How to Advance Your IT Career, with Scott Finkhouse

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SPEAKERS

Scott Finkhouse, Narrator, Aaron Bock, Keith Hawkey

N **Narrator** 00:07

Welcome to the IT Matters podcast, where we explore why IT matters and matters pertaining to IT. Here's your host, Aaron Back.

A **Aaron Bock** 00:17

Welcome, welcome. Thanks for joining the IT Matters podcast again, I'm your host Aaron Bock with my co host Keith Hawkey, Keith how you doing?

K **Keith Hawkey** 00:26

Iâ€™m fantastic. I've been feeling great today because I've been looking forward to our podcast of Scott for weeks. He's had an impressive resume. And in our short conversations leading up is clear to me. He has a lot to add to the IT industry conversation.

A **Aaron Bock** 00:42

That is right. Yeah, Keith. I'm very excited for this one. Today's thank you all for listening. If you haven't subscribed, join us subscribe on Apple podcast, Spotify, Stitcher, or your favorite podcast platform. Scott Finkhouse. Welcome to the show. How are you doing today, Scott?

S **Scott Finkhouse** 00:58

I'm doing good. Well, thanks, Keith. Thanks, Aaron. Appreciate it. I'm excited to be here.

A Aaron Bock 01:02

Yeah! Weâ€™re excited to have you. So for those of you who do not know, Scott, check him out. He's the CIO at Nn, Inc, He's based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Scott is going to tell you a little bit more today about how he got where he's at. And then we're gonna have some, some really just dialogue around he how you advance in IT, some of the challenges along the way, some popular conversations, and then one of the big challenges of balancing budget and risk. So Scott, why don't you tell the listeners a little bit more about yourself, your background, personal, professional, etc.

S Scott Finkhouse 01:37

So I guess I'll start personally, Iâ€™m married, I have a couple of kids, grown boys. And I think that's kind of important, because while I was going through my whole, getting into this position, I was raising my family. And doing that, I think that's something that people that are gonna go into IT have to really think about because IT is a very demanding area. Because as I was telling my guys, no one has a problem, in finance at midnight on a Friday, but they've got to jump on it and work all weekend. And IT does, so you got to be prepared for that . And so I was fortunate to have a very supportive wife, that has allowed me to do the things I needed to do and go to the places I needed to while still raising my family. So I think that's a big thing personally, just to understand any job you have to commit to, but I do think IT has got a lot of crisis situations that come up. And unfortunately, that does get in the way, sometimes and you have to be prepared for it. So going back, my career's probably 30-something years. I started in, I'd have to say to get to where I am today, it probably started with my father owning a small retail business. Because I think it really helped me in my philosophy as an IT person, and that is service. One thing my dad, harped on me and pushed very much, educated me at a young age was your customers, everyone has a customer. In IT we have all kinds of customers, we have internal and we have external customers, and how you service those and how you deal with with, requests, demands, issues, creating relationships, I think relationships are vital in IT, we tend to think of IT people are sitting in a little room, pounding away on a keyboard, programming something, and all of a sudden it shows up on somebody's computer. Those days may have been when I first started, well kind of it was that way, right? We were kind of just started on computers, and you gave people a screen and they were extremely happy because they weren't having to type the same thing every day, we had a big printer that would, print off something, right. So, that's really changed. And again, I'm gonna go back to the service. So when I started, went to school, got my degree in Computer Information Systems, and management, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I came home, went to work for a software company did some sales actually, which was really good for me, knew the product and sell it. And then also I did a little coding, I moved from there, I had to do more coding and work for some smaller places. That was actually really good for me. Because I was able to wear a lot of hats. I was able to learn unique things and then grow on that not have to specialize in one thing. When I was younger I did and people probably don't want to like to hear me say this, but I jumped a few jobs. I'd gave myself two three years to learn a new skill set. And then if where I was working, they didn't have the ability for me to learn something new, I looked for that. And I was very aggressive doing that. But one of the things I found at a young age was no matter what position I was in, going in, and learning and meeting with other departments and other groups, finding out really what were their needs and actually developing a relationship with them, I think is what really helped me figure out where I wanted to go, I was good, technically, but I was not a good programmer, let me just put that out there, no one would ever want to

