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BONUS FEATURE
A STRATEGIC LEADER
OF TRANSFORMATION

Fred Laluyaux in conversation with Ray Wang, Founder and Chairman of Constellation Research, during the AeraHUB session “Beyond Buzzwords: Where Are Companies Getting Value with AI Today — and What’s Ahead?”



Improving decision making across a spectrum of industries

Fred Laluyaux — Co-Founder, President, and CEO of Aera Technology — shares the organization’s vision for people-guided decision intelligence and how it delivers that vision through real-time analytics, simulations, and actionable business recommendations.

Co-Founder, President, and CEO, Aera Technology



*The CEO Forum Group has selected Fred Laluyaux, Co-Founder, President & CEO, Aera Technology, as a recipient of the 2026 Transformative CEO Award in the exclusive category of **Decision Intelligence**, and has further recognized the organization as one of the Top 10 Businesses in America. This is bestowed for pioneering the concept of ‘the self-driving enterprise’ through cognitive automation and real-time decision-making at enterprise scale. As CEO, Laluyaux has built a category-defining company while fostering a culture of innovation, agility, and data-driven performance.*

Interviewed on December 16, 2025

Robert Reiss: You’ve talked about creating the “self-driving enterprise.” What does that mean?

Fred Laluyaux: We coined the term “self-driving enterprise” when we launched the company in 2017. It was an analogy to the self-driving car, which at the time was largely in prototype form. We envisioned enterprise technology that would be real-time and always on, connected inside and out, thinking, learning, and autonomous. We were ahead of the curve, but we knew this approach was the only viable way to address the fundamental problem of enterprise decision-making in an increasingly digital and complex world. A world where the volume, complexity, and speed of decisions would increase exponentially to a point where the traditional model of multi-layered pyramidal organizations, equipped with specialized tools on top of transactional systems, would simply break down.

Our vision was clear: evolve from people making and executing decisions supported by machines to machines making and executing decisions guided by people.

Fast forward to today, and you can see vehicles designed from the ground up for autonomy, with no steering wheel, no driver, and operating in a connected and intelligent network. What fascinated me most is that self-driving technology learns from every interaction across the entire fleet. These systems capture learning opportunities and redistribute that knowledge in near real time to all

vehicles. You leverage the exponential power of the entire fleet learning together with the machines, compounding improvement across every vehicle simultaneously.

That’s the analogy. We are redesigning the system entirely, building it from the ground up for a new era of enterprise operation.

Our customers across industries talk about levels of decision autonomy much like autonomous vehicle manufacturers describe theirs, from Level 1, decision support, to Level 5, fully autonomous, where humans supervise and govern the system. Self-driving car companies count miles driven; we count decisions augmented and automated. To date, we have executed more than 50 million decisions, and automation levels often exceed 90%.

“We coined the term ‘self-driving enterprise’ when we launched the company in 2017...We are redesigning the system entirely, building it from the ground up for a new era of enterprise operation.”

You were a pioneer of decision intelligence. Describe where the industry is today.

We launched Aera years before decision intelligence was formally recognized as an enterprise software category, and years before generative AI and large language models entered the mainstream. We were

“Organizations are becoming flatter, and technology stacks are simplifying, with decision intelligence sitting directly on top of transactional systems.”

convinced the future would require a fundamental operational shift, from people making every decision supported by software to machines executing decisions at scale, guided and governed by people. That conviction has proven correct.

Today, enterprises are no longer asking what decision intelligence is or why it matters — they’re asking how quickly they can adopt and scale it to deliver value. Industry research reflects that shift. A recent IDC study found that 88% of enterprises have either implemented or plan to pilot decision intelligence initiatives, with more than 40% citing rising operational costs and inefficiencies as key drivers.*

The technology is ready and deployed at scale across many industries, and its full impact is becoming quickly understood. New roles, such as Decision Architect and Decision Analyst, are now emerging on LinkedIn today. Organizations are becoming flatter, and technology stacks are simplifying, with decision intelligence sitting directly on top of transactional systems. The long-awaited delayering of organizations has already begun.

