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# COLLEEN BARRETT SERVANT LEADER 8 SUPERSTAR



WHEN THE ADMIN AWARDS WAS LAUNCHED IN 2012, WE SAT DOWN WITH COLLEEN BARRETT TO ASK HER FOR HER THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSION. HER ANSWERS FROM THAT SEPTEMBER INTERVIEW, EDITED FOR BREVITY; ARE BELOW:

### **INTERVIEW**

### WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A SECRETARY?

I Like To Serve So You Have To Start There. I Loved To Solve Problems. And I Loved To Give Exemplary Or Positive Customer Service Delivery On Behalf Of Whomever I Was Working For. Life Is All About Relationships... You Have An Opportunity In The Administrative Group To Form More Relationships Than Probably Any Other Position — Even Much Higher Up On That So-Called Ladder Because You Are Very Often That First Point Of Contact With The Outside World Or The Customer... Life Is Just One Big Grassroots Campaign As Far As I'm Concerned.

### WHAT DID YOU LIKE THE LEAST?

I Didn't Like Anything That Was Routine. I Loved To Master Projects, But, For Example, Filing Was Only Interesting To Me Because I Loved To Be Able To Find Anything That Anyone Was Looking For... I've Never Liked Rote Work. (But) There's Some That Goes In Every Job No Matter What Position You're In.

### WHAT WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF SERVING HERB KELLEHER?

Being A Nanny For 45 Years For A Man Who Has Always Thought He Was 17 Regardless Of Any Year That Was Added To His Personal Calendar! He Was A Great Servant Leader. He Loved Life And You Almost Couldn't Be Around Him And Not Catch That Love Of Life And Love Of People.

### AND THE BEST ASPECT?

It Was Truly Feeling His Egalitarian Spirit And Appreciating The Fact That He Valued My Judgment And Thinking As A Team Member.

### DID YOU EVER THINK YOU WOULD RISE FROM SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT AND COO OF SOUTHWEST AIRLINES?

Quite Honestly It Wasn't Something I Wanted, And I Never Wanted To Be COO—And I Made That Very Clear To The Board—That Isn't My Strength. My Strength Is Customer Service And People And Everything That Touches People, And, Honestly, Being President And COO Wasn't My Favorite Position At Southwest...My Favorite Position Was Executive Vice President- Customers. Customer To Us Means Employees, Passengers, And Shareholders, So I Could Really Touch Everything. I Could Touch Every Department. And As President... I Had To Do A Lot More External Things... I Did Them... I Can't Say I Hated Them... (But) I Like To Get Down And Dirty And Really Roll Up My Sleeves.

### WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR ADMINS?

Love. Everybody. Just Love. It's A Word That Corporate America Doesn't Use Very Much... Always Remember Where You Came From — So That You Know How Far You've Come...I Don't Think Most Of Us Start Out Thinking We're Going To Be The President Of The United States Or The CEO Of A Company... And I Think... Be Humble And Appreciate What You Get. To Me Psychic Satisfaction Is 10 Times More Important Than Pay Or Title.

"Be Authentic. Be Real. Remember Who You Are"

# Beloved Recording Academy Executive Assistant, Lani Simmons Remembered at the GRAMMY's & Honored Posthumously at the Admin Awards in San Francisco

When Wayne Zahner, CFO of The Recording Academy, first met Lani Simmons, she was 55 years old and sitting across from him in an interview for a dream job she thought she had no chance of landing. After all, this was The GRAMMYs. She had recently left Mattel after a 27-year career and found herself, like so many women at midlife, questioning if the professional world still had room for her.

I can't believe you hired me, even though I was 55 and still used shorthand!" she told him later. Wayne smiled and answered with quiet certainty. "I hired you because you were 55 and knew shorthand, not in spite of those things." Wayne instantly saw someone with that kind of company tenure and experience as a rare and valuable asset. Her shorthand skills, in particular, brought an extra layer of confidentiality, an invaluable advantage for a CFO of a high-profile organization.

### "Here's somebody that can help me do a better job as CFO. I thought she was the perfect person for me," Wayne said.

And so began a fifteen-year partnership inside one of the most high-profile organizations in music. But Lani Simmons wasn't interested in titles or prestige. She wasn't trying to prove anything. She simply showed up. Fully, consistently, and with a kind of grace that can't be taught.

