



Global innovations take shape in Scottsdale

Meet Richard Coleman II, Vice President and General Manager of the federal sector at Scottsdale-based Axon Enterprise.

#ScottsdaleForAll

Scottsdale is home to more than 18,000 companies that employ more than 150,000 people. One of the most recognizable among those businesses is Axon Enterprises — the world’s leading producer of connected public safety technologies, including body cameras, AI-powered license plate scanners, vehicle camera systems, virtual reality training modules, real-time communications systems and digital evidence storage.

In addition to the company’s Scottsdale headquarters, Axon has a global software engineering hub in Seattle, Washington and offices in Australia, Canada, Finland, Vietnam, England and the Netherlands.

Many of Axon’s local employees were raised in the region and have spent their careers building revolutionary technologies with a worldwide impact.

***Richard Coleman is one of
the leaders among them.***

Richard grew up in the Valley and began to pursue his interest in engineering as a young teenager.

While he was a student at Mountain Pointe High School in Phoenix, Richard competed in the NAACP’s [Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics](#) and won the STEM competitions at both the state and national levels.

From there, he attended a camp hosted by NASA, and began networking with engineering professionals. “I knew I wanted to become an engineer, so I made it a point to seek out and find people who looked like me that were engineers, that were older, that I could pick their brains and learn from,” he said.

While he credits his father as being his first mentor – a man he’s always admired for the wit and work ethic it took to go from being one of nine children, growing up in East Texas, to building a career in logistics and raising a family in Arizona — it was also important for Richard to see the path others took in overcoming the barriers specific to his goals.

“I didn’t come from a family where you had business executives, or a ton of engineers or a ton of people that you could talk to, get mentored and really understand what it would take to get to the higher levels of business,” he said.

“I think a lot of people of color face the same barriers, where it’s just sometimes difficult to break these ceilings when you don’t have a lot of representation around you to talk to and see that it’s actually possible.”

“Often times, it’s easier to achieve something if you’ve seen someone who looks like you also achieve it.”

Richard went on to earn his undergraduate and master’s degrees in electrical engineering, and an Executive Master of Business Administration degree from Arizona State University.

His started his career in engineering at General Dynamics, in Scottsdale, where he worked as a satellite architect, and later went on to manage one of the company’s business units. He stayed with General Dynamics for more than 18 years before taking his position with Axon Enterprise in 2018.

The company’s ethos of protecting life, increasing transparency and building a better justice system created

the perfect climate for Richard to merge his passions for technology with his interest in social justice, “I’m personally a technologist; I love technology. I love the intersection of technology and business, and at the same time, I love this concept of capitalizing advocacy, trying to figure out how you can build a business that can make a better world.”

Axon technologies are widely used at the state and local level, nationwide, and by federal law enforcement agencies such as the Department of Justice, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Department of the Interior. Richard’s team is working toward broader adoption of those products and services among other federal agencies and military forces — they hope to set a universal standard for transparency and accountability in the 21st century and beyond.

“I see a future where there’s no more inequities in our justice system.”

That mission of building a more equitable world, he points out, is integrated into the company’s work at every level. Since 2020, Axon’s [Community Impact Team](#) has facilitated a Community Advisory Coalition, comprised of leaders in education and advocacy from across the nation, who weigh-in on the development of the company’s products and how they might impact the public. Axon is also advised by an independent review board dedicated to ethics in artificial technology, which in 2020 sought to redefine the company’s customer base as not only law enforcement agencies, but ultimately the communities they serve.

“I think working in this climate of social unrest and this climate where there needs to be more trust between the community and law enforcement, to be able to leverage technology to solve that problem is such an amazing position to be in,” Richard said.

“It ties together my passion for innovation and my passion for solving that problem- because I am from a community of color that wants to have a more trusting relationship with law enforcement and the way that you do that, in my opinion, is through the technology that we’re providing to the country.”

At the local level, he also helps to build that vision by mentoring kids through the Boys & Girls Club, which puts him in the position of being a representation of professionalism in business and technology for kids from different walks of life — much like the mentors he sought out when he was their age.

“Knowledge is everything, and knowledge can be the barrier of entry in a lot of careers — a lot of professions or a lot of things that you’d want to do,” he said.

He and his wife, Ivorie, are raising their three children with a similar emphasis on building knowledge through the exploration of their curiosities – whether that’s in sports or exploring the great outdoors, much of their time is spent pursuing memorable and impactful experiences as a family.

His advice to them, and to the kids he mentors, is rooted in having risen far above his own youthful expectations for his potential to effect positive, long-lasting change in the world.

“I think it’s really important to try and understand what it is you’re passionate about and work as hard as you can to get into a field, to get into a role that allows you to enjoy what you’re doing every day, and a role that makes you feel like you’re adding to a greater good.”

#ScottsdaleForAll

Scottsdale for All showcases the interesting and diverse people in Scottsdale. This campaign promotes community pride and understanding by profiling different people and perspectives, all which make our community a great place to live and work. Scottsdale welcomes and embraces people from all walks of life.

Use #ScottsdaleForAll on social media to share what Scottsdale means to you.
