# Lester Hightower

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## Senior Technology Executive and Entrepreneur

A multi-talented senior technology executive with successful and diverse experience in various positions, including roles as Chief Technology and Chief Information Officer, IT Director, and Technology Entrepreneur. Continuous learner with a deep understanding of macro- and micro-economics and software-as-a-service (SaaS) business models. Leveraged benefits of open-source software to build, grow, and sell a prominent railroad industry SaaS provider that concurrently served *Fortune* 500 and quite small companies, and all sizes in between. Proven abilities to succeed as a change agent, to plan objectives, determine strategies and implement methods; staff (recruit, hire, train and mentor); direct; organize; coordinate; and evaluate business and IT policies, projects and procedures. Excellent interpersonal relations and abilities, including oral, written, and presentation skills needed to communicate with all levels of management, staff, and clients.


## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Founder, President and Principal Consultant**                                                    **2019 – now**
**Adivvyo, Inc.**, Orange Park, FL - http://adivvyo.com
Adivvyo provides retained consulting services such as a Fractional Chief Information Officer, Fractional Chief Technology Officer, Product and Industry Advisor, and similar; subcontracted access to highly talented software engineers; and a software as a service (SaaS) platform named RailBot, a rail industry focused robotic process automation technology.


**SVP and Chief Information Officer (CIO)**                                                         **2012 – 2019**
**Florida East Coast Railway (FECR)**, Jacksonville, FL - http://www.fecrwy.com
*Leader of the information technology department for an exceptionally densely trafficked regional railroad plus two trucking subsidiaries, FEC Highway Services and Raven Transport. Fortress Investment Group acquired FECR in July of 2007 for $850 million and sold it to Grupo México Transportation (BMV:GMXT) in July of 2017, for US $2.1 billion. The FECR CIO position was eliminated in May of 2019, as part of the continued integration of FECR into GMXT's Ferromex railway.*

In July of 2012, Fortress sold RailAmerica (RA) to Genesee & Wyoming (G&W), but kept FECR. Years prior, after Fortress gave RA control of FECR, RA disbanded and absorbed the FECR IT Department. In 2012, job #1 was to rebuild the FECR IT Dept. and to smoothly separate its IT infrastructure from G&W. Conducted RFQ processes for several managed service providers, staffed the department, and separated FECR IT from G&W. After that, brought many technology innovations to bear over FECR's operations, for both internal and external customers. Created value through digital transformation of numerous internal and customer-facing business processes and systems. FECR achieved substantial efficiency gains and cost reductions as well as captured additional revenue and improved profit margins.

- 2012-2013 – Separated FECR IT from RailAmerica and Genesee & Wyoming; added disaster recovery.
- 2012-2013 – Created a new, high-performant business intelligence environment with executive dashboards.
- 2013-2014 – Introduced Customer Relationship Management and Customer Service Ticketing systems.
- 2013-2014 – Led technology design and spend for a highly automated intermodal terminal at Port Everglades.
- 2014-2015 – Assisted with the RFQ process and then the implementation of Wabtec's TMDS for train dispatch.
- 2014-2015 – Advocated the need for and then created FECR Connect, a B2B web portal for FECR customers.
- 2015-2016 – Implemented owner-operator kiosks to solve load paperwork challenges in drayage business.
- 2015-2016 – Added load paperwork visibility and the Statements & Invoices app to FECR Connect.
- 2016-2017 – Added EZ Buy and the related Web APIs for load board integrations to FECR Connect.
  - EZ Buy is FECR's conduit for selling door-to-door transportation in the spot market.
  - EZ Buy exceeded its multi-million dollar revenue goal within the first 18 months.
- 2016-2017 – Enhanced FECR Connect track & trace fidelity via train locations data from the signal system.
- 2016-2017 – RFQ and implementation of Pricing Dept. price optimization (Deal Desk), with Revenue Analytics.
- 2017-2017 – FECR Connect train string charts with features for scheduled, what-if/planning, and actual runs.
- 2017-2017 – Enhanced FECR Connect track & trace fidelity with "on the street" locations from Omnitracs VMUs.
- 2018-2018 – Created the FECHS Owner/Operator Mobile App for smartphones (FECHS O/OMA)
- 2018-2018 – Created Raven Connect, a B2B web portal for Raven Transport customers, akin to FECR Connect.
- 2017-2019 – Aided in the relocation of many administrative jobs from Jacksonville, FL to Guadalajara, Mexico.
- 2017-2019 – Led the relocation of all administrative workers and the primary datacenter to a new office location.

**Director, Software Solutions**                                                              **2010 – 2012**
**Invensys Rail (now Siemens Mobility)**, Jacksonville, FL - http://www.siemens.com/mobility
Reported to the President of Invensys Rail North America and consolidated various SaaS, back-office software, and IoT systems into a new Software Solutions P&L that was set apart from the products business. Also applied technologies from sister companies – Invensys Controls and Invensys Operations Management – into the North American freight and transit railroad markets. *Siemens acquired Invensys Rail in November 2012.*

Modernized and improved several aging software services and introduced these industry firsts:
- Centralized monitoring and alerting of liquid propane levels at switch heaters, via an Invensys Controls product.
- Detection and alerting of end-of-train (EOT) devices that moved away from the owning railroad's property.
- Invensys Rail's EOT data and software services used by a competitor's EOT devices and our mutual customers.
- Over-the-air software upgrades for EOTs, and for both Invensys's and a cooperative competitor's device.
  - The EOT SaaS described here supports many tens of thousands of EOTs that constantly send data in via the cellular radios that each EOT contains.

