



Business

Winners Announced: *D CEO's* 2022 Financial Executive Awards

The steady hand of CFOs and other financial executives has never been more important. Here are outstanding professionals who have stepped up for their companies.

By Christine Perez | April 27, 2022 | 12:50 pm | Cover photo by Gregory Reid



Gregory Reid



In a second year of grappling with economic uncertainty and new waves of a global pandemic, area financial executives were called upon in 2021 to help provide clarity—and strategy. In the midst of it all, some moved from conserving cash and preserving liquidity to help their companies continue to

pursue opportunities for growth. It made financial modeling and flexibility key.

Here, in partnership with the Association for Corporate Growth, TXCPA Dallas, and Financial Executives International, we highlight 30 North Texas CFOs and other leaders who helped their companies navigate risks and opportunities in the past year's unpredictable climate.

Our 2022 Financial Executive Awards finalists were selected by esteemed judges, including Daniel Boarder of Whitley Penn, Alice Elkins, Abby Fuqua of Venturity Financial Partners, Tom Hook of USI Insurance Services, and Sharon Lukich of Thomas Edwards Group. Winners were revealed at an April 26 event at On the Levee.

Outstanding CFO: *Midsize Public Company*

Winner: Laurie Latham

QUEST RESOURCE HOLDING CO.

"If the business is heading down the wrong course, as CFO you cannot fix the issue alone. A great C-level team working together is fundamental to creating a more rewarding outcome."

Outstanding Public Service

Winner: William H. Hornberger

JACKSON WALKER

Attorney William H. Hornberger of Jackson Walker is one of the most deeply networked professionals in DFW. But his influence doesn't end there; his commitment to public service has taken him around the globe. Locally, he has had a profound impact on organizations that span from the Texas Society of CPAs and FEI to Klyde Warren Park and the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum. "In everything I do, I try to lead by serving others," Hornberger says.

John Steinmetz

VISTA BANK

The CEO of Vista Bank, John Steinmetz, has been service-minded ever since holding his first real job—waiting tables. He is passionate about creating equity and inclusion for underrepresented communities in the area of finance, and created and implemented a Southern Dallas initiative at Vista Bank. It provides financial literacy education, resources, funding for various programs, and partnerships with Dallas ISD, Camp Exposure, and For Oak Cliff, among others.

Outstanding CFO: *Midsize Private Company*

What's the most difficult professional challenge you've faced, and what did you learn from it?

Gayle Anderson

KALKOMEY ENTERPRISES

“Leading Kalkomey as interim CEO while our PE investors conducted a search. While still performing my CFO duties, the role required a great deal of energy, intellectual curiosity, and contributions from the whole team.”

John Bailey

PRISM HOTELS & RESORTS

“As a result of tough decisions during the pandemic, we had our best year in history in 2021, which allowed us to sell to Aimbridge Hospitality and merge our small company into the largest third-party hotel manager in the U.S.”

Winner: Kelsey Cunningham

TIMELYMD

“I’ve learned the most when I have held multiple roles within an organization during a transition period. That time allows me to step outside of my comfort zone, learn something new, and gain a different perspective.”

Irma González

LERMA

“More than once I’ve paid the price for my accent for job opportunities. But I set out to help people get to know me for my abilities and became the first Mexican American woman controller at TRG, then joined Lerma as CFO.”

Timothy Hess

AZTECA-OMEGA GROUP

“I have been laid off several times. It was a humbling experience and forced me to continue to learn more on a broader spectrum. I pushed myself outside of my finance bubble and immersed myself in the operations side of construction.”

Drew Keith

TEXAS SECURITY BANK

“In March 2020, our CEO called me to say that he anticipated doing more than \$200 million in PPP loans. Funding was a significant challenge but in the end, we originated 940 PPP loans totaling \$245 million—and gained many new clients.”

Adam Powell

VALOR MINERAL MANAGEMENT

“We have been faced with serious challenges, particularly when building out the team. I’ve learned we can’t just hire based on immediate need. We have

really taken a thorough approach to evaluating candidates and their fit with the company.”

Keegan Smith

BRIGHT REALTY

“I’m a young woman working in a male-dominated field. I’ve learned it’s important to support other women in the workplace. The best way to make changes is for us to encourage each other, inspire each other, and lead by example.”

