



**GERARD R. GIBERT, CCP**

Founder and CEO, Venture Technologies  
Entrepreneur • Technologist • Independent Thought Leader

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Venture delivered a variety of IT infrastructure solutions including networking, security, hyper-convergence, collaboration, VTCloud® Services and ERP consulting services to enterprise private and public sector clients across the nation. The company operated physical locations, including three data centers, in Ridgeland, Memphis, Birmingham, Baton Rouge, Mobile, Montgomery, Englewood, CO, Naperville, IL, Waukesha, WI and Casper, WY.

### CAREER EXPERIENCE

- 1980 - 1984 - Arthur Andersen and Co.  
*Staff Analyst in the Management Information Consulting Division (MICD),  
Senior Analyst*
- 1984 - 1986 - Koury, Ready and Lefoldt, CPA Firm  
*Managed an accounting services practice and provided IT consulting to the firm's clients*
- 1986 - 2019 - Venture Technologies  
*Founder and CEO*

### EDUCATION

- 1976 - St. Joseph Catholic School of Jackson  
*Graduated with honors*
- 1980 - University of Mississippi  
*Earned a degree in Business with a  
major in Accounting*

### HONORS AND DISTINCTIONS

- 2019 - Featured in publication, *Hometown Madison*
- 2018 - Data Center Architecture Partner of the Year –  
U.S. South, *Cisco Systems*
- 2018 - Venture named Business of the Year, *The Ridgeland Chamber of Commerce*
- 2018, 2016, 2015 - Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist, *Ernst & Young*
- 2018 - Partner of the Year Data Center Architectures – U.S. South Region, *Cisco Systems*
- 2018 - Featured in Retail Merchandiser – “Successful Ventures” –  
IT Solution Provider focus, *Retail Merchandiser*
- 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015 - Managed Services Provider Elite 150, 250 &  
a Triple Crown Winner, *CRN's Tech Elite 250*
- 2017 - IT Nation Innovator of the Year, *ConnectWise*
- 2017 - Services Partner of the Year – U.S. West, *Cisco Systems*
- 2017, 2015, 2014 - “Top 21 in Tech” in Mississippi, *Mississippi Business Journal*
- 2016 - 2006 - Best Places to Work in Mississippi, *Mississippi Business Journal*
- 2015 - Solution Innovation Partner of the Year – U.S. Theater, *Cisco Systems*
- 2015 - Outstanding Solutions Partner of the Year – U.S. West, *Cisco Systems*
- 2014 - State, Local & Education (SLED) Partner of the Year –  
U.S. South, *Cisco Systems*
- 2014 - Partner of the Year, *LifeSize*
- 2013, 1997 - “Mississippian of the Year” award – the only two-time winner,  
*Mississippi Chapter of the Association for Information Technology Professionals (AITP)*
- 2013 - State, Local & Education (SLED) Partner of the Year –  
U.S. West, *Cisco Systems*
- 2006 - Venture recognized as one of the top private firms in the State of Mississippi.  
Currently ranked at number 33, *Mississippi Business Journal*
- 2003 - Venture recognized as the top mid-sized commercial business in the  
State of Mississippi, *Mississippi Business Journal*
- 2000 - Venture featured for the MAN (Metropolitan Area Network) it designed,  
installed and provided support for Memphis Gas, Light and Water, the  
nation's largest public three-service utility, *Network Computing*
- 1999 - Best e-Business solution in the area of customer relationship management,  
*Lotus Beacon Award*
- 1996 - “Top 40 under 40” Leadership Award, *Mississippi Business Journal*
- 1994 - MicroAge franchise was recognized as the top MicroAge operation of  
over 300 locations in North America, *MicroAge*

## VISION AS CHANCELLOR

The University of Mississippi is at an inflection point of the sort that has occurred rarely in its 171 years. The next chancellor must restore academic excellence, increase in-state student enrollment, defend free expression, and marshal private sector support, all of which should be facilitated by meeting or exceeding alumni expectations for all major sports.

## BROADENING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

This is our core mission. No success anywhere else excuses failure here. We have been reduced to marketing shrinking islands of nationally recognized excellence, such as the School of Accountancy. Where we can excel, we must. Where we can't compete, we should question resource allocation. That's how CEOs win. Yes, we are small, and still too hindered by past battles over race. But everyone always has more than enough reasons to remain mediocre. Nearly 40 years ago, prospective investors and lenders had a long list of reasons why I could never achieve my target of \$500,000 annual revenue. When our company merged with ConvergeOne in January 2019, our annual revenue run rate topped \$215,000,000 – that's \$43,000 every 23 business minutes. Ole Miss needs a chancellor who has done what the experts knew was impossible.

