

THE 10 MOST INSPIRING BUSINESS LEADERS TO FOLLOW IN 2021

# CIO VIEWS

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## PYXIS CULTURE TECHNOLOGIES

LINKING RISK, CULTURE AND  
BUSINESS PERFORMANCE.

Helping Companies  
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COVER STORY

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Christiane Wuillamie met John Childress 25 years ago, she knew her background in IT management and John's expertise in organizational culture would be the perfect combination. She envisioned using their experiences and expertise to improve the culture and performance of organizations around the world. Although it took time for that vision to come to fruition, they have finally teamed up, resulting in the creation of PYXIS Culture Technologies, a company providing a disruptive approach to culture.

#### An Unstoppable Duo

Neither Christiane nor John is new to starting and running a successful company. In 1978, John co-founded an international consulting firm called Senn Delaney that focused on helping

senior leaders understand and manage corporate culture. When John started, he explains that there was almost no understanding of culture and how it applies to business. He goes on to explain how they believed in the principle that “organizations are shadows of their leaders”, and therefore company performance and employee engagement needed to be led by management.

In 1994, while John was growing his consulting firm, Christiane was starting CWB Systems Services, an international consulting, software, and managed services company. The company provided emergency IT projects rescue on a fixed fee and fixed deadline basis. CWB worked with clients who had failed IT projects, by bringing in a team to work alongside the client team. The client team had insight into why the project had failed, and Christiane's team had the

expertise to make the project successful. Throughout the process, Christiane's team would provide education and training to the client employees, while documenting the process to ensure the client could deliver successful projects in the future. Christiane had a policy and was adamant that the client team would receive all the recognition for successful project implementations.

It was during her time running CWB that Christiane met John when she hired him to help her company with culture. At the time, she admits that she did not know much about culture, but her company was rapidly growing, so she allowed John to come in and conduct his workshops, which opened

Christiane's eyes up to culture and helped shape the culture she created within her company.

Christiane saw the potential that she and John could have together. With his experience and understanding of culture and inventive ways to make it work, coupled with her practical side and the ability to make it sustainable, she knew they would be an unstoppable force. After 15 years of persuading John to go into business with her, they started PYXIS Culture Technologies in 2018.

#### About the Company

Christiane explains how culture is an overused word and is often misunderstood. Organizations tend to view culture as the responsibility of the HR department and the term is generally used synonymously with vision, values, and employee engagement. However, PYXIS Culture Technologies believes culture is a business issue, and management is responsible for the culture of the company. The company redefines culture as a “business ecosystem”, which shifts the focus towards factors inside the organization that create and sustain culture while driving business performance. They use analytics and ecosystem mapping to identify the factors that create and sustain corporate culture and impact business results. With this approach, an organization can identify hidden business risks and link culture to business outcomes.

PYXIS has developed a profound approach to critical business issues such as digital transformation, cybersecurity, risk conduct, safety, customer satisfaction, strategy execution, innovation, employee engagement, and leadership. PYXIS'

culture management platform identifies and reduces culture-related risk while putting an organization's internal team in charge of proactively managing culture. The culture map displays culture drivers, which are all connected in a culture ecosystem. The metrics of the culture map come from qualitative and quantitative company information and operative data. The platform provides a visual that allows an organization to see the impact all the drivers have on business results while showing the organization where they can make the most effective improvements. For each driver, the platform provides a library of best practices to aid organizations in selecting which cultural improvement programs they should implement. The goal is to impact business results by determining the current culture, targeting the risk factors, implementing best practices, and then improving and measuring business results. With PYXIS' experience, methodology, technology, and support they help each organization operationalize and manage a healthy culture.

PYXIS' approach differs from other consulting firms because they combine over forty years of experience in researching, studying, and supporting leadership teams to understand how culture impacts performance. Additionally, they bring years of experience in culture transformation, digital transformation, and business turnarounds. The company believes that the best way to promote and sustain culture is through internal employees, not consultants. Therefore, the company prides itself on operationalizing culture and transferring the skills to internal teams.

PYXIS is an innovative, one of its kind company. Their approach to culture looks beyond just the traits of the company, but rather how to improve





the business. The company is constantly seeking to innovate new approaches that help leaders build better businesses. The most important innovation so far has been the culture causal maps for specific business issues, which look at specific business issues, rather than a general approach to culture. The company has recently been working on building an ecosystem map for the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals that help policymakers focus on the key drivers of global sustainability.

#### Contributions of the Co-Founders

As Chairman of PYXIS, John's role is a thought leader and developer of the company's culture mapping approach and best-practice methodologies. Every day is different, as some days he is being interviewed on a podcast or writing articles and white papers on culture and cybersecurity, other days he is promoting the company on social media platforms, and some days he is focused on being a consultant and advisor on culture change assignments. When asked to define himself in one word, John says “innovative”. He believes there is always a solution to every problem, you just need to figure it out and look at problems from different angles.

As CEO of the company, Christiane's work is focused on revenue and product development. Christiane defines herself as far-sighted, as she is usually thinking ahead of most people. She has an intuitive gift that allows her to predict the future, guiding her

present-day actions. While this is an advantage in her company and aids her in her decisions, it is not always well-received by others. When Christiane was working in the corporate world, she recalls times she would tell her manager that an idea would not work, and how they could adjust it to provide a better outcome. However, her manager would not always listen, but Christiane would be proved right when the idea did not produce the desired outcome. Similarly, when Christiane started her company in 1994, people thought she was crazy for structuring her services on a fixed fee basis, as that was not heard of at the time. Today, it is common to do fixed-fee projects. Christiane tends to be ahead of the game, and others do not always initially understand her decisions or ideas.

