MiC News

Remain visible. Remain vocal. Never back down.

Check out the Blueprint Keynote from MiC2025 here: *bit.ly/2025MiCPics*

REMAIN VISIBLE. REMAIN VOCAL. NEVER BACK DOWN.

OMOWUNMI AKINYOADE

Tell us about yourself.

I'm an anthropologist at heart and a cybersecurity professional by training. I've always been fascinated by the systems—both human and technological—that shape our behaviors, decisions, and ultimately, our outcomes.

In my personal life, I'm a wife, mother to two children, and on the verge of becoming an empty nester. Professionally, my journey started in IT Consulting in Nigeria 25 years ago. Then I moved to the United States and I've had the privilege of working across a variety of industries, from non-profits and higher education to financial services and tech. One thing I've observed consistently, regardless of industry or geography, is that people remain the most critical element of technology.

Looking back on your career, what were some pivotal moments that helped you advance to your current cybersecurity role?

For me, what comes to mind are the numerous people—mentors, managers, and colleagues who encouraged me, challenged me, championed me and modeled the kind of leader I aspired to become.

I remember passing the CISA exam and sharing the news with my manager. I was relieved and ready to rest—but he responded, "You know what else would be cool? The CISSP." That moment pushed me to keep growing.

In my early years as an IT auditor, I had two incredible mentors who guided me. Their generosity with their time and insight made all the difference, helping me navigate both the technical and organizational dynamics. And I look for the opportunity to pay it forward by mentoring others.

At my current company, I joined as an individual contributor and initially hoped to move into a manager role. But the opportunity that came up was a Director position—something I might not have pursued without the encouragement of my then-manager and the support of the CISO. Their belief in me helped me believe in myself.

How do you foster a culture of security awareness and collaboration within your organization or team?

I believe continuous learning and collaboration are essential for any team. One strategy I use is encouraging cross-training. Team members can shadow projects outside their core responsibilities to gain a broader perspective and become more flexible in their ability to support other areas.

I also encourage team members to engage with others outside the team wherever they can. Developing such relationships across the organization provide the opportunity to influence security culture and help others understand the "why" behind security controls.

With a globally distributed team, I've also learned the importance of creating informal, low-stakes moments for connection. A few years ago, I realized all our meetings were work-focused, and one team member even noted that we never had any fun. So I introduced a monthly "fun" meeting—our first was a show-and-tell session, and it sparked more spontaneous collaboration across the team. While the "fun" meeting faded away due to time pressures, I've seen its value and plan to bring it back.

What have you found to be the biggest challenges in leading cybersecurity teams and managing people in this field?

Transitioning from individual contributor to people leader within the same team was a major shift. I knew the work well and had a hard time letting go. At first, I tried to stay hands-on with every project, but I quickly realized that wasn't sustainable—and more importantly, it was limiting my team's growth.

Liz Wiseman's Multipliers talks about how leaders can unintentionally diminish others by taking on too much themselves. That really resonated with me. Learning to delegate—and to trust—was key.

Another ongoing challenge is making space for strategic thinking. Cybersecurity evolves so rapidly that if we simply repeat what worked last year, we fall behind. Continuous improvement isn't just a priority—it's survival. Luckily, most people want to work on new and meaningful challenges, so that focus helps energize the team.

What do you consider the most rewarding aspects of being a senior cybersecurity professional?

I've always found the concept of controls to be deeply satisfying—like a form of pre-mortem thinking. You consider what might go wrong and put systems in place to prevent, deter, or detect issues before they escalate.

Security doesn't live in isolation—it operates within complex systems that combine people, processes, and technology. I love being able to view that landscape holistically and help organizations make smarter decisions.

Tip for the month?

Don't be afraid to try something new. You either win or learn—either way, it's a win.

Fun fact about you?