hire me to be a programmer I guess. But as far as the networking person I am, and I took great pride and I thought it was a thrill to come in. And I could connect some place in another part of the world to where I was, and then we can share data and move data. To me, that was amazing. That was a thrill. But, in working with others where I was different, again, was the going out learning and actually developing relationships with the other departments, finance and sales and operations, I spent a lot of time walking our operations floor, I still do today. And we think most people at our work probably don't even know me, as a CIO, I don't go around, I'll have a tag on I don't act any differently. I still walk the floor with my guys, I think it's important. If I ask them to, in fact I demand it, that, we don't get to just go work in a room and think that we know what's happening down there. So throughout my career, I think that's what's really happened. And then I got into a company, I worked for them on and off over two different steps for over 20 years, started off as just a basic networking guy and worked all the way up to the global director/ VP of the department. That was before I came here to NN. And I would say the reason I got that was because I worked with all the different departments, and I made a point to learn and to be with them and find out what they needed. So I think that's important.

A Aaron Bock 07:09

And I think that's great. And so Scott, we on previous shows, with some of our other guests who have been in IT roles and leadership, it's very common for us to hear, you know, I was working in a different part of IT or in finance, or I was doing this and that. And so it seems to be a theme. And so, on that topic, I guess a question for you is you've held all kinds of different roles. So two questions for you that I'd love for you to kind of answer and give advice on for our listeners. One is, you said you went to get a cis degree, basically, but you didn't really know what you wanted to do. And now you're a CIO, did you know that? And how did you figure out that you wanted to eventually do that? And then the second thing is, there's a big debate going on right now, for kids that are going to college or coming out of high school? Do they go to college for a computer science degree or a data analytics degree? Or did they go get experience first? And with you having all the experience? I'm curious to hear your thoughts and and what you would tell, a high school junior who's looking at their options, and how they evaluate that.

S Scott Finkhouse 08:15

good questions. So, no, I don't think I ever really knew I was going to be a CIO. I'm not even sure when I started that I would have really thought of what that was. I think I knew I wanted to manage people, I enjoy building teams. I was big in sports. I excelled in that I was able to bring people together. And I think, you know, Captain and stuff like that. I always thought of people working together towards a common goal, you could get so much more done. I was never afraid. And I'm still not today of having people that are better than me around me. I go by the old Reagan thing when he wanted to be president. And I'm not gonna get this exactly right. I was pretty young. But I remember when somebody asked him, How does a spaghetti western star, the level spaghetti western star? How does he think he could be President of the United States? He said, because I'd hire the smartest people around me that love to do their jobs, that was resignated. That made a lot of sense to me. And I don't know if everyone is like that. I'm not threatened by that. I think that's how great teams happen. And so I think it didn't take me too long to figure out that I really liked the technical side. But I really enjoy being in the meetings with the management, trying to figure out the challenges of where we were and

where we needed to go and what were we missing? How did we get that, I love being having a chair I sat in front of me and trying to figure it out, it's a puzzle. How do we do it knowing our constraints and figuring out those constraints and there's different ways of doing it, too. So to me, that's the excitement. And then as I started going up through and I think the hardest thing for all technical people, and I don't know if this is exactly right. But I heard it in engineers, and in IT, which are technical people in general, that 80% of those people fail when they try to get into management. And the biggest reason for that is they can't lose their technical side, I had that problem. In fact, one of the guys is working for me now, itâ€™s his second round with me, he worked with, he laughed, got a better job. And came back, when I hired them. I asked him to go create the servers get some stuff going. And he went down, and he was working in our server room. And next thing, I was next to him. And I started working on it with him. And he looked at me goes : â€œ Am I doing this or are you doing this?â€ And I was like, â€œeoh, ohâ€. And he was like, â€œWell, if you're going to do it all the time, how am I going to learn?â€ And I was like, â€œNo, but I can do it quickerâ€. And we had to have this little discussion. And I was like, â€œokay, youâ€™re right, if I'm always doing it, you're never gonna do it and how I'm going to build your skill setâ€. And I think it was my fear of losing that technical side. And you have to be prepared to do that. You will not be that technical person, I don't have the time to now get into the nuts and bolts and stay up with the changes that happen. But I think once I got to that point, I knew I wanted to go as high as I could. I didn't know if I was gonna be CIO, but I knew I wanted to go as high as I could, education. I kind of split on that. I think that's a great question. We are very active in Nn. With co ops. And we've actually, over the last couple of years, since I've been the CIO, have had three or four different high school co ops. And we currently have one right now, who will be over two years with us, we got them before his junior year. He just knew somebody in our company came in and wasn't sure what he wanted to do. He liked technology, liked computers. But yeah, there's security, cybersecurity, there's networking, there's programming, there's, bi, business intelligence, there's infrastructure in general, servers, server teams, what do you choose? That's pretty tough. So we're bringing people in like that, letting them do a certain amount of time in one area, and then exposing them to several, and then finding out what they can start gravitating to and I think that's really important. So I think education is important, depending on what your goals might be, if you want to get into management, if you want to go up in that level, there are the ceilings if you don't have degrees, and you can be the best technical person out there. But they will limit your ability to move up. I don't feel that way with the technical people, though.