From her first day at The Recording Academy, Lani brought an energy that changed the rhythm of the room. She had this way of making people feel instantly at ease. The other Admins called her "the dean. " When someone had a question about process, about politics, or how to deal with a tricky personality, they came to Lani. She became the one everyone turned to, not just for how-to's or quick answers, but for how she made you feel when the work was hard and the pace relentless. She felt like home. She was the kind of person who could make folding hundreds of 401k mailers feel like a party. She emailed funny jokes and comics, shared music, remembered your favorite dessert, and made everybody on the floor feel included. Her humor was dry and quick. Her spirit, electric. She had this way of both anchoring and elevating the people around her.

"She lived with joy. She didn't waste a second, " her coworkers shared. You could spot her desk by the jungle of greenery trailing over every surface. She was the plant whisperer, the person coworkers would bring their near lifeless plants to for resurrection. She was also a master knitter. Over lunches, she taught coworkers how to cast on and purl. She made hand-knit gifts for colleagues every year, scarves, slippers, baby owl beanies, even a knitted beard with loops to hook over glasses. Lani saw beauty in small things and believed in celebrating often. She organized department potlucks, holiday shirt-painting parties, and brought her legendary pineapple upsidedown cake to celebrations. She didn't just work at The Recording Academy. She wove herself into its fabric.

But Lani was not all softness. She had edge and humor and a razor-sharp ability to read people. She knew who you were before you did. Her sayings lived on long after she left, things like "Hold my ankles, I'm going in" when diving into her favorite foods, or "Back in my day, when Earth was still cooling," making light of her age. She described Wayne's jam-packed calendar at times as looking like "the dog's breakfast." She could lift your spirits with a one-liner and then walk away before you could say thank you.



### The story of her hiring has a perfect second chapter.

On her first day at The Recording Academy, Lani showed up with a new nose ring. Wayne, ever the detail guy, did a double take. "Did you have that piercing when I interviewed you?" She looked mildly panicked. "No, I figured if I was going to work in rock and roll, I better look the part!" They shared their first laugh. Wayne wasn't worried one bit about the nose ring, just wondering if he lost his eye for detail. That was Lani. A little bit rebel. A whole lot heart.

Lani Simmons lived her life to a soundtrack that was as rich and varied as she was. A lifelong Beatles fan, she saw them live at the Hollywood Bowl at 14 and later tattooed the Yellow Submarine on her shoulder.

Her musical taste was expansive. She found joy in the haunting beauty of Bon Iver, the soul of Gregory Porter, the raw energy of Florence and the Machine, the poetic grit of Nathaniel Rateliff, and the sounds of Future Islands, The Lumineers, & The Mavericks. Music wasn't background noise for Lani, it was part of how she experienced the world. Lani loved hockey a die-hard LA Kings fan, with a tattoo to prove it. Lani attended games often with her best friend Leslie. Lani also loved her cats. In her final years, as she battled cancer, she never let her light dim. She remained involved, engaged, & deeply loved.



She had a calendar on her wall to keep her days organized and track which colleagues were visiting when so they could enjoy undivided time together. When she passed, colleagues wrote in from across the country, asking about her. At her memorial, every chair held something she had knitted. Each stitch a quiet testament to who she was. Generous, attentive, joyful in the everyday.

### And in a rare, unanimous decision, The Recording Academy honored her in the GRAMMYs In Memoriam segment this year.

Not because she was famous, but because she was unforgettable. On April 21, 2025, we honored Lani with the Jeanette Castellano Lifetime Achievement Award at the 10th Annual Admin Awards in San Francisco.

It's was the first time we've ever presented this award posthumously. It was presented to Wayne Zahner, who from the very beginning of Lani's tenure with The Academy saw not just her capabilities, but her worth. Lani Simmons spent her life giving to others in ways that cannot be measured by job titles or captured in performance reviews. In hand-knit scarves and homemade cakes. In making the mundane a memory. In whispering life back into everything - and everyone she touched.