**Vice President, RailDOCS Solutions**                                                          **2009 – 2010**
**RMI, a GE Transportation Company (now Wabtec)**, Jacksonville, FL - http://www.rmiondemand.com
Directed all activities of the RailDOCS SaaS business with over 5,000 users across 30+ customer accounts. In February of 2019, GE Transportation merged with Wabtec Corporation, including the GE Transportation Digital Solutions business unit, and so Wabtec is where RailDOCS now resides.

**Vice President and Chief Technology Officer (CTO)**                                          **1997 – 2009**
**10East Corporation**, Jacksonville, FL - https://www.raildocs.net
*In January 2002, the private equity firm Three Cities Research and management of The AIMS Group formed 10East, following TCR's purchase of ABC-NACO from bankruptcy. In April of 2009, RMI, a portfolio company of The Carlyle Group, acquired 10East. In November 2011, GE Transportation acquired RMI from The Carlyle Group and in February 2019, Wabtec acquired GE Transportation.*

Software as a service to the North American railroad industry provided under the RailDOCS brand, which continues today at Wabtec. Led all IT infrastructure, R&D, and software development functions. Prior to ABC-NACO's bankruptcy, also served as the Divisional CIO for ABC-NACO's Rail Systems Division (~350 employees and 11 office locations), while also leading the growing RailDOCS SaaS offering inside of ABC-NACO subsidiary, The AIMS Group, Inc.

Built and operated RailDOCS and RailDOCS Mobile with and upon open source technologies that include Linux, Apache, MySQL, PostgreSQL, Perl, Python, Xen, Mapnik and others. RailDOCS was the first Internet-based vertical supply chain management platform that allowed North American railroads to collaborate with their vendor community to estimate, design, procure materials for, and build projects within several railroad engineering sub-disciplines. RailDOCS Mobile was the first mobile computing platform for railroad field workers in the signal and communications discipline. It schedules and guides workers through safety testing and inspection processes on wayside assets, and collects the related electronic data. Additional functionality includes tools for Federal hours of service compliance, for compliance with newly enacted Federal regulations around signal hardware and software configuration management, and for track and bridge inspections. The system was widely adopted by the North American rail industry, with five of North America's seven Class I railroads as customers, plus many regionals and short-lines.

**Vice President and Manager of Information and Communications Systems**                        **1995 – 1997**
**United Railway Signal Group (URSG)**, Jacksonville, FL
United Railway Signal Group was an independent signal design and engineering contractor to the North American railroad industry. Joined URSG in 1995, as the Manager of Information and Communication Systems, and ultimately became a Vice President. During that time, a fledgling software-as-a-service business was born that later became known as RailDOCS. URSG was sold to ABC-NACO (NASDAQ:ABCR) in October of 1997 and, in 1999, RailDOCS was spun into a separate ABC-NACO subsidiary named The AIMS Group.

**Lead Developer of the WANE Project** (and other projects)                                     **1990 – 1995**
**The Supercomputer Computations Research Institute (SCRI)**, Tallahassee, FL - https://rcc.fsu.edu/history
*Federally funded supercomputer center—now Florida State University's Department of Scientific Computing.*
Through the years, supported several PhD research scientists at SCRI who worked in areas ranging from high energy physics to macroeconomics. Authored computationally intensive software in several programming languages, including C, C++, and FORTRAN, and ran some of those on very high-performant computers of the day, including a Cray Y-MP/432 and a CM-2 Connection Machine. Authored visualization software that produced 3D stills and 3D stop-motion videos

using SciAn, a scientific visualization and animation program for Silicon Graphics 4D and IBM RS6000 workstations. My final assignment at SCRI was as Lead Developer for the Wide Area Network Environment Project in which we enhanced the then fledgling and open-sourced Linux operating system (kernel version 0.0.54) to support very large numbers of simultaneous users on commodity x86 hardware, for use by community Free-Nets.

## EDUCATION

**Bachelor of Science: Economics**                                                    **1992 – 1996**
**Florida State University**, Tallahassee, FL

## RECOGNITION, VOLUNTEERING, AND PROFESSIONAL / COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**Jacksonville Business Journal, 40 Under 40 Award**                                   **2014**

**Board of Directors Member**                                                          **2017 – now**
**The Rivere Foundation** is a USA registered public charity (EIN 82-0728601). The foundation performs its primary advocacy work via its Let Me Be 83 trademark. Learn more at www.letmebe83.org.

**Northeast Florida CIO Council** (www.neflcio.org)                                     **2018 – 2020**

**GE Transportation Digital Solutions, Customer Advisory Board**                        **2018 – 2019**

## REFERENCES

- Mr. Jim Hertwig, President and CEO (retired), Florida East Coast Railway, Jacksonville, FL
- Mr. John Brenholt, EVP and CFO (retired), Florida East Coast Railway, Jacksonville, FL
- Ms. Melissa Westerman, Chief Accounting Officer, Advanced Disposal Services, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
- Mr. Tom Ballas, VP of HR (retired), Florida East Coast Railway, Jacksonville, FL
- Mr. Craig King, President and CEO (retired), RJ Corman Railroad Group, Nicholasville, KY
- Mr. John West, VP Engineering (retired), CSX Transportation, Jacksonville, FL
- Mr. Mike Choat, Vice President - Business Development, Wabtec Corporation, Benwood, TX
- Mr. Sid Bakker, President, Transportation Products Sales Company, O'Fallon, MO