A Aaron Bock 13:14

So I guess, do you think you made a really interesting point. So if you're really technical, and you want to be technical, it's going to be tough to manage and make sure other people are doing like you've said, I can't be the one configuring the server, I can't be the one taking the call. I need someone else to do that. But for those that are super technical, and there are folks that are very technical and very skilled, do they end up going the path of like a CTO? Or how does someone that is very technical, who wants to stay very technical and keep that knowledge? Like how do they go into leadership? Or is there not really a path?

S Scott Finkhouse 13:56

Well, that's a great question. Yeah, I would think, I'm not a CTO. But I think that would depend on the industry you're into. If you're obviously in a in a technology driven industry, we're in manufacturing, technology is extremely important to us, We're driven by technology, but

different ways. I took my C ISO course this summer, and I was thinking there were some people that were very technical at that level. And there was a couple of people that were gonna go into CTO , but they were in technology driven organizations or industries. I can see that possibly because they would have that, but I still think that guess is there's going to be limitations when you start putting officers or you start talking executive management people they tend to want degrees. Most of the people I see that that really excel, if they're technically driven, is they'll become level three like Cisco engineers, high level Windows engineers. Those people, I mean you can raise your paycheck on those, we're all needing them, right. And they'll work for big service organizations, if they only have to be ready to work for big organizations, because they're so gifted the companies my size, when I don't have a need for Level Three all the time, I just I need them every now and then. Or in certain times. But that that's, but most of the people that that technical, that's what they want to do. And I've had a few that have come through a band, they're great. But a really just as much as we try to develop relationships and get in front of people, you got to do that. They just didn't excel in that, but put them on a router or put them in that area in lowball, now they're working for the big cloud based companies. So there's great opportunities there.

A Aaron Bock 15:51

And I guess going back Yeah, and I agree. By the way, I want to tell you we're not saying anything about "if you want to be technical, don't do that. Because you can't be no leader". I think it's just an interesting phenomenon. And we see it all the time, you know, here at Opkalla because you have the folks that are in the trenches, and they're on the help desk. And they're the network admins. And these guys know, technically, they're wizards. They know everything. But like you said, and what I really appreciate what you said, Scott about, "I really want my people to go walk the floor, walk the line, go see finance, you want them to get the experience from the business, because that's the way they're going to learn cross functional and the business, what are we actually supporting? Who are our customers. And so I think what you're saying is the ability to kind of do that and think kind of above the technical and how we support our end users is the most important thing that you can do.

S Scott Finkhouse 16:49

It is, because if you don't understand their job, if you can't walk a mile in their shoes, I'm gonna go back to my dad, he was a commercial fisherman. And not technical at all, there was no technology in that whatsoever. But I thought being his son, I was gifted to not have to do certain jobs. And he quickly corrected me and we had a crew that worked for us. And I just thought I didn't have to do certain things that I thought were below me. And he forced me to do those. And he said, If you don't know how to those, you can't manage people, and expect them to follow you, if you haven't done it before, and you don't know what it takes to do that. And I and I think that has helped me tremendously through my career. Even raising my children that way, right, understand what you're asking others to do. And I think that's the saying you can't be a programmer. 30 years ago, maybe you can be a programmer and get away with that. I don't think you should or could do that anymore. You have to know, the same as even just networking, you have to understand what is it what's happening to the end user, walk with them, talk with them. And create a relationship with them. I can't stress that enough. Because when somebody has a relationship with you, if I know you, Aaron is Aaron and you Keith is Keith, it's much harder for me not to work with you on a problem, than if you're just a nobody

