



Interview: James Stillwell **Technical Director**



Tell us about yourself?

I have always loved learning about and utilising new technology, from the early days of messenger applications creating 'chat groups' with friends (that went down when Mum used the phone J) through to the work we do now with our clients to ensure the right technology is recommended for their requirements.

I am a problem solver and will always look at ways to make things more efficient, its technology for a purpose not for the sake of it.

What is your role within Savient?

I joined Savient shortly after its creation in 2016 and become Technical Director in 2017. My focus has always been to ensure that we are using technology to enhance the experiences of our customers and colleagues, create space not barriers.

As the responsible officer for both client facing and internal security my role is to protect, comply and govern, whilst ensuring we are able to be innovative and experimental. One of our key values when creating the company was to have an organisation whereby our team had the freedom to learn and try emerging technologies. My role is to manage the movement between the lab and the customer office and ensure we retain an integrated and manageable set of tools. To support this, we have created 'Security Champions' within our teams who support both colleagues and customers in ensuring innovation and security can work hand in hand.

What technologies excite you at the moment and why?

Quantum computing seems to have been around as a Sci-fi idea since I was young, and it's exciting to see it getting closer to being a real thing. Whilst I don't expect us to have one in the server room anytime soon, understanding what they will bring and how security needs to adapt to the new possibilities is really exciting. I am looking forward to working with the Quantum Simulators that hopefully will provide an evolutionary bridge.

As a business we are actively working with AI and ML and working with clients to deliver innovation and efficiency using these tools is a great experience.

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How can Savient help people maximise the benefits of those technologies?

We have always wanted to be an organisation that our customers can trust, our focus is on helping and supporting the choice of and application of the right technologies and this must also come ahead of revenue. We do not mandate technologies to our customers, rather we provide advice and guidance to help them make the best decision for themselves. I consider us experts in the area of 'Big Data', we have been supporting blue chip organisations in their management, security and utilisation of data before the term 'Big Data' became fashionable.

By creating space for our team to be innovative in a trusted and supported environment I believe we are the trusted advisers our customers need, and that is why they like working with us.

What is the most challenging part of your role?

I have many hats and ensuring I spend the right amount of time wearing each is always a challenge. There is always more that can be done to support our team, advise our customers, manage our estate, and lead our business, the key is spending the right amount of time on each. As a Dad of a 2 year old, with a second child due in February all time is precious and I strive to ensure that everyone gets the best of me.

What is the most rewarding part of your role?

We had a clear vision to create an organisation that was people centric when we formed Savient, to see how that vision has manifested itself over the last 8 years is very rewarding. When I look at members of our team starting their journey either in IT or in Savient and what we are able to provide in support and space for innovation and how that helps them develop, I am very proud.

As my fellow Directors have said our CSR achievements are significant, and gaining acknowledgement and awards shows we are focusing our efforts in the right places to make lasting difference.

The creation of Savitrace has been very rewarding and I am looking forwards the next part of its journey as we get positive feedback from our customers and can see it making a big difference to them.

What do you do to relax?

Free time is a luxury that is fleeting at the moment, however I like doing things where I can be creative and solve problems that are different to those that fill my working day. I love Dungeons and Dragons, not just the playing but the creation of the adventures, scenario planning and then having to make things up on the spot when people jump in the river rather than take the treasure. I also enjoy rock climbing and walking the dog, an activity that I am now starting to share with my young daughter.