



DAILY DEDICATION

McCorkle Building on
Big Accomplishments

Indiana Vision 2025
DYNAMIC LEADER OF THE YEAR

By Tom Schuman



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One way of understanding Scott McCorkle's work approach and career success is by looking at the first and last days of his tenure at ExactTarget/Salesforce Marketing Cloud.

Most people are engaged in a series of welcome meetings on the front end (after potentially figuring out where to park and having your picture taken for an identification badge) and a round of farewells on their way out the door.

Not McCorkle.



Scott McCorkle at work in one of his three roles – with High Alpha partner Mike Fitzgerald and assistant Rachel Lacy (the two previously worked together at ExactTarget).



By 2005, he had already spent a decade talking to a customer every single workday (more on that later). But there was a challenge on his first day at ExactTarget, even though he was an early investor and advisor and had been keeping a close watch on the company for about five years.

“I didn’t know any customers. This was still fairly early in SaaS (software as a service),” he explains. “I’m walking around, meeting people and there is this big screen where operations was taking care of people. There was a customer seeing a bunch of errors, having trouble with capacity. I said, ‘That’s who I’m going to call.’”

“The company was based in San Francisco. I called, talked to them, asked if I could see a demo. I was really impressed by

how that part of our system could be used. We ended up creating a whole business unit to focus on that go-to market.”

Fast forward 11 years and McCorkle is exiting as CEO of the Salesforce Marketing Cloud. Sure, there likely were a few tributes and celebrations. But also some unfinished business.

“The last customer I spoke to was (a major retailer) we had tried to take away from a competitor. This was the third attempt; we lost the first two. This one we won. And my last day that deal closed,” he shares.

Interaction at the highest level

McCorkle details the impetus for the conversations with customers and why he did

it each day for more than 20 years.

“When I joined Software Artistry, I ended up running engineering but started in a really single contributor role. I liked our product and wanted to learn more about it. I would talk to our implementation folks, ask if I could sit in on a call to see how they make it work for customers. It sounds kind of obvious – you talk to customers. But not everyone would do it.

“I would take those conversations back into product meetings, direction meetings, and when you can speak on behalf of customer needs, it creates influence,” he continues. “So I kept doing it. I just liked that it informed what we could do, so I made a commitment to myself in 1995, 1996 that I would just talk to a customer every day. So I did.”

Not every day, of course, lends itself to direct customer interactions. McCorkle admits he had to work at it, and there certainly was a “cheat sheet” of favorite customers that he could rely on.

“I would call those ... and you start to build a relationship with those customers. You discover something going wrong – if I hadn’t called, what would have happened,” he surmises. “I just got a lot of energy from that.”

Asked whether he ever tried to impart that strategy to others, McCorkle interrupts with an affirmative before the question is finished.

“There will still be many situations where super-smart, highly-effective people will be debating some idea without the voice of the customer,” he offers. “The marketplace, of course, wants companies we’re involved with to come up with ideas that are new or challenging. But those ideas don’t exist in a vacuum. They have to be applied to some problem or scenario that a company has. I impart that advice all the time, and there is no stage that is too early.”

Early influences

One of today’s leading tech and innovation voices grew up in the tiny town of Milroy in Rush County. At age 13, he received an Apple IIe computer. “I loved it, learned to program it top to bottom. I was in eighth grade and thought I would do something in computers.”

Studying computer science at Ball State University and engaging in practical experience through a co-op only fueled his desire. He says, “I loved this connection of computers into the physical world,” giving the example of making robots move.

McCorkle enjoyed his first job at Eli Lilly and Company, noting he learned many of the fundamental skills that help him to this day.

While studying for his master’s in

business administration degree at the Indiana University Kelley School of Business on the IUPUI campus, McCorkle and classmates heard from guest speaker Scott Webber. Webber was CEO of Software Artistry, the first publicly-traded software company in Indiana.

Webber, who enjoyed a lengthy career with a number of entrepreneurial ventures in central Indiana, recalls, “After the class, where I talked about Software Artistry and our culture and how we aggressively moved toward achieving things, he came up and said, ‘This is exactly the kind of place I want to be.’ We interviewed and he was a fit. I hired him to run IT initially. He did a good job there, then we needed someone to manage development. We decided to move him to that role and it was a great move.”

From McCorkle’s perspective, “I was excited to join a company where computers were the product. I wanted to be directly building the product. In this start-up company, I was able to move orders of magnitude faster, executing on ideas. The speed at which a company like that moves is very different.”