to me. And I'm angry because face it when most people call a help desk or contact us. It's not because things are working great. It's because something's not doing what it needs to do, and they can't get their jobs done. And that's what we have to remember too, they're there to do a job and our systems, our applications help them, but those don't work, they're upset because they can't get their job done. And if you have a relationship, they're much better, much more willing to work with you, and walk you through it. And I think that it doesn't only helps them and helps us to, hopefully that makes sense.

K Keith Hawkey 18:55

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I mean, business at its core is relationships, and more and more of the IT department, just as you were alluding is turning into much more of a business function than a simple cost center and a technology department, you are solving the business problems and often you're making or breaking whether a company is possibly turning at profit or not at the end of the day based on your utilization. So yeah, relationships are becoming more and more important, just as you said, switching gears, you manage a large manufacturing organization from a CIO perspective. And we all know manufacturing, they don't get to enjoy some of the high profit margins of a business services organization or a technology company or perhaps a social media company. How do you go about managing risk versus investment in the IT? Some of your strategies, I guess, do you have a story you around that's fascinating to me?

S Scott Finkhouse 20:03

Yeah, that's. So I've been in manufacturing now, for over 20 plus years of my 30 plus years. So it's something I fell in love with, because, a lot of it's been automotive. But manufacturing is kind of manufacturing. And I love the speed and the intensity of it. So I always tell people when they interview, be careful, because Automotive is pretty rapid. But you're absolutely right. It's a low margin. And typically, what we have to buy to run the machines, they have to use our multimillion dollar machines. And their plan is to run those for 20 years. Technology, how much has technology changed 20 years? a lot. So what I think has happened. And what we talked about a lot in our IT meetings is what I think is starting to come is this ramming, coming in two different worlds, we have to become cybersecurity aware. And operations just need to run things for a long time, because that's how they make money is you run and utilize the machines for 20 years. So what we commonly run into is vendors and all these big machines don't have a good path of how to keep things secure. Either they're making what the CNC machines and others will do. Now, it's amazing. That side of it, but on the back end on the embedded boards, it's very old technology. So how do we keep that in our environment, which we have to, my meetings with my board? isn't about the cool things that IT is doing, It's like," hey, well, we developed a whole new program, this is really cool". It's about are we secure? How are we doing what we need to because we're all seeing all the cybersecurity the ransomware issues out there. So what are we doing to make ourselves better? All right? So here's the dichotomy, right? they want to run things forever, and we got to be secure. So currently, the situation we're at right now we have tons of machines on our floor. And, these all cost 80,000 100,000 million dollars, half a million dollars a box, and they run old operating systems that are unsupported or they're going off and a life and you talk to the vendor, there's no plans to move forward with those. Well, again, it goes back to you, you have to create a good relationship with operations because, they've got to make the money, we don't make money for the company. But boy, IT sure can lose a lot of money. I mean, if things happen, they

