

TECH CONNECT™

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Speaker Guide

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Lisa Abendroth, PhD

Founder, Business in a Digital World

University of St. Thomas

Lisa Abendroth, PhD, is the Founder of Business in a Digital World at the University of St. Thomas and an Institute for the Future Certified Foresight Practitioner. Her mission is to develop leaders who understand the power and potential of emerging technologies in business and society, and who can responsibly harness that power for the common good. In her course Modern Business Mindset, she prepares students to lead rapid, ongoing transformation through strategic foresight, customer centricity, and a growth mindset. Her research focuses on the competencies business professionals need to succeed in a digital world.



Steve Arsenault

Chief Information Officer

APi Group

As CIO, Steve ensures that technology supports APi Group's growth and business strategy. Steve's significant experience in IT leadership and systems, including mergers, acquisitions, and divestiture, will facilitate APi Group and its operating companies to improve on current capabilities and bring new digital capabilities. He has developed and led high-performing teams in more than 100 countries and has deep experience integrating large and small acquisitions. Before joining APi Group, Steve spent nearly 18 years in Information Technology (IT) leadership roles at Medtronic plc. His most recent position was Vice President of Global IT Shared Services, where he managed enterprise technology platforms and services. Steve also brings other experience to APi, having worked in financial services, manufacturing, oil and gas, and chemical industries.



Steve Bauer

Director of Product Transformation

Thrivent

Steve leads the product and agile coaching practice for Thrivent. His focus is on enabling an enterprise transformation from conventional project to product operating model. Steve has years of coaching experience at the team, enterprise and leadership levels. He has a passion for helping leaders make the transition from the conventional style of command and control to an empowered servant leader paradigm. Prior to joining Thrivent in 2022, Steve was a consultant based in the Twin Cities. He helped numerous organizations initiate and execute their transformation initiatives. He was the leader of the product practice for the Minneapolis office of a national consulting organization and focused on delivering transformation work with clients while also building the overall product coaching capability for the organization.



Rich Bellefeuille

IT Director

Land O'Lakes

Rich Bellefeuille is an IT Director at Land O'Lakes responsible for multiple Product Teams within Supply Chain IT. He has a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Saint John's University and an MBA from University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. He also holds certifications through Cornell University Business Analytics, Project Management Institute, Scrum Alliance and the BP Group for Certified Process Professional. He's held various data-centric consulting positions and has 18 years' experience in High-Tech Medical Device and Agricultural industries. Prior roles include Developer, Architect, Data Management and Architecture Lead, Project and Portfolio Manager, and Analytics Manager. He came to Land O'Lakes because of data integration opportunities and has stayed because of the robust portfolio, progressive nature of the organization and leadership opportunities.



Charles Betz

VP, Research Director, Enterprise Architecture

Forrester

Charles Betz leads Forrester's Enterprise Architecture priority, providing guidance to EA professionals worldwide on evolving a relevant, modern, and valuable architecture practice. He is deeply engaged in researching the transformation of the IT operating model, in particular the impact of Agile, DevOps, and product thinking. He has previously led Forrester's DevOps and Enterprise Service Management coverage. Prior to joining Forrester, Charlie was a chief architect with ATT's Signature Client Group, where he was responsible for technical strategy with Fortune 100 clients. He served for six years as lead enterprise architect and VP for "business of IT" architecture at Wells Fargo. Charlie also held architect and product manager positions at Best Buy, Target, and Accenture.



David Bingenheimer

Chief Information Officer

Ecolab

David Bingenheimer is executive vice president and chief information officer for Ecolab Inc., the global leader in water, hygiene and infection prevention solutions and services that protect people and vital resources. Prior to joining Ecolab in 2022, Bingenheimer was the chief information and digital officer for Honeywell Aerospace. Before joining Honeywell in 2017, he served as the chief information officer for the flooring segment of Mohawk Industries. Throughout his career, Bingenheimer has held information technology roles of increasing responsibility for several industrial and manufacturing companies, including vice president of IT at Eaton Corporation, director of the Global Oracle Center of Excellence at Johnson Controls, director of technology delivery and strategic consulting for Mercury Marine, and global program manager for GE Medical Systems.