Outstanding CAO, Controller, or Treasurer

Winner: Chad Bradford

ELEVATE CREDIT

Last year was a breakthrough for Chad Bradford at Elevate Credit. Serving as senior vice president of finance since 2015 and adding CAO to his title in 2017, he stepped up in a big way following the transition of the company’s former CFO to chief strategy officer. Among other achievements, he transitioned Elevate to a new accounting methodology, managed cash flow projections, and secured a \$100 million debt financing deal at the lowest interest rate in the company’s history.

Karyn Brown

AUSTIN INDUSTRIES

During the past 22 years or so, Karyn Brown has held myriad positions at Austin Industries, one of the nation’s largest construction companies, from safety office manager and office manager to treasury analyst, cash manager, and assistant treasurer. In April 2020, she was promoted once again—to treasurer. Her key strategy is to remain nimble. “I like to encourage people on my team to challenge the status quo and try new things and new processes,” Brown says. “It helps us improve and keep innovating.”

Winner: Ellen Detrich

TEXAS CAPITAL BANK

Throughout her career, Ellen Detrich has always been outside the room when the earnings calls took place. Being promoted to CAO at Texas Capital Bank gave her the chance to get inside the room. She says her leadership strategies depend on who she is trying to lead. For those without a strong accounting background, she says to “Lead as a partner in all decisions, providing guidance that can assist them while on their own.” For other leaders, she says “I empower my teams to think independently and make decisions across the bank. They know I’ll always have their backs. I am passionate about leading with candor, always doing the right thing, and believing that the details always matter.”

Chris Monroe

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

A 30-year veteran providing leadership to the treasury, supply chain, and fleet teams at Southwest Airlines, Chris Monroe also is responsible for managing risk and maintaining compliance. He says he has learned key lessons from the airline's various leaders. Co-founder Herb Kelleher taught him to "Lead with a compelling vision and always communicate that. Don't be afraid to bring your sense of humor to the job." Former CEO Gary Kelly told him, "If you always lead with integrity that will result in you always being a leader worth following." President Emeritus Colleen Barrett taught him to "Lead from the heart. Never forget the people on your team have hopes, dreams, families, and loved ones."

Outstanding CFO: *Nonprofit Organization*

Jeff Gentry

BUCKNER INTERNATIONAL

"Years ago, I was involved in a strategic plan at a previous organization that resulted in the layoffs of over 30 employees. As an experienced CFO, I made sure that the financial analysis that supported the decision included sound assumptions based on empirical data. What I missed throughout the process was that I didn't involve others who could have provided a valuable perspective that I wasn't going to find in the financials. The effect was that the decision did result in financial sustainability and alignment with mission, but there was a lack of trust going forward and a lack of buy-in from those directly involved. I learned from this experience that effective communication and including others is imperative when evaluating changes to how an organization delivers services to fulfill its mission."

Winner: Robert Watling

UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

"We've undergone a financial transformation in the past 12 to 18 months that allows us to strategically invest in the future. It took tremendous time, effort, and teamwork to improve the university's liquidity position by over 300 percent, strengthen the balance sheet through refinancing all institutional long-term debt, and restructure operational activities that brought expenses in line with revenue. We've also reinforced financial resilience through new vendor partnerships and have upskilled financial talent to help make more informed financial decisions. All that hard work has provided the stability necessary to invest in the student experience. Now that the financial flywheel has begun to spin, we are continuing to push with innovative financial ideas to foster greater acceleration."

Outstanding CFO: *Large Public Company*

Winner: Tammy Romo

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

Working in the airline business is not for the faint of heart, says Southwest Airlines CFO Tammy Romo. “It has been full of challenges over my career, including 9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis,” she says. “But the most daunting challenge has been navigating through the pandemic.” Thankfully, Southwest was in a strong financial position when the pandemic hit, one that was strengthened by maneuvers that helped cut spending and cash outlays by \$8 billion and raising \$22.8 billion in capital. The actions allowed Southwest to maintain its 50-year history of no furloughs or pay cuts. “Like many of us, I’ve learned there is a lot we cannot control in today’s world, which can be unsettling,” Romo says. “But you cannot let that paralyze you. Instead, you must go to work on what you can control.”

Philip Schlom

AZZ

After joining AZZ as chief accounting officer in October 2019, Philip Schlom was promoted to interim CFO then named to the permanent post. He was initially hired into what he describes as a difficult situation—one that was complicated when his boss left the organization. “I had to utilize all the skills learned in earlier experiences to get up to speed with treasury, deal with a hardened insurance market, and get filings back on track,” he says. “I learned to have patience, trust my judgement, and methodically make progress. Schlom also learned to rely on a key leadership strategy: teamwork. “No organization can succeed with the capabilities of one or few persons,” he says. You need to have the team in the boat all rowing in the same direction at a similar cadence.”