# COLLEEN BARRETT AWARD FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE



### **TUUYEN TRAN**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, CISCO SYSTEMS

For nearly seven years, Tuuyen Tran has served as a trusted advisor, a true business partner, and a critical extension of Cisco's Chairman & CEO, Chuck Robbins, his leadership team, and Board of Directors. Her impact on Cisco's executive culture and the broader Administrative community cannot be overstated. Tuuyen's belief is simple: success is in the small things—the subtle nuances that elevate a meeting from functional to exceptional and turn relationships from transactional to trusted. She personally vets venues across the globe for Board meetings, offsites, and partner events, ensuring not just perfection, but connection. Over the last 25 years as an Administrative Professional supporting some of the highest offices in business, Tuuyen has mentored countless individuals into senior Admin roles, investing deeply in the next generation and elevating the profession along the way.

Cisco's CEO, Chuck Robbins says "Her ability to identify potential challenges is impressive, but it's her ability to seamlessly solve them before they ever reach my desk, is truly incredible." and "I firmly believe I would not be celebrating 10 years as CEO without her on my leadership team."

### **Finalists**



ALISON SOWELL
Applied Materials



**ANDREA GJERS** NetApp



VERONICA CERVANTES
Intuit



SANDY LEUNG
Pacific Gas & Electric Company



### STEPHANIE MONNIER

#### ADMINISTRATION MANAGER, LAM RESEARCH

Stephanie Monnier is a powerhouse. As Executive Assistant to the COO of Lam Research, she's earned a reputation as a force multiplier, culture shaper, and operational genius. Whether she's coordinating a 600-person global planning event, standing up new systems for onboarding, or helping integrate departments post-acquisition, Stephanie blends precision with empathy and always gets it done. Her list of accomplishments is long—and impressive. From launching a new employee onboarding experience that's now used company-wide, to successful execution of a global engineering summit, support of complex cross-functional programs involving global teams, Stephanie brings focus to areas that once felt chaotic. Known as someone who sees around corners, connects the dots, and cares deeply, Stephanie exemplifies the spirit of achievement - not for recognition, but for pure impact.



### **Finalists**



JOYA NOEL Adobe



AUREA THOMPSON
Micron Technology



JENNIFER YORK
Applied Materials



MARY BETH GAGEN
Netapp



MAYA DESAI Lam Research



LUBA MOREIN
Pacific Gas & Electric Company

We develop work that expands professional horizons through innovative technologies, solutions and creative mindsets.



Smart. Bold. Human.



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# THE ABOVE THE CALL AWARD



### **JEN BURNS**

### **EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT BUSINESS PARTNER, UBER**

Jen Burns isn't just someone you can count on—she's someone more than 40 people do count on, every single day. As an Executive Assistant at Uber Freight, Jen supports a massive volume of internal clients across the business without skipping a beat. What sets her apart isn't just her ability to manage an extraordinary workload - it's how she does it: with grace, kindness, and an attention to detail that sets the bar. One colleage shared "She does more in a day than most do in a week." and another: "she supports 40+ people without missing a beat, and somehow makes each of us feel like we're her top priority." That balance of capacity and care is rare. And when something lands on Jen's radar? "You can consider it done - and done flawlessly." Jen is the definition of "above the call" - not just in output, but in attitude, attention, and heart.

### **Finalists**



JENNIFER COY



MIMI SALOMON
Lam Research



AMELIA CHEUNG LeoLabs



SHARINKA DE ZOYSA Cisco Systems



**DEANNA TRAN**Nutanix



STACEY MUI
Gilead Sciences



FIONA GREENE ServiceNow

## Congratulations to our nominees

Cisco Administrative Council
Council leads - Amanda Reese,
Becky Abella, Charlotte
McLachlan, Debra Leckie, Eva
Yee, Lia Mckenzie, Linda Suri,
Melissa Acuna
Nominated for Team Achiever Award

Tuuyen Tran
Nominated for Colleen Barrett Award
for Administrative Excellence

Nominated for Above the Call Award

Jinna Park Nominated for The Spirit Award Sharinka De Zoysa We celebrate your exceptional achievements and the remarkable impact you make each day.

Your excellence, commitment, and leadership truly stand out.

To all the incredible administrative professionals being recognized today.

THANK YOU for everything you do.

