supercharge operations, and help boost the bottom line. But there is a catch — casinos need a data game plan to make AI magic happen.

DATA COLLECTION AND AGGREGATION: BRINGING IT TOGETHER TO BUILD A SOLID FOUNDATION

Daily, Casinos generate substantial volumes of data, which include player profiles, digital touchpoints, marketing records, transaction journals, gaming history, and more. Often, this data resides across a mixture of legacy home-grown systems, gaming platforms, websites, apps, reservation engines, and ticketing platforms. In addition, vendors and regulators don't always make moving and manipulating data easy. Casinos are sitting on digital goldmines and shouldn't let this scattered data go unused. Operators must define a data collection process that consolidates and keeps data fresh — hopefully in near real-time.

It's imperative to establish a process to capture, organize, and securely store data efficiently. It's

essential not to just data dump but to institute a well-defined data collection process that isn't just focused on the quantity of data but takes into account vital details like player preferences, gaming patterns, spending habits, marketing touchpoints, operational data across finance, talent, and more. Marketing can't be the only department to benefit from AI.

DATA HYGIENE: IT'S GOT TO BE SQUEAKY CLEAN

Here's the deal — AI thrives on clean data. Misinformation created by AI can come in many different forms. If you've tried any generative AI offerings today, you may have discovered they aren't perfect. At times, they are brilliant and can pass the Bar Exam, but other times, they've learned something incorrectly because of consuming insufficient data and produce misinformation as a result. To avoid AI getting tangled up with messy data, you must be methodical about what you feed it. High-quality data is necessary for AI systems to provide accurate insights and predictions for your business. Data sources must be cleansed to avoid inconsistencies, errors, and missing values.

Establishing a process for regular data quality checks and system maintenance is critical. In addition, consider leveraging an any-point technology platform that helps integrate data and systems and automate workflows and processes. Several industry-leading API management platforms can help you achieve this, helping you get closer to the holy grail of real-time data and a more innovative customer profile. These management platforms can help

facilitate quicker decision-making and boost your marketing team's capabilities to engage quickly with customers in today's instant gratification world.

HOW AI NEEDS YOUR HELP: STRUCTURE, ANNOTATE, AND LABEL

AI can't understand data without a bit of help. Once data has been integrated and structured across disparate sources, ensure it speaks a common language. For example, it must follow consistent formats, naming conventions, and categories so AI algorithms can process and analyze information effectively. Typically, a human needs to get involved at some point to help label and annotate data points. In gaming, this could be tagging marketing programs, customer behaviors, revenue, gaming outcomes, digital marketing metrics, financial and POS transactions, slot data, etc. This data labeling will help AI systems identify patterns, make predictions, and offer personalized recommendations.

DON'T LET THIS WORK LIVE IN A SILO

While it'd be great to focus on the end game of AI, ensure this work is part of a holistic vision. Over the past few years, we've observed independent and commercial operators in the gaming industry make a significant shift toward digital transformation. This need for change is not a fleeting trend but a strategic imperative to modernize antiquated digital infrastructures encompassing data, marketing technology, and digital experiences across the web and apps. The acceleration of digital transformation has been driven by various factors, including the pandemic, the rise of sports betting and iGaming,

and the increasing expectations of tech-savvy consumers who desire personalized experiences. However, forward-thinking organizations have recognized the value of digital tools and adopted marketing technology stacks to enhance their data-driven capabilities.

By embracing these technologies, casinos have embarked on a journey to build a comprehensive real-time customer profile, expand communication channels, deploy marketing automation, and deliver personalized experiences at scale. These tools have proven instrumental in fostering meaningful engagement and enriching customer relationships. The ability to understand customer preferences and communication channels and treat every customer as a VIP, regardless of their status, has become a reality.

As casinos prioritize features for customer relationship management (CRM) platforms, the potential of AI to enhance productivity across analysis, content generation, and personalization is a crucial area of interest.

The casino industry is undergoing a significant transformation, with data and technology playing a central role in shaping the future of customer experiences and loyalty. The adoption of AI, CRM, and customer data platform (CDP) solutions is pivotal in meeting the expectations of today's tech-savvy guests and staying ahead of the competition in the ever-changing world of gaming, hospitality, and entertainment.



BY

RYAN MCGRATH

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ryan McGrath is a digital and marketing leader with experience developing and executing award-winning marketing campaigns with a digital DNA and tech backbone. Ryan leads the Digital Innovation Group at Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures and is responsible for the growth, support, and scalability of the digital ecosystem and in-house marketing agency for Grand Casino Mille Lacs and Grand Casino Hinckley.

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AGENCY UPDATE

NIGC: NIGC's Ongoing Commitment to Tribal Sovereignty and Indian Gaming Integrity

SHAWN PENSONEAU

Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE LATEST
UPDATES AND ONGOING ACTIVITIES OF THE
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The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) is dedicated to upholding and promoting tribal sovereignty and maintaining the integrity of Indian gaming. Established through the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), NIGC has evolved over the years to address the changing landscape of the Indian gaming industry. Here, we will provide an update on recent initiatives and regulatory revisions.

Consultation Policy: NIGC recognizes the importance of meaningful consultations with tribal nations to fulfill its statutory obligations. Starting in June 2021, the Commission initiated government-to-government consultations on various topics to strengthen its tools and align its practices with IGRA requirements. One notable initiative was the inclusion of remote video conferencing as part of its consultation policy, making it accessible to all tribes. The Commission also committed to updating tribal leaders promptly after consultations. The new policy, reflecting the Commission's transparency commitment, was [published](#) on October 31, 2022.

Strategic Plan: In January 2022, NIGC [published](#) a new Strategic Plan that prioritizes industry integrity, preparedness, outreach and agency accountability. This plan is shaped by NIGC staff perspectives and guides the Commission in efficiently monitoring and measuring its strategic goals and objectives, emphasizing commitment to consistent improvement of services.

Facility License: The Commission engaged in consultation with tribes regarding facility license notification requirements. Recognizing the challenges tribes face when assigning street addresses for new facilities, NIGC streamlined these requirements in a final rule [published](#) in July 2022, facilitating more practical submission requirements and smoother facility openings.

Ordinances: Another consultation topic addressed the submission of ordinances for the Chair's review. Previous regulations created challenges for tribes seeking approval before adopting gaming regulations and for those without written constitutions. NIGC addressed these issues with a final rule [published](#) in September of 2022, promoting efficiency and equality in the process.

Free Play: Responding to tribal leaders and industry experts, NIGC consulted with tribes on whether "free play" should be included in annual fee rate calculations. The decision, [published](#) in a final rule in September 2022, clarified that free play is not required in NIGC's fee rate calculation while ensuring accurate verification. This respects tribal self-governance and promotes fairness.

Management Contracts and Background Investigations: NIGC introduced regulations to reduce the number of investigations required. The new regulation focuses on individuals or entities with ten percent or greater interest, departing from the previous practice of investigating the top ten individuals with a financial interest. This final rule [published](#) in November 2022 underscores NIGC's commitment to efficient oversight.

Small and Charitable Gaming: Recognizing the diversity within the Indian gaming community, NIGC sought to minimize the financial burden on small and charitable operations while maintaining oversight standards. The final rule [published](#) in September 2022 incorporates the Commission's dedication to balancing oversight and cost-effectiveness.

Self-Regulation: NIGC worked to increase tribal access to the petitioning process for self-regulation certificates and addressed concerns regarding the administration of the Office of Self-Regulation by reclassifying the Director of Self-Regulation as a non-Commissioner position. The final rule, [published](#) in October 2022, promotes tribal engagement and participation.

Adverse Audit: NIGC addressed adverse audits, crucial components of its compliance approach. Feedback from tribes provided valuable insights into the circumstances leading to such audits and considerations when engaging in independent audits. A final rule [published](#) in December of 2022 affirms NIGC's commitment to transparency and responsiveness by clarifying that adverse audits, except in limited circumstances, do not meet the submission requirement.

Key Employees and Primary Management Officials: NIGC addressed FBI's long-standing concern involving two discrete NIGC definitions of key employees and primary management officials (KE/PMO). The Commission consulted with tribes to focus on functions, responsibilities, and duties as the basis for the definitions as well as providing tribes the option of backgrounding and licensing TGRA, Security officers, and/or IT personnel as KE or PMO (if they are managers). In so doing, NIGC ensured tribal access for KE and PMO to criminal history information records via the NIGC fingerprint program. A final rule [published](#) in August became effective on September 14.

