He's an avid cyclist who savor the opportunity to compete as a team and
the rigors that lead to improved performance. He's invigorated by spirited
discussions and debates that prompt deeper examination by looking at
issues from multiple angles. He's an admirer of great literature and values
the profound implications it imparts to readers. He's also a chief executive with a
professional upbringing as a technologist and enginee.

These are the narratives that shape and guide Symantec President and CEO Enrique
Salem, and their combination is what makes him a unique leader. Since taking the
helm three years ago, Salem has led a flurry of activity. He did not find a smoothly
paved road when he assumed charge. It was at the tail end of the 2008-09 financial
crisis and the company was facing a number of market changes and the technology
landscape was quickly evolving. But with the same relentless focus he has when
cycling and the analytical
rigor that
has marked his
career, Salem spearheaded a series of initiatives to enable Symantec to capitalize on
these new economic and technological changes, transforming these challenges into
opportunities.

Though he could cite others, Salem pinpoints four core accomplishments that have
been realized under his watch. The first is the definition of a new vision and strategy
around protecting information, anywhere and anytime. Part of the strategy included
the rebranding and launch of the new Symantec Checkmark Logo.

The second is the execution of mergers and acquisitions. Historically, Symantec had a
reputation of struggling in this area. Salem and his management team have completely
changed this perception with new processes and controls. “In addition to making sure the
acquisition is an appropriate fit in terms of technology and culture, the key is to integrate
them into the larger company, quickly and effectively,” he says. “We’ve had a great run of
very successful acquisitions—MessageLabs, PGP, VeriSign, Clearwell, to name a few.”

Interview with Patrick E. Spencer
Enrique Salem,
President and CEO,
Symantec Corporation
Symantec Career Highlights:
Salem was named Symantec’s president and CEO in April 2009. He initially joined Symantec in 1990 through the Peter Norton Computing acquisition and held a number of engineering and senior leadership positions, including serving as the company’s first chief technology officer.

Enrique Salem at a Glance
“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald

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The third is the launch of a new appliance business. “Our initial goal was to build a business with a $100 million annual run rate,” Salem notes. “We have achieved that, and the business continues to grow rapidly. It’s been a very successful venture.”

The final achievement is the implementation of a new performance management system based on core Victory Plan goals that cascade from the company level down to individual contributors. “We use it to measure and reward performance,” he explains.

In the following interview, Salem discusses how Symantec solutions are playing a critical role in facilitating five key IT trends, Symantec’s strategies around organic development and mergers and acquisitions, how Symantec can help CIOs remain relevant to—or specifically be part of—the business, his interest in cycling and literature, and the evolution of his career over the past two decades.

PATRICK: The role of the CIO has changed dramatically in the past couple of years. Relevance is getting more and more difficult. How is Symantec helping CIOs reposition themselves and their organizations as business enablers?

ENRIQUE: IT needs to drive differentiation for the business and must integrate into the business. Too many CIOs are still on the outside looking in. The key is really to become a business partner, and the objective is to help the business innovate while becoming more efficient and agile. Symantec is part of this equation in that we help CIOs protect their infrastructure, information, and identities as well as deliver solutions that enable high availability and disaster recovery. As a result, they, along with their business partners, can
We don’t care what device you want to use or what size and type of organization you are. We will be there to protect you.”

– Enrique Salem, President and CEO, Symantec Corporation

Enrique Salem
at a Glance
Non-Symantec Career Evolution:
Before Salem joined Peter Norton Computing, he was a vice president at Security Pacific Merchant Bank, where he led projects for the development of real-time trading systems. In the late 1990s, Salem left Symantec and joined Ask Jeeves, Inc. as vice president of technology and operations. He was recruited by Oblix, Inc. in 2001, holding the role of senior vice president of products and technology. In late 2002, he joined Brightmail as president and CEO, leading the anti-spam company through its acquisition by Symantec in 2004.

Professional Highlights:
Salem holds a bachelor’s degree in computer science from Dartmouth College. He was appointed to the President’s Management Advisory Board in March 2011, which provides advice on how to implement best business practices on matters related to federal government management and operation.

Born in Colombia, Salem received the Estrella Award by the Hispanic IT Executive Council and was named 2007 Corporate Executive of the Year by Hispanic Net. He also was recognized as 2004 Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst and Young. Salem is on the Board of Directors for Automatic Data Processing (ADP).

Favorite Author and Book: F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby.

Symantec.com/ciodigest 15
have a significant distance to go in virtualizing all of their servers, and it is just starting on the storage front. Virtualization is exciting because there is a tremendous opportunity to drive real efficiencies.

PATRICK: The technology challenges and business requirements of today quickly become yesterday’s news. How is Symantec evolving its portfolio to meet these changes?

ENRIQUE: We continue to transform our solution portfolio through organic development and mergers and acquisitions. One of the big initiatives in 2012 will be around what we call Symantec O_. In a nutshell, it is a cloud security platform designed to protect all enterprise cloud applications and cloud infrastructures. It addresses questions such as, “How do we protect identities across a range of Internet-based services? How do we protect information as it goes out into different environments, not only in the data center but into the cloud? And how do we govern and manage those processes from a centralized view?”

We’re working on a number of projects, but I cannot talk about those yet. But we’ve had some great successes over the past couple of years—from the extension of deduplication technology across our portfolio to the development of Symantec Data Insight.

Merger and acquisitions also play a critical role in enabling us to better execute to our vision and meet new requirements from our customers. We’ve had a great run of some very successful acquisitions but more importantly of integrating them into our larger product portfolio.