#### Challenges are Inevitable

Starting and running successful companies has not come without challenges for John and Christiane. When John was younger, he was a chronic stutterer, shying him away from speaking up, for fear of being ridiculed. However, he knew he somehow wanted to make a difference in life, so he spent most of his time in the library, reading. At the age of 24, while in graduate school for his Ph.D. in Marine Biology, his wife encouraged him to sign up for a personal development seminar. The seminar helped build his confidence and self-esteem, giving him the courage to work on his stuttering. After a year of working on his stuttering, he left his Ph.D. program and became a seminar presenter and public speaker for

the same company that taught him the principles of leadership and group dynamic.

John experienced other struggles when co-founding his company, as he had no business degree or background in business. His partner taught him that business is just applied common sense and the secret to growing a profitable and sustainable business is to solve the needs of the customer by delivering exceptional solutions. If you focus on this and hire the right people, the rest will work itself out. John took his partners' words to heart and was able to overcome the initial challenges of co-founding a business, turning it into a success.

Christiane's father was a senior Naval officer and was incarcerated in a reeducation camp for 12 years after the Vietnam War. Having experienced the war, Christiane overcame many challenges during that period. She did not have a supportive upbringing, nor did she have the opportunity for education. At age 14, she left Vietnam for France, where she had to get a job at a young age and take care of herself. After France, she went to England to pursue more opportunities. In 1980 she worked for UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and assisted in setting up a reception centre for resettlement of Vietnamese refugees picked up by a Merchant Navy ship and from a refugee camp in Hong Kong. While there, Christiane oversaw the Medical Centre, which she describes as a profound experience.



# WE IDENTIFY HIDDEN RISKS



MAP.  
IDENTIFY.  
FOCUS.  
IMPROVE.  
SUSTAIN.

## COVER STORY

Christiane has had the privilege of working for many companies, both large and small. She has a reputation of being a change agent with the ability to turn around projects, functions, and companies for the better. She is easily able to develop a strategic vision with a clear path forward and the ability to implement the required changes. To do this, she has had to take risks and learn lessons from failures along the way. She has learned it is best to be honest and sometimes that comes with telling people things they do not want to hear. In giving her best and honest recommendations, she has found that it is not always received well.

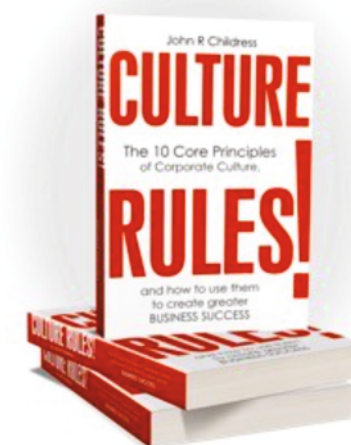
### Success and Leadership

John and Christiane both wish to make the world a better place, by helping others. John believes that success is ultimately about whether he has made a positive and lasting difference. To achieve business success, it is about knowing that he has used his talents to create a sustainable, lasting, and positive impact on people's lives and their livelihoods. This could be through a product or service that solves a problem or through the culture created in his company that allows employees the ability to grow and develop as professionals and human beings.

When discussing leadership, John explains that leaders are lifelong learners. With the rapid rate of change occurring in the world, leaders are never done learning and evolving. He believes that effective leaders are constantly reading, specifically biographies of leaders who have faced significant challenges. Secondly, John states that leadership is dynamic and different leadership approaches are required for different situations. A turnaround leader must act differently and use different approaches than a leader who is faced with an innovation

challenge or a merger. Leadership styles are not one-size-fits-all. Thirdly, leaders must understand that organizations are shadows of their leaders. Employees are constantly watching leadership for clues as to what they deem important, how to behave, and how to be successful within the company. Leaders do not always realize how their actions and attitudes impact the organization, whether positively or negatively.

Christiane explains how success to her is about the creation of a positive high-performance culture in organizations fostering through feedback and



accountability and the focus of personal development of all employees, rather than yearly performance reviews. She goes on to explain how she receives the most satisfaction in discovering the potential in individuals and encouraging and supporting their development to realize their potential and watching them achieve more than they could imagine.

### Recognition of Impact Leaders

John views one of the best recognitions he has received as having one of his most recent books *LEVERAGE: The CEO's Guide to Corporate Culture*

translated into Korean for the South Korean business market. He is also proud of the work that his company did to build a safety culture following the nuclear accident in 1979 at Three Mile Island, which helped create one of the safest and most productive nuclear power generators for the next 38 years.

Christiane feels the proudest when she sees the people she has touched, realize their full potential. She is passionate about helping people and positively impacting their lives. Additionally, one of her most memorable recognitions was receiving the Officer of the British Empire award from the Queen, which recognized her contributions to the UK Government supporting SMEs in International Trade, Export Finance, and Employment Law.

### Continuing to Grow

Looking ahead, John and Christiane hope to have PYXIS Culture Technologies' approach to mapping culture become well-known and used by more business leaders, to improve culture and performance. Personally, John desires to develop more leaders, as he sees this as the ultimate purpose of leadership. One day he hopes to teach leadership at a college or university and to develop advanced leadership education workshops for management teams.

John and Christiane's advice to aspiring business leaders is to never settle for good enough and keep chasing excellence in everything that you do. Always volunteer for the worst assignments, as that is where you will learn the most and develop yourself the fastest. No matter how hard it may be, always be honest and tell the truth.