



Trust X Alliance Member Q&A

Cathy Vankesteren, Senior Vice President, End to End Networks

Cathy Vankesteren, End to End Networks senior VP, has helped her company grow to a 53-employee, global NOC/SOC provider. End to End thrives by hiring the right people, building the right culture and delivering the types of service and support today's customers demand.

Start at the beginning. When and why did you start your business?

End to End Networks launched in 1993 to provide help desk services for wide area networks (WANs). Our goal was to provide service beyond "break/fix." We developed and brought to market tools, systems and processes to proactively monitor and manage WANs. I was employee #3—the two founders and me. Our CTO, Heath Freel—employee #4—became president in 2015 shortly after we relaunched our business.

Today, we operate a 24/7, fully staffed network operations center (NOC) and security operations center (SOC), primarily for midmarket and enterprise in the manufacturing, logistics and retail verticals. Our NOC/SOC headquartered in North America is a live-answer, technical service desk—no call center agents and no off-shore resources. The first touch is an End to End Networks Security technician actively working on issues and requirements. Our customers' operations span North America, Asia Pacific, Europe and South America. We're actively managing 18,000 network devices—

routers, VPN gateways, firewalls, access points, switches, etc.—on prem and in the cloud. The bigger, broader and more complex our customers' network infrastructures are, the better.

What are the most common needs of your customers? How have you seen that evolve in the last few years?

Uptime. Our customers' business operations are 24/7 with product that needs to be moved and shipped and services that need to be delivered continuously, and where seconds count. We weren't always a 24/7 operation. Round the clock support began 15 years ago (2003) as the industry's service level agreements (SLAs) were evolving to next-day response (including weekends), and then after-hours call out/page out with 4-hour turnaround. Now SLAs have a 5-minute response time following an alert and resolution also within minutes. When we started the company, our management tools were disparate and didn't support the SLAs needed, so we built our own fully integrated CMDB (configuration management database), RMM,

ticketing and reporting system with a full customer portal, which we call the eView platform. Now, all of our customer network and security infrastructures are managed by the eView platform.

If you could go back, what would you do differently with the business and why?

There are two things:

1. Remain focused on our core business and our core market and not be distracted by trying to be all things to all people. We lost time and money attempting to be successful in doing the latter. About 10 years ago, we tried going downmarket to SMB, providing full network, desktop and server management. Since SMBs usually have no internal IT and no economies of scale, this outsourcing model required a completely different skill set, different resources, a different type of service and didn't align with our culture. Dealing with end users vs. an internal IT team diluted our core business and attempting to shift skill sets into other areas didn't work.
2. Invest more, and sooner, in our eView management platform. It's proven to be one of our key differentiators and value propositions. Today, we're investing heavily in automation and business intelligence to make eView an even more effective management tool.

With so much emphasis on the customer experience, what are customers looking for in and from a technology business advisor such as you? How is that impacting your business?

Customers are looking for trusted relationships, consistency and reliability. It's our people that make the difference and create longstanding, trusted relationships with our customers. We invest heavily in:

1. Retention by creating an innovative, open, collaborative and fun culture and environment to work in and build strong teams.

2. Recruiting for the right mindset—we've created a close alignment with local colleges where we have direct input into curriculum, participate in mentorship and internship programs to help develop young talent for today's workplace.
3. Signing up and keeping customers that value our business, our service model and our people.

We participate in Trust X Alliance's Mastermind program and measure and manage our business based on Paul Dippel's best-in-class Service Leadership Index (SLI). We're 100% accountable to our Mastermind group members for profitability and growth targets. We work together with our employees to ensure that they're reaching their full potential. We conduct monthly performance reviews and incentivize employees with rewards and recognition. We share balanced scorecards on finance, sales and operations with all of our employees—the entire company knows how our business is doing at all times.

We also respect the fact that our customers rely on us to do what we say, every time, and we know you only have one chance to create a good first impression. Two years ago, we launched our own internal PMO (project management office) and formalized our onboarding process for new customers. This has streamlined customer onboarding and improved our customer satisfaction (SAT) rates tremendously. Our PMO team has been expanding at the same rate that our business continues to grow.

We also realize our customers want to understand where they've been and where they're going. Our regularly-scheduled CBRs (customer business reviews) are key to providing that insight and direction. We're continually looking for opportunities to provide better data, faster, and with a better understanding of the story the data is telling us.

How has your company's role changed over the years?

We've always aspired to be an extension of our customers' IT teams and operations, and this has come to fruition in recent years. Bringing together people, processes and systems is imperative. APIs are now able to facilitate seamless integration of eView with customer IT service management (ITSM) systems, such as ServiceNow, Cherwell and FreshService. We also participate on customers' IT steering committees, partner advisory boards and other strategic planning initiatives.

What's your company doing to stay ahead of technology trends and business model shifts?

Keeping up with technology trends is a constant battle, and we rely on our vendor partners and Ingram Micro to do this.

To share what we learn with our customers:

1. End to End maintains a regular one-on-one cadence (i.e., CBRs) with our customers.
2. We actively blog to help our customers separate the wheat from the chaff when it comes to technology innovations and conduct regular POCs.
3. We host events that are cosponsored by our vendor partners.

How has Trust X Alliance positively impacted your business?

We attribute a large part of our growth over the last four years to TXA—specifically, participation by our president, Heath Freel, in Mastermind, my involvement in the TXA Council and the many successful partnerships we've developed across our TXA community.

What has surprised you most about being part of Trust X Alliance?

The openness and transparency of sharing individual business practices. I'm impressed by the level of commitment and dedication to service excellence when partnering to deliver technology solutions together to our respective end customers—it's second to none.

Just a few more details:

Service specializations:

Networking, security, wireless, unified communications

Percentage of growth, 2016 to 2017: 16%

Headquarters: Markham, Ontario

Reach: Global

Number of office locations:

1 office, 4 data centers/POPs

Best business advice ever received:

Give the most challenging, complex work to the most junior people who can manage it. The rewards are endless—it allows them to demonstrate their abilities and live up to their potential; it affords senior team members the time to be more strategic; your organization becomes more resilient and able to take on new opportunities and address challenges faster.

End to End Networks: www.endtoend.com

Social sites:   

www.trustxalliance.com

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