

CHFS Community

Chad Heilig, System Tech Specialist

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Secretary Eric Friedlander Intro:

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Julianne Hatton:

Hello and welcome to CHFS Community. A podcast about health and well-being for CHFS employees across the cabinet, hosted by Secretary Eric Friedlander, broadcasting from Frankfort, Kentucky.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Hello, this is Secretary Eric Friedlander with your CHFS podcast today. Trying to continue our run of talking to interesting people all across the cabinet. And today we have Chad Heilig with us today who works in IT, an IT specialist, a system specialist. So Chad, say hello.

Chad Heilig:

Hello. How are you doing? I'm doing great.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

It's doing all right. Today's one of those days before the holidays, and a little cold outside, but we are, of course, Zooming as we are all now doing, right?

Chad Heilig:

Yes. It does feel a little crisp out there. I was out there a couple of times this morning.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Right. And lots has changed. I think when we started this COVID it was spring. And now we're already way past winter and getting ready to end the year.

Chad Heilig:

Yeah. I don't think anybody would have guessed it would have carried on this long, so-

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

No.

Chad Heilig:

... basically got to hang in there.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

So what attracted you to IT? What attracted you to this kind of work?

Chad Heilig:

Well-

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

How did you get here?

Chad Heilig:

Right. Well, originally, I actually was going into business. I've always liked computers from a very young age, I remember my first computer was a Commodore 64 going way back in the '80s. And so I've always been attracted to IT... always fascinated me. I always liked working with it, but my actual degree was in business. But coming out of college, my first job was in an IT area. So it kind of just stuck ever since then. I've just enjoyed it. So I've stuck with it.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Excellent. How did you end up here?

Chad Heilig:

So I did live in Louisville actually for about eight or nine years, working for an energy company up there doing IT services. And then I had a baby, decided we going to move closer to home, which was in Lexington, so it required a job change. And so I just went to an IT placement company and they found that job for me at the state, and I worked for a little under a year as a contractor, and then they brought me on full time.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Cool. So yeah, you were driving to Lexington from Louisville and your resume flew out the door and somebody picked it up and yeah, okay. All right. I got it.

Chad Heilig:

Pretty much. That is how it happens though [crosstalk 00:03:38].

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Well, that's kind of how it happened for me too. So I get it, yeah. And then a couple of years go by and you think, "Hey, I'm still here."

Chad Heilig:

Yeah. Been about 15 years for me. It doesn't feel like it, but yeah. That's [inaudible 00:03:52] for a while now.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. It's amazing sometimes how fast that time goes here, it really [crosstalk 00:03:56]

Chad Heilig:

Yeah. Unbelievable. Yeah, my daughter's driving down, she was a baby when I started, so yeah.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Wow. Congratudolences, what is the proper...

Chad Heilig:

Yeah, she didn't waste any time taking my car, that's for sure. So that's now hers, I had to go find something else.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Again, understood. What are your special areas? What are the things that you're doing now? What's your main interest?

Chad Heilig:

The area that I contribute right now to is the SharePoint applications for the cabinet. So the projects are for anybody inside of the cabinet, any department. So we provide the SharePoint platform for them to collect information, collect documents, those type of things.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Well, that's become even more critical for us as we all work virtually now. It's kind of hard to share documents, the hard documents, so how we use all our different platforms, that's really critical for us.

Chad Heilig:

Yes, absolutely. Especially when there's a workflow processes where people need to go in and approve them, update them, resubmit them, all of those things need to be taken care of remotely now. So yeah, SharePoint really is a crucial part in facilitating that.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Well, and all of the IT at this point is crucial for how we've been doing things. So you and your fellow IT specialists have really supported us as we've kind of changed the way we do work.

Chad Heilig:

Yeah. COVID has definitely given us a new look on how we approach IT now that everyone's working remotely. So we have to step up for not just the applications we're developing, but also the security aspect of it. Cloud-based solutions where people can access it from anywhere. So all those become very, very important.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

And it looks like you're at home today, so that's changed the way you work, right?

Chad Heilig:

Yes, it has. Absolutely. So-

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Do you like it better? How are you learning on different ways to collaborate with folks. Right? Because how do you get what the departments need now?