David Black

Chief Information Officer, EVP, Enterprise Transformation

CHS, Inc.

David Black is executive vice president, enterprise transformation, and chief information officer for CHS, a leading energy, grains and foods company and the largest farmer-owned cooperative in the United States. In his role, Black is responsible for enterprise transformation, marketing and communications, sustainability and innovation, facilities and CHS global information technology. He leads enterprise transformation efforts, including the company's change in operating model and transformation management office. Black also leads strategy, implementation, delivery and operation of information technology for all CHS businesses worldwide. He oversees the company's owner and employee communications, advertising and public relations and CHS sustainability and innovation programs, including the CHS venture capital program, Cooperative Ventures.



Jason Brown

Senior Director of Networking

Xcel Energy

Jason Brown is the Senior Director of Networking for Xcel Energy, leading teams that support LAN, FAN, WAN, F5, Firewall, and Private LTE. In his 30+ years in technology since starting on a help desk, he has led global teams in a variety of roles while previously at Dell, Cargill and Thrivent. He resides in Edina MN with his wife, two sons and a Newfie.



Steven Burk

Director of Unified Communications and End User Services

Xcel Energy

Steven Burk, Director of Unified Communications and End User Services at Xcel Energy, proudly oversees the provisioning of technology tools to increase employees' efficiency. For 20 years his work has spanned deskside support, executive support, mobility, security operations, application delivery and equipping collaboration spaces.



Laura Carlson

Vice President, Operations Support

Thrivent

Laura Carlson is vice president leading a Shared Service function in support of Operations at Thrivent, a Fortune 500 diversified financial services organization. In her role, Laura leads a diverse group of Operations teams including training, quality assurance, risk and controls, and technology assets that serve the enterprise. She is an early adopter of the product operating model and is leaning in to work in new ways. In close partnership with technology leaders, she is helping implement change and influence new leader behaviors within the organization. Laura's sweet spot is helping to coach leaders in behaviors that support empowering teams, driving outcomes and building trust quickly to drive results.



Chris Chapman

SVP, Chief Information Officer (Commercial)

Thrivent

Chris Chapman is senior vice president, CIO, Commercial at Thrivent. In his role, Chris is accountable for all aspects of technology supporting our Commercial business as well as the broader enterprise strategy. From strategic direction through execution, Chris also drives innovation of new and existing digital solutions and technology systems across products and services. His focus is on driving digital business transformation to help our clients achieve financial clarity, enabling lives of meaning and gratitude. Before joining Thrivent in 2021, Chris served as Chief Operating Officer/Chief Information Officer of the Commercial Businesses at TCF National Bank where he was responsible for product and digital capabilities for commercial customers. Chris also held leadership positions at Target Corporation, Allianz, Best Buy, and Cap Gemini/Ernst and Young.



Jim Christy

Director of Member Engagement

Optum

Jim Christy is Director of Member Engagement for Optum's Prevention team, currently supporting four product lines with more than six million members. Jim has more than 20 years of experience developing and managing online content. He guides his team and content strategy to use a plain-language approach to in talking about health, wellness and chronic conditions. His focus is on providing tools and resources that can help people make better decisions about their health.



Alex Cook

Principal

Inspire11

Alex Cook is an experienced, value-driven data and analytics practitioner and is currently a Principal in Inspire11's Data and Analytics practice in Minneapolis. He has nearly 20 years of experience in business intelligence and data analytics, having served clients in various roles across several industries and business functions. Alex helps clients optimize their data assets to drive actionable insights, enabling key business decisions and driving organizational transformation.



Theresa Dolezal

IT Manager

Xcel Energy

Theresa Dolezal is a context driven communication strategist supporting senior leaders with comprehensive communication and engagement strategies, and managing a team dedicated to people and organizational health within the Technology Services department at Xcel Energy. Theresa's areas of expertise include team development, strategic communication planning, business improvement, product ownership, stakeholder relationships, positive youth development and strengths-based organizational change management.



Andy Domeier

Senior Director, Technology Engineering

SPS Commerce

Andy has been in Technology Operations leadership at SPS Commerce since 2005 leading a variety of teams including System Operations, SRE, Cloud Engineering, and Continuous Improvement. SPS's continuously growing retail network creates a fun environment of persistent growth challenges. Andy spends many cycles collaborating on strategy to help the organization successfully scale; he is particularly interested in leading solutions for platforms and CI/CD that leverage the cloud and observability tooling to help #TeamSPS deliver high performing services at scale.



