



# Executive INSIGHTS

## 10+1 Questions with Linda Maclachlan entara

*Linda Maclachlan is the Founder and CEO of the IT Service Management Firm entara.*

- 1. You recently rebranded, changing your firm's name to entara, from YJT Solutions. You also rolled out a new IT Service Management Platform. Tell us about the strategy.**

So many people have asked me, "Why are you changing your name after 17 successful years?" It's a good question. After all, our firm is on a rapid growth curve. Why change what's working?

The answer is that we weren't content with where we were. The technological world is fundamentally shifting, and we wanted to double down on our investment in our future and our clients' futures to build the best IT Service Management firm possible to support that new world. We've spent the past year implementing a best-in-class IT Service Management platform with a ServiceNow foundation, and we're leveraging this platform to build offerings that will help our clients journey easily, quickly, and affordably into the future of IT.

We're still providing the same 24/7/365 highly responsive IT support that we've always been known

for. However, our future-facing offerings have evolved to such an extent that we wanted to rebrand as entara, a name derived from the Hill of Tara in Ireland with great vision, and the star Antares with great illumination.

**And your new platform is called entaraWorks. Tell us about that and your other new services.**

Our entaraWorks platform is designed to help middle market companies take advantage of technology that, until now, has been available only to enterprise-sized organizations with very large budgets and staffing levels.



The beauty of entaraWorks is that it provides a single system of engagement for an IT department, whether that's us, our client's internal IT department, or a combination of both. Everything from users to laptops to firewalls to applications can be tracked, along with the tickets, monitoring alerts, projects, portfolios and processes that use these assets. Once all that activity is centralized, organized and simplified, it becomes straightforward to start automating repeatable business processes for the business users. Examples

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include automating new employee onboarding and offboarding processes, which have tie-ins to IT, but also include manual steps. Now the entire workflow can be automated to ensure consistency, accuracy, and efficiency, as well as alerts when a manual step is overdue. I think of it as an Enterprise Resource Planning system for the office.

Our collective futures are filled with automation that none of us can predict today, but we can prepare today. That's the underlying promise of entaraWorks.

## 2. What else should people know about entara?

The IT industry is rife with M&A activity, and the IT Managed Services industry in particular is known for lots of turnover in leadership and service models. entara is different from the pack. We have no outside investors, and we are entirely focused on the concept of "Built to Last." We want to do right by our clients, whom we also view as our neighbors. I hear repeatedly from our clients that working with our firm is a refreshing change, as our commitment level to them goes above and beyond their expectations. We are deeply committed to Chicago and to the leaders and employees of Chicago businesses.

Also, I don't have this formally tracked, but I've noticed the vast majority of business leaders who bring us in end up getting promoted!

## 3. What characteristics do you look for when hiring?

We have four core values at entaraCorps, as we call our collective team, and before anyone is interviewed for their technical skills, they have to be a fit culturally. The four core values are:

**Empathy** – Genuinely caring about our clients and being able to take their perspective. All of our employees need to be kind at heart.

**Excellence** – We hire people who are driven by excellence in all aspects of their lives. These are

people who don't relate to the phrase, "Good enough."

**Execution** – While intentions are good, execution is better. We place execution over intention.

**Evolution** – entaraCorps team members are constantly evolving and getting better, not just at work, but in their lives. They love learning. They seek coaching. They are fascinated with the future.

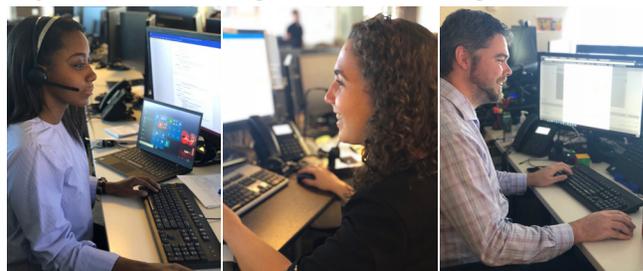
I am humbled to come to work each day and surround myself with this great group of people. Every one of them is a star.

“The technological world is fundamentally shifting, and we wanted to double down on our investment in our future and our clients’ futures”

## 4. Same question, but with strategic partnerships.

We have an IT Strategy Group at entara that is comprised of senior engineers and architects who love thinking about IT Strategy for our own platform and for our clients' IT architecture. Our selection of vendors as strategic partners is a key part of this group's role at entara.