### **CONGRATULATIONS** to our Admin Award Nominees!

We applaud you for your unwavering support and administrative excellence. You enable Joy at Work every day and drive our PG&E Purpose of Delivering for Our Hometowns, Serving Our Planet and Leading with Love. Thank you for your dedication to your teams!



Corey Lee Chris Cadungug Gayleen Lentsch Luba Morein Monica Padilla Roenna Alegre Samantha Allen Sandy Leung





# ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD



### **DESIREÉ HOO**

SENIOR ENGINEERING AIDE, SAN LEANDRO PUBLIC WORKS

If you've ever crossed paths with Desiree Hoo, you know: public service isn't just her job—it's her calling at the City of San Leandro for the past 11 years! As a Senior Engineering Aide, Desiree is the driving force behind countless civic improvements. From ensuring timely public works inspections to meticulously maintaining project documentation and managing contracts with an eagle eye, her work touches nearly every corner of the city - and every citizen it serves. But it's how Desiree shows up that sets her apart. Whether coordinating permit logistics, advocating for community needs, or making sure contractors get paid on time, Desiree blends empathy with excellence, always and the City of San Leandro is immeasurably better for it!

### **Finalists**



**STEPHANIE PEREZ**Blue Shield of California



LISSETH MICHEL
San Marcos Unified School District



SAMANTHA ALLEN
Pacific Gas & Electric Company



TAMAYA LEE
Stanford Medicine Children's Hospital

# Congratulations to our nominees

2025 Admin Awards





Kimberley Baxter-Ptarcinski Loyalty Award



Megan Hardesty Spirit Award



Randi Wiesner Leadership Award

### Recognizing Excellence

**PayPal** 

### Congratulations to all Finalists!

As a proud supporter of the Admin Awards, PayPal is honored to sponsor this year's celebration of outstanding administrative professionals. We are committed to recognizing the vital role EAs and administrative leaders play in driving impact across organizations.

At PayPal, we're proud to foster a strong EA community and are actively building an employer destination of choice for top talent in the admin profession.



## LEADERSHIP AWARD



### **CATHY NGUYEN**

### **EXECUTIVE BUSINESS PARTNER, SENTINELONE**

Cathy Nguyen is described as "the EA that every executive dreams of having - and the one every EA aspires to be. Cathy has supported her executive across three companies, to the point where her role has been negotiated as part of his leadership package. At SentinelOne, she's helped steer the company's most mission-critical initiatives—from Sales Kickoffs hosting 1,000 attendees and global staff meetings to onboarding programs that now set the gold standard across the organization. When change hits, Cathy's the one who keeps everyone grounded. She's redesigned onboarding for both the Sales and EA functions, launched training programs to help others work smarter and created AI-powered productivity sessions to bring the future into the now. All while mentoring the next generation of Admin leaders. She's credited with revitalizing EA morale during a time of upheaval. Colleagues call her a Google guru, a culture shaper, and a calming presence in a fast-paced world. But mostly? They just call her the best.

### **Finalists**



VANESSA PHAM

Cadence Design Systems



VERNEE MCFADDEN
Lam Research



JENNIFFER MINARD
ServiceNow



JUDY MRAKAVA GlobalLogic



AUREA THOMPSON

Micron Technology



MARIETTA AWOSANYA Kaiser Permanente

cādence



JULIE DANG
Nutanix

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NOMINEES



# LOYALTY AWARD



### KIMBERLEY BAXTER-PTARCINSKI

**EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATE, JUNIPER NETWORKS** 

With 32 years in the Administrative Profession—and 23 of those at Juniper Networks, Kimberley Baxter-Ptarcinski loyalty is matched only by her influence. Known simply as "KBP" by colleagues around the world, Kimberley brings both heart and precision to everything she does. She co-leads Juniper's Admin Council, drives global volunteer programs, and serves as the go-to support at high-stakes events like Mobile World Congress. Her impact hasn't gone unnoticed - Juniper's CEO personally honored her with the company's internal Admin Excellence Award, an accolade voted on by her peers. And Kimberley makes Admin Awards history—as only the second two-time winner in our program's history.