Michael Downs

Chief Technology Officer

Evolving Solutions

Michael Downs is the Chief Technology Officer for Evolving Solutions. In this role, he is responsible for leading the company's technology vision and strategy as well as development of solutions that enable modern operations. In addition, he leads a team of technical experts focused on helping clients drive better outcomes in complex hybrid cloud environments. Michael joined Evolving Solutions in 2014 and he brings more than 20 years of broad technology, business, and industry experience defining and implement innovative technologies to solve the most complex business problems.



Julie Durham

Chief Technology Officer

United HealthCare

Julie is currently serving as the Chief Technology Officer for United HealthCare, where she is responsible for strategy and execution of \$3.0B of technology investments that drive UHC revenue globally. Julie has been with United Health Group since 2016. Prior to her UHC CTO role, she was the CTO For Optum Payment Integrity and Optum Connect where she served on senior pursuit team that led M&A integration of Equian for \$3.2B. She also created the first AI Platform & Transformation team for UHG. Recognized as executive top talent and completed exclusive General Management Program in 2019 in conjunction with Harvard and Stanford. Former employers and clients include Best Buy, SAP, Nike, Apple, Al-Futtaim, ExxonMobil and GE. Julie brings an innovative and entrepreneurial approach, with the ability to influence and create consensus at the 'C-level' providing leadership in ambiguous, innovative, fast-paced, complex corporate structures.



Justin Grammens

Founder & CEO

Lab651

Justin Grammens is a lifelong learner who is passionate about software development, artificial intelligence, and giving back to the community through service and education. He is the Founder and CEO of Lab651 where he helps companies successfully release software products using our talented team and proven process. He is the creator, producer, and host of the Applied AI Podcast which allows Justin to interview the world's leading experts on Artificial Intelligence, and an Adjunct Professor teaching graduate-level Machine Learning courses at the University of Saint Thomas. Most importantly, he is blessed to have a loving wife and two amazing boys who are the light of his life.



Dale Henninger

Senior Director, IT Global Infrastructure

CHS, Inc.

Dale Henninger is the Senior Director of IT Global Infrastructure at CHS, Inc., a diversified global agribusiness cooperative owned by farmers and local cooperatives across the United States. Dale has over 30 years of IT infrastructure experience with companies such as Thomson Reuters, General Mills, Cisco Systems, and United Health Group as well as experience with his own Internet startup in the late 1990s. In his spare time Dale shares his knowledge and passion for IT as an adjunct faculty member at Inver Hills Community College in Inver Grove Heights, MN.



Barb Johnson

Director, Product, Information Technology

Thrivent

Barb Johnson is product management director supporting the Commercial division at Thrivent. In her role, Barb is helping to lead the enterprise into a new way of working by supporting the implementation of a product operating model that will help accelerate Thrivent's transformation to serve generations to come with client-first, digital-first experiences. Barb is a proven leader of product management in diverse industries. Barb grew up in roles that straddle business and IT. She loves the sweet spot of bringing teams together to drive outcomes for customers. She has a passion for creating awesome culture within teams and finding ways to celebrate success. Barb's enthusiasm for product management is evident as she coaches leaders and teams on new behaviors and techniques to empower teams to make incremental improvements to deliver value faster to customers.



Nathan Koering

Associate Principal

Turnberry Solutions

When Nathan was 23, he designed his first sales revenue digital tool for his territory, and bang! He was hooked! Ever since, Nathan has brought a passion for pulling together IT, business, operations, marketing and others and working collaboratively to support their achievement through effective tools. Tools that make lives easier, processes that are just enough to enable and not disable, and organizational frameworks that optimize, stabilize, and foundationally support innovation. With a deep background in facilitation, strategic design, design thinking, and some of the most widely used operational technologies in the market, Nathan's approach is to deliver effective and dynamic outcomes with each client and team he works with.



Nick Kwiecien, Ph.D.

