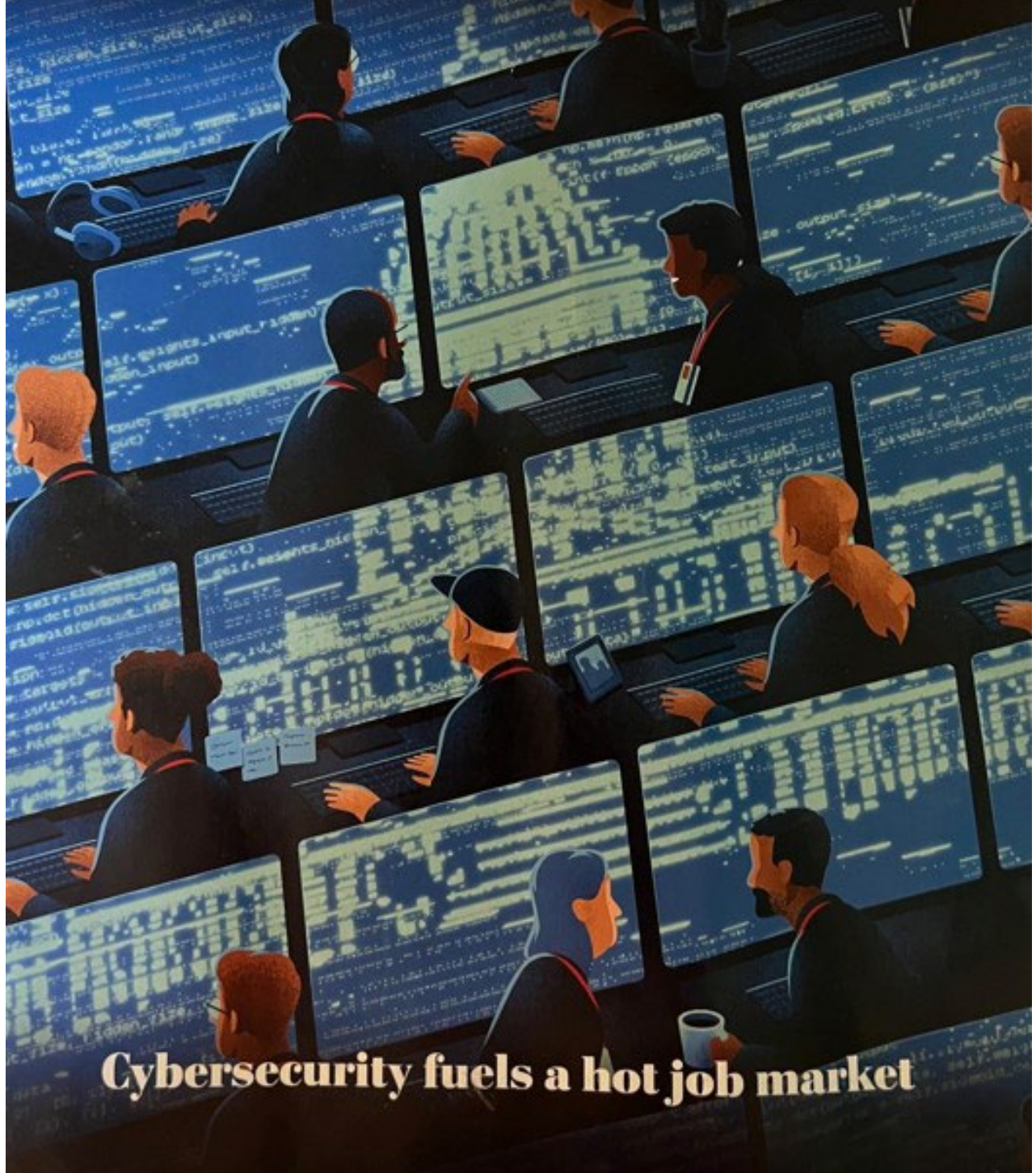


The Washington Post

TOP WORKPLACES

June 2024



Cybersecurity fuels a hot job market

Largest

Large

Midsize

Small

1. FTS
2. Tekla Research
3. IntraFi Network LLC
4. The Flagship Group
5. VAE
6. Intact Technology
7. ACDI/VOCA
8. Procentrix
9. MarginEdge
10. Dev Technology Group
11. Edgewater Federal Solutions
12. TCG Inc.
13. Acuity
14. Bates White Economic Consulting
15. Kelley, Drye & Warren
16. U.S. Senate Federal Credit Union
17. New York Life-Greater Washington
18. HealthWell Foundation
19. ValidaTek
20. SMS Data Product Group



