



Interview: Paul James Innovation Director, Savient



Tell us about yourself?

I have approaching 30 years experience of working in software and technology, most of which has been focused on maximising the value of organisations' data. I started working with Local Government on both education and social care data. This was extremely rewarding and a great introduction to balancing value of information sharing against the need for privacy.

I have worked across a range of sectors including Utilities, Banking and more recently National Defence, with a focus on Big Data before the term existed. Unlocking the power of organisational data is at the heart of what we do at Savient.

What is your role within Savient?

I am Innovation Director, and that means providing an environment whereby our team can be creative and have fun. It is a significant differentiator that Savient gives our people the freedom and time to explore their ideas.

We have developed a data platform, 'Kuvono', that provides core system functions such as security, scalability, audit, user management etc that removes the barriers from creativity and allows the team to focus on their idea realisation rather than the 'plumbing' of system creation.

I know you also 'Run the Factory' what does this entail?

I come at this with my systems engineer's hat on, always asking how we can make the process or activity as simple and repeatable as possible. I manage the operations teams and the back-office finance, HR, and marketing functions, always looking at how we ensure Savient provide the best experience consistently and at the right (not necessarily the lowest) cost.

I also deliver some consultancy services which helps me support our customers and colleagues in the execution of their roles.

I know process and governance is important to you, how do you balance the freedom of innovation with the control of the operation?

It is all about getting the right balance, providing freedom where possible but within a structure of the 'governance curve'. By that I mean ensuring that the transition from idea



to proof of concept, to minimum viable product, to released solution moves through the appropriate governance gateways and we apply the right control at the correct points.

It is important that we do not stifle innovation with bureaucracy, but also important that as ideas progress, we have the right levels of process, control and visibility that ensure successful outcomes.

Again, with the Systems Engineer hat on ensuring we have a continuous improvement and learning culture across all we do is key to striking the right balance.

What does success look like to you?

A profitable business where all our employees are happy and secure. There are lots of things that go into achieving this, but at the heart of all we do that is our overriding objective.

What excites you most about what we are doing at the moment?

Unlocking the potential of Savient, we have some great activities on the horizon, and of course we launch Savitrace at the end of January, so we are living in exciting times.

What is the most challenging part of your role?

Given the breadth of my role this biggest challenge is ensuring I get the right balance across a wide range of areas, and do not become a bottleneck. I try to ensure I am focusing on what is needed to enable our team and our customers. It is also important to get my work / life balance right ensuring I am the best version of myself at home and at work.

What is the most rewarding part of your role?

Our people are our business and there is nothing more rewarding than supporting their growth, unlocking their potential, and helping them see what they could be. Mentoring colleagues to understand the scope of their talent and desire is a key part of being part of the Savient leadership team.

Savient does CSR really well, why do you think that is and what could other organisations learn from our approach?

We knew we wanted to be different but did not know how best to achieve that, so we went out and recruited someone who did. We then ensure we do not get in their way, supporting them and all the team in fulfilling our vision. We consult with our team on the focus and activities for the next 12 months, share a full year calendar of events and do not set limits on the amount of time people can spend on activities. Having that environment of mutual trust is key to our success.



What do you do to relax?

I love immersing myself in Minecraft, it gives me a creative outlet and an alternative intellectual challenge to work. I find it rewarding discovering things that have been shaped by others and then looking at how I can use that to create something different.

I also enjoy photography, I use my phone or simple camera's (I am not a Insta or Facebook addict) and for me it's all about the moment, not post image processing. It captures a moment in time and that is rewarding.



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