

## FEATURED EXECUTIVE



**Nick Kottyan**  
*President & CEO*  
*DataChambers*

## INTERVIEW

**Like many NCTA members, you wear multiple business hats. Tell us about some of those.**

Wearing the NCTA Chairman's hat has been extremely rewarding as I've watching the organization thrive and, in some respects, reinvent itself over the past 2 years. During this time, NCTA has focused on truly being a technology voice for North Carolina and growing technology within the state.

Being the CEO of a smaller tech company like DataChambers, I realize that "small" is important because small and medium businesses [SMBs] make up the majority of NCTA's membership. It's good for those companies to see that there is leadership within similarly-sized company. The big companies provide lots of support for NCTA, but the smaller companies may wonder how the big companies' perspectives are relevant to theirs.

I've heard more positive comments from folks about NCTA over the past 12-18 months. People who had disengaged are saying they like the new NCTA and getting involved more.

I think Brooks [Raiford, NCTA's CEO] has been very instrumental in NCTA's new direction. Most organizations take on the personality of their leader. Brooks has an outgoing, engaging personality. He understands how to work with a cross section of members and organizations that we are trying to influence, such as state government, and to a lesser degree, federal government.

Is it to Brooks' credit alone that NCTA is growing? No, but he certainly gets some credit for it because he's developed the strategy and led the group implementing that strategy. I liken him to the guy driving the chuck wagon. The horses will run without him. But, the guy with the reins in his hands directs where they run.

I'm also on the Board for the Forsythe County United Way. That takes a fair amount of time, especially when we're determining where to distribute the money.

At DataChambers, we're certainly proud of how far we have come over the past seven years. We are a small piece of the technology industry in North Carolina. But, we believe strongly in advancing technology here. And of course, we want to be in a position to support that cause and provide support for anyone who needs data center services.



**How has being NCTA's Chairman changed your view of NCTA and the role it plays in our state?**

As Chairman, I have gotten more involved on how NCTA influences what goes on in our state government, and somewhat federally, as it relates to technology. We have more influence on what happens at state level than I realized. We *really* are the voice of technology here and state decision-makers really do call us about technology.

In North Carolina, we are moving in the right direction for technology. We are ranked in the top 5 or 6 states in the nation regarding technology and second in gaming, only behind Silicon Valley. RTP and North Carolina in general, has a reputation for embracing technology as driver of its future economy. Many states talk about it. But, I don't see as many of them taking steps to develop the initiative.

**Are there other major changes you have seen in NCTA in 2010?**

The one thing I would add to what I've already said is that 2010 was a pivotal year in our programming and our events. We changed the look, touch, feel of our events. The NCTA staff did a phenomenal job and it is still an ongoing process. 2010 was a year we made a leap forward to change the flavor so that people attending NCTA events, year after year, had an incentive to attend those same events again.

**As Chairman, you have met with hundreds of NCTA members, as well as business and government leaders. Is there a particular story that encapsulates NCTA's mission, accomplishments and benefits?**

I attended NCTA's Tech Day at the Legislature and came away thinking, "This is pretty cool." My experience that day opened my eyes to how much recognition NCTA has at the state level and influence they have on the legislative agenda pertaining to technology issues.

I point out to new members that, besides NCTA's networking and professional development opportunities, we are SMB's voice in Raleigh that they would not otherwise have. The big companies have folks there. But DataChambers, and other small companies, can't afford that. So through NCTA, we have that voice.

**What was your primary goal(s) when you took over the Chairmanship? Do you feel you made headway toward those goals?**

Our primary goals for 2010 were to continue to solidify the programming we began in 2009 and to solidify the NCTA management team to really strengthen our organization's structure. We certainly accomplished those goals. We were blown away at the 21 Awards. Brooks and the team absolutely hit homeruns on all fronts. It was a year of increased sponsorship, improved programming, and structure throughout the entire organization.



**Pull out your crystal ball and tell us what you think NC's tech industry has in store for the next couple of years.**

I think that, as we continue to pull out of this recession, the North Carolina's technology sector will continue to thrive. This progress will be driven by new technologies related to gaming, mobile applications, wireless technology, bio-medicine and bioinformatics.

I believe there is a rapid convergence bio and technology sectors. And it is being supported by our universities, the NC Research Campus in Kannapolis and others that will promote technology in North Carolina. We are poised with RTP and other areas within our state to grow. And that will start with small business.

NCTA has to continue to be the voice for small business. Fortunately, a lot of folks in Raleigh get that. Jerry Fralick, the state CIO, clearly says, tech, tech, tech, we need to embrace it. Lieutenant Governor Walter Dalton says technology will be a driving force in North Carolina's future growth. Those are positive signs of what our state leadership thinks, whichever side of the isle you line up on.

**How do you plan to be involved in NCTA after you step down as Chairman?**

My individual involvement will be as proactive as it has been over the past 4-5 years. Although I won't be leading the board meetings, I will continue to be an engaged board member.

DataChambers will also have a consistent presence at NCTA events. We have already committed to sponsorship throughout 2011, including being the dinner sponsor for this year's NCTA 21 Awards.

**Are you a little relieved to give up such a time-consuming role?**

There is some sense of relief but also a sense of "oh, geez." with the staff and team at NCTA. They make it a real pleasure to serve.

This past year as chairman was almost simpler than a couple of years ago when we were recruiting Brooks and doing strategic planning. In many respects, there was more stress before Brooks came on board in 2009 because we didn't know where the organization was going. This year, we had a good road map. So, my job was more about execution.

I must add that Michelle [Calton, VP of Membership] really took a leadership role then, guiding the staff and sticking with it. That was a time when it would have been easier for the staff to say, "I don't need all these headaches." But they hung in there, to NCTA's benefit.



### **Do you have any advice for your successor Harvey Braswell?**

Harvey is a seasoned technology veteran in this state who has served as NCTA chairman in the past and who has the skills and acumen to be leading our organization in 2011. I would be presumptuous to think I could give him much advice.

### **DataChambers, had quite a year in 2010, including adding a new high-security data center in Winston-Salem. What's up for 2011?**

We had a great 2010 with the opening of our new data center, and we are poised for considerable growth again in 2011. [CED](#) [Council for Entrepreneurial Development] named us one of 2010's top companies to watch for growth. Once we get on that list, people are watching. Now, we have to execute and produce.

We continue to be a privately-held small business and expand at a pace that we can grow within ourselves.

### **As leader of NCTA and DataChambers, it must be difficult to find time for your personal life. But, inquiring NCTA members want to know who Nick Kottyan is when he's not wearing his business hats.**

I have 5 grandchildren in Charlotte and Colorado. I love being with them.

My passion is snow skiing. I did not get to do as much, due to a recent hip replacement. I plan on going out to Colorado in a couple of weeks for some skiing.

I also have a place at Topsail Island. And I play golf on occasion, usually as it relates to business. So I'm active, but also kind of a homebody.

You can reach Nick Kottyan, [DataChambers](#) CEO, at [NKottyan@DataChambers.com](mailto:NKottyan@DataChambers.com), 336-499-7220.

Mary Storms is an NCTA Ambassador and a technology sales recruiter at [STORMS Associates](#). You can read and comment on her job hunting and tech sales tips at [The Sales Hunter](#) blog, or contact her directly at [Mary@STORMSassociates.com](mailto:Mary@STORMSassociates.com), 704-607-9118.