When my kids were younger, I maintained a website dedicated to West African folktales. I've also a published children's picture book titled, ***"The Putaway Monster."***

Sustainable Leadership

by Chioma Abangwu-Iwenofu

When I was invited to submit an article, I thought long and hard about what I wanted to write about. See I've had this dream for a while of sustainability not in the sense that we're all accustomed to hearing but from a different point of view that some may not have considered. For me I'd call this sustainable leadership.

Businesses of the 21st century and beyond are evolving. There's a greater sense now more than ever to evolve in much more ways, constantly and at a very fast pace. One area where it's becoming increasingly important is in the definition of who a business customer/stakeholder is.

Recent events have shown that any business that continues as usual is going to find themselves in a difficult untenable position. Businesses are going to have to redefine and rethink the definition of who a customer is. Recent events point to the fact that your customers are no longer just those who patronize your products and services but also to a large extent, has been expanded to now include the communities that are affected positively or negatively by your business's actions and/or inactions be it in the marketplace, boardroom or hiring space.

Businesses of the 21st century and beyond have to recalibrate or they'll start seeing their customer and impact base eroded by their competitors who have caught the vision, interpreted the vision and integrated it in their day to day operational decision making. The businesses who understand this dynamic business landscape take several things into consideration when making decisions. They understand those decisions can positively or negatively affect them.

During the pandemic, I decided to go back to school as part of my plan to transition/redirect my career and law practice. Part of the driving force in my decision is this dream I've had since I was a child of running a sustainable company, one that transcends me and becomes a legacy that lives beyond my time here on earth. One that presents the argument that doing good in the right way, is the path to good business and sustainability when times get hard. As a child i didn't realize that dream described a sustainable company. I just thought of it as a different way that ensures we continue on the path to profitability even in the toughest business or economic climate. It's a dream that has grown as my career has taken me through different paths and exposed me to endless untapped opportunities (often disguised as problems) for businesses to become entrenched and ensure continued vertical growth to the delight of all stakeholders.

In my Corporate Governance class, I was tasked with preparing a presentation on The Business Roundtable's statement on the purpose of a corporation. There were all these articles that talked about the benefits of diversity with The Business Roundtable taking the position that businesses with more diversified boards did better in general.

In accounting, there's something called goodwill which oftentimes is an asset that you don't or can't really quantify until you're looking at liquidating or selling a business concern. My argument is that good-

-will can be supercharged as an agent for continued, sustainable growth.

History is replete with so many instances that prove that an organization that invests in people in the long term is better off for it. Organizations that invest in their employees see far lower attrition rates. Organizations that invest in their communities also see much more investment by that community in their products and/or services.

The world is evolving. With this continued evolution, the stakes are also evolving. The Organizations that survive in this new world are going to be Organizations that truly invest in people not when it is fashionable to do so but rather everytime. They are the Organizations that choose to continue to invest in people and communities when it is no longer the buzz. Goodwill is about to change in such a way that it is realized and tangibly accounted for when profit and loss statements are being prepared and not just when it is time to sell the business.

As a leader in this new world order, it is going to be much more imperative for you to lead your organization into long term prosperity by making the conscious decision to become a sustainable leader. From time to time, when you make the choice to become a sustainable leader, you might find that you are by yourself. When that happens, it is very important to remember your vision of building something that stands the test of time.

MiC Announcements

MiC 2025 Conference Photos:

See more photos from the conference here: *bit.ly/2025MiCPics*

Check out this article:

How cybersecurity leaders feel federal DEI rollbacks will impact the industry

by Brianna Monsanto, Reporter, IT Brew

"It becomes a [question of] 'Will organizations still commit to affiliating themselves with an organization entitled Minorities in Cybersecurity when their legal risk has gone up?'" Chaney said.

Chaney told us that she has already seen a decline in corporate members who are renewing their membership with MIC and organizations that are sponsoring its programs.

"We have individuals that work for the government or quasi-government entities that are pulling out because their organizations are not supporting their attendance at our conference," she said.

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MiC LEAD Aspirers™

Coming up on:

April 25, 2025

MiC Drop Prep™ Sessions

Coming up on:

May 06, 2025