The driving question we ask is, "Is this platform/company/offering the very best-in-class for serving the IT operational needs of the mid-market?" We look at the industry's leading, known contenders, and we also are not afraid to look at lesser-known, emerging players. We do our own evaluations, and they are not based on profit margin or anything to do with money. We know we will do fine financially if we have the right vendors with the right integrations and the right processes, all operated by the right people. We've switched vendors for various components multiple times, all at our own expense. We do this because we want to look our clients in the eye and be able to say that we are doing continual investigative work on



entaraCorps team members

their behalf, and we believe that this solution is the best available on the market today and the best for their businesses.

**5. Tell us about an experience, or a person, who influenced you.**

My mother was a school teacher and then went on to become a very successful principal. When I was growing up, I heard the empathetic tone in my mom's voice many evenings as she actively listened on the phone to concerned parents and then worked collaboratively to resolve the issues at a core level. I noticed how she memorized every child's name who walked through her doors. I observed her inspirational and future-focused thinking about new things to try in education. I watched her pick up tiny pieces of paper from the floors to keep the halls spotless. She simply drove empathy, excellence, execution and evolution into every aspect of her day.

Still today, I find inspiration in how my mom problem-solves and drives empathy and excellence, from small details all the way through to big decisions. She is retired, and my children are lucky to have her close by. Her core values paved the way for entara's core values.



Linda's mother Mary Lou Bracken

**6. What setup are you most productive in, your desk? Someplace more informal?**

Ha! The train! I get more tactical work done on the Metra than anywhere else. I pound away on my laptop on my commute downtown in the mornings, and then I prioritize the day's events and pound away again on my way home. I find the train rides to be cathartic in a way.

That said, my most important work is not doing emails or editing documents, but meeting with clients and employees to ensure everyone is happy and moving forward. Those conversations are had face-to-face, whenever possible, each day. Sometimes having a two-hour breakfast with a client and hearing one sentence is the most productive outcome of the week.



Linda with her mother, Mary Lou, husband David, and daughters Jenna (left) and Tara (right)

**7. Outside of work, what does your perfect day look like?**

Being on the ski slopes with my two daughters and my husband on a sunny spring day with lots of snow. We go out to Telluride every year.

## 8. What books, movies, music or other art/entertainment/media are you into?

Aside from skiing, I am not a good athlete but I love reading about coaches. My favorite author is John Wooden. His book *Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court* is one of my all-time favorites. I've read it over and over, and in fact, I'll sometimes read a paragraph at our family dinner table. It is written in short segments, which is good for me, as it's hard to find consecutive hours to dive deeply into a book.

Through one of our client's recommendations to me, I am now also a big fan of Blinkist, which is an app that condenses best-selling books into "Cliff Notes" versions, which I value.

## 9. Everyone in business has setbacks. Tell us about one of yours, and how you got past it.

Professionally, my firm originally served the financial trading industry, exclusively as an IT Managed Services provider to electronic traders. When the recession hit, it hit us hard as many traders gave up or cut back significantly. However, that downturn is what spurred me to take what we had learned from supporting traders and expand that high service-level to more industries. In hindsight, it was a blessing. That old adage is true: What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

On the personal side, I feel compelled to talk about mental illness. My dad suffered greatly from depression and alcoholism, and I don't think enough of us are talking openly about these diseases and the impact they have on loved ones. My dad was a brilliant, kind and generous man, but he suffered greatly from these diseases. He was my biggest supporter when I decided to found YJT Solutions, and his ardent faith in me bolstered me when I didn't have faith in myself. However, he was embroiled in the pain of these devastating illnesses, and we sadly lost him in 2012. The more I have researched mental illness,

the more I'm convinced that it remains a field with much hope and opportunity for the future, and I'm grateful for the research happening today. There is much more to learn and discover. However, many of us are still more comfortable talking openly about physical diseases than mental illness, and I hope this can change over time.



Linda's father Bill Bracken with grandchildren Tara and Jenna

## 10. Separate from your own, what industry are you watching and learning from?

If Amazon can be called an industry, then we are watching it! Their pace of innovation is inspiring to me. We are a certified Amazon AWS partner and are excited to see the game-changing innovation that is being rolled out on practically a daily basis.

### +1: To what one trait would you attribute your career success?

Grit! You have to be able to hang in there and ride the roller coaster of growing a business. 🏹