Cloud Solutions Architect – Data & AI

Microsoft

Nick Kwiecien, Ph.D., is an accomplished AI Cloud Solution Architect at Microsoft, where he is primarily responsible for fostering the adoption of cutting-edge AI/ML technologies amongst large enterprises. Nick has a strong background in Chemistry and Bioinformatics and holds a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. In his current role, he is committed to driving the development of robust data science solutions in the Azure cloud, implementing MLOps to support continuous improvement across the entire ML model lifecycle, and promoting responsible AI practices. As the leader of Microsoft's Enterprise Data Science Program for the entire Manufacturing vertical, Nick leverages his extensive industry experience as a data scientist to guide organizations towards achieving their AI-related goals. As a speaker at Tech Connect 2023, he is eager to share his insights and knowledge with attendees to help them navigate the rapidly evolving world of data science in the era of Generative AI.



Emmanuel Letsu-Dake, PhD

Vice President of Technical Innovation

U.S. Bank

Dr. Emmanuel Letsu-Dake is a Vice President of Technical Innovation with U.S. Bank. He has a multidisciplinary background in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Human Factors. He excelled for over 14 years in aerospace research and development before pivoting to banking and financial technology. Emmanuel has a passion for advanced technology and innovation. He has extensive experience in applying user-centered design across multiple domains resulting in 11 patents to date. He has also contributed to aerospace standards and regulations development.



Max Lindquist

Machine Learning Engineer II

Launch by NTT Data

Max is a passionate developer dedicated to creating efficient, scalable ML pipelines using both proven and emerging Data Science and Cloud Computing technologies. He focuses on servicing clients in the retail sector. Prior to joining Nexient, Max worked on personalization the search technology at GameStop.



Michael Mathews

CEO & Co-Founder

CREO

Michael Mathews is the CEO and one of the co-founders of CREO, a specialized advisory firm that enables companies to create and expand value by providing meaningful insights, transparency and prioritized, actionable focus areas across a company's digital ecosystem. CREO delivers these results using their proprietary Quality of Technology (QoX.T®) assessment instrument and advisory service offerings. Prior to CREO, Michael was the SVP, CIO & Head of Product Development & Engineering at Deluxe from 2013 to 2022. He was named the MN Global CIO of the Year in 2019 and then as the National CIO of the Year in 2021.



Sean Mee

Regional Vice President, Solutions Architecture

Outsystems

Sean leads the Solution Architect team for OutSystems across the East Coasts of the U.S. and Canada. In his role, Sean equips his team of Solution Architects to provide technical expertise to prospects throughout the sales and technical evaluation process. He comes to OutSystems with over a decade of consulting and software engineering experience from a variety of organizations. Sean's deep industry expertise, paired with his customer-first mindset, allows him to quickly understand prospective client business needs and recommend potential solutions. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce in Management Information Systems from the University of Galway, as well as Master of Science in Information Technology from Technological University, Dublin.



Asim Mohammad

Director, Transformation

Grant Thornton

Asim is a Director and Head of Data Strategy for the Enterprise Information Management practice and has more than 24 years of industry experience and data specialization. As a leader in Enterprise Information, Asim assists organizations seeking to unlock their data and turn it into an asset. He has led large teams of functional experts, customers, customer advocates, and senior client-leadership to deliver strategic end-to-end solutions. His background includes banking, retail and public sector experience as well product development and customer success.



Meredith Murphy

Advisory Services - Risk Advisory

Grant Thornton

Meredith is a Principal in Grant Thornton's Advisory practice, and is based in Minneapolis. Ms. Murphy has over 20 years in professional services working with IT, legal and risk leaders. Central to her experience is the focus on innovative data and technology as an enabler to growth and transformation at her clients. Meredith is an author and thought leader of the book: "Data Analytics: A Roadmap for Expanding Capabilities" and is a frequent speaker on the topics of data and technology. Ms. Murphy leads Grant Thornton's global Risk Advisory practice and is the leader of the Minneapolis Risk Advisory practice. In addition to her technical focus, Meredith is relentlessly focused on inspiring companies and individuals to embrace the use of computer science and analytic capabilities.