In conclusion, NIGC remains dedicated to supporting tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and the integrity of Indian gaming. Through meaningful consultation, regulatory updates, and strategic planning, NIGC continues to evolve and adapt, ensuring a thriving, accountable Indian gaming industry that benefits Indian Country while preserving industry integrity.



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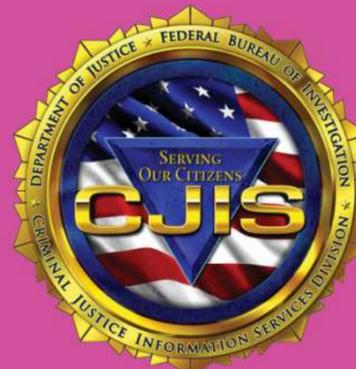
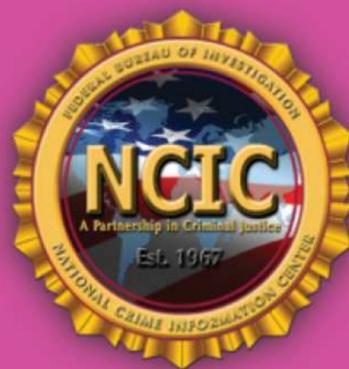
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AGENCY UPDATE

FBI: Officer Safety – The Mission of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Violent Person File (VPF)

BY B. STEVENS, PHD



Law Enforcement is a selfless profession where officers regularly demonstrate valor when faced with nefarious acts, leading to their own injury or fatality. According to a 20-year average, 52 officers are feloniously killed each year and over 55,000 are assaulted in the line of duty. While many things saw a downward trend during the COVID-19 pandemic, these values did not. In fact, 2021 marked the highest rate of officer deaths in more than 20 years, with 73 officers being feloniously killed. This is over half of the number of officers killed in 2001 when the nation experienced the terroristic acts of 9/11.^{1,2}

How can the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), an FBI-housed information sharing system, be better used to reduce the alarming increase of officers killed and assaulted?

The purpose of the NCIC System is to improve law enforcement information sharing with the objective of enhancing safety for officers and the public. During 2012, in response to a rise in law enforcement officers being killed or assaulted in the line of duty, the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division developed and released the NCIC VPF. Personal protective equipment, like a Kevlar vest, serves the safety of an officer on the front lines of danger, while information contained in the NCIC VPF is aimed at aiding in an officer's safety prior to encountering danger.

The NCIC VPF provides a location to house and subsequently share information on violent individuals. One of four criteria must be met to enter an individual into the NCIC VPF. These criteria are based on an individual's previous violent convictions and/or seriously expressed intent to commit violence against a member of the law enforcement or criminal justice community. Entry based on the first three criteria requires a conviction, which can be at the misdemeanor level. For the fourth criterion, entry only requires a reasonable belief, based on a law enforcement investigation, of a seriously expressed intent to commit violence against a member of the law enforcement or criminal justice community.

When an agency submits a query of the NCIC's Wanted Person File and Vehicle File, the VPF is cross-checked. If a VPF record exists, NCIC will return a caveat prior to all NCIC records within the hit, alerting an officer that the individual searched has been identified as a violent person who may pose a serious threat to law enforcement officers. Directly before the VPF record within the hit will be an additional warning specific to the criteria in which the individual was entered into the VPF.

Nationwide, there is an average of only two sworn law enforcement officers per every 1,000 inhabitants.³ With few officers available to safeguard the populations they have sworn to protect, We must do all we can to protect them as they perform their duties. Although the use of the NCIC is voluntary, participation and information are vital. Information must first be entered into the VPF before it can benefit law enforcement and their safety.

Additional Documents

1. U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Crime Data Explorer," accessed August 08, 2023, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/le/leoka>.
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EMBRACING ONLINE PORTALS FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS



BY
EVEN BRANDE
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Even Brande is the Founder and Chairman of Handel Information Technologies, a technology company that provides software solution to tribal, local, and state government agencies. He is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Wyoming, College of Business where he teaches Information Management and Business Analytics. Prior to founding Handel in 1997, Even held executive positions with Aspen Tree Software and Tandy Corporation. He has served on several boards including the State of Wyoming Information Technology Policy Council, Governor's Digital Privacy Task Force, and the Wyoming Technology Business Center. Even is a sought-after speaker and frequently speaks at technology conferences on topics involving government and technology. Even is passionate about helping government agencies become more efficient and delivering better services to their constituents through better use of technology. In his spare time, Even likes to spend time with his wife and three children at their ranch on the Wyoming/Colorado border.

A fairly new trend is emerging in tribal government. Many tribes are adopting online portals, which allow tribal members to apply for services, check statuses of pending services, change addresses, upload documents and more. This self-service trend has evolved over time, but only recently started to impact our field of work, tribal social services.

Retail is an example of an industry where the “self-service” transformation has been happening for a long time. A few generations ago, grocery store shopping would involve a clerk behind a counter picking grocery items for customers. A generation or so later came the advent of self-serve grocery stores, where shoppers do the “picking.” This eliminated the need for a clerk to retrieve products and gave customers the advantage of comparison shopping. In the last 20 years, the retail sector has again experienced tremendous change, including online shopping, self-check-out, and in the most recent example, the Amazon Go store, where customers simply select their groceries and walk out of the store.

I use retail as an example because I believe it illustrates what will happen to other types of services. In a few decades, the retail sector eliminated the need for clerks, shifted the “data-entry burden” to the consumer, reduced costs, and made processes

more efficient. Today, we see these changes happening in many industries, including financial services, banking, travel, media, and yes, even government.

Government programs often lag behind corporations in adopting new technology. Until recently, I renewed my vehicle registration and paid my property taxes by going to the courthouse, waiting in line, and completing my transactions with a real human clerk and a few pieces of paper. Now, I complete these transactions on the web using a credit card and receive my vehicle tags in the mail.

There is no doubt that self-service online portals are coming to all types of government services. At the recent TribalNet conference in San Diego, I had the pleasure of being part of a round-table discussion on this very topic. Tribes are in various stages of implementing self-serving portals for their members, ranging from “just starting to think about it” to fully implemented. One tribe reported that they already support over 50 programs through their online portal.

There are a tremendous number of benefits associated with self-service portals. Let's use a tribal financial assistance program as an example. In this hypothetical example, a tribe administers a



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variety of financial services to their tribal members, and with an online portal, their members have full access to their own information. There, they can edit pertinent information, upload and download relevant documents, and track the progress of payments. The online portal shifts the data-entry burden to the members, allowing the program's employees to spend their time providing services rather than entering data. By using the portal, the members gain a sense of ownership of their own information and can check updates and statuses without traveling long distances, standing in lines, or waiting on hold. Forms can be exchanged electronically, so paperwork is diminished or eliminated. Processes that could take weeks now can be done instantly.

Portals also tend to reduce data errors. For example, it is fairly common for checks to mistakenly be mailed to the wrong address, but with an online portal, tribal members can keep their address up to date and ensure their check is sent to the correct address. Better yet, if a portal integrates with online banking, tribal members can set up their bank account information to facilitate direct deposit.

Are there any disadvantages to online portals? To some extent, I believe with portal implementation, there is a loss of community. Online portals reduce the chance of random encounters and connections with fellow humans because they eliminate the need to make an in-person appearance.

However, overall, I believe the benefits of having an online portal far exceed the disadvantages. People are generally social by nature and will find opportunities for social activities, but updating financial information or submitting documents do not necessarily have to be arenas for social interaction. Furthermore, the addition of videoconferencing to an online offering can add back a human element for members who need to discuss an issue face-to-face.

There will likely be tremendous adoption of online portals in tribal social services over the next decade. As technology continues to improve and as people get more accustomed to using it in their everyday life, more online portals seem like a natural progression.