We often speak of “revolutions,” but I believe this one is real, and it will unfold faster than any disruption since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

Describe Aera Technology’s model and approach.

Aera is a Silicon Valley software company that has developed a leading AI solution for decision intelligence. Decision intelligence is the digitization, augmentation, and automation of the decisions you make every day to run your business, across supply chain, operations, marketing, sales, and more. Gartner predicts that by 2027, 50% of business decisions will be augmented or automated by AI agents for decision intelligence, and that by 2030, explicitly modeled business decisions will be five times more trusted and 80% faster than ungoverned

decisions enabled by decision intelligence platform adoption.** We led the creation of this new category when we launched in 2017, and our technology is recognized as the leader in this emerging field of AI, analytics, and automation.

In a nutshell, Aera is an AI agent that continuously analyzes your data in the context of your company and industry, delivering real-time analytics, simulations, and actionable business recommendations. For example: move inventory from one place to another, change a marketing promo, hold a purchase order, or switch a supplier. All of this works together to continuously optimize your plan, whether it’s financial or operational performance.

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Zooming in more closely, Aera sits on top of your transactional systems. It automates and executes the majority of the recommendations it generates and proactively engages business users when their input is needed. It communicates in plain English, provides all the insights required to make a decision, and executes and memorizes those decisions. As a result, it not only ensures timely execution, but also captures the tribal knowledge and best practices that build up in a company over time.

That decision memory becomes the foundation for AI-based learning. Over time, decisions increase in accuracy and speed and expand across the value chain, breaking down all of the traditional data and functional silos.

Co-Founder, President, and CEO, Aera Technology

CEOs think in value. What's the ROI of decision intelligence?

This is the fundamental question: What is the value of a good decision?

What is the ROI of making faster and better decisions across your value chain? Improved forecast accuracy and service levels lead to market share gains. Process and waste optimization reduces costs, increases cash on hand, and improves working capital. Carbon footprint reduction improves as well. Customers have seen forecast accuracy increase by 15%, waste reduction of up to 20%, and similar gains in logistics efficiency.

In a 2023 Forbes article, Will Beery, CIO of Mars Wrigley, reported that after deploying Aera for

stock rebalancing and root cause analysis, truck utilization jumped from the mid-80% range to 95%, resulting in significant cost savings and a reduced carbon footprint. In a very different context, Western Governors University, the largest nonprofit, competency-based online higher education institution in the United States, saw an 8% improvement in student retention after deploying Aera.

ROI is realized across many dimensions. Every decision executed with Aera is tagged with context and an expected outcome. The metrics used to measure outcomes are automatically calculated for every decision. Every micro-decision can be tracked and analyzed in context, giving organizations a level of precision and accountability that was previously impossible.



*IDC White Paper, sponsored by Aera Technology, "Accelerating enterprise decision intelligence with AI agents," Doc #US53891725, November 2025.

**Gartner Magic Quadrant for Decision Intelligence Platforms, David Pidsley, Carlie Idoine, Gareth Herschel, Kevin Quinn, Kjell Carlsson, 26 January 2026.

The larger ROI comes from connecting dots that were previously unconnected, for example, linking a strategy to reduce raw material waste with demand creation in a single dynamic decision-making process. The value compounds over time. Most customers begin with one high-impact decision use case, what we call a skill, and once results are visible, they expand into adjacent decisions across functions and geographies. Because decision capabilities are composable and adaptable, organizations can continuously scale as conditions change and unlock incrementally more ROI.

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That’s possible because decisions themselves are digitized. Instead of executing every step manually,

teams supervise and guide the system as it runs continuously.

This is amazing. Could you share another concrete example?