Case in point: The company’s largest customer, in the logistics business, was having some performance issues. A massive effort – code-named parcel – required placing a special team off-site in order to dramatically advance the platform. McCorkle was the leader of the group.

“That was probably the first project that I managed that it *had* to be successful. There are many projects where you want it to work, you expect it to work, but if it doesn’t, nothing terrible happens. This was life and death. This *had* to be successful. It was the first time I felt that kind of weight or pressure.”

Webber believes McCorkle has an “unusual set of talents. I always

find the hardest role to fill in any software company is the person running technology and development because they’re almost contrary skill sets. Really good technologists love being in front of a screen building technology. In terms of social skills and management skills, (that’s) generally not as much their way. Scott is very, very good technologically, but what is amazing (is that) he blends that with an incredible set of social skills and great strategic thinking.”

About 18 months before Software Artistry was sold to IBM, the company was restructured into business units with McCorkle leading one of those. “Even back then,” Webber says, “we saw general management capabilities in Scott that obviously led to chief operating officer at ExactTarget and his role at Salesforce.”

Career advancement

McCorkle shares a lesson on clear communication and teamwork from his IBM days, when he was focused on trying to break down product siloes.

“I remember learning, and I carry to this day: Don’t just assume everyone knows what they are doing and are executing a plan that they think is the right plan. It’s tempting to assume that, but people must understand why they are doing what they are doing.”

A “skunkworks initiative” titled Blowfish resulted in McCorkle and Webber presenting in front of IBM CEO Lou Gerstner. The program was approved and McCorkle was chief technology officer across 100 or so products.

In 1999, McCorkle and two co-founders started Mezzia, which had a health care focus and was a SaaS company to manage large capital spending initiatives. Although ultimately sold to a firm in Boston,

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Scott McCorkle
Indiana Vision 2025
Dynamic Leader of the Year

Your leadership and support have been key pillars of our success.



McCorkle and Vibenomics (CEO Brent Oakley is at far left) recently announced plans to add more than 250 employees in Fishers by the year 2020.



McCorkle is pleased that there is still a team on the north side of Indianapolis utilizing the software.

“I do take some comfort and some pride in starting a company in the dot-com bubble and have it still be around,” he admits. “The company still has many of its first customers using the product, which is kind of cool.”

Mezzia was about a year ahead of ExactTarget in raising money and being part of the early central Indiana tech community. McCorkle came to know ExactTarget co-founders Scott Dorsey and Chris Baggott. When Mezzia sold in 2005, “I couldn’t wait to join them. I was about employee No. 80.”

He believes the company was at about \$10 million in revenue. The product line, at \$350 million at the time of the Salesforce acquisition, is now worth over a billion dollars – one of maybe 10 SaaS products to reach that threshold.

Like Webber, Dorsey sees that special mix of abilities in McCorkle.

“I’d start with his innovation and vision. Scott is a really unique technology executive because he understands the technical side and the business side – with a focus on the customer,” Dorsey reflects. “In time, he

CONGRATULATIONS

TechPoint's Executive Chairman

SCOTT MCCORKLE

for being named the 2017 Indiana Vision 2025
Dynamic Leader of the Year!



became an incredible business partner. In many ways, we led the company together.”

When Dorsey stepped aside from Salesforce in 2013, “Scott was a no-brainer decision to step in as my successor. Scott really had grown into a tremendous communicator and leader. He quickly won the respect of the Salesforce executive team. It was the smoothest transition you could hope for.”

A serious challenge

McCorkle takes pride in helping integrate the very strong ExactTarget culture into the Salesforce way of doing things. There were different products and different methods that had to be incorporated.

Externally, he was thrust into the spotlight when then-Gov. Pence signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in March 2015. Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff was among those leading the criticism from afar and one of many threatening to pull business from Indiana.

It was a very serious time, McCorkle recalls. “We believed, and believe, the original RFRA law created an environment of discrimination that would have made it very hard to continue the way we wanted to continue. That’s the point we made and why we fought so hard for the fix. We had employees who felt threatened. It was employees who brought their concerns to us as a leadership team.

“The thing was a week away from being signed when we wrote the first letter to the Legislature and that kicked up a little bit of dust, a little bit of attention,” he adds. “But then the law was signed and we thought, if we cared enough to try and influence it along the way, we cared enough to try and change it after the fact – so that’s what we did.

“I can remember when Gov. Pence signed the RFRA fix, the feeling of accomplishment and relief ... to this day is unlike anything I ever felt.”

