



# technology executive council

## Get to Know a TEC Member

This week: Get to know Dannie Combs



***Dannie Combs, SVP and Chief Information Security Officer, Donnelley Financial Solutions***

***Where did you grow up?***

I grew up in Lacy Lakeview, Texas, a smaller, tight-knit community located near Waco. The region is known as the Heart of Texas. Central Texas has a special place in my heart and always will.

***Where do you live now?***

As Chief Information Security Officer for DFIN, I still travel quite a bit throughout the United States and the globe. My job requires it. However, when I am home, I split my time between Chicago and Austin.

***What was your first job?***

My first career job was a cyber analyst as a member of the United States Air Force. Cybersecurity has been my focus since 1994; it's been my life's work. A "3C0" airman (the Air Force job code...) was training on all things computer systems operations. You were expected to learn everything from operating systems to databases to networks. However, my first 'job' that I ever had, I was 15 years old, and I worked at a local, yet well-known steakhouse named Heitmiller, as a dishwasher and later as a busboy clearing tables for customers. It was a tough job that taught me the importance of putting in a hard day's work.

***Name the last best book you've read or podcast you've listened to.***

I am a big fan of John Grisham and just finished reading “The Judge’s List.” I also am a fan of NPR and Guy Raz’s “How I Built This.”

***Who do you admire most in tech?***

While I am in cybersecurity, I admire all technology and innovation. Of course, doing what I do, I admire the late, great Steve Jobs. It goes without saying that he changed the world through innovation that delighted customers on a scale that remains unmatched. I also admire Michael Dell — and not just because he’s a fellow native Texan. Michael Dell transformed the Central Texas region, followed by transforming storage, computer, and to an extent software on a global scale.

***If you weren’t in your current position, what career would you have liked to have had?***

As a younger man I aspired to be a federal law enforcement agent, as a member of the Federal Bureau of Investigations. In fact, that aspiration is one of the primary reasons I joined the Air Force.

***What’s the biggest lesson you’ve learned from the pandemic?***

No matter what business or industry that you may be in, communications with your peers, clients, and partners (and family) is so important. In many ways, when we were unable to be together in person in real life, technology helped to bring us together in so many ways. That could not have been possible, say, 10 years ago. The pandemic also reminded all of us in technology how important it is to continuously monitor our security and to innovate. For example, we all need to revisit our remote workforce policies, rely much more on remote access solutions, and of course do so without sacrificing security.

***What’s something you want other TEC members to know about you?***

I am a former cybersecurity analyst for the U.S. Air Force—where I served for nearly a decade. I managed cybersecurity operations and information risk activities for military and governmental organizations as a member of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, various intelligence squadrons supporting the National Security Agency, Air Intelligence Agency, and more, participating in missions ranging from homeland defense to offensive operations around the world. The Air Force is a family tradition. My grandfather served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. My father served most of his adult life during the Vietnam Era. My oldest son served four years as well.

I am of the opinion we are in a state of cyber war. We have been for years. This war has several fronts. Economic with intellectual property theft remains a threat. We continue to observe nation state bad actors with geopolitical motivations. Then there are the many international criminal organizations whose objective is to generate revenue through illicit means, such as ransomware. I believe my experience and skill set enables me to better serve DFIN and our clients from cyber threats and to do so with confidence – just as we did in the military. In fact, I often quote the great General Patton’s: “Train like you fight – fight like you train.”

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