### **Finalists**



MELINDA LOVEDAY
Applied Materials



**SHEILA WATT** Guardant Health



CHRIS CADUNGUG
Pacific Gas & Electric Company



KAY SHEAR
Applied Materials



KIM AMUNDSON Intuit



SUSAN NYSTROM

Marvell Technology



CHERYL SALMON

UCSF Medical Center



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At Applied Materials, our Administrative Business Partners **Make Possible® a Better Future**.

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### **EVELYN BRYANT**

### EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPERVISOR, YAAMAVA' RESORT & CASINO

Evelyn Bryant brings a spirit to Yaamava' Resort & Casino that's not just felt - it's contagious. With over seven years of dedicated service, Evelyn has become the heart of the Accounting & Finance team. Known for her warmth, energy, and a daily dose of optimism, one colleague shared, Evelyn doesn't just brighten the day "she builds a better one." Her impact goes far beyond attitude—Evelyn consistently steps up to lead with action. She's coordinated key compliance processes, helped implement new systems during critical transitions, mentored new hires, and brought people together through team celebrations and thoughtful moments of recognition. "She wasn't built for pressure, she was born for it," one teammate said. In high-pressure situations, Evelyn doesn't just keep things moving she lifts the people around her. "Her presence changes the energy of a room - in the best way," "she defines our culture just by being herself," and "every team needs an Evelyn" are just a few of the heartfelt sentiments shared by colleagues.



### **Finalists**



BETZI RUIZ
Applied Materials

**SANDRA GONZALES** 

Micron Technology



REBECCA ROBLES
Intel Corporation



MONICA PADILLA
Pacific Gas & Electric Company



MEGAN HARDESTY

Juniper Networks



MICHELLE MONAGHAN
Salesforce

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# Lam Research Congratulates Our 2025 Admin Award Nominees

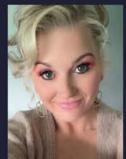


Lam is pleased to honor our 2025 Admin Award nominees. We extend our congratulations to all the 2025 Bay Area administrative nominees and wish you all a happy Administrative Professionals week.

### **Individual Award Nominees:**

Maya Desai, Emma Ford, Stacy Kirby, Vernee McFadden, Stephanie Monnier, Mimi Salomon, Carlo Vera-Cruz















### Team Award Nomination:

The Admin Leadership (ALT) Team; Jennifer Botts, Kristine Caroza, Don De La Cruz, Maria Fernandez, Emma Ford, Jessica Keizer, and Chrissy McKeever

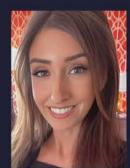














We recognize our admin community and their contributions to our success.

Let's prove it.



### Congratulations to Susan Barela Nystrom

2025 Achiever Award Nominee

We value your dedication, creativity, and commitment to delivering excellence. Thank you from Team Marvell!



Essential technology, done right™

### SolomonEdwards congratulates the 2025 Silicon Valley & Bay Area Admin Awards nominees!

Thank you for your dedication, talent, and the immense impact that you bring to organizations in the community.



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# THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AWARD



### KRISTINE KARVELAS

**EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, APPLIED MATERIALS** 

With a strategic mind and a memory like a steel trap, Kristine Karvelas, Executive Administrative Business Partner at Applied Materials, has redefined what it means to be an indispensable partner to executive leadership. Known for her calm under pressure and her ability to keep global teams aligned and focused - even in the midst of chaos - Kristine enables leaders to operate at peak performance. Her deep understanding of business operations allows her to anticipate needs before they're even voiced, delivering with precision and care every time. One executive consultant called her his "efficiency partner," calculating that because of her, he was able to bill 30% more client hours. That's ROI—admin-style. A 26-year in the profession, 9 at Applied Materials, Kristine has earned the trust, admiration, and gratitude of every leader she's supported. And as one of them put it, "How am I going to function without you? My wife is thinking I should hire you to support us in our retirement!"