Thomas Panikkar

Sr. Director of SAP and Corporate Applications

Xcel Energy

Thomas Panikkar is the Sr. Director of SAP and Corporate Applications at Xcel Energy with over 24 years of helping companies build their technology strategy and execute their application roadmaps that consistently deliver expected business value. Specializing in ERP Applications, Thomas uses his experience to ensure optimal application usage, best-in-class user experience, and data insights enabling real-time to make management decisions. He believes that technology without business process transformation is often redundant and non-effective. He has a master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Louisville, KY, and a bachelor's in electrical engineering from Undivert of Kerala, Kerala, India.



Anna Pohmer

Group Product Manager, Digital Workforce Experience Program

Xcel Energy

Anna Pohmer is the driving force behind the Digital Workforce Experience (DWE) Program, serving as its Group Product Manager. Her mission is to streamline and simplify the work experience for both corporate and field employees by eliminating two hours of unnecessary technology friction. With a varied background spanning from digital agencies to Fortune 50 firms, Anna has honed her expertise and is well-equipped to steer the program towards success.



Jett Robinson

Principal Data Scientist

Inspire11

Jett Robinson is a Principal at Inspire11 with more than ten years of experience empowering businesses to increase the value they derive from their data. His focus is on maximizing the efficiency of institutional decision making by creating new AI and ML products and optimizing business processes. Jett has extensive experience leading organizations down the path of Data Science maturity, starting from creating the business case to establish the need, to putting machine learning models into a production environment.



Jill Ronk

Director, Engineering Productivity, Information Technology

Thrivent

Jill Ronk is the Engineering Productivity director whose teams support all software and infrastructure engineers at Thrivent, a Fortune 500 diversified financial services organization. In her role, Jill is leading six teams that work together to drive productivity within Thrivent's engineering community during a time when Thrivent is transforming to deliver client-first, digital-first experiences. She is new to the product operating model and is adopting new leadership behaviors while helping her team perform and manage change. Since 2018, Jill has held multiple roles within Enterprise Architecture at Thrivent. She's a proven leader and has a reputation for being a strong collaborator and communicator within the division. Prior to joining Thrivent, Jill led multiple infrastructure teams over the past 30 years at both service and manufacturing companies.



Gene Sawyer

Senior Director, Sales Engineer

Juniper Networks

Gene Sawyer is the Senior Director, Sales Engineering at Juniper Networks where he leads a team of accomplished Specialist Sales Engineers as well as working directly with customers and partners leveraging technology to drive mission critical business requirements. Gene has been working in the IT industry for over 25 years and has extensive experience with large solution design and deployments across numerous verticals such as retail, hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing and education. Before joining the Juniper Networks team, Gene was the SE Director at Mist systems and prior to Mist spent over 13 years at Cisco Systems in Systems Engineering and leadership roles including Director, Systems Engineering in the Cisco Meraki business unit focused on Cisco's Global Enterprise Segment.



Creg Schumann
Principal, Digital Innovation
Turnberry Solutions

Informed by a good understanding of building cool things, Creg was an early adopter and adapter of agile techniques from the likes of DSDM, SCRUM and other flavors (before there was an agile manifesto). He's been part of large teams/organizations or small teams in many industries and solution spaces. Some of his clients he's worked with on transformation are American Airlines, Disney, Ecolab, US Bank, Wells Fargo, Optum PHS, and many others. He's a candidate for a Professional Scrum Trainer license through Scrum.org. He pushes for a pragmatic environment and helps teams move away from dogmatic systems.



Brian Seebacher
President, CEO, & CTO
Hargrove & Associates

Brian Seebacher is a leader, broad-based technologist, and creative design thinker. He has helped translate real-world business requirements into elegant working solutions for over twenty-five years. By day, he leads a team as President, CEO, and CTO of Hargrove & Associates, Inc. (HAI), an industry intelligence product and services firm based in Minneapolis, MN. HAI specializes in designing, implementing, and operating market benchmarking platforms used by some of the world's leading companies and their professional associations.



