When you look at a list of priorities for nonprofits, IT typically isn’t at the top. In fact, IT is often not even on the list: more than half of nonprofits in the United States report they lack the necessary technology and IT services to effectively accomplish their work. With this in mind, NPW was formed by Microsoft, Accenture, and JPMorgan Chase in 2002. In addition to helping nonprofits with their IT needs, this founding group also wanted to help young adults gain a brighter future through the creation of the Technology Service Corps that provides them with training in IT and professional skills.

NPW took a new direction when Stephanie Cuskley was appointed chief executive officer in 2009. She and her team introduced plans to expand NPW’s portfolio of services while increasing its geographic reach. “We refocused the organization around the concept of bringing the IT community together for social good,” she explains. “Our IT consulting and managed services offerings were quite successful, but they were targeted at helping one nonprofit at a time. What we wanted to accomplish was a broader engagement with the IT community, one that would enable NPW to achieve greater impact—for more nonprofits and young adults across the United States and even internationally.”

Under the leadership of Cuskley, NPW realigned its portfolio into three areas. The Community Corps matches pro bono IT and business experts to nonprofits and schools. Started two years ago, The Community Corps is comprised of more than 2,000 volunteers and 1,000 nonprofits from 50 states. With 900 projects completed or in progress, The Community Corps has delivered projects valued at over US$3 million. Technology Service Corps was started 10 years ago and is focused on providing young adults (ages 18–25) with free IT and professional skills training. The 22-week program also includes mentoring, internships, and job placement. The initial area of focus for NPW when it was founded, IT Professional Services, delivers managed IT services to nonprofits and helps foundations provide streamlined grant making in the cloud.

CIO Digest recently had an opportunity to sit down with Cuskley to discuss where NPW has been, where it is going, and some of the ways it is having a tangible impact on individuals and nonprofits.

PATRICK: NPW’s initial focus was on the nonprofit. What was the rationale for doing so?

STEPHANIE: Nonprofits typically have very poor technology solutions, and everything is managed in house. In fact, 88 percent of nonprofits do not have an IT professional on staff. Imagine running your business without adequate IT. This is essentially what they do every day. NPW was founded to
address this need, to provide on-site managed services for nonprofits that do not have the resources to manage their IT infrastructure themselves. And as the world of technology has rapidly changed in recent years, our business model has also evolved.

PATRICK: What are some of the core requirements that nonprofits have when they engage your IT Professional Services group?

STEPHANIE: There are a number of factors that vary based on the organizational needs of the nonprofit. Some simply recognize that IT is a necessity that managed services provide. Others just seek the flexibility that managed services provide. They can scale their operations up and down without worrying about adding or eliminating staff. Another big concern is regulations. Nearly 80 percent of the nonprofits we serve are social services. They are highly regulated by healthcare, mental health, and other privacy requirements and simply don’t have the internal resources—or wherewithal—to address these fairly complex issues.

PATRICK: You have spent a lot of time developing C-level relationships and strategies. What have you done in this area?

STEPHANIE: One of the objectives we had when I started was to develop relationships and opportunities to engage the leaders and innovators within the IT community, particularly at the senior management level. One way we did this was to build a stellar board that helps drive strategic decisions and governance.

Another was the formation of a CIO Council. It gets together several times a year and serves as a sounding board as we design and launch new initiatives or recalibrate existing programs.

PATRICK: Let’s talk about The Community Corps in more detail. Launched about 18 months ago, it is highly successful—nearly 2,000 registered, active volunteers representing 15 corporations who have completed 900-plus projects to date. And those numbers are growing fast. What does a typical project look like and how does an individual or company sign up?

STEPHANIE: These are not huge projects. They typically range from a couple hours to maybe 30 hours in length and involve teams of one to three people. Many of them are virtual projects and the volunteers can do the work remotely, even if the nonprofit is located in their backyard. We are piloting the program in three countries now, including India where 15 percent of our volunteers originate. Individuals who are interested in volunteering can simply go to our website and complete a profile. We then match them to projects based on their skills and interests.

We also work closely with our corporate partners to help them launch The Community Corps within their own organizations. Programs such as The Community Corps play a pivotal role for many of our corporate partners and their corporate social responsibility initiatives, helping them track and manage and then celebrate how their employees are giving back. It also provides them with a culture of social responsibility that serves as a great talent acquisition tool and facilitates employee retention through integrated community-corporate engagement.

PATRICK: Let’s talk about your second program, Technology Service Corps. It was created about 10 years ago. What is it all about?

STEPHANIE: The objective of Technology Service Corps is to provide free IT and professional skills training as a lynchpin in their ability to deliver services to the needy. They don’t have the resources or expertise to hire an IT team and look to NPower to supplement and manage those resources for them. They receive added benefits since we can provide the services at a discounted rate through our community of IT supporters. Others just seek the flexibility that managed services provide. They can scale their operations up and down without worrying about adding or eliminating staff. Another big concern is regulations. Nearly 80 percent of the nonprofits we serve are social services. They are highly regulated by healthcare, mental health, and other privacy requirements and simply don’t
NPower CEO Stephanie Cuskley began her career as an investment banker, first at Drexel Burnham Lambert followed by a stint as the head of restructuring at Integrated Resources. She subsequently joined JPMorgan Chase (then Chemical Bank) in 1994, where she spent a number of years in High Yield origination and leveraged finance. In 2001, Cuskley changed career paths when she was chosen to lead a new CEO-sponsored, organization-wide leadership development and corporate cultural initiative. It began with the firm’s top 200 executives and eventually expanded to include all employees.

