



really starting to become more mainstream, and we were introducing technology not only into the fire stations, but also into the apparatus into the trucks and the equipment and we'd bring in, we'd strap down with bungee cords, personal computers within a truck to look up information on hazardous material. And I thought this is pretty cool. And I started to take a couple of classes in college and really that was the catalyst for me to start focusing on technology was the opportunity that I had on the fire department.

**Nichols:** And wow, and I know you concur with this, but I think you chose well, technology is important, isn't it?

**Cavellier:** It is and you, it really suited well I get bored very quickly and I like things that are continually changing and evolving, and that's the spirit of technology. I think one of your recent podcasts with Dan Roberts talked about the half-life of technology. Now, I was around 18 months in a continually re-learn and retrain ourselves, and new and evolving, areas of technology. So it's perfect for those of us who like I said are ADD in that respect.

**Nichols:** So I think it's probably safe to say you've never been bored.

**Cavellier:** Never.

**Nichols:** So talk to us where were you before you came to Cass?

**Cavellier:** My first real job was with a company called EDS, and if you were from Michigan you were either working for one of the big three automotives or you were working for another company that worked for the big 3 automotives. So back in the day, this was right after the Ross Perot era, EDS was recruiting from the college I went to, and I had an opportunity to go in and be a systems engineering development engineer. We learned mainframe programming. I was one of the last classes to go through mainframe and had an opportunity go down to Plano, and study went through the phase one, two, and three programs, evolved within EDS from doing mainframe programming to client server programming back in the day, third generation, fourth generation coding tools and eventually still with EDS, just started out doing some web development, so I really had the opportunity to move fairly quickly within EDS was a fantastic company, they had fantastic training programs and having an opportunity to learn a structured and disciplined approach to doing systems development was something I never really could have gotten within school.

**Nichols:** Yeah, I remember being able to tour the headquarters at one point and it was like a museum almost.

**Cavellier:** When I was at EDS probably the best project that I've ever been on in my career was called The Globe logistics pipeline and this is back in the early 90s. Well before the internet was as prevalent, and we developed a system for General Motors that allowed for them to track shipment of automobile components overseas. This is before the FedEx and UPS to see where is my shipment. We built it for GM, and then we were selling it to other companies because whether you're tracking converters radios or blue genes, it's the same premise. I had an opportunity to go to, they called it the God Pod, at the headquarters, it was I think 15 stories up and do a demo of a system that we helped build for GM. It was a fantastic opportunity.

**Nichols:** So before Cass, where were you? You were at another bank?

**Cavellier:** I was. So after EDS, I had an opportunity to get my graduate degree when I was at EDS and when I finished my graduate degree, I had a lot of friends in school, who were starting to work with a big six consulting firms, and I had an opportunity to interview with ENY. And went to work for ENY, for a while and it was a fantastic learning experience, they were phenomenal. The opportunity to be on really the cutting edge and it really forces you to become a quick learner and hone in on your people skills. It was a fantastic opportunity. And from there, doing consulting, I went to AAA, now Michigan. and for going into AAA, this would have been late. 90s was an interesting time because folks in Michigan who knew AAA, thought of AAA as the insurance company, but it's really so much more.

The travel and road side. And it was when the internet was becoming much more prevalent, and it was eating our lunch at the time, because no longer did you have to call AAA a book of plane reservation to book a car rental to plan a trip, you could do everything yourself. So it was a time when the company had to reinvent itself and decide how it was going to position itself and how it was going to compete in the long run. And sometimes the adversity and challenges that come with those difficult times lead to a much broader organization and frankly, opportunities that I probably never would have had being in an organization where things were going swimmingly. That was AAA... I went to Comerica Bank, and that was where I was before coming to St. Louis.

I was with Comerica Bank for 16 years and what I went into Comerica, I had an opportunity to lead. What we called then architecture technology planning, it was really strategic technology planning, enterprise architecture, it was similar to what I did with consulting. I had a fantastic two

amazing bosses when I was there who I was running ATP for about a year and a half, and my boss came to me one night and he said, "You're doing a great job, running technology planning, but you don't know a lot about banking. And he says in the path that you're on, you're going to be 10 years. He said before, you know, he says how you'd like to come into our M&A group. And I said, I really liked my job I've got things down into a cadence. I've got the right people on the bus and things are clicking along. I said "Are you asking or telling me?" And he says, "Well I'm asking", he says, "but I think you should think about it a little bit longer".

