



## Building a Culture of Innovation

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK CALLAHAN

BY MICHELE SCHIAVONI

»» **The Delaware Data Innovation Lab (DDIL) is your most current breakthrough project. Talk to me about how it came to be and what your expectations are for it?**

In March of 2020, when businesses were shutting down, our team [at CompassRed] asked the question: “How can we take advantage of this moment for our community and our industry using the skills and talents we have?” Looking at what inspires us: innovation and the use of data and technology to affect change, we researched other organizations that have made impacts in these areas; organizations that served as models for what we wanted to do for our community and our world. MIT’s Media Lab has always been a center that

drives innovation and change by bringing multiple backgrounds together to solve problems and advance innovation. Our team studied their makeup, their mission, purpose, and accomplishments.

When the New Castle County Executive announced the opening of an innovation grant, we saw our chance to propose the development of a Data Innovation Lab we dreamed of. We assembled a team to focus on a “moon-shot” for our community. After getting the go-ahead, our team spent three months building just that: a 501(c)(6) stand-alone organization that intended to attract talent to our region, develop groundbreaking solutions and insights, and build an organization that will have a long-lasting impact on our region and our world.

**The team for the DDIL is exceptionally diverse in its scope of projects. What inspired this idea?**

The DDIL wanted to ensure our work was touching all aspects of data development – from working with social determinants of health to leveraging new technologies that allow us to interact with data in new and exciting ways. We believe that discoveries in our field are just starting to happen and we want to be on the ground floor. One of the aspects we are most proud of is not just the diversity of projects, but the diversity of the fellows addressing those projects under the leadership of the executive director, Anne Clauss. We have been able to attract talent from all corners of the country and our own back yard.

**You were recently appointed the chair of a new statewide Science and Tech Advisors group. What are your expectations for this group?**

The purpose of the Science and Technology Advisory group is to facilitate innovation in the industry from startups to the largest global companies in Delaware. We are organizing to increase the state’s advocacy for this growing industry and take advantage of all the foundational elements Delaware has developed throughout our history. The expectations of the group are to participate in the discussions, advocate for collaboration, and develop clear and actionable initiatives that our corporate, state, and federal leaders can react to. We have the opportunity to put forth specific initiatives to improve our industry and grow the region on a global scale. I want our group to take advantage of this moment.

### What does success look like for you in 2021 and beyond?

I believe we can make an enormous amount of headway in this year – partly because of the environment we are in right now. In times of hardship, innovation happens at a faster rate. Additionally, our state and federal leaders committed to decisions based on data and science. I expect this year to be the year they look back on as a time when our state made significant progress in developing our science and technology industry. All the pieces are in place. We just need to focus, risk and execute.

### What are you reading?

I tend to read many books at the same time. I sometimes enjoy the juxtaposition of a novel and a work of nonfiction. On my bed stand are three right now: *The Overstory* by Richard Powers, *Startup Communities* by Brad Feld (a re-read) and *Poor Charlie's Almanack* by Charlie Munger. There are central themes that fascinate me that I can spend hours on.

### What inspires you?

I get a lot out of seeing someone pursue their dreams, exploring a hypothesis, failing miserably, and getting back up, or that simple spark when someone sees something they never saw before.



**Patrick Callahan** is the founder of the Delaware Data Innovation Lab, co-founder of CompassRed, and a board member of Delaware Prosperity Partnership.

## Businesses Honored for Supporting Service Members and Veterans

» The Delaware Warrior Friendly Business Award recognizes businesses' efforts to support service members, veterans, and their family members through workplace initiatives. The Joint Military Affairs Committee (JMAC) of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and New Castle County Chamber of Commerce recognized the 2021 award recipients at the State of The Guard event on February 19.

### Middletown Area Chamber of Commerce (Under 50 Employees):

The Middletown Area Chamber of Commerce (MACC) has a long history of supporting veteran and military organizations and initiatives. The nonprofit business organization was founded in 1972 by two former Navy Seamen, Will Kirkwood and W. Dean Hatton, with the latter serving on the USS McCork, helping to storm Normandy at Omaha Beach on D-Day. Over the past 12 years, roughly 50 percent of MACC's employees are military spouses. The organization has also offered many veteran-owned businesses the opportunity to be a part of their Incubator and Collaborative Workspace. In addition, they support and promote the American Legion Post 25, the VFW Post 7632, the Middletown Cadet Squadron, Veterans Outreach Ministries, and others.

"All six staff members employed by the MACC over the years have had a military affiliation of some kind, although we just realized that fact last year in preparing for our milestone 50th anniversary," said Executive Director Roxane Ferguson.

"The Warrior Friendly Award embodies the commitment to our service men and women. The MACC is honored to be recognized for those efforts and join the esteemed group of businesses who continually support our veterans."

### Bank of America (Over 50 Employees):

Bank of America has a long history of assisting and supporting military personnel and their families. Last year marked their centennial of support, a tradition which began when they started providing financial services and products for service members at Fort Sam Houston in 1920. In addition, last February Bank of America surpassed its five-year goal to hire 10,000 veterans, National guardsmen, and reservists.

Locally, the bank established a Veterans Onboarding Initiative, which pairs current Bank of America veteran employees with new ones to provide guidance and mentorship. They also created a Military Support & Assistance Group, which includes about 1,000 employees and provides a support system for both veterans and active military personnel and their families who are both currently living in Delaware and deployed overseas.

"We are honored and humbled to be a recipient of the JMAC's Warrior Friendly Business Award," said Delaware Market President Chip Rossi. "We remain committed to continuing to attract, develop, and retain military talent. There are thousands of veterans who we now have the privilege to call teammates, and each one of them brings unique skills and experiences from their service to our country."