## IN-STATE STUDENT ENROLLMENT

We are losing this battle, especially to Mark Keenum (an excellent president) and MSU. Worse, we haven't seemed to care. Accustomed to battling the impression of being outside the club of great public universities, Ole Miss now struggles to be considered first-rate within our state. OUR state. As a result, Ole Miss actually contributes to the outflow of young talent. As Mississippi's population shrinks, so does our tax base. This downward spiral has been apparent for years, but addressed half-heartedly and ineffectively. Ole Miss must expand research and partnerships with the private sector, create new STEM curricula, and forge collaborative studies with other top-tier universities.

## FREE EXPRESSION MUST BE DEFENDED

This shouldn't need to be said. It shouldn't be controversial, but it is. Conformity to the politics of the moment, or even of the generation, should never compromise a university's search for knowledge – true knowledge – wherever it may be found. All who seek that end should be engaged and put to use, whatever their politics. No mob should be allowed to keep them out or shout them down.

That's not an argument against what has become known as diversity. No institution has a greater obligation to bury deep, and face down, the last vestiges of slavery and Jim Crow. But the best way to do that is to offer an excellent education and bright future to the descendants of those who were too long deprived. Ole Miss should have a continuous, prominent presence in high schools to identify students with exceptional promise, to help prepare them to compete here, attract them, educate them and promote them to a national audience eager for young talent.

It's time to stop focusing on renaming buildings and focus on the product that comes out of them. Our focus should be on the future, not the past.

**PUBLIC AND PRIVATE  
DOLLARS, SPOTLIGHT  
ON UMMC**

No Mississippi legislature has had, or is likely to have, enough of a budget to fund this vision fully. Alumni cannot fill the gap entirely. While he or she maintains excellent relations with legislators, the next chancellor must also tap other private funding sources, leveraging his or her national contacts and credibility.

Ole Miss must enhance technology research and development that can be commercialized and monetized. Ole Miss should serve as an incubator of ideas, concepts and innovation that address critical needs across a broad spectrum of society.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center has been underutilized for this purpose but offers great opportunities. Its management has attracted legitimate critiques from the legislature, the IHL board, and UMMC staff and patients. The ship must be refloated and sent on a world tour, flying our flag. The most critical need for the long-term success – if not sustainability – of UMMC is to enhance and expand private-public partnerships. UMMC should seek to expand and enhance coalitions with peer health care institutions to fulfill its mission. A leader is needed who is proficient in the complexities of UMMC's sources of revenue: private insurance, Medicare, Medicaid and DSH. A chancellor is needed who possesses a deep understanding of the ACA and its impact on society – providers, consumers, insurers and government. This is essential to institutional governance.

Ole Miss donors and business partners must know and trust that common sense and pragmatism will influence decisions, governance and strategy. The chancellor must not be perceived as running things simply to enhance his or her chance of landing a better job as soon as “a better deal” surfaces.

**WINNING ANYWHERE IS  
EASIER IF YOU'RE WINNING  
SOMEWHERE ELSE**

When Robert M. Carrier was permitted a home on campus, and again when his widow was allowed to drive her car to her 50-yard-line box, the Ole Miss chancellor was summoned before the board of trustees to explain the VIP treatment. He took a copy of Mr. Carrier's big check to each meeting and offered the same treatment for anyone willing to write the same check. Mr. Carrier and the chancellor both understood that what Ole Miss most needed would be most easily attracted by something logically unrelated – a winning sports tradition.

That is no less true today. As William Faulkner wrote regarding the Civil War then haunting Mississippi, “The past is never dead. It's not even past.” Sports dominance is within living memory and within reach. The experience Ole Miss offers coaches, staff and athletes is unsurpassed. Exceptional academics, world-class facilities and Oxford charm blend to make a compelling case for Ole Miss versus any rival institution. A leader who can effectively promote the university's unique assets and project a positive image will be an integral part of the Rebels' athletic success. After all, “We are Ole Miss!”

**CONCLUSION**

I live to defy the odds – especially where it concerns my beloved Ole Miss and Mississippi.