Came back the next day and I said I'd love to do it. And really, my career at EDS was 16 years of moving into many different positions from M&A to architecture technology planning operations, running a data management organization, and when I left, I was a demand CIO for payments and payment services, which is really from a technology perspective, where a lot of innovation with FinTechs are these days. So I really had an opportunity to move into several different areas in Comerica.

**Nichols:** Really and prepared you for what you're doing today. I'm looking at that and I'm thinking, Wow, there's a lot in there because you were able to do and touch a lot of different areas, right? So really that was great preparation for being the CIO now for Cass.

**Cavellier:** It really was, I looked at my career and I had an opportunity to run every aspect of technology from operations to strategic planning, data project management offices. But I never really had the opportunity to run my own organization run my own show. I was very happy at Comerica. They were fantastic. organization and when I was approached by Cass, I thought it would be difficult to find another company with the same core values as Comerica but I found it within Cass Information Systems and similar to Comerica. Cass has been around for 113 years, based here out of St. Louis but is a company with a footprint that spans not only across the US but really globally in the APAC area. We have offices in Europe. It is an interesting combination of that Cass is still a 113-year-old company, but when you go around the organization and our different divisions, we still maintain an entrepreneurial spirit in the company in terms of growing the organization competing for business very strong focus on customers. So really, a unique combination of characteristics within the company.

**Nichols:** And you said that was one of the draws for you is the core values of the company and then also the opportunity because they're going through a major transformation right now, right? And you were excited about getting involved in that.

**Cavellier:** We really are in... That was the catalyst for coming to St. Louis for picking up and moving after. Like I said, spending my whole life in Michigan. Cass in the 113 years that we've been in business last year was a record year for us, in terms of earnings and we're having another phenomenal year here in 2019. We were at a cross road we're in the past, we have multiple divisions five divisions within Cass that each ran technology in their organizations independently, and they were very successful in doing it.

We grew to a size that really started to force us to look more holistically at technology across the organization and making sure that we were investing in new technology that could be leveraged in all of our divisions. And especially when you're going to be doing business globally, you need to ensure that the solutions that you're putting in place are going to satisfy compliance and requirements, not only here in the US, but GDPR and so forth. So that really was the catalyst and I saw an opportunity to come in to Cass and to align these five divisions or five organizations. Into one it at the same time we were ready to make significant investments in technology, so it was really a unique opportunity to find the right organization and the right role. And that's what I found here at Cass.

**Nichols:** So Jim, you are the CIO, what do you believe the modern CIO needs to look like? And we'll kind of go there, and then, you know, talk about what initiative CIO, should be focused on right now, if you can just speak to that a little bit.

**Cavellier:** I think the role of the CIO is significantly evolved from where it was certainly not just 20 years ago, but 10 years ago. A CIO needs to be a business leader that understands the business that your company is in, who also by the way, knows technology, but the days of having an individual who says, "Well I know everything about technology, and my role is to just have a technology focus are long gone. The CIO today is a partner with the different divisions of an organization. Understands their role understands the business objectives and helps in the execution and developing the strategies to achieve those. And as I said, "Oh by the way, they have an expertise in technology to help.

We've adopted within Cass a model of partnership in our organization that we refer to as two in the box. And when I came in to Cass and we reorganized our division, we established a role of a technology product owner, we got away from functional definitions and started to evolve into a product-centric environment in addition to finding and identifying individuals who lead products from a technology perspective, we established business product owners, individuals in the business who led the development of their products in our 2 in the box model, we partnered up

our TPOs with our BPOs and we said, You'll have joint responsibility for not only the day-to-day management of our products, but putting together the roadmap and the vision for where your products are going to go, and our TPOs our technology experts who are saving in the business and or BPOs are business experts who are savvy in technology and has been a phenomenal pairing for us.

**Nichols:** Yeah, well I'm excited, I want to dive more into that.

**AD:** We're going to take a quick break and then we'll be back with Jim Cavellier.

**Nichols:** Well, welcome back. So CIOs today have so much on their plate, so many different things that they could be focused on. What are some of the most pressing priorities that a CIO should be looking at today?

**Cavellier:** I mentioned before that really the focus of coming into the organization, was to help lead the technology transformation and as you said, it is kind of one of the current buzzwords and means different things to different folks. Our focus on transformation really focused on four main areas. The first was our customer experience, we look at Cass our product is our systems and technology that we deliver to our customers. It is front end in terms of the way they interact with our organization, all of our systems within Cass our home-grown they really are the secret sauce of Cass and my people come to do business with us. Our focus more recently in the last year has been around how the customers interact with the systems that they do business with, and we have made significant investments in the user interfaces and the tools that we give our customers.

