



1700 E. Golf Road, Suite 400
Schaumburg, Illinois 60173, USA
Telephone: +1.847.253.1545
isaca.org | E-mail: info@isaca.org

Trsar Family Helps Ensure ISACA's Growth in 'Good Hands'

Terry Trsar was instrumental in building many of ISACA's most well-known programs. His son, Tim Trsar, is helping take them to new heights.

Collectively, the affable father-son duo continues to leave a significant imprint on ISACA's trajectory of growth and expanded global impact.

Terry Trsar worked at ISACA for 20 years, beginning in 1995, overseeing many of ISACA's core areas, such as conferences, training and certification, and serving as chief professional development officer for many years. Tim Trsar, one of his four sons, started in ISACA's marketing department in 2016, less than a year after his father retired. Suffice it to say, there is plenty of talking shop when the two get together.

"I think it's kind of cool that Tim is involved in programs that were initiated back when I was there building them with other staff and teams," said Terry, sitting alongside Tim on a recent afternoon at ISACA's global headquarters. "When he talks about the CACS conference or some of our certification programs or training weeks, it makes me feel good that they are still vital ISACA programs that are doing well and that remain in good hands. They're in Tim's good hands, and everyone else's good hands. I get excited about that."

Following in the footsteps of mom or dad can be a tough sell for children, who often are eager to chart their own path. Going to a different college, moving to a different area or choosing a different line of work is often the preferred approach. Not so for Tim, who was thrilled to follow his father's long and distinguished career at ISACA.

"I'd say it was sort of the opposite of being resistant," Tim said of pursuing a career at ISACA. "I looked up to my dad."

In the case of the mark Terry left on ISACA, there is plenty to look up to. It's fitting that Terry began his time at ISACA in a different millennium, given the dramatic evolution that has unfolded since. Terry recalled attending his first ISACA conference shortly after he started in 1995, and members of the ISACA board added an outing to see "The Net," a movie set in the rudimentary days of the internet in which a floppy disk played a key part in the plot. Just like the internet, ISACA has progressed remarkably in the years since, with Terry helping to drive that growth. Both ISACA's staff size (around 20 when he started) and membership (around 15,000 when he started) are now roughly 10 times as large today.

"I love to build. I'm always building something, always doing something, so ISACA was perfect for me when I came because it was still fairly young and we had a lot of growth ahead of us," Terry said. "There were always things to do and build. I loved it because it was like being an entrepreneur. I enjoyed that immensely."



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He also initially found the close-knit nature of ISACA's modestly sized staff, working in close quarters in ISACA's former Rolling Meadows, Illinois, USA, location, appealing. Whether it was in the early days converging on the fax machine to listen for the hum of incoming CISA exam registrations as the deadline neared, planning conference programs, or a range of other team efforts, the back-and-forth made the job fun.

"I think you'd hear this from anybody that you'd bring in here from the time that I worked here – the fun for all of us was working with the other staff because it was all extremely collaborative," Terry said.

"We all had our specific responsibilities, but we all worked together on many projects, and the volunteers were a big part of that and just a blast to work with."

Tim, growing up as the second-oldest of four Trsar brothers, picked up on his dad's passion for his job, and developed an especially favorable view of ISACA while traveling with the family to various ISACA conferences. Young Tim even helped stuff bags at one CACS conference in Chicago, foreshadowing his whatever-it-takes approach to his current role as marketing manager.

As Tim grew older, Terry detected that he would be a great contributor at ISACA, and helped set the opportunity in motion with some of his former colleagues.

"I knew Tim would be a good fit [at ISACA] because he is very creative, very passionate about his work, and the one thing I think you have to be above everything else at ISACA is able to multitask, and Tim is the ultimate multitasker – believe me," Terry said. "You should see what his life is like, when he used to play in a band and work several jobs. He always has a million things going on at once."

Today's ISACA has a much larger, more sophisticated and more specialized marketing function than during Terry's time, and Tim quickly carved out a niche marketing ISACA conferences as well as assisting the marketing team with video and other creative elements.

In between assignments, Tim hears plenty about his dad from many ISACA colleagues who fondly recall working alongside his father: "Great guy." "Problem-solver." "Knowledgeable." "A joy to work with."

"When I first started, I would report back to my dad all the nice things that people said about him: 'I talked to so-and-so today and they said all these nice things about you,'" Tim said. "And then it turned out I was having the same conversation with everybody."

Kim Cohen, ISACA's current director of certification, worked extensively with Terry on building out ISACA's CRISC and CGEIT certifications, and in recent years has come to appreciate the creativity and multimedia skills that Tim brings to his marketing role.

“The ongoing success of ISACA’s certification portfolio has a lot to do with the foundation that Terry played a major part in setting,” Cohen said. “Terry was very well-respected throughout the organization and really helped ISACA grow its footprint in the areas of governance and risk. And now, it has been great to see Tim build on his dad’s legacy and bring an innovative mindset to advancing ISACA’s marketing capabilities. ISACA has been fortunate to have the Trsar family as part of its family of employees.”

Tim pointed to one piece of advice in particular from his dad that helped shape his mindset each day he arrives at work. Treat co-workers, Terry advised, like your “work family.” Tim took that message to heart, regularly offering to lend a helping hand when a coworker is in need of help or a pick-me-up.

That approach to relationship-building also applies to Tim’s interaction with members. In staffing the ISACA marketing booth at conferences, Tim has found ISACA members and volunteers to be part of the family atmosphere that his dad described.

“You start to learn all these things about them, and they become your friends,” Tim said. “They might come [to the booth] on day one at CACS and then day two they show up, ask how you’re doing, hang out in the booth a little bit more, and then you get to your social event [toward the end of the conference], and then you guys are full-blown friends at that point.”

ISACA is celebrating its [50th anniversary](#) this year, and combined, the Trsars have been part of the ISACA story for half that time. They have supported the growth of ISACA’s certification program; the emergence of COBIT as a leading global framework; helped ISACA reach beyond the IT audit community to become inclusive of risk, governance and security practitioners; and seen the organization explode to more than 140,000 members in 188 countries around the world.

Terry arrived at a time of building, and Tim considers the project far from complete, citing recent initiatives such as the Engage platform, chapter leaders portal and cybersecurity for audit certificate.

“At this point, we’re an organization that’s going through a lot of change, so that also creates an opportunity to build upon everything that’s being brought in that is new,” Tim said.

Terry is proud of how far ISACA has come, and the part that he – and his son – have played. Terry said a good measure of ISACA’s global cachet is the way others in the industry respect and look to ISACA for leadership on major industry challenges.

“When I first started ISACA was known primarily as a resource for IT auditors,” Terry said. “Today, technology and business professionals from around the world and from many different disciplines rely upon and trust ISACA for its expertise and guidance covering a broad array of technology issues. It has been a privilege to be part of that evolution, and to see it continue through Tim.”



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