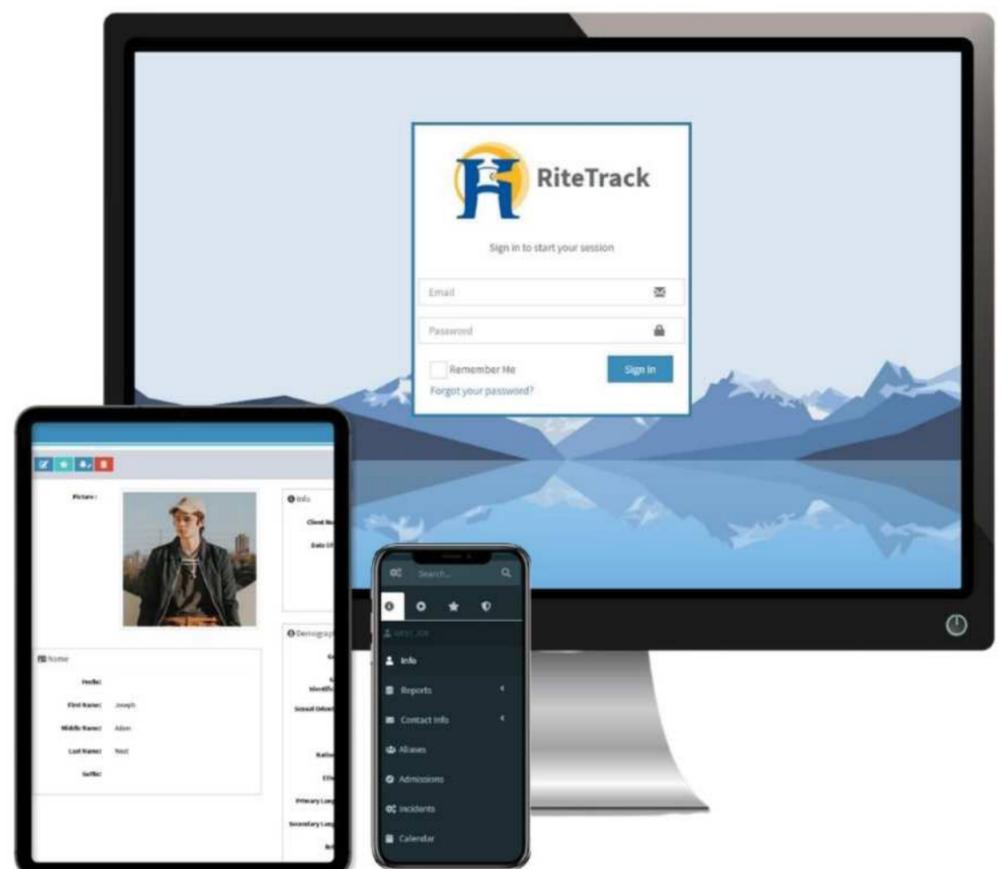
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NURTURING A STRONG SECURITY CULTURE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION: **A PERSONAL APPROACH**



BY
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CISO, APPALACHIA TECHNOLOGIES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Miller is a Chief Information Security Officer for Appalachia Technologies. For over 25 years, Mike has specialized in both offensive and defensive cybersecurity, and GRC (Governance, Risk, and Compliance). He has served as an effective liaison between technology and stakeholders, for organizations of all sizes. Mike continues to follow his passion by helping organizations understand business risk and strategically aligning a company's security posture to protect it.



Imagine your organization as a close-knit community. Just as a community thrives on trust, effective security measures rely on a culture that values protection and vigilance. Building a strong security culture is like fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility within a group of friends.

In this article, we'll embark on a journey to explore how to create a resilient security culture within your organization, with a friendly and personal approach...

1. LAY THE FOUNDATION: IT STARTS WITH YOU

Building a security culture begins with education and awareness. Ensure your team understands the significance of security. Offer training on identifying threats, maintaining strong passwords, and recognizing risks in everyday tasks. The key is to help everyone realize that cybersecurity is not just the IT Department's responsibility; it's a collective effort.

2. OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Just like in any close-knit community, communication is key. Encourage open dialogue about security concerns. Create an atmosphere where employees feel safe reporting suspicious activities. Remember, a security culture thrives on trust.

3. LEAD BY EXAMPLE: BE THE ROLE MODEL

Think of yourself as a role model guiding this security journey. To inspire your team, you must lead

by example. If you emphasize the importance of security, it sets a powerful precedent for the entire organization. When employees see their leaders practicing good security habits, they're more likely to follow suit.

4. PROVIDE ONGOING TRAINING: KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

Continuous learning is vital for a robust security culture. Cyber threats constantly evolve, so ongoing education is a must. Conduct regular training sessions, workshops, and awareness programs to keep everyone up-to-date on the latest security practices.

5. IMPLEMENT STRONG PASSWORD PRACTICES: PROTECT WHAT MATTERS

Encourage employees to use unique, complex passwords for all accounts and systems. Consider implementing multi-factor authentication to provide an extra layer of security. This ensures that sensitive information remains safeguarded.

6. EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA: VALUE YOUR ASSETS

Data is your organization's most valuable asset. Help your employees understand the significance of data protection and the potential consequences of data breaches. This cultivates a deeper sense of responsibility toward safeguarding sensitive information.

7. FOSTER A SECURITY-CONSCIOUS CULTURE: WATCH OUT FOR EACH OTHER

Encourage employees to be vigilant in watching for signs of security risks. Urge them to report suspicious emails, phishing attempts, or any unusual activities. This collective vigilance can prevent security incidents.

8. DEVELOP AN INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN: PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Just as communities face unexpected challenges, organizations encounter security incidents. Have a well-defined incident response plan in place. This plan should outline how to respond to different types of incidents, minimize damage, and learn from each situation to improve security measures.

9. REWARD AND RECOGNIZE: CELEBRATE PROGRESS

Acknowledge and reward employees who consistently practice good security habits. Recognizing their efforts can motivate others to do the same. This positive reinforcement strengthens the security culture.

10. ASSESS AND ADAPT: KEEP GROWING TOGETHER

Regularly evaluate your security measures, policies, and practices to identify areas for improvement. Be willing to adapt to new threats and challenges, and update your security strategy accordingly. This ensures that your security culture remains resilient and effective.

11. SEEK EXTERNAL EXPERTISE: EMBRACE OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVES

Even the most closely-knit communities benefit from external

advice. Similarly, organizations can gain valuable insights from external security consultants. Consider bringing in experts to provide fresh perspectives and enhance your security culture.

Nurturing a strong security culture within your organization is akin to fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility within a close-knit community. It requires a personal touch, trust, and a shared commitment to protecting what matters most. Starting with education and awareness, fostering an open environment, and leading by example are the initial steps to sow the seeds of a resilient security culture. With a friendly and personal approach, your organization can cultivate a strong security culture that protects your valuable assets and allows your business to flourish.

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AGENCY UPDATE

CISA: Cyber Resilient 911 Symposiums

LISA FESTA, EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS
DIVISION, CYBERSECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SECURITY AGENCY

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As the nation's cyber defense agency and national coordinator for critical infrastructure security, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency leads the national effort to understand, manage, and reduce risk to the digital and physical infrastructure Americans rely on every hour of every day.



CISA's Cyber Resilient 911 (CR911) program is an initiative dedicated to assisting Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs) at federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (FSLTT) levels in addressing operational cybersecurity challenges. As ECCs transition from legacy technology and systems to [Next Generation 911](#) (NG911), they are exposed to a range of potential cybersecurity risks. CISA recognizes the varying levels of cybersecurity preparedness across 911 services and seeks to address these differences by offering essential cybersecurity resources to ensure a secure and resilient emergency communications environment.

Guided by the needs of 911 stakeholders, CISA is hosting four interactive regional symposiums across the United States through 2024. These symposiums inform the 911 community on cyber threats and available tools, frameworks, and solutions. Objectives include promoting 911 cybersecurity communication and collaboration among FSLTT governments, addressing immediate needs of the 911 community, and determining stakeholder-driven cybersecurity priorities for CR911. Supported by the program's other legislative partners – the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) – the first symposium took place in September 2023 in the northeast region, covering [CISA regions](#) 1, 2, and 3. The second symposium (encompassing regions 4 and 6), will be held in the southeast region in late January 2024. The western region (including regions 8, 9, and 10) and the central region (regions 5 and 7) will host subsequent symposiums during the first half of CY2024.

CISA is actively seeking tribal stakeholder involvement for the upcoming symposiums in 2024. If you are interested in participating, please contact CR911@cisa.dhs.gov for more information.