CEO Sylvia Megret, third from right, cheers on staff members during a 5-kilometer road race in Washington during May 2024. (Lexey Swall for The Washington Post)

7. ACDI/VOCA

- Founded: 1963
- Employees: 174 local; 900 worldwide
- Sector: Global development
- acdivoca.org

This nonprofit organization has implemented economic and social development projects in more than 150 countries in concert with the federal government for 60 years. It partners with LocalJobNetwork.com to attract top-tier jobseekers, with special attention given to diversity groups including veterans, individuals with disabilities, minorities, and women. One employee said, “I get to live my values through my job.”

BUSINESS

How to rally your staff, and other fun stories

Four leaders receive top recognition from the 2024 Top Workplaces survey



By [Julie Hoban](#)

June 21, 2024 at 6:30 a.m. EDT



These days, trust might be hard to come by. How can you trust whether that picture on Instagram is real? Or that your kid's homework wasn't finished by ChatGPT? Or that the delivery driver hasn't taken a bite of your food?

Our hybrid work environment has also introduced a host of trust issues. When employees are at home, managers doubt their productivity, going so far as to install software that tracks what they type into their computers.

But when you sit down with four Washington-area leaders, the word “trust” emerges in each conversation — and in many different ways. One believes when employees feel trusted, they also feel safe and confident. Another person believes she is a CEO because a mentor trusted her early in her career.

Thanks to the trust nurtured within each of their organizations, it's no surprise that these leaders were ranked as exemplary in their respective categories based on votes from their employees. The rankings were determined through surveys conducted by Energage.

And no matter how small or large the organization they manage, each would agree that it's not their title that defines true leadership; it's the trust.

Sylvia Megret | President and CEO of ACDI/VOCA

Midsize companies (150-499 employees)

You don't have to be Superman to be a good leader. You just have to be yourself.

Long gone are the days when leaders had to pretend to have all of the solutions, says Sylvia Megret, the CEO of a nonprofit global development organization called ACDI/VOCA. Megret considers authenticity and transparency as the cornerstones of modern leadership.

"You have to be willing to know that you don't know the answers. You have to be curious," Megret says. "I think the feminist style of leadership, which men can have as well, is about being vulnerable. It's a different style than the 1950s."



Sylvia Megret (Lexey Swall for The Washington Post)

Megret is the first female CEO in the organization's 60-year history. When she first joined the organization as the chief operating officer in 2016, the C-suite was all men. Now, three out of the five leaders are women. "In the past, I don't think there was a deliberate attempt to not allow women into the C-suite," Megret says. "If we want to change that, we have to be deliberate."

Megret says that it's "absolutely crucial" to build a pipeline for women and minorities to ascend to leadership positions and that the organization is taking steps to increase its diversity among junior employees, too. The

number of women in the company has increased by 88 percent since 2016; and the number of minority hires increased by 67 percent from 2016 to 2023.

Megret values open and honest communication with her staff. She encourages her employees to come and talk to her about why certain tough decisions were made. “Not everybody is going to agree with the decisions that we and the leadership team makes, but they can hopefully trust and have more confidence in those decisions if we can articulate why we made those decisions,” Megret says.

With the help and feedback of her staff, Megret intuited a set of six values that define the organization: passion, insight, respect, resilience, impact and integrity. The values are not just a bunch of nice words written by somebody on a communications team. “These guide everything that we do,” Megret says.

And while some of them might be aspirational, Megret admits, there’s only one that requires absolute excellence: integrity.

Much of the work that ACDI/VOCA does is located in dangerous and harsh environments around the world where resilience is key. Megret says she trusts her leadership and staff to find the best possible solutions for challenges that may arise while directing her efforts toward areas within her control.

“When staff are trusted, they feel safe and they feel confident, and I think they can do their job better. I think that’s really what’s important, particularly in the challenging work that we do,” Megret says.