

OC'S CFO OF THE YEAR--PROFILE

SERVICES: ALLIED CFO HELPS RAISE \$4 BILLION

Drew Vollero: Building an \$8.4B Security Business

By [Peter J. Brennan](#)

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Drew Vollero knows tech, having helped take public the high-flying wunderkind Snap Inc. in 2017.

Now, he's well versed in the security industry as chief financial officer at Santa Ana-based Allied Universal.

"There are more similarities than you may think," Vollero told the Business Journal. "You're looking for great people. You want a point of differentiation with the competition. We're competing all the time with new folks or to hold onto our current business."

Vollero has had quite the run since he joined Allied in late 2018.

At that time, the company had about \$5.5 billion in sales, a number that's expected to be \$8.4 billion this year. Last year, he helped Allied Universal raise \$4 billion in debt and oversaw nine acquisitions, including a deal to buy the fourth-largest player in the industry, SOS Security.

He also helped convince Canada's second-largest pension fund, Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, to buy into Allied Universal, which now has a valuation around \$8.5 billion.

For all these reasons, Vollero was chosen as the Business Journal's CFO of the Year of a Private Company, an award category that had 44 nominees.

"It's fun to be recognized," he told the audience of 800 during the Jan. 30 event at Hotel Irvine (see stories on other winners, pages 1, 4, 8, and 9). "I really appreciate this award."

Allied Security provides security for about a quarter of the Fortune 500 CEOs and their families. If Allied Universal was an army, its 230,000 employees would top Saudi Arabia's, the world's 20th-largest fighting force.

Taco Bell Vet

Vollero, who grew up in San Marino, earned a bachelor's degree in math and economics with high honors from Yale University and a master's in management from the University of Oxford.

He has a long background in corporate finance, including spending the 1990s at Irvine's Taco Bell, rising to become controller. He then jumped to Mattel Inc., where he was a division CFO and then senior vice president of corporate strategy.

Since the early 1990s, he's lived in Orange County, including as a homeowner in Laguna Niguel since 1997. He loves Orange County so much that he declined to move even when he had to commute to El Segundo for Mattel or Santa Monica for Snap.

"I'm a big fan of the area," he said.

In 2015, Vollero joined Snapchat, then a hot tech company that was rivaling Facebook. A few months later he became its first CFO, overseeing a sevenfold revenue jump in 2016.

In 2017, he helped Snap go public, which was a huge hit on Wall Street as its shares soared 61% on its first two days of trading, pushing its market value past \$30 billion for a time.

The Allied Team

He departed Snap in 2018 and a few months later, he joined Allied Universal where Chief Executive Steve Jones has taken a company from \$12 million in annual revenue in 1996 to more than \$8 billion this year.

The pair is positioning Allied Universal as more than a security guard company by introducing technology such as a platform called Heliaus that combines artificial intelligence and human eyes on the ground to foresee potential trouble spots in security. The company says technology can add \$1 billion in annual sales such as providing sophisticated tools for monitoring websites organizing protests against clients, and an Uber-like application to help security guards quickly apply for jobs. It's also introducing security robots at a variety of places to work in tandem with human guards.

Demand is growing due to terrorism, workplace violence, intellectual property theft and police-poor municipalities.

An initial public offering may come if the company needs to raise a large amount of capital, he said.

Vollero now has bragging rights along with Jones, who in January was named a Business Journal Businessperson of the Year, for the services category.

“Steve Jones is as talented as a CEO as I’ve ever worked for and I’ve worked for some talented CEOs,” Vollero told the audience at the event.

“He’s brilliant in a room full of Wall Street people when we’re raising \$4 billion in debt and he can relate ... with hard working people that are guarding our facilities.

“He is as good as it gets and I owe him a lot.”