Cyber Resilient 911 Focus Areas



911 Cyber Strategy



Identity and Access Management



Objective Validation and Verification of Cybersecurity Technologies and Operations



Cybersecurity and Information Sharing Tools



Cyber Awareness, SOPs, and Workforce Proficiency

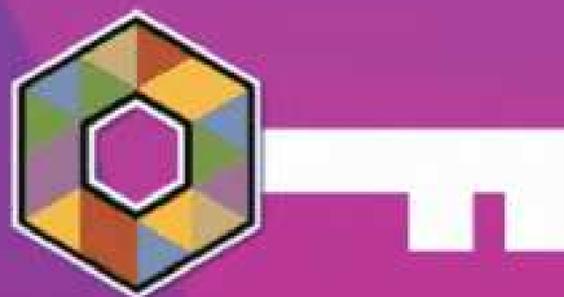


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SUCCESSION IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTION: AN ADAPTIVE- RELATIONAL STRATEGY



BY
RANDY EVANS
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Randy Evans is an executive coach with over 25 years of advising organizations and leadership teams. He specializes in enhancing leadership through clear communication, strong relationships, and adaptive strategies. Founder of Synerlogic, he's committed to forging resilient leadership in complex, dynamic environments.

In today's ever-changing business landscape, traditional succession planning models are no longer adequate. Technological advancements are outpacing many businesses' ability to adapt, while global disruptions continue to amplify volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). These and other factors leave businesses vulnerable to missteps and missed opportunities. To succeed in turbulent times, succession strategies must prioritize adaptability, relationships, and open communication.

THE CRITICAL NEED FOR ADAPTIVE SUCCESSION STRATEGIES

Succession planning is not just about filling the gap left by a departing executive. The goal is to strengthen the continuity and resilience of the enterprise. Failing to develop adaptive strategies leaves businesses vulnerable to disruptions that can impede progress. Conversely, a company can establish a foundation for long-term success by prioritizing processes over personalities, roles

and responsibilities over titles, and continuous learning and knowledge sharing over simple title succession.

MINDSET: EMBRACING THE UNEXPECTED

Mindset is the cornerstone of an adaptive succession strategy. Leaders who strengthen their growth mindset and remain flexible are better equipped to navigate challenges and guide their organizations through turbulent times. Resilient leaders expect the unexpected and understand that industries and markets will continue to evolve, requiring adaptive strategies that shift as needed. This ensures the organization can respond to future trends while remaining true to core values.

An adaptive strategy is also essential for emergency preparedness and business continuity. By crafting strategies that address known and unknown disruptions, organizations are better prepared to address unavoidable challenges while seizing new opportunities.

RELATIONSHIPS: BUILDING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Meaningful connections are critical for successful succession strategies. Key elements include mentorship, trust, transparency, effective listening, and nurturing internal talent. Transparency enables smoother transitions by ensuring all stakeholders are informed and engaged. Effective listening, which makes employees feel genuinely heard and respected, creates a work environment that encourages team members to share insights, concerns, and innovative ideas. This fosters psychological safety, reduces blind spots, increases engagement, and helps retain top talent for critical positions.

COMMUNICATION: THE BEDROCK OF TRANSITION

Adaptive succession strategies require open communication. This means being transparent, having clear expectations, and encouraging honest feedback and open discussions. Open dialogue, constructive conflict conversations, and robust feedback loops ensure that succession plans are comprehensive, inclusive, and well-informed. Embracing conflict as a natural part of the process allows stakeholders to voice concerns, highlight unforeseen consequences, and share potential solutions without fear of rejection or retaliation.

NAVIGATING INTO THE UNKNOWN: A DYNAMIC SUCCESSION PLANNING BLUEPRINT

In today's era of unprecedented disruptions and extreme VUCA, organizations need succession strategies that cultivate

adaptability, strong relationships, and effective communication. Below is one possible approach that can be adapted and modified to each organization's unique situation.

Step 1: Assess Current Needs and Objectives. This might include evaluating the existing structure, skill sets, engagement, and alignment with purpose, core commitments, and strategy.

Step 2: Embrace an Adaptive-Relational Approach. Succession planning should prioritize processes that outlive individual personalities, cultivate roles and responsibilities that transcend titles, and foster continuous learning and knowledge sharing to ensure operational integrity. The details of the strategy should be organically crafted from within.

Step 3: Make Succession Planning Part of the Culture. This should not be a one-time event or afterthought but rather a strategic focus that prepares the organization for unavoidable transitions. Encourage employees at all levels to see their personal development as an essential part of the company's future.

Step 4: Provide Robust Training and Mentorship. These programs should convey critical knowledge, nuances of operations, and the organization's purpose, vision, values, and core commitments.

Step 5: Evaluate and Refine Continuously. An adaptive succession strategy is a living process that is regularly assessed and refined to address new

challenges, organizational shifts, and changes in the external business environment.

Step 6: Emphasize Communication. Effective communication is key during leadership transitions, reducing uncertainty and aligning stakeholders with the process. By encouraging dialogue, organizations can address resistance and gather feedback to improve succession.

Step 7: Ensure Organizational Resilience Post-Transition. A successful succession plan aligns with other strategic objectives, ensures continuity of core functions, and adopts new approaches as needed. It keeps the organization future-focused, embracing each transition as an opportunity to evaluate and shift as needed.

A successful succession strategy is not just about deciding who might take over after the absence or departure of a top-level executive. Rather, the focus is on cultivating authentic relationships and constructive conversations. This creates a positive, resilient workplace that bolsters the organization's ability to navigate, adapt, and thrive in the face of turbulence and turmoil.

AGENCY UPDATE

USDA Rural Development High-Speed Internet Programs

BY ANDREW BERKE, ADMINISTRATOR

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Connecting all communities, including those on tribal lands, to high-speed internet is a central part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda to rebuild the country's infrastructure and the economy from the bottom up and middle out.

USDA Rural Development plays a critical role in connecting all people in rural and tribal communities to high-speed internet. Reliable, high-speed internet helps people in rural areas bring new and innovative ideas to the rest of our country and create good-paying jobs and opportunities for generations to come.

USDA Rural Development invests billions of dollars towards this goal and accepted applications through four programs in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 that are key to the Biden-Harris Administration's Internet for All initiative to connect everyone in America to high-speed internet by 2030.

USDA expects to announce awards for the following programs this fall:

ReConnect Loan and Grant Program

Last fall, USDA made available \$1 billion under the fourth round of the [ReConnect Loan and Grant Program](#) to fund projects that serve people living in the most rural, remote and unserved communities. This funding included \$350 million in available grants for Alaska Native corporations, tribal governments, colonias, persistent poverty areas and socially vulnerable communities. Applicants could request up to \$35 million per project with no matching funds required.

To date, USDA has announced 74 ReConnect awards totaling more than \$1.4 billion. More than \$278 million of this funding will support broadband expansion to tribal communities.

Broadband Technical Assistance Program

In April 2023, USDA Rural Development launched the new [Broadband Technical Assistance program](#) to provide competitive cooperative agreement funding to entities interested in receiving or delivering broadband technical assistance and training. This program promotes the expansion of high-speed internet into rural and tribal communities by funding feasibility studies, network designs, hiring efforts, application development assistance and more.

USDA prioritized projects that serve areas where at least 50% of the communities benefiting from the project are tribes and tribal entities. USDA Rural Development has received nearly 100 applications requesting more than \$44 million.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants

USDA also invited applications under the [Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants](#) earlier this year. This program assists rural communities in accessing advanced telecommunications technology to overcome effects of remoteness and low population density.

In FY 2023, USDA provided special consideration to applicants that proposed to serve people living on tribal lands. Special consideration was also given to projects that use distance learning to protect, revitalize, and promote the use of Native American languages.

Community Connect Grants

Finally, USDA accepted applications under the [Community Connect Grants](#) program from March 20 to June 20, 2023. This program provides funding to deploy high-speed internet service to essential community facilities and rural residences or businesses.

It helps equip community centers that provide people with free access to high-speed internet service in their facilities for at least two years. Funding may also be used to build, acquire, or expand a community center. USDA has received 83 applications requesting more than \$272 million.

As you work through your community's high-speed internet priorities this fall, USDA Rural Development encourages you to explore opportunities available through its many programs. To learn more, visit <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs>.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us for more information and assistance!

CYBERSECURITY— WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?



BY
RENITA DISTEFANO
PRESIDENT AND CEO, SECOND DERIVATIVE, LLC

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Renita is the founder, President and CEO of SECOND DERIVATIVE, LLC, a Native American, woman-owned business that provides a broad spectrum of technology services featuring strategic business/technology alignment, information security strategy, PMO & Portfolio Management capabilities. Renita has performed as both a CIO and a CISO, creating business, technology and information security strategy for medium to large sized businesses. One of the first Native American women to become a CISO, Renita is regarded as a pioneer in her field and one of just a handful of IBM iSeries information security specialists.