go wrong, it could be a huge expense. So you know, there's the old thing is you can take these old machines, and you can see laying them off separate them totally from half of your part of your network. But the problem today, is these machines communicate and we get OEE, so the utilization of the machines, that stuff's all gotta come in. Well, if you separate those, now you're working on control access less? Well, things don't work, things get blocked, and operations are spending more time, having worked through the boundaries of the barriers we're putting up there, because well, they're just as secure enough. So one of the things that we did is, I was put in front of our group as we found a company that kind of lets us geofence all the machines. So it's kind of like your cell phones, you can sit right next to somebody and text them which unfortunately, a lot of people do, right? Well, cell phone doesn't just go five feet and talk to that line, it goes to a tower and it comes back. So everything centralizes in and scrubs that information. So what we found was the ability to take all of our devices without having to put any application on or anything else. It's just a straight, it's a sub net change, where we force it to communicate with one device, nothing can talk east and west, it's kind of talk north and south and ultimately can go east and west, after it goes north and south and we scrubbed our packets. So we feel through a very affordable, much more affordable solution than if we went back and told them that, "hey, you got to replace 14 of these one devices that we have on our shop floor that range at least around $1,000 piece", which by the way, they run Windows 10. Windows 10 is going to be unsupported in a year and a half. There's absolutely no plan for those to be upgraded. So all right, can't afford that right. That's just one location. That's millions of dollars. Well, for just 10s of 1000s of dollars. We found a way to , and now we can keep those in our network and we can only allow it to speak One way and if an engineer has to program it, we can allow one device to and it's very graphical very easy for us, it doesn't take a tremendous amount, of IT power. So that's some of the things that we've done is you just have to find, I think, more inventive ways to be as secure as you can be. There's risk in everything we do. There's risking getting into our car to go to the grocery store, there's risk that we will always carry no matter what we do. We're just trying to minimize that then. So that's kind of what we're doing.

A Aaron Bock 25:30

you said, what in technology has changed in 20 years, what 2002 I was on my way to go pick up the new Eminem CD that I was going to pop in my anti Skip 45 second CD player or Walkman or whatever, with my new over the year, headphones, my how things have changed with just our personal technology.

S Scott Finkhouse 25:53

And I remember the CD, five disc device where you can rotate it, and that was great.

A Aaron Bock 26:02

You had a pull on the side of the road to change a CD because the the five CD changer was in your trunk.

S Scott Finkhouse 26:07

Yeah it was in your trunk, but you have to shuffle and to kick it. You know, 80 different songs could play. That was great. So yeah, so technology's changing.

K Keith Hawkey 26:16

That was cutting edge, back then. Bleeding edge technology. And I love your story, Scott about about how there's a business problem. And there's a security risk to your your in solution, your point your infrastructure, and you can't just go to the board and say we need to go spend another hundreds of 1000s of dollars to replace these. And it's only marginally going to make us more secure. Yeah, that's a great story of how you guys had to roll up your sleeves, redesign the architecture to solve a business problem. And that leads me to my next question. And this is something that a lot of CIOs and IT leaders in general having to do more and more traditionally, IT leaders have to interface with the financial officers, the CFOs, the controllers to get budgets passed, but more and more today. IT leaders are a part of the executive team, they are there. They're underneath the CEO, and they're having to sell or pitch their ideas of making it changes to an executive council. What are some of the strategies that that you would tell an up and coming it leader when he or she is confronted with a board? And what are some of the strategies they can do to get their message across and speak the language of the leaders of these different departments? Like what do they care about? How do you finesse? I'm sure there's a little bit of a science and a little bit of an art, but just what are your thoughts around that?

S Scott Finkhouse 27:49

Ah, well, that's a great question, first off, I think that there is a change that's happening over the last few years is the IT the CIO has to have a seat at the big table. So much has been asked of us Technology is everywhere. There's nothing that we do today that, unfortunately, don't have some technology to it. So you know, with that responsibility, you have to have the ability to act and do the things. So I think that the key is demanding or if you're going to take that, make sure that you have the authority and the ability to enact and make change that needs to be done. How do you discuss with the board, I don't I did it. So when I had to talk to our board, they really didn't know where we sat. We had a big change over we had a CEO and some other people, we have big flip. And then I became a CIO with that flip. And I was the first CIO in several years of our company that actually spoke to the to the board directly. So I speak to them every quarter. I think the first thing , for me, it was very important and I said this to our CIOs when I first came in, and before I became that is they said, "What do you think I'm failing?" And I said, "Well, I think the biggest failure out is you're not understanding your customer". And that would be the EVP of operations, your CFO, what do they need? What are they hearing? Go to the sites understand that. So when I became the CIO, and I reported to the CEO, I'm lucky is we have a very good relationship with our CEO, and I asked him point blank, what what do you want to hear from me? I know what I want to say, but what do you what do they know? What do they think? And he said, "well, first off, you got to be you. And I think that's the first thing is you got to be you. And we know what's wrong. The thing is, is they didn't know it. So first, set the standard and when you meet with them the first time, honesty is the key". I don't sugarcoat a lot. I too think I made my board hyperventilate a little bit, the first time I met with them, where we really were, but I had to set expectations, you've got to create a standard, where are you today? And then, this is where we are and, how are we going to get in, where do we want to be, we want to get to this level up here. And then, what I was able to do

