

# Paul Southam

Chief Information Officer, Paul Southam, joined Sterling in 2019, after working across a range of highly regulated industries, to support Sterling's growth ambitions.

## Can you give me an overview of your career to date?

My career started in very different industries to the one that I am in now. I left school at 16 to join the RAF and worked as a chef before leaving to run pubs and restaurants for around 15 years. I then decided I wanted to pursue a career in IT, so I began an IT course. This was a self funded course to get me started in the industry, which lasted two years, and gave me three accreditations in various areas of IT.

Once I had completed the course, I wanted to learn more about how IT works across various industries, so I spent the start of my career working for a range of different companies including Royal Bank of Scotland, Paragon, and Unidays. I progressed from entry level positions up to management. Although none of my previous experience was within the pharmaceutical space, I gained extensive experience working in highly regulated industries, which has therefore benefited me in my role at Sterling today.

In 2017, I decided to take a risk and become self-employed. I worked as a consultant for a year, and during this time Sterling became one of my clients. I then went on to join Sterling full-time as Chief Information Officer to help with the company's growth ambitions.

## How has your previous experience supported you in your role?

My previous roles in highly regulated industries mean that I am well versed in adhering to guidelines and industry specific best practices. This knowledge is vital as it enables me to lead the team effectively, ensuring they work to these guidelines. This is important because if we don't get it right, there's both financial and reputational penalties to pay.

Another key thing is that I have worked my way up to management within the IT field, and so have had vast experience within a range of roles. I think this allows me to support the team more effectively, as I understand the challenges they face and have been in their position before.

Something else that my previous roles taught me was the importance of a work-life balance, and I try to ensure that the team have this. In one role, I worked for a hospice, and I saw that people's lives can change in a



## Fast Facts

### ROLE

Chief Information Officer

### STARTED AT STERLING

March 2019

### EDUCATION

Management and Leadership, Chartered Management Institute (CMI)

Information and Security Management Principles, British Chartered Institute for IT

### SPECIALISATIONS

Information technology, cyber security, technology

moment. This made me realise that there's truly nothing more important than your family. I know that by ensuring the team has a sustainable work life balance, they'll be more focused when they are at work and therefore deliver better results for the business, our employees and our customers.

### **Can you discuss some of the recent global/digital enhancements at Sterling?**

We have recently been awarded the CyberEssentials Plus UK certification at our Cramlington facility, and also the ISO 27001 accreditation which the team have spent a lot of time working hard on achieving. This shows our dedication to protecting our customers data.

In the time I've been with Sterling, we've worked on a lot of projects to enhance our digital capabilities. We undertook a large SAP upgrade project, we implemented MasterControl globally, and we've been working to standardise processes wherever possible, such as with the implementation of Chromeleon in the labs and Salesforce across the business.

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### **How do you ensure we are meeting and exceeding customer requirements?**

Although the team and I don't work face-to-face with our customers, the work we do impacts them. We need to ensure employees have the resources and technology required to support their business function, which ultimately supports our customers. A lot of what our team does goes on behind the scenes to ensure there's as little disruption to our business, and as a result our customers, as possible.

Our customers and regulators have growing expectations when it comes to their cyber security expectations, so it's all about giving them the assurance that we are doing the right thing and taking our cyber security practices seriously.

It's also important that we are keeping pace with industry trends in terms of technology in order to continue to act in the best interests of our customers. We are currently investigating AI and its use within the business, and how we can use it in a safe and secure manner.

Other technologies we are looking into include the use of virtual reality, augmented reality and how we can further enhance our current systems to support the business, such as additional uses for SAP.

### **Can you tell us a little about the dedicated integration team?**

Although currently in its infancy, our vision is to have a dedicated team of employees from across all departments focusing on the role of integration. These individuals know their department best, how it operates, and how it is structured, so they can bring an expert perspective about the integration activities required. They will be involved with potential future mergers and acquisitions from the very beginning in the due diligence stages and throughout the onboarding process. Projects like this are a fantastic personal development and learning opportunity for those within our business looking to grow their skills and career at Sterling.

### **Can you tell us a little about your approach to integrating new sites into the global Sterling network?**

It's a huge undertaking from all business areas, including IT. Although there are certain steps we need to follow, we try to keep the process dynamic and learn from each acquisition. Each site is very different and offers various challenges, so as part of our due diligence process, we assess what will need to be done, by when, and how best to do it. There are different requirements based on which country a site is in too, so it's important to consider how various laws and regulations will impact our contribution to the integration process.

### **What do the Sterling values mean to you?**

The values to me mean that we treat our staff and our customers in the same way. Most company values are customer focused, whereas ours are focused around our employees too. I think our values are unique because of this, and because they reflect the values our people hold in their personal lives, and not just at work.