The differences between JPMorgan Chase and NPower are dramatic: one is for profit, the other is nonprofit; one has more than 100,000 employees, the other doesn’t quite have 50. However, Cuskley believes the differences aren’t as dramatic as they initially appear. “I've been very impressed with the quality of professionals in the nonprofit world,” she says. “They are just as dedicated as their for-profit counterparts.”

BOARD MEMBERSHIPS
> Aegion
> Avantair
> New York City Commission on Women’s Issues
> Resource Development Committee for the United Way of New York City

EDUCATION
> MBA, Cornell University
> Bachelor of Arts, University of Toronto

From Investment Banking to Nonprofit

well as mentoring, internships, and job assistance to young adults with disadvantaged backgrounds between the ages of 18 and 25. It is a wonderful program that, in 22 weeks, truly changes the lives of young people. And while the curriculum is very demanding, we have been able to maintain a graduation rate in excess of 83 percent. The success speaks for itself. The average annual incoming income is $15,000; outgoing is $30,000. It literally has made a marked difference for thousands of lives and families. Going forward we’d like to expand the effort to other cities where young adults need a brighter future and IT jobs are available for those with the requisite training.

“Eighty-eight percent of nonprofits do not have an IT professional on staff.”

– Stephanie Cuskley, CEO, NPower

PATRICK: You talk about making a big change in young people’s lives. Do you have any anecdotes?

STEPHANIE: We have many. For example, we recently had a graduate who was basically homeless. She told us she came to our program in the morning, held down both an afternoon and an evening job, and literally slept in the subways at night because she had nowhere else to go. She graduated from the Technology Service Corps, worked at a nonprofit, secured an interview through Technology Service Corps networking, and was hired as an engineering analyst at JPMorgan Chase with an annual salary of $50,000. This is just one of many success stories. And the list grows longer every year.

PATRICK: IT Professional Services consists of two areas of focus. What are they and how are they changing?

STEPHANIE: Five years ago, IT Professional Services concentrated on customized consulting and application development, helping one nonprofit at a time. We are transforming that approach into a more replicable model so that we can help more nonprofits. The first area is managed services or what we call IT Basic. Today, we provide managed services for 55 nonprofits in New York and four other states. These organizations range in size from 3 to 350 employees. We work closely with each of them to design and implement the right sys-
some of the activities in which Symantec has been involved?

**STEPHANIE:** The relationship goes back a little more than three years when Symantec attended our annual gala. Peter Hancock (a director in the Technical Sales Organization) had served as our Symantec sponsor during this time and continues to play a critical role in growing the engagement. In addition to supplying hardware and software, Symantec has provided classroom trainers and mentors for our Technology Services Corps program. Peter has been heavily involved here, teaching various courses and organizing site visits and presentations. We also provide each of our students with copies of Norton Internet Security and Symantec Ghost Solution Suite. We want them to know what tools are available to protect themselves when they are online and how to perform bare-metal restores when systems fail.

We are very pleased that the relationship continues to evolve and grow. For example, Symantec recently provided a $50,000 grant for Technology Service Corps and our new women’s initiative called NPW: Women, a social outreach effort focused on getting more women and girls from disadvantaged backgrounds into IT. In addition, we are working with Peter and other members of the Symantec team to add a security track to the Technology Service Corps program, as we believe there is a significant need for IT security professionals with the right skill sets.

**PATRICK:** NPW relies on several Symantec solutions to protect internal infrastructure and as part of the standard architectural configuration delivered with IT Professional Services. What pieces are in use and how?

**STEPHANIE:** We use Symantec NetBackup to protect our data along with the data of our managed services clients. It is very reliable and robust and the latest releases deliver features that enable us to drive down storage costs, reduce backup windows, and improve operational efficiency. For endpoint security, we rely on Symantec Endpoint Protection and include it as the endpoint security standard for our nonprofit clients. It provides us with a full set of features such as a centralized console and virtualization support. In regard to the latter, as we have a mixed physical and virtual environment and many of our nonprofit clients do as well, the virtualization support in NetBackup and Endpoint Protection is critical.

**PATRICK:** Empowering women in the realm of technology is a key interest for you. How did you get interested and what are some of the things that NPW is doing?

**STEPHANIE:** When I was in investment banking, there were too few women, especially at a senior level. As a result, in the late 1990s, I partnered with JPMorgan Chase’s CFO Dina Dublon and other senior women at the company to grow a women’s leadership initiative. In 2002, Mayor Michael Bloomberg appointed me to serve on the New York City Commission on Women’s Issues.

At my first NPW gala, I was a red dress in a sea of black suits. I realized IT had the same problem, only maybe worse. I polled some of our partners and there was real passion around the topic. Interest was overwhelming and we decided to start a women’s initiative called NPW: Women. Susan Erickson, the CIO at New York Life, and Gail Fierstein, a senior IT leader at Goldman Sachs, kindly agreed to serve as co-chairs. Others such as Cathinka Wahlstrom from Accenture, who sits on our board, along with a long list of other senior women leaders, from a wide range of leading companies, have been involved.

While the effort is still nascent, we are locking in on two project scopes that we will pilot in New York City and then scale more broadly through The Community Corps. First, we plan to work with girls in middle school to get them excited about careers in IT. Currently, to get the program up and running, we are in discussions with organizations such as The Girl Scouts and the National Center for Women in Technology. The second area is focused on getting more young women to enter and succeed at vocational tech programs like Technology Service Corps.

On that note, we are proud to have almost tripled the number of young women in the Technology Service Corps program. In addition, we are working with our corporate partners to develop a mentoring initiative that will help young women succeed in class and then in the early phases of their career once they are employed. With efforts such as these, I am convinced that in 15 to 20 years women graduates from Technology Service Corps will head the IT organizations for some of the world’s leading enterprises.

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