

# ATLANTA BUSINESS CHRONICLE

## Blue Ridge CEO finds inspiration in ‘The Art of War’ by Sun Tzu



PHIL W. HUDSON  
Staff Writer  
Atlanta Business Chronicle

Welcome to Atlanta Business Chronicle's "Meet the C-Suite," where we feature a slew of the city's high profile c-level executives.

Today we introduce Jim Byrnes, CEO of Atlanta-based Blue Ridge.

### Jim Byrnes

*Chief Executive Officer at Blue Ridge*

**Headquarters:** Atlanta

**Background:** Grew up in St. Devon, Pa.

**First job:** My first real job was a caddy at St. Davids Golf Club when I was in 5th grade

**Education:** St. Michael's College

**Residence:** Milton, Ga.

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## Business Strategy

**How's business:** Business is great— we landed a record number of new accounts in the first half of 2017, and are on track to increase that number far higher through the end of the year.

The company welcomed several marquee brands that were drawn to Blue Ridge's innovative supply chain solutions, including Martignetti, Rhee Brothers, RaceTrac and others. New customers continued to replace on-premise and legacy supply chain planning solutions with cloud-based solutions from Blue Ridge.

As well, we launched our Science Advisory Board in 2017, including Dr. Jennifer Priestley, Professor of Applied Statistics and Data Science at Kennesaw State University and distinguished applied mathematician Dr. Calvin P. Lee. We've also made key hires including Todd Craig as our new Chief Marketing Officer and Rajesh Veliyanallore as Chief Data & Analytics Officer.

**Biggest challenge for your business:** Convincing prospects that 'good enough' isn't enough. Customers are still executing their planning using legacy products like JDA E3 and Excel spreadsheets. It's often a compelling event that forces a company to move and invest in real, actionable supply chain planning. Soon after they can't believe they hadn't made the change earlier, once they see the numbers involved in reducing inventory spend by 10-20 percent. We are always working to show prospective customers the value of going beyond the status quo.

**What's going to change at your company in the next year:** For us, change is all about growth. We want to expand our coverage in North America with both direct and indirect channels from a go-to-market perspective. An example of indirect would be our partnership with Radial, which helps us expand our presence in the retail sector. We're looking to continue to grow in almost every respect.

**Company goal yet to be achieved:** We have a lot of aspirational goals-- from a product perspective, we need to continue driving down the path of incorporating deeper machine-learning and artificial intelligence into our platform to continue to help our customers be smarter and faster. We want to be the quintessential cloud-native company, providing the speed and agility that comes along with that designation. We certainly want to maintain our leadership position in the supply chain planning space and

broaden our horizons globally.

Focusing on the cloud makes these goals attainable-- the ability to sift through millions of customer transactions to help forecast inventory levels and positions is a huge advantage for us and our customers. We can reach a level of sophistication and accuracy where we know what a customer is going to buy before they know it.

## Management philosophy

**Guiding principles for good management:** Focus. You can only do so much, and you must concentrate on the strategic initiatives that will make the biggest difference to your company and customers. Focus on two or three things and do them really well.

**Best way to keep competitive edge:** Listen to your customers. Customers make Blue Ridge possible! Intimate knowledge of their challenges and direction combined with our subject matter expertise enables us to deliver continuous value improvement that benefits our customers and us. We win only if they win.

**Why people like working for you:** I treat people with respect and am always honest, transparent, accountable and inclusive. I think employees appreciate that.

**Most inspiring entrepreneur:** Jim Schaper- the man who started infor. He is disciplined, has an incredible sense of urgency, is not afraid to take risks and is the hardest working guy I've ever met.

## Judgment calls

**Best business decision:** Joining Blue Ridge. The customer satisfaction is off the charts and the product is delivering real measurable value. Blue Ridge is a leader in the Gartner Supply Chain Planning Magic Quadrant and draws from the strength of a staggering amount of supply chain and retail experts. And, we have the benefit of a great Venture Capital team in Vocap Investment Partners.

**Hardest lesson learned and how you learned it:** Hiring is the most important thing that I do. I've made mistakes in the past in that area and learned from it. I've realized that a bad hire can cost you more time and money than almost any other decision. You've really got to hire like you're hiring your replacement.

**Toughest business decision:** Leaving infor in 2012 was my toughest business decision. I joined

infor when it was \$60M, and when I left 11 years later it was \$2.7B. I enjoyed great success and ran a global team of 4,000 people that I helped build. It was just time to do something else and I felt like, with my leadership skills, it was the right time to take a CEO position.

**Biggest missed opportunity:** I carved out three businesses from Compuware a few years ago and stood them up as standalone businesses. I was very focused on the go to market strategies and building a predictable revenue stream but I left the back office for someone else to build and handle and wished I had kept a sharper eye on it. In the end, it cost us at least six months of time and money, but did teach me a valuable-- inspect don't except.

## True confessions

**Like best about job:** Working with our customers and prospects. I love it. I find it incredibly energizing and it puts all the innovation we are developing behind the scenes perspective. That's where you find out the value, where they're going and where we need to be to support them.

**Like least about job:** My commute! I drive in from Milton, at 5 a.m. it's a 30-minute drive but going home it can be up to 90. There's only so many podcasts I can listen to.

**Pet peeve:** Punctuality. Start on time, end on time. People being late for meetings show a lack of respect.

**First choice for a new career:** I love doing things with my hands, so perhaps carpenter-- maybe a mason.

## Predilections

**Most influential book:** The Art of War, Sun Tzu.

**Favorite cause:** I've worked with the Central Night Homeless Shelter for 11 years, which provides meals and overnight support to a group of 30 men in downtown Atlanta. There are some really good guys with unfortunate circumstances that put them in that position. They're just down on their luck and need some help and a chance.

**Favorite restaurant:** Gun Show--I went the other night and loved it.

**Favorite way to spend free time:** Family, golf and travel.

**Favorite music:** I like Dave Matthews and Neil Diamond.