Chad Heilig:

So we mainly use Teams at this point and it took a little while to get used to having meetings that way, but we've grown very accustomed to it. It's very simple to use now once we've done it a few times. So yeah, we collaborated quite a bit through the Teams application to collect the information we need. Even with the programs I create for people, there's always, like a saying, a learning curve, and the same applies for this telecommunication and working from home and working with other people. So this has definitely kind of thrown people into that mix where... Sink or swim, you got to learn how to do it, you know?

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. And there are all sorts of new phrases for... Or that get used so much more right now. It's like, "You're on mute," I think is the most overused phrase of 2020, right?

Chad Heilig:

Yes. I can't hear you, can't see you. Yeah.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. Some people have said that it's kind of like a séance, "Are you there? Can you hear us? Can you..."

Chad Heilig:

I hear you, can you hear me? Yeah. It all comes with working remotely. But at first I had a lot to get used to, but things have gotten much, much easier as time has gone on.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

I think it just kind of pointed to the importance of the IT infrastructure we already had. I don't think we've fully utilized it, and I think now we're probably pushing the boundaries on some of the things we're trying to do, like the collaboration that we're doing with work, right?

Chad Heilig:

Yes. Yeah, absolutely. I was actually surprised because it came so quickly, it felt like we had a couple of weeks, "Oh, we're going to be working from home," and the speed that everything was set up and moved out to help us continue to work from home, I was very happy with it. It actually went very well. I've had very few problems with my... So I'd normally VPN into my work computer, that's how I work and very little issues, every once in a while it'll get a little laggy or whatever, but nothing major, had no major issues with it. So it's been great.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. Have you found that it gives you a little better work-life balance? Because we've heard that from other folks. Do you feel like it's helped you at all that way?

Chad Heilig:

Yes. At first I kind of missed the interaction with people directly, so that's taken a little bit to get used to. And the meetings, like we mentioned before, meetings happen a little bit differently. Sometimes it depends on my day, I could get really busy and then I figure out that I'm still logged in at 7:30 at night.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

That's right.

Chad Heilig:

So yeah, I got to kind of force myself to jump off there when I need to. But yeah, it does, it gives you a little more control over what's going on. Yeah, I don't have that long commute, I live in Lexington, so yeah. I don't have that long commute every day. That saves me about an hour and a half worth of my time each day. So it's been nice.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. I live in Louisville, but I haven't been able to do much of the... I'm not a great example on the telecommuting, I have to admit, but I kind of have to be here in case they put me on The Andy Show, which I haven't been on in a while. So maybe I'll do some [inaudible 00:09:48] telecommuting, that would be cool, right? So even with this change, right, even with the rapid change, what are of the pieces that you like the best about what you do?

Chad Heilig:

I like to provide these applications for people in a way that's... well, as quickly as possible. I know that a lot of them, especially towards the end of the year, they got a schedule they're trying to keep. But also just in a way that's easy for them to understand and use the application. Sometimes that can be lost in IT because we're approaching it from the backend. We kind of know how it works and where everything is, and we don't necessarily see it from the user side.

Chad Heilig:

So I try and do extensive testing and ask lots of questions from them to get an idea of where they're at with it, so that I can better accommodate those users. But that's what I like most about my job is to hear, "Oh, we love your program. It's changed the way we do things. It's made things so much easier." And so that's the gratification I get.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Oh, that's fantastic gratification because it supports everything we're trying to do here, right? With all the COVID changes, with everything we're doing differently, it's like the infrastructure, we all need that. And hopefully get some satisfaction from being connected to some of the work that we've done here. CHFS has never been in the forefront like we've been here. So it's a big deal, right?

Chad Heilig:

Yes, it is.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

So are there lessons that you think we've learned that maybe we can carry forward into '21 and '22? Things that maybe we didn't know were possible in February that we all of a sudden learned in March [inaudible 00:11:38] possible? What are those pieces that you think you've learned?

Chad Heilig:

Well, it's definitely changed the way we work, the way we will probably continue to work in the future. We don't know how long this will continue and whether it will happen again, so I think there's been a lot of lessons learned on how we can set things up moving forward in order to help people to continue to work from home or at work either way.