In October of this year, I had the distinct honor of collaborating with Toni Pepper of Pepper Consulting on a TribalHub Webinar titled, [“Assessing Your Infrastructure: A Person First Approach.”](#) Not only has the webinar been named the “Top Webinar in 2023” (please hold your applause until the end), but the follow-up has been spectacular. As if that wasn’t enough to be jazzed about, all of the buzz surrounding a couple of the recent high-profile cybersecurity hacks has leaders at the highest levels within tribal organizations asking, “What are WE doing about cybersecurity?” I’d like to continue the conversation and provide some of the rationale around the person-first approach that we talked about in our webinar, and then wrap some context around how that relates to cybersecurity.

The business landscape evolves rapidly. We all know this. As IT leaders, that phenomenon requires us to respond with pronounced agility and to create flexible, scalable infrastructures that allow us to adapt quickly to changing market conditions with solutions that align with business goals. It’s at the heart of what we do as leaders. Our ability to scale up, scale down, and onboard

new technologies is a competitive advantage — but it also highlights our reliance on a secure, healthy, robust, and scalable infrastructure to support business agility. Traditionally, conversations about infrastructure have narrowly focused on networks, hardware, software, applications, and facilities. Indeed, what comes to mind when we think about “infrastructure” is our STUFF. If you’re really lucky, the concept of infrastructure extends to the processes that support day-to-day operations. But truly, the cornerstone of any infrastructure is PEOPLE and it is crucial to adopt a person-first approach when assessing and optimizing your infrastructure. The same applies to any cybersecurity efforts.

A person-first perspective emphasizes the importance of placing the strengths, career goals, and experiences of your employees at the forefront of your infrastructure planning and development. It requires us to really see employees as mission-critical assets within our technology ecosystems. Why is that? Because all of the cool tools in the world and the most mature



PODCAST

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processes are meaningless without the people who are closest to both of those things.

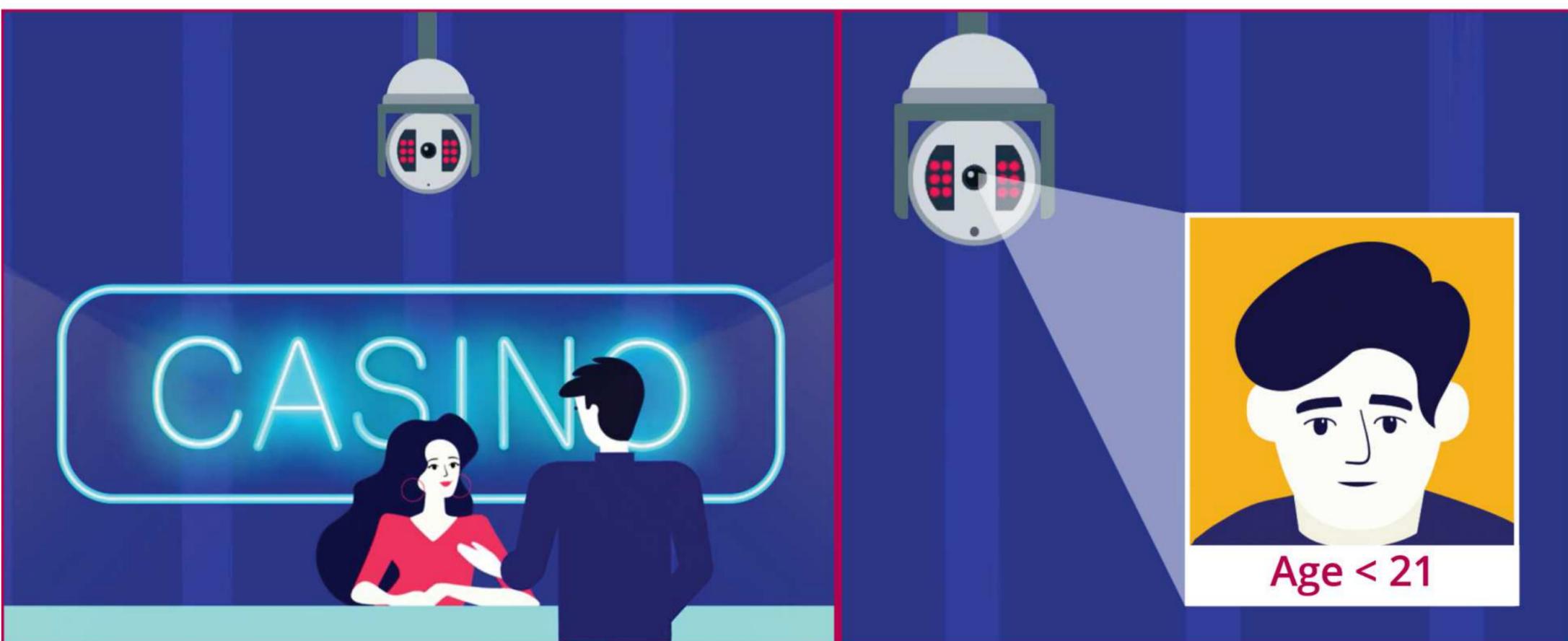
The business benefits of a person-first approach are real, tangible — even **measurable** competitive advantages. A person-first approach means culling and prioritizing the talents and experiences of the individuals who directly interact with your infrastructure. By understanding and optimizing their goals, needs, and preferences, you can create a more productive and satisfying culture and work environment. An employee-engaged and informed infrastructure design and cybersecurity program leads to higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, reduced turnover rates, and greater cyber resiliency.

Employees are more likely to stay committed to their work and contribute to the organization's success and cyber resiliency when they are not only involved in infrastructure decisions but also when they have been given the necessary training and support to use infrastructure effectively.

Protecting the personal and sensitive information of your employees, tribal citizens and customers is paramount. Tribes are increasingly investing in robust cybersecurity measures and data privacy protocols to ensure that their information remains secure and confidential. Yes, the tools are needed, but PEOPLE are **necessary** to wield them appropriately, and with the confidence and expertise that they get with training and

development. When it comes to managing cybersecurity expertise, you have two options: get 'em or grow 'em. We all know that turnover and recruitment are expensive endeavors. We also know that retaining and growing talent is not only a moral imperative, but that this approach fosters a culture of empowerment, empathy, innovation, and success.

So when leaders want to know how they are positioned in the cybersecurity space, my answer is consistently, "Who's on your team?" The success of your infrastructure and cybersecurity program ultimately hinges on the satisfaction and engagement of the people it serves.



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AGENCY UPDATE

FEMA: CDP Tribal Nations Training Week set for March 2024

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REGISTER, VISIT THE CDP'S WEBSITE AT
<https://cdp.dhs.gov>.



FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) has finalized plans for its 9th Annual Tribal Nations Training Week, which will be conducted March 9-16, 2024.

During the week of training, responders affiliated with one or more tribal nations or the Indian Health Service will gain skills enabling them to better respond to incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological, or explosive materials.

Lenda Greene has seen firsthand the benefits of training with the CDP. During the Covid-19 pandemic, she deployed to various sites as part of the State of New Mexico's Medical Reserve Corps. In each location, her training with decontamination procedures and personal protective equipment saved lives.

"Learning to respect the hazard was some of the best training I've ever received," said Greene, who has attended hazardous materials training as well as hospital emergency response training at the CDP.

"As a Navajo woman, I am so grateful for the training I received. As a tribal nation, we are so vulnerable and our people need to be better prepared and better trained for any disaster or incident," she said.

Kelbie Kennedy, FEMA's national tribal affairs advocate, attended the CDP's 2023 Tribal Nations Training Week and recently spoke about it during an interview, encouraging tribal nations' responders to develop skills they may need during or after a disaster.

"The biggest thing tribal leaders can do today...is really focus on building emergency management in blue sky days," said Kennedy.

The theme of the CDP's 2024 Tribal Nations Training Week, "Developing Generational Resiliency Through Training," was chosen earlier this year by participants of a tribal nations group.

The focus group, comprised of responders from various tribal nations and representatives from the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC) - which includes the CDP - and the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium (RDPC), also determined training most needed by tribal nations based on risk and hazard vulnerability assessments submitted by various tribal nations.