was to set that, and then part of my first meeting was, this is what we're going to do next. So this is what we're going to do next. And then I know I'm going to meet with you every quarter, I'm going to give you an update on that and tell you where we're gonna go from there. So, and I can tell you right now, boards are scared to death. While cybersecurity, it's just, that was my key, I really focused on the security of our company, where we weren't, and where we were going to be and how we were going to get there and what it was going to take. And I told them, If you gave me this budget, then we were able to do this, we would get here in the next few years. And I think we're right on track with that we've had our ups and downs. And again, but be honest about it, I will sit in two weeks with our board. And I'm gonna tell them that we missed out a couple of things, we're off by another quarter, well, we thought we're gonna get done this year, we're not gonna get done by until the first quarter of next year, because there were more things that we didn't know when we got into some application systems that we had to work through. But maybe I'm lucky in that central Pi board, we've gotten a good relationship, they've got my number, they can call me directly, and ask me any question, and I'll answer it to the best of my ability. So

A Aaron Bock 31:34

I think it's really a great point, though, to be honest, because if you don't, it's not going to help you, it's only going to make your job harder. I remember I used to have to audit, fortune 500 companies. And I remember, there was a great CIO, that I used to get to go to the steering committees. And I remember, there was this one steering committee, pretty much every project they had was behind schedule, and he knew it. But we showed up and we were watching them each kind of project owner present. And they were using the green, yellow, red or whatever. And everything was green, but one project was yellow. And it was like, after they all got done 55 minutes presenting, he said, "We're gonna meet again, tomorrow, this time, clear your calendars. Every single one of our projects is off pace, but you guys just presented everything as green". And he knew the only way to change that organization was to be honest about the progress so that they could figure out where do we focus, because, he kind of came in and said we don't focus on anything. We just focus on reporting good results. So I think it's great.

S Scott Finkhouse 32:47

Can I tag on? So I think it's definitely important for you to be honest, upward. But I think what you have to be able to do,the people that report to you, you've got to allow them to fail, no one achieves levels, if they're reporting directly to me. They've already achieved certain levels, they've already done things. No one's gotten there by failing their whole life. I mean, it just isn't right. But we all fail at some point throughout the day. I mean, there's whatever, right? I mean, maybe I fail in getting enough steps in for the day. But, you've got to allow and you can't have an environment where your people are so scared to fail, because that is failure in itself. And I know people, I've talked about that in the past are for that, too. But if you talk to anybody, it works for me, we have heart to hearts. I mean, I hold people accountable. And just because other people are held to this level doesn't mean that we're not, I don't buy into that. I don't do that life. And I don't do that in work. I mean, there's a standard that we're going to do. But sometimes things happen and with everything you can put into it, you just can't get it done in the timeframe, or something happened and it was not what you expected. But you have to allow that and learn from that. My biggest thing, is that's okay, we don't work to fail. But we

better learn from it, what I don't accept from, my group is failing on the same thing over and over and over. If you don't learn, that's a problem. But, sometimes in failure, there's a lot of growth and learning. But again, not that you try to fail, but it does happen, just be honest about it and learn from it, but allow people to do what they're supposed to do and it will happen once in a while. But that's okay.

A Aaron Bock 34:39

And you bringing the conversation all the way back to the beginning like earlier you said, " if I do the job versus lead the person who's supposed to do the job, they're gonna continue to fail by you helping them and not letting them succeed". And so, I think one of the challenges is, you want people to fail and fail fast. But my point is basically in short that, like you have to let people fail. And then it's like you said, you have to coach and help them understand what did you do wrong? So they don't get it wrong again? And then, you know, to Keith's question and what you answered about, showing, where are we honestly, at? I imagine the other thing is, is that not only it's saying, Where are we honestly at, but here's the roadmap, here's the plan for how we're going to get better. And if you have that, you can say, this is how we're going to do it. If you don't have the plan. I think that's where people start to question. "Hmm, I don't know".