Using Aera, Hershey is transforming its entire global supply chain by shifting to proactive decision orchestration across planning, inventory, and logistics. Aera continuously detects aging stock before expiration, rebalances supply and demand, automates routine planning decisions, and optimizes truckload utilization, enabling Hershey to act earlier and capitalize on opportunities before they become problems.

The project took 90 days from start to go-live. Within the first 90 days after going live, Hershey prevented approximately 200,000 cases of waste, the equivalent of 40 truckloads, saving \$5 million in six months, or \$10 million annualized. The company reduced excess inventory, improved cash flow, lowered costs, and decreased carbon emissions.

Beyond the metrics, Douglas Guilherme, Senior Vice President Global Supply Chain at The Hershey Company, described a fundamental mindset shift: “Instead of asking, ‘What happened and how do we fix it?’ teams are now asking, ‘What’s about to happen, and how do we prevent or capitalize on it?’ Decision intelligence is increasingly viewed as a trusted partner in decision-making, enabling faster, more confident action across the supply chain.”

How do you handle structured versus unstructured decisions?

Decisions come in different forms, and Aera is built to handle the full spectrum. Structured decisions, typically high-volume, rules-based, and time-sensitive, can be configured in Aera using deterministic logic, agentic logic, or a combination of both, and allowed to run continuously.



Fred Laluyaux (left) with Aera Co-Founder Shariq Mansoor celebrate Aera's recognition in Gartner's inaugural Magic Quadrant for Decision Intelligence Platforms, marking a defining moment in the evolution of decision intelligence as a core enterprise software category.

Co-Founder, President, and CEO, Aera Technology

For example, Avantor uses Aera to optimize and execute structured procurement and inventory decisions that occur daily at significant scale. As a leading global provider of mission-critical products and services to the life sciences and advanced technologies industries, Avantor operates a highly complex supply chain. Its global distribution network includes 40 facilities serving more than 300,000 customers across 180 ship-to countries, supporting nearly 6 million SKUs and processing over 10 million orders each year.

With decision intelligence, Avantor continuously monitors demand, utilization, and availability to sense risk early. It also generates decisions to rebalance inventory; reduce, cancel, or accelerate purchase orders; or adjust supplier commitments. These decisions follow clear business rules and constraints and run continuously as conditions change. When recommendations are approved, either automatically or manually, the platform executes the related actions and communicates with suppliers. This allows the company to prevent excess inventory before it enters the network, all while keeping people in control of oversight and exceptions.

That last point is key: this is human-guided automation. Teams review, modify, or approve recommendations, maintaining governance and accountability while eliminating low-value manual work. Within the first 4 to 8 weeks of go-live, Avantor began delivering meaningful financial and operational impact, including reductions in excess inventory and procurement-related waste, improved service levels, and lower transportation-related emissions. Decision intelligence also accelerated revenue realization, reduced supplier spend, and drove double-digit productivity gains for planning and supply chain teams, all supported by strong user adoption across decision workflows.

Jared Guckenberger, Vice President of Global Supply Chain at Avantor, recently shared, “Decision intelligence is one of the few technologies that

fundamentally changes how we work, moving us from reports and emails to operating decisions end-to-end in one place, with speed, scale, and accountability.”

One important nuance: Aera can also work with unstructured data to support both structured and situational decisions. A leading global beverage manufacturer uses Aera to ingest unstructured claims arriving in inconsistent formats, apply policy and financial logic, and recommend next-best actions, dramatically reducing cycle times while keeping human teams firmly in control of governance and escalation paths.

What should CEOs do now to prepare for agentic AI?

Agentic AI is already real and delivering results. It has matured beyond productivity and text-heavy tasks to become trustworthy enough to operate core business processes at scale.

The opportunity is that organizations can now modernize incrementally, scale autonomy responsibly, and incorporate innovation continuously. That is why we designed Aera to be composable and adaptable, so decision capabilities can evolve as technology advances, allowing companies to move at their own pace and expand as confidence grows.