PATRICK: Symantec recently made a decision to have Huawei Technologies buy Symantec’s share in Huawei Symantec. Can you elaborate on the reasons to do so?

ENRIQUE: We entered a joint venture with Huawei just over three and a half years ago with three goals in mind. First, we sought better access to the market in China. There was tremendous growth potential, and we wanted a partner in China that could help us build awareness for Symantec and our solutions. Second, telecommunications is critically important, and Huawei has a great footprint in that space. Third, our customers were telling us that they wanted the simplicity of managing solutions in an appliance form factor.

Since the joint venture was kicked off, we have achieved or exceeded all three goals, and this is the reason we decided to sell Huawei back our 49 percent. China is now our largest business in the Asia Pacific; it was the fifth largest market back in 2004. In regards to penetrating the telecommunications market, it is now our second-largest vertical. As to our appliance business, we have been able to deliver a number of our capabilities in the form of appliances. Our appliance business is up almost 100 percent year over year and is continuing to accelerate rapidly.

We have a big commitment in this area, and Symantec will continue to invest heavily and remain focused on evolving and further developing our appliance business in 2012, 2013, 2014, and beyond.

PATRICK: Let’s switch gears from your professional life to your personal life, though there’s obviously an intertwining of the two. You’re an avid cyclist. When did you become interested and what has kept you cycling?

ENRIQUE: Cycling for me is something that is a real challenge. You can set goals and aspire to be better. When we first started cycling, I had modest goals to get around Lake Tahoe. Our first time in 2006 we completed the circuit in four hours and six minutes. But this was just the initial line in the sand. In order to improve, we had to maintain a relentless focus on improvement. Every year we’ve cut our time—it went to three hours and 50 minutes, to three hours and 45 minutes, to three hours and 29 minutes. And this last year, we did it in three hours and two minutes!

Now one thing that’s interesting about cycling is it gets harder to improve as you progress, and that’s the same thing about business. The better you get, the harder it becomes to get better. So you must maintain a relentless pursuit of excellence.

PATRICK: Teaming is also critical when it comes to competitive cycling. You are an information-socialist; you welcome the interaction and the debates that take place on your staff and with others, even customers and partners. That’s how you reach decisions. Can you describe this correlation?

ENRIQUE: Commitment is really a centerpiece of teaming—whether in cycling or in business. Our goal at Symantec is to do a fantastic job of taking care of our customers. One of the things that we measure—and we have a maniacal focus on it—is the Net Promoter Score, whether we’re talking customers, partners, or employees. This is how we ensure that we deliver exactly what our
ENRIQUE: It probably started in the eighth or ninth grade. The quote from Shakespeare I learned when I was a freshman in high school: "Our doubts are traitors and they make us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt." Here’s what it says to me: you sometimes must take chances—whether personally or professionally—and just go for it.

As you mentioned before, I am an information-socialist. I like to understand other peoples’ viewpoints, and literature is a great way to do so. This is why I like the quote from Tennyson’s poem “Ulysses” so much: “I am part of all that I have met.” I want to learn from everyone, listen to their different viewpoints, and then apply those to whatever problem I’m trying to solve.

PATRICK: Your background is in engineering. Indeed, you were Symantec’s first chief technology officer back in the 1990s. How did you make the move into executive management? And how does your technical background color your management lens?

ENRIQUE: When I work with a team or groups of teams, it is about setting direction, identifying priorities, determining success measurements. This is really function-agnostic. It doesn’t matter if you’re in sales, marketing, finance, operations, or engineering; it is the same: where are you going and where do you invest the resources?

The great thing about Symantec is that we have tremendous resources, but we must prioritize and inspire the larger team to go and achieve things that they might think are beyond their ability. Of course, with my engineering background, I probably have a greater interest in being a bit more analytical and focused on details; how things fit together. I’ll get underneath the hood on occasions and tinker.

PATRICK: Who is your favorite author and why?

ENRIQUE: I’m a big fan of F. Scott Fitzgerald. The Great Gatsby is one of the best books ever written. One of my favorite lines from Fitzgerald is the following quote, which goes back to my earlier point about the importance of looking at business issues and challenges from the perspective of multiple angles: “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

PATRICK: You left Symantec for a few years in the late 1990s and early 2000s for a series of executive management roles with startups—Ask Jeeves, Oblix, and then Brightmail, where you served as president and CEO before it was acquired by Symantec in 2004. How did these experiences help prepare you for your return to Symantec and then your role today?

ENRIQUE: Startups are fighting for survival every day. They’re hungry. They’re driven. They’re aggressive. These are attributes that I want to see Symantec embody. We need to have the same passion and commitment of a startup. The other thing you don’t have in smaller companies or startups is silos. Everyone works together and there is collaboration across all organizational segments. I don’t want Symantec to be a consumer business, storage business, enterprise business, security business. We are one company and need to act as one cohesive team.

PATRICK: You’re coming up on your fourth year as Symantec’s president and CEO. Much has been accomplished but much is still to come. What is on the horizon for Symantec?

ENRIQUE: Symantec will remain the leader in protecting infrastructure, information, and identities. As technology and business requirements evolve, whether it is virtualization, the cloud, or mobility, our focus will remain unwavering. We don’t care what device you want to use, if you’re an individual or business, or what size and type of organization you are. We will be there to protect you.

“There the better you get, the harder it becomes to get better.”

– Enrique Salem, President and CEO, Symantec Corporation

Patrick E. Spencer (Ph.D.) is the editor in chief and publisher for CIO Digest.