### **Finalists**



**BRANDI DILL Applied Materials** 



**CLAUDIA HERRMANN** Okta



**JANIS NG** Cadence Design Systems



KATIE SPIVAK ServiceNow



LIZA JOHNSON Informatica



# THE TEAM ACHIEVER AWARD

### CISCO ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

#### **CISCO SYSTEMS**

The Cisco Administrative Council isn't just a team -it's a movement. Founded in 2022 this powerhouse of administrative professionals has become the connective tissue of Cisco's global Admin community. What started as a Council quickly grew into a strategic force shaping culture, championing growth, and building resilience. This team has launched game-changing initiatives under 3 pillars; Growth & Development, Health & Wellbeing, and Partnerships. And when Cisco executed its historic acquisition of Splunk the Admin Council played a critical role - from establishing buddy systems to thoughtful onboarding and tailored trainings - efforts that were described as "like nothing else admin teams see across the globe."



### **Team Names**

**BECKY ABELLA** 

LIA MCKENZIE

**AMANDA REESE** 

**MELISSA ACUNA** 

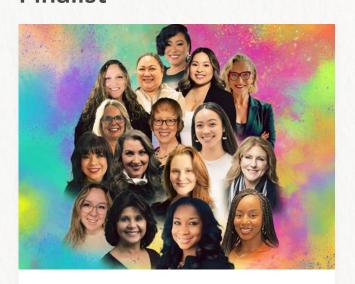
**DEBRA LECKIE** 

LINDA SURI

CHARLOTTE BOBEK MCLACHLAN

**EVA YEE** 

### **Finalist**



ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS **GROUP, APPLIED MATERIALS** 

Arlyn Bungay, Stephani Cruz, Brandi Dill, Rachael Gifford, Amanda Glenn, Lyn Hobbs, Kristine Karvelas, Lily Lewis, Melinda Loveday, Quenette Mendenhall Lorie Roldan-Almogela, Nuria Root, Kay Shears, Alison Sowell, Tatiana Sualua, Sonja Taddie



ADMIN TEAM, NUTANIX

Donna Capriotti, Kristen Casey, Nicole Martinez



OAKLAND BASE COORDINATORS, **SOUTHWEST AIRLINES** 

Melanie Macanlalay, Jennifer Solis, Yvette Wanzo

### **NUTANIX**

# Congratulations

Thank you for your endless and unwavering hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence.



**Deanna Tran** Above the Call Award



**Nicole Martinez** Achiever Award



Julie Dang Leadership Award



Nicole Martinez, Kristen Casey, and Donna Capriotti Team Achiever Award



## FOUNDER'S AWARD



### LAM RESEARCH

Among Lam Research's Executive Office team of nine Executive Assistants, two have been with the company for over 25 years, two for 20 years, and three for more than 15—an extraordinary testament to a workplace where Admins thrive. As Lam's CEO joined us at the 2025 Admin Awards Gala, his own 30-year journey stood as a powerful reflection of the environment he's helped create—one where Administrative Professionals are empowered, supported, and valued. When he hired his current EA, Sherry Buie, five years ago, the role was dual: partner with the CEO, yes, but also ensure the Admin community's growth and success. Empowering Admins isn't a sentiment at Lam Research, it's a strategy. And as one of the largest semiconductor equipment companies in the world, it's also clearly a competitive advantage.

At Lam Research, Admins aren't behind the scenes, they're at the center. They are trusted with high-impact initiatives, included in strategic discussions, and offered clear, personalized career paths. Quarterly forums connect executives and Admins, while a dedicated council and engaged Executive Sponsor foster mentorship, professional development, and community. For building one of the most exceptional work environments for Administrative Professionals in the country, we proudly presented Lam Research with the 2025 Founder's Award

### NOMINEES

**Shawntae Austen** Sarah Green **Maria Guzman** Katie Spivak **Jennifer Minard** Fiona Greene **Andrea Winters** Jocelyn Lalonde **Cara Nicols** 

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2025 ADMIN AWARD NOMINEES

We're proud to recognize our nominees for the 2025 Admin Awards, and we thank them for their incredible dedication, leadership, and for helping us put our purpose-making the world of work, work better for people—into action.



# Mozillα 🔼

Proud of our 2023 Leadership Award Winner and to be part of the Admin **Awards** 

THE LEADERSHIP AWARD



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CONGRATULATIONS to our 2025 Admin Awards Nominees!

We are all proud of you!

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# GRAND PRIZE WINNER

### **CHRISTINE MCKEEVER**

- LAM RESEARCH





Kimberly Lopez Santa Clara County Emergency Medical Services

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