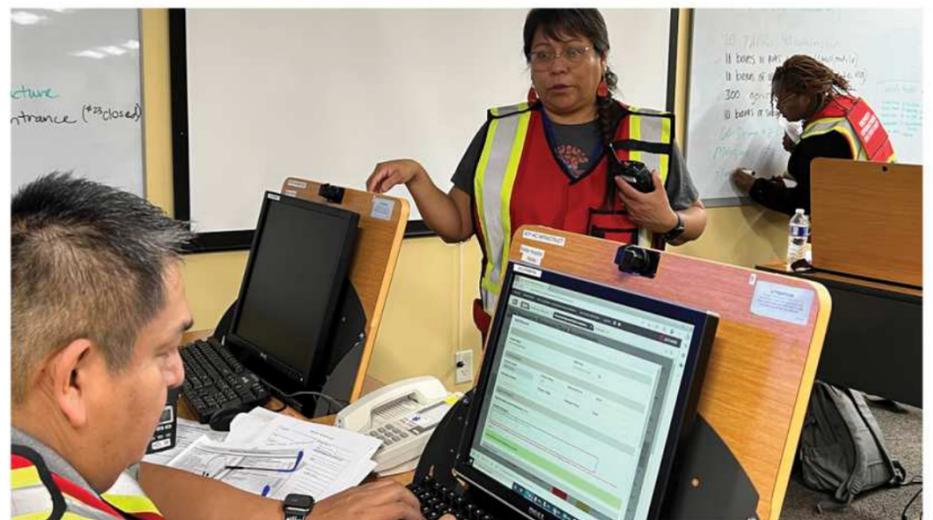
Training tracks established by the focus group include Overview of Emergency Management in Tribal Communities; Executive Engagement in Disaster Preparedness; Hazard Awareness, Response, and Plans; Hazard Identification and Emergency Operations Center Operations; Health Care Leadership; Environmental Health and Safety; and Underserved Populations. Specific course offerings and registration information for the 2024 event will be released in October.

The week of training will also include speakers who will address a wide range of topics relevant to Indian Country. Additionally, it will again include a listening session with various senior FEMA representatives, who want to hear from leaders and emergency managers within Indian Country about how FEMA can better serve tribal nations.

CDP training is fully funded for state, local, tribal, and territorial emergency responders to include roundtrip airfare, meals, and lodging. For more information or to learn how to register, visit the CDP's website at <https://cdp.dhs.gov>.



Students in the Center for Domestic Preparedness' Hospital Emergency Response Training for Mass Casualty Incidents course prepare a 'patient' for decontamination. The three-day course teaches responders the appropriate use of personal protective equipment and how to triage and decontaminate both ambulatory and non-ambulatory patients. (Credit: CDP External Affairs)



Students in the Center for Domestic Preparedness' Healthcare Leadership for Mass Casualty Incidents Course (HCL) respond to a simulated incident by standing up an emergency operations center. The four-day HCL Course teaches healthcare leaders how to prepare their teams for, and guide them through, mass casualty events. (Credit: CDP External Affairs)

THE CURIOUS LEADER: UNVEILING THE POWER OF CURIOSITY IN LEADERSHIP



BY
JAMES BEAL

DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT
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& CASINO

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James has a decade of training and talent development experience in the tribal and hospitality industry. James currently serves the Kalispel Tribe and Northern Quest as the Director of Leadership and Talent Development. James has a distinct focus on the curated experience that learners have when engaging with any programs, initiatives, conferences, focus groups or workshops that he has facilitated or developed. Learner eXperience Design (LXD) is an approach he has naturally embraced as a foundation for all learning and development Opportunities.

"I live to innovate and create processes that others may leverage to better themselves. Through my creative design and people focused development programs, leaders learn and grow to be people focused."



PODCAST

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with James!

In the world of leadership, qualities such as empathy and emotional intelligence and skills like active listening and intentional coaching are often lauded as the hallmarks of a great leader. While these qualities are undoubtedly valuable, it's time to shed light on an equally essential but often underestimated trait - curiosity. As Walt Whitman, via Ted Lasso, aptly said, "Be curious, not judgmental." Curiosity is the unsung hero of leadership, and this article aims to delve into why curiosity is not as celebrated as it should be, the misconceptions surrounding it, and why it should be a super skill for leaders.

THE STIGMA SURROUNDING CURIOSITY

Curiosity is a term that sometimes gets dismissed as childish or cute. It's an attribute that often doesn't make it to the top of leadership discussions. Why is this the case? One reason is the fear of overleveraging curiosity, which can lead to annoyance. Additionally, there's a misconception that curiosity signifies a lack of knowledge, and in the leadership realm, knowledge is often equated with authority. As a result, some leaders avoid embracing curiosity, fearing it might diminish their perceived expertise.

THE FEAR OF JUDGMENT

In our daily lives, we encounter numerous situations that pique our curiosity. We come across stories we don't fully understand, acronyms that elude us, and decisions that

appear irrational. However, instead of embracing our curiosity, we often stop ourselves out of fear of judgment. We hesitate to ask the questions that arise in our minds, hoping the feeling of curiosity will pass, leaving us unchanged. This fear of being seen as uninformed or inexperienced can be a significant barrier to the development of curiosity in leadership.

ELEVATING CURIOSITY

To elevate curiosity beyond this stigma, leaders must take the initiative to lead with curiosity and follow those who are naturally curious. But how can you cultivate curiosity effectively? It's not just a matter of asking more questions; it goes beyond that. Curiosity is about being intentional in the way you process information, the words you use, and the experiences you curate. It's about training your mind to look beyond the seemingly obvious and consider what you don't actually know.

APPROACHING CURIOSITY WITH INTENT

When you approach leadership with curiosity, you open yourself up to a world of possibilities. Instead of immediately seeking to diagnose, you seek to discover. Instead of remaining uninformed, you strive to understand. For instance, can you demonstrate empathy without first being genuinely curious about someone's thoughts and feelings? Perhaps, but your empathy will be far more profound if it's born out of a sincere desire to understand.

THE POWER OF CURIOUS WORDS

Curiosity is often revealed through the language we use. When you're curious, you'll find yourself using phrases like "What is missing?", "What do you think?" and "Tell me more." These are the words that facilitate meaningful conversations and promote understanding. Recognizing and using these curious words can be transformative in how you engage with others.

CELEBRATING THE CURIOUS

To make curiosity a driving force in leadership, it's not enough to embark on this journey alone. We must recognize and celebrate those who exhibit curiosity. By correctly

labeling and appreciating curious behaviors, we encourage others to follow suit. Boldly challenging assumptions, asking questions, and thinking beyond the obvious should be celebrated as valuable traits in leadership.

THE SUCCESS OF CURIOSITY

It's important to note that the success of curiosity may not be immediately evident. It's not a case of being curious today and expecting something amazing to happen tomorrow. Instead, the reward for embracing curiosity lies in the possibilities it opens up. By approaching life and leadership with a curious mindset, you are opening your mind to the potential of what could be.

CONCLUSION

If you aspire to be a great leader, embracing curiosity is non-negotiable. Curiosity is the key that unlocks a deeper understanding of the world and the people around you. It enables you to form genuine connections, make informed decisions, and foster innovation. While the benefits of curiosity may not be instantly visible, the long-term rewards are immeasurable. So, don't shy away from asking questions, thinking deeply, raising your hand, and boldly pursuing connections. Curiosity is the super skill that will set you apart as a leader who truly makes a difference.

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AGENCY UPDATE

NTIA: TRIBAL BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM UPDATE

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On July 27th, 2023, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP). Nearly \$1 billion in funding will be available to eligible tribal entities to deploy internet infrastructure and increase broadband use and adoption. NTIA hosts monthly webinars and provides application guidance documents for eligible entities.

The TBCP is a nearly \$3 billion program that deploys high-speed internet infrastructure, establishes affordable internet access programs, and supports digital inclusion projects for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. The program has been split into two funding rounds; the first funding round opened in 2021, and the second in 2023. As of October 2023, NTIA has made 226 awards to tribal entities. These awards are made available from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

A few key differences between the first and second TBCP NOFOs include the application period being open six months, instead of three months, and closing January 23, 2024. Funding in the second TBCP NOFO is prioritized towards network deployment, capping use and adoption projects at \$100 million total and not funding planning projects. Mapping requirements were expanded to ensure applicants submit data in a consistent format. This allows application reviewers to identify critical components of the proposed service area, such as households and community anchor institutions, while highlighting broadband availability and mitigating duplication issues. Finally, NTIA is prioritizing applicants that received equitable distribution awards for planning projects and giving additional consideration to use and adoption projects which include digital equity planning activities. Interested applicants can find more information at internetforall.gov or broadbandusa.gov.