Chad Heilig:

But yeah, definitely communication has been extremely important to continue. So even though we're not there in person, to still stay in touch whether it's through email or Team meetings or whatever, to stay on top of things. Collaboration is another thing that I've seen with some of my coworkers. Especially in the beginning, it wasn't as easy to... You could just go to their desk and, "Hey, I want to pass this by, see what you think about this problem," or whatever. Now it's you have to kind of reach out to them remotely to collaborate with them and get some input from other people. So those are some of the ways that have been a little different, got to get used to during this COVID season.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Right. It's that kind of interaction and personal interaction that I think how we come back and what we're going to look like, are you at Mill Creek?

Chad Heilig:

Yes. Yeah, my office was at Mill Creek.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. So I think if a vast majority continue to do the telecommuting piece, which I believe we should, right? From what I've heard everybody, most everybody is happier with what's going on with that. Then what does the main building in Frankfurt look like anymore? And if the most important thing is collaboration, how do we design our building or how we work together? How do we design that to make sure that we're getting that maximum collaboration on those maybe one or two days that we come in? I still don't know, but I think those are the kinds of pieces that I hope we're able to be open to. I've worked in this cabinet for 30 some odd years and it's like, how do I blow my bureaucratic brain up not say, "Oh, I want to just go back to the way it was." I think that's really hard, and I think that's true for IT too, right? I mean, it's different.

Chad Heilig:

Yeah. It is different, that day-to-day work has definitely changed. And into the future, yeah, I don't know what it'll look like once all these vaccines get out and we start heading back to work. But I think we're definitely prepared for it either way, whether we're, like you said, working part-time from home or coming in full time. I think we're more ready now for any future type events than we were before.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. And again, I think just learning the technology, we started out talking about Teams and SharePoint and blending those things together so that we can work across distances, right? You're in Lexington, I'm in Frankfort, I live in Louisville, we collaborate all the time. So how we do that across a state, just it opens up a lot of different possibilities that were always there, right, but we didn't take advantage of it.

Chad Heilig:

Yeah, that's true, very true.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

So I'm always intrigued, you're closer to what the maybe coming trends are in IT, what do you see is coming down the road?

Chad Heilig:

I think anything remote, Telehealth, contact tracing, any kind of cloud-based solutions are all going to play a big part of the direction that IT is going. It's definitely a growing industry. I mean, we're going to need more and more IT professionals as time goes on, I believe it's one of the fastest growing career segments right now. But definitely in the area of cloud-based solutions, remote-type work.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

That's the kind of thing that we have lived through, well, I'm older than you. I remember black and white television, and one or two channels, and rotary phones. I was reading a story to some elementary school kids when I was working for the City of Louisville, because we were doing financial empowerment, [inaudible 00:16:14], and there was this whole teaching thing. And they had a picture of a headset, right? With a curly wire from it, those kids, they were in elementary school, they had no idea what that was. I'm like, "Awe, dang it." It happens all the time.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

So then I do a rectangle, right? And I said, "What's this?" And they went, "Oh, that's a phone." So the technology has changed so much and so quickly, and will continue to do so, and will pick up speed. Already the speed at which we're working in, and the amount of data transfer that we can do, it's amazing.

Chad Heilig:

Right. Yeah, I mean, a lot of these younger kids don't even know hardly what DVDs are anymore. I mean, everything is online, it's like, want to see a movie, you just pull it up, or if you want... So a lot of things that they interact with are just all out on the internet now. So very little media [crosstalk 00:17:14]

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Right, exactly. I heard an interview with some jazz artists or something, and they were talking about their record collection and I'm like, "Nobody even knows what that means anymore."

Chad Heilig:

It's a relic now. I think some people will collect records as just a hobby now, but yeah, that kind of thing. So yeah, it's funny, it's definitely changed.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Yeah. Well, thank you for your part in helping us manage the change. And everybody that works in IT, thank you all, we wouldn't have been able to do any of this without you. So you're a part of a team that I think is making a difference, we all are. So thank you for that. And I appreciate your time today.

Chad Heilig:

Thank you, I appreciate it as well. Thank you for the opportunity.

Secretary Eric Friedlander:

Absolutely.

Julianne Hatton:

Thanks for joining us on CHFS Community, hosted by Secretary Eric Friedlander, produced by Julianne Hatton. Our Assistant Producer is Beth Fisher and IT Director is Lisa Wallace. Watch for the Podcast Preview in your email so you'll never miss an episode. While you're at it, tell your co-workers about the show. Until next time stay healthy, Kentucky.