## INTRODUCTION

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## EDUCATION

Gibert was born in Jackson, Mississippi in 1958. He graduated with Honors from St. Joseph Catholic School of Jackson in 1976. Gibert attended the University of Mississippi where he earned a degree in Business with a major in Accounting in 1980.

## EARLY CAREER

Upon graduation, Gibert joined Arthur Andersen, and Co. as a Staff Analyst in the Management Information Consulting Division (MICD) of the New Orleans office. He was promoted to the position of Senior Analyst and remained employed by Andersen until 1984. His clients included numerous private and public sector entities, including the states of Louisiana and Oregon. The MICD eventually became Andersen Consulting and today operates as Accenture Corporation.

While at Andersen, Gibert was responsible of the functional and technical design of an integrated Pension Fund Accounting System in the State of Louisiana which became the model for public retirement systems later deployed in several states. He developed extensive skills in all aspects of planning, design, development and implementation of large-scale IT systems.

During his tenure at Andersen, Gibert completed requisite training – both self-paced and at the firm's renown Center for Professional Development in St. Charles, Illinois. Widely considered equivalent to an advanced technical degree, coursework included technical architecture, software engineering, comprehensive business systems design and implementation, and all phases of the firm's world-class project methodology – Method/1.

Following a successful career with Andersen, Gibert returned to his home of Jackson, Mississippi in 1984 where he joined the staff of a local CPA firm to manage an accounting write-up practice and provide IT consulting to the firm's clients. In this position, Gibert streamlined and grew the firm's practice, automated the firm's internal operations and was the first in the State of Mississippi to implement inhouse automated income tax processing and electronic auditing.

In 1984, Gibert earned a Certificate in Data Processing (CDP, now CCP), by passing all five parts of a rigorous exam that tested knowledge in hardware, operating systems, telecommunication systems, programming and business transaction systems in the first attempt. The certification was administered by the Institute for the Certification of Computing Professionals (ICCP), now the Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP) and requires 48 months of practical experience in IT.

**FORMATION OF  
MICROAGE**

Gerard Gibert's lifelong passion was to build and operate a business. In 1985, he created a business plan to launch a microcomputer services firm in the Jackson area. The plan called for \$189,000 in start-up capital. Gibert felt that his best chances for success lay in associating with one of the major computer re-sell network organizations, so after careful analysis, he decided to become a MicroAge franchisee.

With business plan in tow, Gibert pitched his idea to numerous financial institutions and investors. Securing funding for the venture was challenging, as financial institutions were still reeling from the recent S&L crisis and the microcomputer industry was still very young and volatile.

The message from prospective lenders was clear: Assets are needed to secure loans. Gibert was young and without any net worth, so after sixteen months and countless presentations, he decided to abandon his dream.

Then, one evening, Gibert's wife, Julie, offered a proposal as they shared dinner. The couple had been updating her parents on progress of the venture, and informed them of the need for collateral to secure funding. Julie's parents happened to have a 19-acre parcel of land on I-10 in Biloxi, which they generously deeded to the young couple with no strings attached. Mr. and Mrs. Gill were a typical working class, post-WWII couple and they felt the investment could ultimately be liquidated as a small retirement nest-egg.

So Gibert went to the bank, deed in hand, and secured a \$189,000 7-year term loan. MicroAge of Ridgeland opened for business in May 1986 in a 1,200 square foot "retail" store in a strip shopping center.

From the outset, Gibert's mission was to solve business problems with information technology with an emphasis on technical excellence and client satisfaction. Gibert knew that immediate positive performance would be essential for survival, given the small amount of capital - sufficient to fund operations for less than 5 months. The life of an IT services entrepreneur is one of wearing many hats - sales, technical, operations - exhaustive hours - working virtually every night, weekends and holidays - for the first several years after inception to ensure the viability of MicroAge of Ridgeland.

MicroAge, Inc. recognized MicroAge of Ridgeland at its international conference held in Phoenix, Arizona in 1987, as the Top New Franchisee of the Year in North America. Gibert's Ridgeland operation won the prestigious award over other new MicroAge franchisees located in larger, more opportunistic markets including San Jose, CA; Norcross, GA; Gaithersburg, MD and Los Angeles, CA. In 1994, MicroAge of Ridgeland was recognized as the top location in North America - the prestigious Eagle Award as the "National Reseller of the Year" from a field of 400. Not a sales contest, The Eagle recognized the partner that excelled at innovation, customer satisfaction, strategic planning, execution and consistent profitability.