S Scott Finkhouse 35:36

For it if I didn't have a plan. I mean, you can't plan for everything, right? But you got to have a strategy and a plan of where are we going to be in 24? Because we're at 22. Right now, my group, we're already playing the 24 and 25, where we're going to be and then the next round is going to be 27, when the next round of Windows operating systems become unsupported. Right. So where are you going to be before that? you can't wait till 26, 27 To do that. You got to get ahead of it. Because when we have hundreds and hundreds of servers and 1000s of applications. If you wait until that wall is right there in front of you. you're already in trouble. And I think that's the big key.

A Aaron Bock 36:20

Yeah. And I would say Well, I 100% agree. So I guess going back, Scott, you mentioned. You said "I love manufacturing, because of the pace because you're making something out of nothing. And it's a really cool industry. It is a competitive industry. It's a sometimes low margin industry. I'm curious to hear your thoughts on manufacturing as a whole. And I know there's tons different manufacturing, what are some of the trends in IT specifically for manufacturing, that you think that we're gonna be talking about in the next three 5, 10 years that you're paying attention to?

S Scott Finkhouse 37:01

Well, I think, obviously foremost is cybersecurity, because of our industry. I mean, if you like Colonial Pipeline, if you take a lot of these manufacturers, one of things you're gonna find is they run old ERP systems, because they have they run them for 25 years, and they do exactly what they need, I think we're going to see and this is kind of a big push at our company,

manufacturers love to repeat, do the same thing over right, and they just do better. Well, that's not IT. That's not technology technology reinvents itself all the time. And one of the things that I had to work with, people on the shop floor is updating old applications, we have a lot of internal, so we rewrite up. And they're like, but it's changed, I don't like to change. So change management is a huge thing, especially for people that that's what they do. They're wonderful. They're just amazing at how they run a machine. But they don't like change. So I just brought up my iPhone, and I'm like, "you guys have, these changes all the time". And so, it's creating that relationship explaining to them because you can always tell the executive team, "you guys tell management where you're going", the thing that even myself, you still have to work on is that communication down to the actual end user and letting them know ahead of time what's coming and why we're doing this is what we're doing. This is where we're achieving it.and, by the way, we're going to make changes that next month may seem worse for you. And sometimes we're going to take a step back, we have to, we're taking a step back, it'll seem like oh my gosh, this is the dumbest thing in the world. But that all sudden, the next three steps will come real fast and you'll see it, so I think that's a huge thing is to to get ahead and to try to figure out and work with your operations in your different facilities manufacturing in general. And how can we become as secure as we can reduce our footprint and be where we are and then I think the next is we love to gather data manufacturing, manufacturing just loves to get "Oh, give me all this data". And then we have this huge amounts of just sitting there and this person does this with and this person does this with and Excel files run everywhere because everybody loves Excel. I think the next thing and I think we're already in that revolution, but we're really getting into it is the BI is actually taking ETL is out there that we can take and pull data because we have so many different types of machines and storage. How do we get that in and put it into one I'm a huge person into standardization. IT we're going back to a centralized IT environment we've have 27 different manufacturing facilities globally. And when I got here we had over 50 in every one of them the goal before I was prior to me was everyone would have their own little IT, server room. I've shut that down and said "No, we're pulling it all back." Because I can't change 50 different locations and keep them where they should be. I can change one, and have those people come in. So you know, it's almost like what was old is coming back again, the the old mainframe, we're not running any frames, but the old thought is one too many? Well, I believe in that it works for us in our environment. I'm not saying it does for everyone. But if we can change, so we have 1000s of satellite stations on the shop floor, so they can do, real time ship production logs, so they can, tell them what we're producing scrap and everything else. If we change if everyone had their own, which they did when I first got here, how old do you think you hold It and everything? And how could you keep things updated? So now we run it off one central? Yes, there's negatives to that. But the positive is I can make an update. And I can push it out to 1000s of different, end users globally, in minutes. And it doesn't take a staff of 100, one person can do it. And I think that you've got to dowith less, I was told a long time ago by a guy is, "you got to learn how to do more with less". Because just because we had another location doesn't mean I get to add three more IT people, it just doesn't work that way. So how do you learn to do more with less? That's, I think that's where IT is going or manufacturing in general with it.