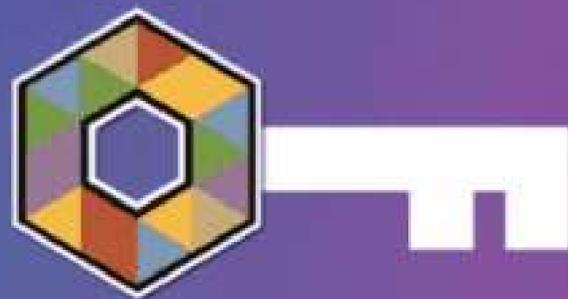
Internet For All Programs

Middle Mile Grant Program: On June 16, 2023, NTIA announced over \$930 million in funding for 35 awardees to the Middle Mile Grant Program. These awards will benefit tribal lands by providing backbone internet infrastructure, boosting network capacity, and reducing connection costs for unserved and underserved households.

Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program: This \$42.45 billion program for states will expand high-speed internet access including tribal communities. States are developing initial proposals for how to connect unserved communities. Many states have initiated tribal consultations, a key requirement of local coordination. Tribes may review state broadband coverage maps, challenge them, and submit their own broadband data maps to ensure more areas are served.

Digital Equity Act Programs: This \$2.75 billion program establishes three grant programs that promote digital equity and inclusion. States are currently working on the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program, in which tribal governments are encouraged to participate. Additionally, tribes who submitted letters of intent to the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program received responses detailing that funding was limited and NTIA would be delaying planning and capacity funding until a future opportunity.

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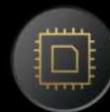
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AT WHAT POINT DOES DISRUPTION



BY
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Larry has leveraged over 40 years of practical knowledge to help raise the bar for excellence in a variety of verticals, including restaurant/hospitality, IT, education, and social services. With four academic degrees and an intuitive understanding of interpersonal relationships, Larry, a former adjunct professor, thrives on educating and mentoring others and finding order amid chaos.



TribalHub members can login to our portal to connect with solution providers.

During the accelerated tech innovation of the past three years, restaurants seem to have gone “all in” on tech. Deploying solutions from the kitchen to the front of house, off-prem, and beyond, solving existing challenges such as labor, supply chain, and spiraling costs all appear to be the new normal.

Growing IT budgets, both in overall spending and as a percentage of revenue; targeted tech spending on features customers most value, including solutions for guest empowerment, mobile ordering and payments, digital menu boards, and more; and emerging tech such as IoT, automation, and voice have been constantly expanding to meet the requirements that were born out of pandemic necessity.

Today’s strategy of “all in,” means betting big on strategic goals like digital engagement, data and analytics, and tools that empower the workforce. But “all in” also means a growing awareness that any calculation of restaurant tech ROI must consider evolving customer expectations, security threats, and integration of current and future tools and channels. As such, the question is no longer, “Will tech investments make us more money?” but rather, “How can tech help us create a better version of our brand?”

But while the expression “all in” may ring with giddy optimism, the current state of our industry demands a sober assessment. According to the National Restaurant Association (NRA), about 50% of restaurants expect 2023 revenue to ultimately trail 2022 revenue due to the rising costs of labor, food, and energy. With margin slipping, statistics show that over 80% of restaurants are likely or very likely to continue raising menu prices. The good news? Technology offers multiple solutions to each of those challenges — and more.

This sea change targets technology that customers demand, namely ordering and payment empowerment (kiosks, one-tap for an array of payment types...) and personalized communications (loyalty/rewards) based on engagement and purchase history.

To meet this ongoing and rapidly changing challenge, owners/operators need to rely on an ever-growing list of integrations to 3rd party providers. It’s also worth mentioning that our findings match those of the NRA and other industry associations as they relate to the top three strategic goals for the latter part of 2023 and 2024: improving digital customer engagement, enhancing business analytics, and elevating employee productivity and retention. Interestingly, all three have gained ground vs. 2022, growing to 63%, 54%, and 46%, respectively. The consistent strategic focus on these three priorities, which have the potential to deliver significant revenue and efficiencies as well as improve quality of life for restaurant workers, underscores our thesis that digital disruption is on the verge of becoming the status quo.

Paradoxically, the remaining two top priorities seemingly conflict with each other: the need to reduce costs, particularly those associated with labor, inventory, and energy consumption, and the desire to spend more on targeted revenue-generating opportunities. (Recall that guest-empowered, self-serve kiosks for both ordering and payments can lower the cost of labor, while increasing ticket amounts by up to 30% on average.)

Just out of the Top 5, but highly crucial to upholding the brand, is enhancing payment and data security, which underscores the need to weave security

BECOME THE STATUS QUO?

into the fabric of any implementation from the onset. Arguably, as important as strategic goals are, let's cite some IT challenges that can impede your needed progress. The top challenge has remained consistent for several years and it is one we've already discussed. Namely, the inherent difficulty of system integrations. Each year further accelerates innovation opportunities, which yield an array of solutions — but also present new challenges to operators who need to properly implement the processes and harness the reams of critical, yet disparate, data.

The second and third challenges — the lack of a sufficient budget and the deficit of skilled in-house talent — may

always be on the “challenge list” (hopefully, the latter will abate as the job market/economy rebounds). However, challenge #4 — meeting customer expectations for technology — is both a pandemic by-product and an omnipresent facet of emerging technologies, including AI. We are pleased to see significant progress on the fifth persistent challenge: the difficulty in measuring technology ROI. We believe there is a growing awareness that calculating tech ROI is more than a binary calculation (e.g., “Will offering mobile ordering make us more money?”), recognizing technology's critical role as a relationship-builder and long-term revenue generator (e.g., “We can't afford not to offer mobile ordering!”).

The Bottom Line. Incredibly, it's been three years since “The Big Shift,” when restaurants accelerated the adoption of contactless off-prem solutions (drive-thru, curbside pick-up, and delivery) as well as “in-place dining,” which expanded the “delivery” of food and beverages to the casino guest via mobile and kiosk ordering. As such, the time for asking, “When will things go back to the way they were?” is over. They won't — not when most restaurants have demonstrated the revenue potential of moving customers into digital ordering and payments, loyalty, and predictive analytics, all while remaining true to their brand's founding principles and value propositions.

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Stay tuned for Spring 2024 dates and locations in these regions as well:

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Michigan

Central

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- Registration is FREE for those who work for a tribe.
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Thank you to the 2023 Host Sites for TribalHub's Regional Tribal Technology Forums

We asked a few of our host sites what they were most looking forward to in welcoming other tribes and casinos to their properties - here from a few of them...

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA REGION - ROLLING HILLS CASINO & RESORT

"Showing off the property and some of the innovation that we are working on will be nice, but the biggest surprise is the relationship that the casino has with the tribe. The tribe and the property work very closely together and enjoy each other's company. The collaboration between the Tribal Government and Casino is beyond anything I have ever witnessed." *John Filippie - Director of IT, Rolling Hills Casino & Resort*



NORTHWEST REGION EMERALD QUEEN CASINO RESORT

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA REGION - SOBOBA CASINO RESORT

"We are thankful and excited to host TribalHub's Regional meeting at Soboba Casino Resort. We look forward to seeing all the friendling faces on the property engaged and sharing ideas to push all tribes forward. We are excited about showcasing our hospitality and Soboba's efforts to open the new property and a brand Roadrunner Express Gas Station C-Store next to the resort to continue enhancing the customer experience. Additionally, we are most excited to be able to share ideas with all tribes and casinos who are like-minded individuals looking to grow their organizations even further." *Steve Nino - CIO, Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians*



MICHIGAN REGION KEWADIN CASINOS

MIDWEST REGION - TREASURE ISLAND RESORT & CASINO

"We are excited to bring thought leaders from all over the industry to Treasure Island Resort & Casino and show off our property. It will be an exciting opportunity to learn from each other and to have impactful discussions about important I.T. topics." *Anthony Matthies - IT Director, Treasure Island Resort & Casino*