Gibert knew from the beginning that his organization's ability to fuse technical skills with business acumen in delivering client solutions would always be a key differentiator and a competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace. MicroAge of Ridgeland thrived in the late 80s and early 90s - a challenging period for the IT industry as the microcomputer was struggling to make the transition from a limited personal appliance to a serious and powerful business tool. For the first 5 years of operations, Gibert maintained his personal compensation unchanged for the five year period post-launch, opting to apply excess cash flow over necessary working capital to the \$189k start-up loan secured by his in-laws' property. That approach resulted in retirement of that loan in 1991 - two years ahead of term.

**TRANSITION OF  
MICROAGE TO VENTURE  
TECHNOLOGIES**

In the early years, MicroAge's core business included the design, implementation and support of accounting and vertical software systems for small and mid-sized organizations across Mississippi. Many of these solutions were installed on early local area network (LAN) platforms and multi-user Unix platforms. Gibert and his team automated hundreds of Mississippi organizations – helping them leverage the power of automation for the first time.

With less reliance on MicroAge corporate and the transition to high-value, complex enterprise solutions, MicroAge of Ridgeland adopted a new name which reflected the solution provider's aggressive technology go-to-market strategy. Thus, MicroAge became Venture Technologies in 1998.

Between June 1998 and December 2001, Gibert served as the executive project manager for the design and implementation of a comprehensive management information system for the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC). In this role, Gibert commuted between central Mississippi and Trenton, New Jersey - weekly, for 25 months. The project team consisted of over 150 technical and functional architects, subject matter experts, network engineers, server/storage engineers and trainers.

The NJDOC solution consisted of five major, fully integrated Oracle Applications, linked with custom interfaces and delivered by a complex 3000-user WAN, anchored by large scale Unix-based SUN Microsystems processors and storage systems.

The Gartner Group, a top-tier global IT industry consulting firm, conducted an extensive analysis which concluded that 66 months were required to complete the project. Under Gibert's leadership and direction, the primary project objectives were completed in less than 20 months, thus avoiding total failure of the State's Correctional Information System. At the time, this was the largest information systems project ever undertaken by the State of New Jersey. The solution was considered the most advanced Correctional Information System in North America.

In October 1999, Venture was selected by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide network consulting, design, integration and deployment of a WAN that supported over 6,000 users in hundreds of locations throughout Texas. Venture also provided inmate applications training and participated in development of application integration and interfaces.

During the mid-90s and mid-2000s, Venture experienced rapid growth. Organizations of all sizes were investing in networks to connect people with data, and the Internet was evolving as a powerful commercial tool. It was during this timeframe that the company gained enormous traction delivering and supporting solutions to large enterprises – including financial and health care institutions, higher ed and large public sector organizations.

In the late 90s the company completed a statewide project for the Mississippi Department of Human Services, deploying servers, workstations and networks to service over 4,000 DHS workers involved in the MACWIS and SACWIS programs. The contract imposed stiff, liquidated damages – assessed daily – for every day past the required completion date – 60 days from award. The DHS accepted the project as complete two days prior to deadline.

**LAUNCH OF FIRST  
COMMERCIAL DATA  
CENTER IN MISSISSIPPI**

In January 2001, Venture launched its Network Operations and Data Center. In January 2002, Venture re-located the Data Center to the Jackson State University e-Center in Jackson, Mississippi. The first commercial data center in Mississippi, the Tier-3, 12,000 sq. ft. facility is staffed by 17 certified engineers 7/24/365. The fully resilient technical architecture delivers continuous, secure cloud services to tens of thousands of customers across the nation and abroad.

Venture's Data Center has delivered a comprehensive suite of cloud technology services for over 150,000 hours with less than five hours of recorded down-time, resulting in attainment of a 99.997% Service Level Agreement (SLA). Even as Hurricane Katrina ravaged Mississippi, knocking out power for the entire tri-county area, relying on its specially engineered fail-over systems, Venture's customers experienced no down-time. A Tier-3 compliant Data Center, the facility and operation have successfully completed eight SAS-70 Type II, HIPAA and HITECH compliance audits.