One of the things that we're seeing, probably most pressing is the need for data within our customer base and we have a long legacy of customer information and data that we've kept in place in the ability to bring that data to them in meaningful ways, is probably top on the list. So a lot of the focus while we'd call ourselves an organization that focuses on payment solutions we're also a business intelligence organization when it comes to delivering the data and the information that our customers need to execute their business. The second pieces around the employee experience, I mentioned that we had brought together a really five different divisions into one group and in the process of doing so I was very conscious of there's what I called muscle memory that individuals had, they were very accustomed to doing things the way they had done for so many years and we had a very long tenureship within Cass.

I wanted to focus on a model that the individuals with the organization saw the preservation of what I'll call the core strengths of our organization, but at the same time started to introduce different ways of developing and leading technology innovation and had to focus on our employees first, one of your speakers recently, and I forget the individual talked about the prioritization of people in technology and he said, "If you get the people right, the technology will fall in place". I deeply believe in that. So we have put together within the organization, training programs, educational programs, restructuring programs and really programs to recruit from outside the organization to bring in the talent and develop the culture that I think is critical for any IT organization. We focused on digital business services, which for us, our core services that we can deliver back to the organization.

Then lastly, the one I probably would emphasize the most is the ecosystem within an IT organization, I believe just about any organization, especially mid-sized organizations such as Cass cannot deliver all of the technology services that are needed within your company and the days are long one of trying to build and deliver everything yourself, internally. And whether those services are around strategy, application development, operations or even... And probably most especially for us, Security Services. So last year we had 66 billion in transactions which came through the organization. And we think if you're the bad guy, you're not looking to break into Fort Knox, because the security systems there are top-of-the-line. Likewise, within Cass we have the same needs of the large organizations from security perspective, but don't have the same level of investment in though, so we do rely deeply on partners to deliver those services for us, and we've done very well with them.

**Nichols:** Well, that's probably the tip of the iceberg, but that gives us a few things that CIOs that are top of mind for CIOs. So this is something extra I would love for you to tell us about the something extra in one of your team members or your team.

**Cavellier:** I have an amazing team. I was blessed coming into the organization to have just a phenomenal group of IT leaders, individuals who know their technology disciplines inside and out. In fact, when I came into the organization, I was so impressed with the staff, I called it the trifecta of an IT organization, and that we had strong technologists. Individuals who also had a high level of business acumen, they knew the businesses that we were focused on and they had an incredible relationship with their business partners. In many cases they're sitting across the aisle, the kids are playing soccer together on the weekend. So we really had all three, which is very unique and fortunate to have but I look at my immediate team, though.

However, in addition to being fantastic, IT leaders and strong in each one of their disciplines, they're outstanding people. And what's interesting is something that you'll never see on a performance review is what type of individual are you... What type of spouse? What type of community leader, how do you give back to the communities in each of the individuals in my organization have a deep dedication to their families, their communities, their churches and really giving back in so many ways, and I believe that outstanding people want to come work with outstanding people, they look for those type of behaviors and characteristics in people and that just starts to breed and bring in more like-minded individuals.

**Nichols:** Absolutely, I believe Birds of a Feather, right? You do want to be... And I always believe that people want to be with people that are like-minded and people that can actually lift them. Iron sharpens iron kind of thing, so that can make them better. And it sounds like that's what you have. So can you think of a time, Jim, where there was something extra missing in you. Requires a little vulnerability here.

**Cavellier:** Sure, well, I can't share out by telling you a funny story. One of my mentors, I have been very fortunate to my career to have individuals who are not my boss, but a mentor in many respects, when I came to work for Comerica who I was always giving me constructive feedback and that was not used to it, at all. I could remember being with them. We drive from Auburn Hills, Michigan... Town to Detroit and I would drive and he'd be in the passenger seat. He'd be doing email, and we'd be having conversations and he would give me feedback such as you didn't say enough in that meeting that really didn't make a difference having you there or you talk too much or you talked a lot, but you didn't say much. Or at dinner when we leave, he'd say you use the wrong fork or you need to learn how to order wine.