Just over a year later, Salesforce was announcing a major expansion in Indianapolis and unveiling its now realized plan of converting the city’s tallest building – the Chase Tower – to the Salesforce Tower. A few months later, McCorkle decided to step away from the organization.

He says today that many accomplishments had been achieved and both the company and product were “in great shape. Salesforce is a great company. I learned as much in that three years as I learned in all the years up to that.”

Back in action

It wasn’t long before McCorkle went from a hiatus to three jobs. He is executive chairman for both Torchlight and Vibenomics, known as Fuzic until its mid-October rebranding. Each has secured additional funding and is aggressively expanding. He is

an Executive in Residence at High Alpha, which now has a portfolio of nine companies in the business-to-business SaaS world with more to come.

“I thought I would take a longer break. I really hadn’t taken a break like that to sort of disconnect from the day-to-day operational intensity of a fast-growing SaaS business. I could feel my brain changing, healing,” he discloses with a chuckle, “where there became room for other ideas. And that was fun, to be able to think about categories I hadn’t been thinking about.

“That I hopped back into things now kind of faster than I thought I would is a result of being attracted to a couple of ideas that I thought were really good ideas. I can say that focusing on more than one (company) turns out to require a very different muscle. I’m still getting that up to full strength. It’s hard work, but it’s really fun.”

Brent Oakley, president of Vibenomics, was most recently in the car wash business before coming up with the idea of customized audio messaging and licensed music as a marketing platform. He did not know McCorkle before their first encounter and is glad he didn’t do much background research as he says he most certainly would have been intimidated.

“Scott asked, ‘Do you want to go at this turbo or is it more of a lifestyle business?’ He also said, ‘I want to be involved.’ When Scott



Fuzic became Vibenomics shortly after this early October press conference.



McCorkle answers questions from panelists during his “pitch” at the Rise of the Rest tour stop in Indianapolis in mid-October. The Vibenomics name was unveiled that day.



Tiffany and Scott McCorkle with ExactTarget co-founder Chris Baggott (back to the camera) at Rise of the Rest. 120WaterAudit, where Tiffany is COO, earned the \$100,000 pitch prize.

“He doesn’t expect the same work ethic from you,” Oakley goes on, “but he pulls you along. Eventually you will start working that hard or you will get left behind – and you don’t want that to happen.”

Webber cites hard work, strategic thinking and people skills as primary attributes for McCorkle. “He is so passionate about what he does from a work perspective. He does what very successful people do – he lives it seven days a week.”

Dorsey disputes the “workaholic” label for McCorkle, citing the latter’s commitment to family and community pursuits. But he does contend that “Scott is tremendously driven, a hard worker and will do what it takes to get the job done.”

Final thoughts

McCorkle on giving back: “There were those along the way who sure helped me in feedback, investments, introductions. There is a feeling then of wanting to help others. It’s also that it’s just fun to do, to see ideas come to life and to be part of the brainstorming or feedback around those ideas.”

On entrepreneurs and ideas: “Clearly, entrepreneurs come up with ideas. But it’s the rare entrepreneur that’s also the inventing entrepreneur. Torchlight is Susan Marshall’s idea and it’s a great idea, and I feel like I’m every bit the entrepreneur helping her make her idea successful. Don’t sit around with a bunch of crappy ideas slowing you up from being an entrepreneur.”

His passion for products: “It is the active creation – it’s making something out of something. It’s the most fun you can have working, being part of a team and a company that conceives some idea that should exist to solve some problem, then building that. That’s what I love to do. I’m a product person at heart. That active creation is addicting.”

Outlook for the next three to five years: “I think it’s, see how things develop. Growing companies, helping companies be successful, working hard to provide a return for investors. There’s a lot of work ahead with these companies, but it’s very exciting.”

says I want to be part of something, the answer is, ‘Absolutely.’ ”

Oakley describes the immediate impact for Vibenomics, which had been in operation at the time for less than six months.

The investor reaction went from “it’s an interesting idea, but I probably won’t get involved because I don’t know these guys running it” to “it’s an interesting idea; with somebody like McCorkle being behind it, now we’ll put some money down.”

High Alpha, Hyde Park and Allos Ventures were all part of a 2017 funding round.

Oakley adds that McCorkle’s presence has also attracted high-quality talent in a very competitive landscape.

“Scott, when he gets a vision ... it is so clear, so direct. I don’t think that can be taught. It is amazing to watch it happen. I consider myself a hard worker but I’ve never seen anybody in my entire career that has a motor like Scott. And the genuineness in how he does it. He treats everybody in the organization the same.