FOSTERING INNOVATION

HOW TO BUILD AN AMAZING IT TEAM

ANDREW LAUDATO

WILEY

Fostering Innovation

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This book is dedicated to CIOs. Long underappreciated, disrespected, and misunderstood, they are now at the center of our digital world.

About the Author

Andrew Laudato started his career as a computer programmer and quickly realized he was as passionate about business as he is about technology. The intersection of business and technology is where innovation happens and where people and companies succeed.

After spending more than 20 years as a CIO/CTO, Laudato currently serves as the executive vice president and chief operating officer of The Vitamin Shoppe. In this role, he leads operations across digital commerce, information technology, enterprise portfolio management, supply chain, strategic sourcing, and commercialization.

Laudato is a member of the CNBC technology executive council and the New York City CIO executive council and is a founding member of George Mason University's Center for Retail Transformation. In addition, he serves on the board of Lideranca, a private company focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Learn more at andrewlaudato.com.

About the Technical Proofreader

Kristian Kimbro Rickard is the founder and CEO of Doyenne360, a social-impact technology company. With a track record for designing, building, and rapidly deploying AI, analytics, and workforce collaboration and training solutions, Doyenne360, and its AI-powered STEM workforce development platform called STEMNXT, serve organizations in industries such as education, oil and gas, and retail.

Kristian has more than two decades of experience in technology, starting her career after graduating from Texas Tech University with a Master's in Technical Communication, specializing in online design and development. Beginning as a software developer at a Big Five management consulting firm, she advanced into technical leadership roles in consulting, spent five years at Microsoft headquarters honing her business, finance, and product management skills to add to her technical expertise portfolio, and launched her first startup, MAX451, in 2011.

Kristian has received numerous accolades as a technologist and an entrepreneur: she has been listed as one of the top ten female entrepreneurs to watch by the Global Accelerator Network (GAN), and her work has been featured in a variety of publications, including CIO Magazine, Retail TouchPoints, Information Week, and Microsoft advanced analytics customer case studies.

Kristian enjoys traveling internationally to speak about technology and the importance of increasing diversity and inclusion within the technology field. Passionate about seeing more women and people of color in technical leadership roles, you can often find Kristian in schools within her community, volunteering her time to teach middle and high-school students how to assemble robots, how to code, or how to make a flashing dance-party bracelet with some duct tape, LED lights, and a little knowledge about how to create circuits.

Acknowledgments

On May 1, 2018, I was in the audience at an industry conference, and it occurred to me that I should write a book. I sent a note to my partner, Kristian Kimbro Rickard, asking her thoughts. Her response, which I still have, was an enthusiastic "Yes, yes, yes, do it, do it!" Soon after, I mentioned the idea to my daughter, Autumn Laudato, who was beyond supportive. Autumn always supports me and my endeavors, no matter how crazy they are. Autumn declared, "I'll buy the first copy!"

Although I had support, encouragement, and even a sale from the most important people in my life, I didn't do anything about it. A year later, in the summer of 2019, I mentioned the idea to my close friends Dan and Bette Apitz. A few days later, three books showed up at my door: books on writing and becoming an author. Dan and Bette didn't just give me platitudes, they decided to hold me accountable for writing this book. Each time we talked, they expected an update. There was no turning back now—Dan and Bette were not going to let that happen. This is what we all want from our friends!

As this book went from a thought, to a few notes, to an outline, and finally to words on a page, I shared drafts, ideas, and chapters with my friends for their advice. This book has been shaped, improved, and corrected by many people. Thank you to Vicki Cantrell, Paul Demboski, Chris Fadrowski, Cathy Hotka, David Kastin, Cindy Lu, Cindy Osmani, Hank Reimer, Stacey Renfro, Deanna Steel, Sheri Strobel, Lou Sterzenbach, and many others.

I've had help and support and the opportunity to work with so many talented people that I could fill another book with their names. If you feel as though you should have received a mention here, let me know, and I'll give you top billing in my next book.

I want to give special thanks to my mentors: Les Duncan, Cary Turner, Greg Rake, Alex Smith, and Sharon Leite. I've learned, and am still learning, a tremendous amount from each of you. Sharon, it's a true honor to work with you at The Vitamin Shoppe, and I am beyond grateful for the opportunities you have given and continue to give me.

I also need to acknowledge people who are no longer with us, who have meant a great deal to me: my parents, Joe and Toni Laudato; my grandmother, Lena Laudato, who told me that every time I got a raise,

I should keep my lifestyle the same and add to my savings (oh, how I wished I had listened to her advice); and Marvin Girouard, who gave me my first CIO role, before I was ready, with the directive, "Don't do anything but learn for your first year." That's a gift no first-time CIO would receive today.

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And finally, thank you to my readers. I hope you find this book worthwhile and that we can continue to learn from one another.

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