I was getting this feedback up all the time, and after, I think it was only a month or two, I remember we were driving in the car together and I asked him, I said, "Should I update my resume? You know because I... I'm always getting feedback that you need to learn to use the right fork and so forth. And I remember he shut his laptop and he looked over at me and he said, Jim the day you need up to your resume is the day I stop giving you constructive feedback, and it was one of the most powerful messages that I've ever received in it was, one, that demonstrated. He had a genuine interest in me as an individual and all of the feedback that he gave me was indeed constructive. And I put feedback in two buckets. There's constructive where you have the individual's best interest in mind, and there's critical right where you're trying to chop them off at the knees and you have to have an element of trust to give an individual constructive feedback. And I think prior to that, I was accustomed to very gratuitous

complementary feedback, which is easy to give, right? You really make yourself vulnerable when you give somebody constructive feedback, but you do so in a way that you really have their best interest in mind.

Prior to that point I never really was focused on that constructed feedback, and it was certainly a changing way of thinking for me and after that, I tried to focus on that I had one individual who came to work in my organization, temporarily, and she was the one who always had kind of a reputation of the organization of being a bit close-minded. And one of our first one-on-ones, I shared with her this feedback and I said, "Are you aware? This is the perception whether the right or wrong". She didn't take it well much as you'd expect with somebody in kind of that frame of mind was upset and she went back. We still had a good relationship, but it was maybe about two years after that. She was promoted within the company to a Senior Vice President, and she came back to me after her promotion and she said, After you gave me that feedback, I couldn't sleep at night. It was the first time somebody really told me things that I needed to change. She said I went out and I hired a life coach. I really started to focus differently. And she said, "I want to thank you because I don't believe I would have gotten this position or promotion had somebody not give me that. So that, for me, I think was like I said, a misstep or something that I hadn't done well in the past.

**Nichols:** There's a lot packed in there, Jim, and I'm just thinking all of us need a mirror because sometimes there is not that self-awareness and you don't see what other people see but I think it's so important if you really care about somebody to say, but do it in a way that is caring and loving. There's those two kinds of feedback right? But when that person has that trust, that yes, you really do have their best interest. How are we going to grow otherwise and especially if we have blind spots and we all do have blind spots. So really, to have that person in your life that is courageous enough that's right to speak up and say, "Hey this may be something you want to look at. I think it's so important.

**Cavellier:** It is. I remember my boss is saying it one time... He said, "You know, really personally I have nothing to gain and everything to lose." He said "You could walk away upset. But I'm really doing this for your, for your growth"

**Nichols:** What do you believe? Is this something extra that every leader needs Jim?

**Cavellier:** There's two things that I focus on and one is the notion of servant leadership. And you had a speaker. I love listening to your podcast first of all. They're fantastic, that mentioned

once that they don't think of their organization as how many people report to them but rather how many people do they report to? The notion of servant leadership, I think, is just that I look at my role in the organization and I see it as my responsibility or my job to set a compelling vision for our organization, one that people can rally behind when that's clear and well-articulated and then to provide my team with the necessary tools and their resources to do their job, and once they have the vision and they have the resources then I need to get out of the way right but they do their... You be there to help to coach and to support, but really to let them do their job.

The second piece that I'd add to that is, what I think of is a genuine care for the people in your organization that it needs to be genuine, you need to really know your team to understand what motivates them, understand their goals, their career goals, their personal goals, and then make their goals your goals and that individuals who at my team who had personal goals around running a marathon, and they needed to take time off for their practice for their training folks who have had personal goals around taking care of family, one individual was focused on being a basketball coach for his son's team and needed to be out at certain times. And when you know, and you have an insight into that individual's personal and professional goals and can help them achieve those, those people will move mountains for you.

**Nichols:** Absolutely, I so believe that well very good. Well, Jim, is there anything coming up that you want to talk about or anything that you want our listening audience to know about?

**Cavellier:** Sure, there's a program here in St. Louis actually that your organization is helped to initiate, which I'm very excited about, and that's our Technical Leadership Experience Program, yourself along with Dan Roberts is what I came to St. Louis and started looking at the transformation within our IT organization, we identified a short list, a small group of individuals who were really the innovators with our organization, my leadership team and I was looking for a way to develop their leadership skills, and being in a mid-sized organization, we don't have the same resources that an IBM would to develop these programs, but I think it was at that time that coincidentally you called me and said, let me tell you about this program that we're bringing to St. Louis, we're very much part of that and I see that is instrumental in how we develop our staff, our own leadership within our organization and I'm so happy to be a part of that program.

**Nichols:** Well, we're so, so glad that you are. And you were one of the first ones when I presented it to you. You said, "I'm in" Because you believe developing your people is one of your primary goals is the CIO.

**Cavellier:** Top-of-the-list.

**Nichols:** Yes. Oh, Jim, this has just been so much fun. Thank you so much for being here.

**Cavellier:** Thank you for having me, it was a pleasure.