CENTRAL REGION HARD ROCK HOTEL & CASINO - CHEROKEE

SOUTHWEST REGION - GILA RIVER RESORTS & CASINOS

"Our Community is known to be hospitable people, we take pride in our properties. Our team members are the most friendliest and helpful people, we make you feel like family. I am looking forward to welcoming our TribalHub Community to this regional event to learn from one another and enjoy being in the same space with others that have similar interest in technology is something of value." *Robin Villareal - CIO, Gila River Resorts & Casinos*

More to come in 2024! If you want one of the upcoming regional events brought to your tribal property, let us know! Contactus@TribalHub.com

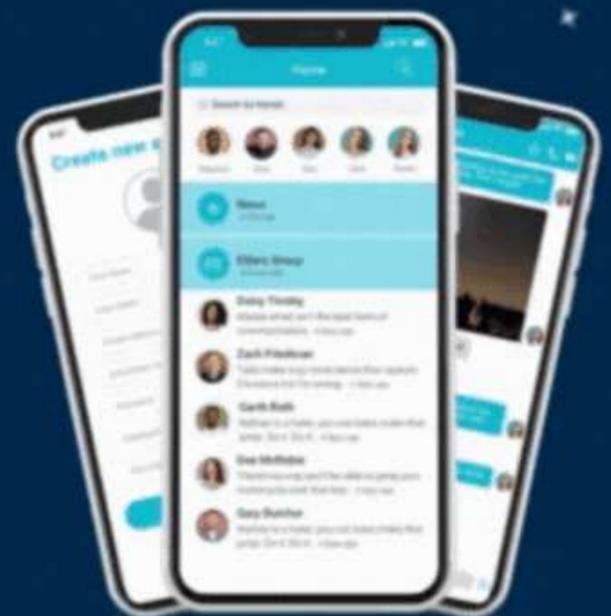
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AGENCY UPDATE

FirstNet: First Responder Network Authority Welcomes New Tribal Liaison

BY JACQUE WARING

Public Safety Engagement Manager, First Responder Network Authority

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At the [First Responder Network Authority](#) (FirstNet Authority), we work to ensure FirstNet, the nationwide public safety broadband network, reaches all responders — including those operating on tribal lands.

From extending coverage into Indian Country's most rural parts to ensuring that tribal responders have the tools to perform their mission critical work, the FirstNet Authority's tribal liaison plays a pivotal role in [advocating for the communications needs of tribal communities](#).

New tribal liaison brings real-world experience to the position

Continuing our strong commitment to Indian Country, I am pleased to introduce [Jasper Bruner](#) as the FirstNet Authority's new National Tribal Government Liaison. Jasper brings more than 20 years of experience in tribal law enforcement and public safety to his new role. As tribal liaison, Jasper works with tribal public safety leaders to discuss their communications needs and help connect tribes to vital broadband and emergency response resources.



A citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Jasper has spent time in a variety of public safety positions. He began as an officer with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Lighthorse Police Department in Tulsa, Oklahoma, later taking on the role of police chief for the Makah Tribe in Neah Bay, Washington. He has managed everything from the volunteer fire department to EMS to corrections to animal control.

From these experiences, he understands the importance of meeting face to face with tribal responders to learn about their needs and how to connect them with resources.

"I have always wanted to support Indian Country, to advocate for it and get out and meet people," he explained. "That's what excites me about my role at the FirstNet Authority. I get to connect with folks and educate them on FirstNet and how it will have a positive impact on their communities."

Bringing technology to tribal communities

Jasper has extensive experience introducing advanced technology systems to tribal communities. As the police chief for the Makah Tribe, he secured funding for a new fire vehicle and ambulance, and to update an EMS facility. He also converted the department's radio system from analog to digital and developed and implemented a plan for a community-wide LTE network. For each project, he had to learn the intricate details of the technology, as well as the federal grants system that would help fund the projects.

He is taking these experiences and lessons learned to help tribes across the country as they adopt FirstNet and broadband technologies.

"I see myself as an educator," he explained. "The FirstNet Authority connects people, educating them on what's going on with other tribes and FirstNet, and how this federal program can benefit their community. We're here to support you."



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BETTER WORKPLACES, ENGAGE!



BY

CHRISTOPHER OROZCO

FOUNDER, HR & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIST
CREATE LEADERSHIP CO.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher is the founder of Create Leadership Co., a Native American owned firm dedicated to creating a better world through better workplaces. An enrolled member of the Pit River Tribe, he has worked in Indian Country for 24 years, and served in an HR leadership role for 17 years.

Earlier this year, Gallup released their 2023 State of the Global Workplace Report, with findings that provide opportunities to improve workplaces across the world. This is especially true regarding employee engagement. And while any report of this nature represents a snapshot in time, the results can yield critical insights that will lead to breakthrough solutions with lasting impact. While a strong company culture is vital to the long-term health of any organization, measuring and maintaining employee engagement is equally important. Simply put, a strong company culture cannot exist without high levels of employee engagement.

An engaged employee feels valued, respected, heard, and seen. They know their work matters, they take pride in their work, and their opinions are actively solicited and turned into realistic strategies for growth. Above everything, they feel important, and rightfully so. In their report, Gallup states that the majority of the world's employees are either not engaged (59%) or actively disengaged (18%). These statistics are a startling reminder that modern leadership can and needs to step up to better serve their people. A closer look at the responses from employees Gallup refers to as not engaged explains what they would change about their workplaces to make them better:

- 41% responded engagement or culture.
- 28% responded pay and benefits.
- 16% responded wellbeing.

None of these findings should come as a revelation. Employees have made their voices heard for years

on these topics, yearning for much-needed improvements. The global pandemic accelerated much of the concern and indeed showed how a renewed focus on the well-being of employees was both a necessity and good business at the same time. Managing engagement remains predicated on how well the leadership of an organization understands and responds to the needs of their employees, and there will never be a more powerful force to engage your team than by making them feel cared for. But how can we turn these findings into practical solutions that create healthier workplaces where people feel important?

Successful organizations are driven by a significant purpose, and employees both understand that purpose and how their contributions align with it. One of the best ways to achieve this unity is through collaborative goal-setting. While leadership can provide the vision and overall strategy for what an organization needs to achieve, collaborative goal setting provides a forum for employees to participate in setting clear goals for how their talent can contribute to the overall success of the company. These goal-setting sessions give leadership the prime opportunity to be approachable and become an employee's thought partner in exploring and discovering new possibilities for performance and potential. This type of collaboration, best supported by a strong coaching culture, also demonstrates how the organization recognizes and respects the talent of its employees.

Speaking of recognition, when a company does well, so should the people who made that success a reality. Whether we're talking about pay and benefits or more informal methods of showing appreciation, recognition for work well done is a powerful factor in how employees feel about their workplace.

Leadership should be intentional about prioritizing recognition, including setting aside time to provide incentives and rewards. It's important to keep in mind that recognition will undoubtedly look different depending on the resources available to each organization. Recognition will also look different based on employee preferences. Some may long for public displays of recognition, while others may not, and not every form of recognition needs

to be a grand gesture. Sometimes, the most powerful reward an employee receives in the moment is reassurance from leadership that their work matters and is appreciated. Employee wellbeing is also linked with recognition, though prioritizing overall wellbeing will call for a more comprehensive approach from leadership. Some of the responses about wellbeing in Gallup's survey range from a desire to work from home more, to setting up a health clinic. Again, the key here is to gain an understanding of what's most important to your employees by soliciting their feedback, knowing what resources you have available, and using that as a catalyst for building stronger relationships.

One of the most important takeaways from Gallup's report is that 70% of team engagement is attributable to the manager. Great leadership requires a servant's heart - a genuine desire to improve the quality of life of those around us. To lead is to serve with care and compassion. That's how our success as leaders should be measured, just as we need to continually measure engagement among our teams. To know that such a large percentage of engagement rests upon our shoulders as leaders is humbling, but it's also a powerful message that engagement is not beyond our reach when we approach our responsibility with open hearts, ready to listen and learn how to best serve.



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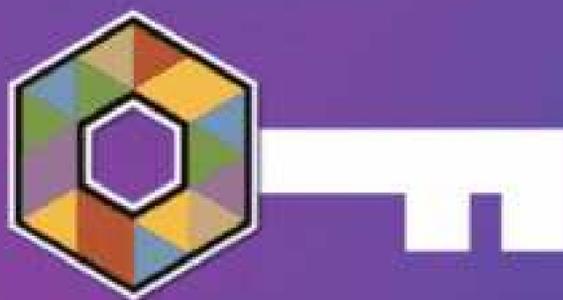
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