K Keith Hawkey 41:31

That yeah, that's a great statement. It's amazing to see the cycles that the IT industry goes through it's always cyclical, diversified. Now moving back into more of a centralized environment that's serving you well, and your organization, Scott, and we're running up on time here. In closing, we'd love to ask a question to everyone that joins our podcasts in closing here. So I'm going to paint the scenario for you, Scott, everywhere around the world.

Everyone's device, television set, digital billboard, everything goes black. And then what appears is Scott Finkhouse's space. What message about technology would you say if you had the chance to everyone around the world?

S Scott Finkhouse 42:27

About technology. That's a great question. Now I'm not sure if he's gonna like to see it my face. But you know, it's funny because being in technology, I think that right now, we have got to figure some things out the the youth right now talks about like, work life balance, it's really important to them, I think we need to get to a technology balance in our world. And I do technology, right? We all do. It's, it's amazing. You sit down and everybody's on their phone, I think that if we're not careful, we're going to lose the ability to communicate the way we should. And it goes back to where I make my people walk the floor, you got to talk to people, there's even COVID, we all learn how to work remotely, I'm working remotely, most of the time too. But there's still nothing quite like being in a room with people seeing body language. And you can get a lot off from that. So I think what we've got to be careful of today is it's very easy to buy everything online and shipped right to your door, you open your door up, you grab it, you can go and get gas, you never have to see anybody right, you put your card and youe gas up, I do that too. But at some point, we're going to lose ourselves. And the small communities? you know , today, if you buy a lawnmower online, it shipped to your house, if that lawnmower doesn't work tomorrow? How does that get fixed? And I think that, technology is wonderful. But we really have to be careful that it's not so much of our lives, we don't know how to do the rest. Again, coming back from a dad, my father had a small little store. But you know, if you could just do that online, he wouldn't have had that interactions that people would have had and to be able to do what we did. And I just think that that's something we've got to be very careful of is just not losing the ability to the communication, one on one face to face, really understanding people because that's how you do it. And then not losing just our small businesses. I think our small businesses are probably you know, we're on a cusp right now at the small model cusp, will they survive? Or will everything just be digital? And then if everything's digital, where you go if something's wrong with that? So I don't know if that answers your question, but I think we gotta get a balance in the technology world.

A Aaron Bock 44:53

I actually hope that Keith's scenario comes through and that you do pop up on everyone's screen all around the world. Because I think it's a great message. I do think that technology was made to help us do our jobs better not do our jobs for us and not do life for us. And I think you're right. We are in a place where everyone is so dependent on tech, do we know how to do things on our own? So I actually kind of hope this never happens. I hope it doesn't happen often.

K Keith Hawkey 45:25

Every morning, we wake up to Scott Finkhouse.

A Aaron Bock 45:33

Yeah!

S Scott Finkhouse 45:35

I think we would have to talk a lot of psychological people on how there'd be some issues, I think,

A Aaron Bock 45:42

we probably couldn't take over. But yeah, Scott, thank you for joining the show. I know that this has been a great show. Our listeners will get a lot out of this. I guess in closing, what the easiest way to get in touch with you if someone listening has a question for you.

S Scott Finkhouse 45:56

Well, I'm always I'm on LinkedIn. So if you ever want to connect, I love connecting and communicating with people. And you know, my email address is Scott.finkhouse@nn.com Yeah, I'd love to communicate with anybody. I love mentoring younger people. Like I said, building teams, I've had, I think, a lot of success for people that have worked with me and moved on to better positions, and I'm very proud of that. Never fine to lose people. But I always tell everybody, I didn't start with an end at this position. So I don't expect everybody else to do that. And I wish them the best of luck. So

A Aaron Bock 46:36

Yeah, well, I thought you had a lot of great advice. And so we're excited. We'll put some of this in the show notes. For those listeners out there. Thank you for always joining us and loyally listening to our show. If you have any suggestions for us. Email us find us on LinkedIn, or check us out online and subscribe on your favorite podcast station. Thanks for joining have a great day and we'll talk to everyone soon.

S Scott Finkhouse 47:00

Thank you.

N Narrator 47:02

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