My advice: pay close attention to this technology. It is not incremental. As a CEO, you must make “agentifying” your company a personal priority, as it impacts the entire business. Whatever the size of your company, assemble top talent and work directly with them and your leadership team on this initiative. Talk to your peers and remain decisively curious.

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Fred Laluyaux with Douglas Guilherme, Global Senior Vice President, Supply Chain, The Hershey Company, and Nitin Murali, Vice President, Supply Chain Excellence, Gallo, during an AeraHUB discussion on how leading global enterprises are using decision intelligence to drive resilience and operational excellence.

Where is this all going, and will machines replace humans?

We are moving toward enterprises that operate like self-driving systems, always on, continuously learning, and increasingly autonomous. The question is how quickly organizations will embrace this shift, and the leaders who move with conviction will define their industries.

The impact will be profound. Decision-making work will be digitized at scale. Organizations will become flatter and more fluid. The technology stack will simplify, with decision intelligence sitting directly between your transactional systems and your people. Machines will elevate human understanding and thinking. The best organizations will be those that most effectively combine human judgment and machine intelligence, with people focusing on strategy, creativity, and oversight while intelligent systems manage the operational complexity of running a global enterprise.

We coined the term self-driving enterprise in 2017. I believe we're at the moment when that vision is reality, at the heart of how the world's greatest enterprises operate. That is what energizes me every day in conversations with customers and fellow CEOs. The vision is becoming real, and the momentum is extraordinary.

You've mentioned transformative moments in your life. What were they?

I grew up in France, not in a tech family, and was fortunate to come to the United States for an internship with a technology company in my early twenties. Shortly after college, I launched my first startup to develop technology invented by engineers from MIT and Harvard. When I met them in Cambridge, near the MIT campus, I experienced a defining moment. The speed and ambition of that young team were transformative for me. Their fail-fast mentality was eye-opening. At that moment, I knew I had to build my career in the United States,

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particularly in Silicon Valley. It took a few years, but I eventually made that move.

The second moment came in 2010. After more than 10 years working on large enterprise analytics and modeling solutions, I realized the real opportunity was in making and executing decisions on top of complex ERP systems. The cloud revolution was democratizing access to data and markets, and yet decisions remained largely manual. The gap between insight and action was enormous.

My “aha” moment came when I realized that to continuously improve decision-making, a company had to record its decisions. That is what Google did to train its search engine. We needed to build new technology to apply that logic to enterprise decisions. That insight led to the vision of moving from people making decisions supported by machines to machines making and executing decisions guided by people. That vision became Aera.

How many decisions does a CEO make in a day?

It depends. In a startup or scale-up environment, a CEO touches many topics and may make or influence dozens of decisions daily. As the role evolves, decisions become more strategic and fewer in number.

“CEOs must implement decision systems that free teams from repetitive work while improving the accuracy and timeliness of decisions across the value chain.”

More importantly, CEOs must implement decision systems that free teams from repetitive work while improving the accuracy and timeliness of decisions across the value chain. They must create a new operating model — one in which intelligent systems manage complexity across the enterprise, and people focus on strategy, oversight, and continuous improvement.



Fred Laluyaux is Co-Founder, President, and CEO of Aera Technology, the leader in agentic decision intelligence and creator of Aera, the first decision intelligence agent. An entrepreneur and Silicon Valley veteran, Fred brings an impressive track record building successful startups and driving technology innovation.

Prior to launching Aera, Fred was the CEO of Anaplan, which he grew to a \$1 billion valuation. He has held several executive positions at SAP, Business Objects, and ALG Software. As a thought leader on the future of work and host of the Decision Intelligence podcast, Fred frequently shares his vision with influencers through media interviews and speaking engagements at industry conferences. His views have been published in business and trade publications. A technology and startup advisor, Fred is an investor and active board member of several startups in the U.S. and Europe.



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