**EXPANSION STRATEGY**

In late 2007, seeing the need for consolidation in the industry, Gibert developed a comprehensive business plan to expand Venture's successful model via acquisitions. Upon presentation of the strategy to several investment bankers, a financial sponsor was selected to market Venture to prospective private equity firms that invest in the technology industry. Numerous presentations didn't yield any interested investors, especially in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

But one firm, New York-based FlatWorld Capital Corporation (FWC) was interested in continuing the discussion. A partner advised that increasing Venture's cloud business and monthly recurring revenue (MRR) would attract prospective investors and improve the company's valuation. Though the strategy to scale Venture's cloud business was already underway, management coalesced around a plan to accelerate the timeframe for achieving Venture's MRR objectives.

In 2012, with achievement of the MRR target complete, Gibert reengaged FWC. The firm's partners were pleased with Venture's revenue composition, EBITDA and growth trends. Working together, FWC and Gibert prepared a comprehensive investment memo to market Venture to the investment community.

With FWC as sponsor, Gibert presented Venture's growth strategy and investment opportunity to numerous private equity firms and cash flow lenders. These discussions produced several term sheets, and it became apparent that the best approach would be to fully finance Venture's growth with cash flow debt. Though considerably riskier than monetizing equity, preserving equity would optimize future returns and lead to a more attractive shareholder exit.

In May 2014, a credit agreement was inked with one of the nation's largest providers of unsecured senior debt. This credit facility was used to combine Venture with two other organizations, ISC of Englewood, CO, and Birmingham-based SAT, on July 1, 2014 marking the genesis of the company's acquisition growth initiative.

Between 2016 and 2018, Venture completed three additional acquisitions, including a Milwaukee-based Oracle ERP consulting organization, establishing the company as one of the largest IT Solution Providers in the nation. The fusion of acquisitions and organic growth propelled the company from a regional player to national prominence, serving mostly large enterprise accounts across the country and abroad.

**SALE OF VENTURE  
TO CONVERGEONE**

By early 2017, the combination of six independent companies into a fully integrated, unified, institutionalized organization began to bear fruit. Venture's revenues, gross and net margins increased. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as margin per account manager and team member, utilization and effective rates of engineering resources, monthly recurring revenue, revenue composition, return on assets and equity, EBITDA and EBITDA as a percent of revenue were all trending positive.

Concurrently, Venture's customer satisfaction was consistently > 4.5 on a 1-5 scale. Customer churn was minimal, retention and service agreement renewal rates were north of 90%. Employee retention, the hallmark of Venture's success, remained high – despite record demand for IT talent relative to supply, a dynamic that made competition for talent fierce.

Clearly, the strategy of preserving equity by financing the growth via unsecured debt was creating material shareholder value, while affording significant upward economic opportunity for Venture team members. All stakeholders – staff, customers, technology partners, investors and shareholders (many of whom were employees) were benefiting from Venture's value creation.

The strategy of combining companies where major shareholders exchanged equity for equity in Venture resulted in a board of directors with diverse long-term objectives, particularly as it relates to equity monetization and exit. Some board members wanted to monetize their equity, while others wanted to continue the acquisition strategy to create more long-term value.

In April 2017, by a 4-3 vote, the board of directors adopted a resolution to engage an investment banker to market Venture to prospective financial and strategic buyers.

After a grueling fourteen-month process, Venture signed a letter of intent (LOI) to sell the company to public company ConvergeOne (CVON) for \$92mm. That transaction was completed in January 2019.

Gibert's personal objective was to scale Venture to a billion-dollar IT powerhouse, with headquarters remaining in Mississippi. Prior to Venture's merger to CVON, the ingredients to achieve that objective were in place. Financial sponsors, creditors and investors were supportive. Systems and organizational structure were institutionalized. But the board had other plans.

*One journey ended; time to start the next one.*

**PUBLIC AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Gibert is the Chairman of the Board of Empower Mississippi, a policy advocacy organization that focuses on removing barriers to success through education freedom and criminal justice reform. He has served in this role since inception in 2014.

In October 2018, Governor Phil Bryant appointed Gibert as the Vice-Chairman to the inaugural Board of Directors of the Mississippi Lottery Corporation.

In August 2018, the Madison County Board of Supervisors appointed Gibert as the at-large board member of the Madison County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA).

Gibert serves as the Chairman of the Steering Committee advising the Board of Directors of Innovate Mississippi, a Division of the Mississippi Development Authority, and the related Central Mississippi Angel Fund.

Chairman of the Executive Leadership Team for the American Heart Association's Annual Heart Walk.

Celebrity Chef at Annual Salvation Army Souper Bowl.