

From Army IT to Healthcare Data Diviner: WPC's Ray Guzman

As CEO of healthcare data solutions provider WPC Healthcare, Ray Guzman likes to make complex things simple. In other words, he's really smart. But he's also a leader and a connector. The Nashville Business Journal just named him to their 2015 class of 40 Under 40 winners. An alumnus of Young Leaders Council, he sits on numerous nonprofit boards. A decorated Army veteran, Ray and his wife Nakisha have five girls. He sat still long enough to answer [a few questions from The Nashville Globe](#).

Ray Guzman
CEO, WPC Healthcare



What brought you to WPC Healthcare?

I had the wonderful opportunity to have a number of career experiences – from the Army to working for two different startups to Microsoft. When WPC came along, it offered me the chance to take my collective experience working with Fortune 500 companies and apply that to a healthcare setting that's also entrepreneurial.

How have those experiences shaped you as a young leader?

Each stop has prepared me for the challenges of leading WPC. In the military, you learn the importance of clear communication and how to handle situations under stress, which directly led to work for two successive startups, which led to my work at Microsoft. I learned a lot about managing an enterprise business.

What's the one misconception civilians have about veterans, and what do you think could be done to change it?

I think a lot of civilians assume veterans are too rigid. It's true we have a command and control structure, but we excel at team assignments. The military makes you extremely mission-oriented and builds an unparalleled work ethic. Responsibilities are clear but they let you do your job. You have to be trusting of your team and communicate with clarity. There's not a better person to do that kind of work than a soldier.

The Anthem data breach is expected to effect 80 million health care consumers. What can health care providers do to better protect patient data? Will new regulations demanding tighter data protection protocols help?

I don't think new regulations are required. They could be more punitive, but what we have in place is sufficient. What's really needed is a maturity around data governance – Who has access to the data? Where does the data lie? How long do I have to store this data? In the near future, most health organizations will have a single repository to store data.

We need to slow down to speed up by investing in data maturity and governance.

Data maturity?

It's how you integrate, aggregate, normalize and report on the data you've gathered. With the right data maturity, you can ask the right questions. From the answers to those questions comes the insights we need to garner better outcomes.

What is the most significant impact data analytics can have on the health care industry?

Our tag line at WPC is, "We turn data into understanding." Most companies in this space are driven by issues of compliance or avoidance of financial penalties, such as readmission. But what's exciting for us is that increasingly, customers are asking more sophisticated questions – the kind of questions that can be more influential than a thousand answers. For example, instead of looking at a population of diabetics and asking retrospective questions like, "What percentage required hospitalization? For how long?" we can answer specific questions around a given population, diagnosis or risk factor. That gives providers the insight they need to produce the most effective intervention.

What are the best things about the health care/tech industries in Nashville?

The best thing about Nashville healthcare and tech is that there is so much here. First it started with the hospitals attracting vendors to relocate. Those initial moves begat more moves, so now we have our own – and very healthy – healthcare ecosystem. As for tech, when I came here in 2002, one of our biggest challenges was to create a job market where younger candidates can get experience in the startup realm and move to a more established company without leaving Nashville. Now there's a stable enough market to sell solutions into the beginning and end of people's careers.

What role do educational institutions have to play in building our tech talent?

I'm gratified to see the Nashville Technology Council just got a large grant to further align local colleges with what's going to be needed in the area's tech industry. And personally, I'm excited about Youth Life Foundation of Tennessee. It's an education and mentoring organization for children in inner-city neighborhoods. We get minority leaders in industries like tech to work with these kids. Beyond demonstrating that people who look like them can go to college and can have a tech career, we also acknowledge it's tough but not impossible. We can say "Look – I know what it's like to be discriminated against, but don't let that hold you back."

What do you do for fun?

Fun for me starts with being with my family. There's a reason we have 5 kids! I have two special needs daughters and we participate in a program at the Y called Full Circle which provides sporting events for the special needs community. I love being out there with them. I'm big on community in general. I grew up knowing that even though we didn't have a lot, somebody in life has it worse than I do. I am the sum total of all the investments people made in me. I'm going to give back to my community in as many ways as possible.