Outstanding Finance Team

Winner: Texas Security Bank

LED BY DREW KEITH

Drew Keith, recently named president at Texas Security Bank after serving as executive VP and CFO, says if he could give his leadership strategy a headline, it would read, “Guide and Get Out of the Way.” It’s a strategy that seems to work; under the guidance of Keith and CEO Craig Scheef, Texas Security is a \$1 billion bank that has doubled in size in the past three years. Last year, the bank found itself with a significant amount of cash on its balance sheets. “My team and I made a decision to invest in assets that will pay off for us in most market situations,” Keith says. “We continued our strategic philosophy of total return investment analysis, which caused us to get outside of our policy. I had to go to our asset management committee and explain that we were not being too aggressive. It was an incredibly unusual set of circumstances that gave us the opportunity to have a much larger investment portfolio than we’ve ever had before.” The situation required Keith and his team to also provide a Plan B in case the recommendation was not supported. “In the end, they understood our philosophy and decision and

are aligned with where we are helping drive the bank,” he says. “We are in an excellent position going into 2022 and beyond.”

Outstanding CFO: *Large Private Company*

Of which professional achievement in the past year or so are you most proud?

Girish Bachani

CAPITAL ONE

“We’ve worked hard to keep our associates motivated through fun virtual events and through recognizing people for the work they are doing—with the same intentionality as if we were in the office. I believe we are on the right path.”

Craig Bjerke

METHODIST HEALTH SYSTEM

“In the last year, our operating margin has improved, we’ve completed a bond issue, won a national revenue cycle award, and completed work for a new hospital, while receiving bond rating affirmation from Moody’s and S & P.”

Winner: Sam Cheng

EARTHBOUND TRADING CO.

“Last year, we had our best year in our 30-year history. We took things we learned in 2020 and turned those into successes in ’21. We weren’t without labor, supply chain, and COVID challenges, but we still met the needs of customers.”

Rudy Gonzalez

ANSIRA

“I am most proud of last year’s sale of Crossmark after a protracted competitive process. It resulted in a significant financial recovery for the lenders-turned-owners and preserved the vast majority of our jobs.”

R. Cory Johnson

SWISS-AMERICAN CDMO

“In the last eight months, we’ve grown back most of the business we lost in 2020, all while supporting our COO while she battled cancer. I’m proud of my team for what we’ve been able to accomplish and endure.”

Kara McKinney

ENVOY AIR

“This year, we changed payroll systems to a new vendor, and the project required support from every department. As the leader on the project, I

worked with all the constituents, and I'm proud to say that we exceeded the expectations."

FP&A: *Public Company*

Winner: Chad Peoples

MATCH GROUP

"As a leader, it is important to delegate. This can be a challenging shift in mindset. But if you have a smart, capable team and work to develop them effectively, you can increase your overall impact."

Constantine "Connie" Konstans Award



Courtesy: Dallas Cowboys Football Club

Winner: Tom Walker

DALLAS COWBOYS, CFO

D CEO's highest financial honor is the Constantine "Connie" Konstans Award, named for the late leader who for years served as director of UTD's Institute for Excellence in Corporate Governance. This year, in a unanimous decision by the judges, the award goes to Tom Walker, CFO of the Dallas Cowboys.

Walker's title is a bit deceiving, as his role with the \$6.5 billion organization has grown to cover far more than the NFL's most valuable franchise. It also involves the team's iconic stadium and merchandising group, as well as the Jones family's oil and gas, real estate, and myriad other businesses.

All told, the organization covers more than 160 legal entities and 500 full-time employees. Walker has steered the organization through milestone projects, including the construction of AT&T Stadium and The Star, game-changing mergers (Comstock Resources and GameSquare), and a 350,000-square-foot headquarters for Keurig Dr Pepper. He also helped oversee the

construction and launch of the Jones family's \$250 million yacht, Bravo Eugenia.

Along the way, he has been an active servant to the industry. "I don't know anyone who has been exposed to as many varied, unique, and imaginative financial situations as Tom Walker," says his boss, Jerry Jones. "He clearly has a command of the multifaceted and creative nature of our organization's businesses. With Tom's instincts and talent, the sky is the limit."

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Christine is the editor of *D CEO* magazine and its online platforms. She's a national award-winning business journalist who has...

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