Dr. Jayshree Seth
Corporate Scientist & Chief Science Advocate
3M

Jayshree Seth is a Corporate Scientist at 3M and currently holds 77 patents for a variety of innovations, with several additional pending. She joined 3M in 1993 after an MS and PhD in Chemical Engineering from Clarkson University, New York. She is a Distinguished Alumni Award recipient from her alma mater REC Trichy India, now NIIT Trichy, where she earned a B. Tech. in Chemical Engineering. Jayshree was appointed 3M's first ever Chief Science Advocate in 2018 and is using her scientific knowledge, technical expertise and professional experience to advance science and communicate the benefits of science and the importance of diversity in STEM fields. She is also a member of Carlton Society which is the 3M Science and Engineering "Hall of Fame."



Ron Tatro
Principal Engineer
Target

Ron is an accidental FinOps Practitioner and Principal Engineer at Target focused on optimizing public cloud costs through both commercial and computer optimization strategies. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.



Edmund Tran
Data Literacy Program Manager
Qlik

Critical and analytical thinking are key skills in today's data-driven world. Overseeing one of the leading programs on Data Literacy, Edmund advises the Fortune 500 in empowering employees to ask the right questions of their data, obtain knowledge, make decisions, and communicate those decisions to drive top and bottom-line performance. Edmund holds a Bachelor's in Business Administration, Legal Studies from Temple University and Certificates from Stanford University in Communicating Persuasively, Microsoft in Technology Specialist & Cloud Services and HDR in Customer Services Relationships.



Matt Versaggi

AI/ML Specialist

Matt is a specialist in artificial intelligence and machine learning, as well as a distinguished engineer, who possess a unique blend of business, technology, entrepreneurial and academic background. He previously held the role of Senior Director of Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Technology at Optum Technology. While at UHG, Matt built the organization's "College of Artificial Intelligence," and holds several patents. He is a former Division III NCAA decathlete and in his free time is a current USATF master's athlete.



Aaron Warner

Founder & CEO

ProCircular

People and relationships are the paths to success. That is why Aaron Warner formed Pro-Circular to prepare and protect organizations from the ever-changing cyber threats we face daily. Backed by Warner's 22 years as a biotech CIO and CTO, and a top-shelf team of cybersecurity experts, ProCircular helps organizations understand and manage their cyber risk. Mr. Warner's decades of global IT and cybersecurity expertise, an MBA from the University of Iowa, and numerous cybersecurity certifications underline the organization's commitment to aligning cybersecurity, compliance, and their clients' company strategy. He frequently collaborates with the FBI, Homeland Security, and other federal organizations and chairs the public policy and legislative committee for the Technology Association of Iowa. Over the years, his personal and company accolades have grown to include Small Business Person of the Year (Iowa) by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Entrepreneur of the Year, Fastest Growing Company, Coolest Places to Work, Technology Achievement Business Award, and the Best Place for Working Parents.



Kim Wier

Director of Engineering

Target

Kim Wier is a Director of Engineering at Target Corporation. Kim has been a leader at Target for many years, including rotations in both real estate and Target Tech. This combination of business and technical backgrounds helps Kim as she leads the Efficiency Engineering team at Target. The mission of this team is to help Target provide near-real time utilization and cost data to engineers and leaders to help them understand their private and public cloud utilization. With this data the application teams can see their efficiency and are encouraged to optimize workloads while balancing reliability and performance.



Bill Wong

Principal Research Director – AI and Data Analytics Lead

Info-Tech Research Group

Bill is a Principal Research Director leading research on AI. He spends his time working with c-level executives and AI subject matter experts on developing their organization's AI strategy, their adoption of Responsible AI Guiding Principles, and identifying the opportunities for technologies such as Generative AI. Prior to joining Info-Tech, Bill was the AI and Data Analytics Practice Leader at Dell Technologies for five years. He also held consulting, development, product management, and executive roles at Microsoft, Oracle, and IBM. He speaks frequently at conferences around the world and is often interviewed by the press regarding AI trends and best practices.



Matt Yates

Sr. Director & Engineering Practice Lead for AI, Machine Learning, and Data Engineering

Launch by NTT Data

Matt is a data science and machine learning (ML) engineering executive, recognized in 2018 by Consulting Magazine's 35 Raising Stars of the Profession. Matt is in relentless pursuit to craft innovative solutions driving both top and bottom line growth for his clients. He has served clients in retail, e-commerce, CPG, manufacturing, logistics, utilities, public sector, financial services, nonprofit, and automotive industries.