

# And the Chairman's Award Goes To...

## (ALT: How a Hungry, Humble SCP Drove Away with the Chairman's Award)

### Blurb

In January 2020, after 21 years with GE Aviation and less than 21 weeks before a global pandemic shut down the world, Peter Messerle joined Quest Defense as the strategic client partner (SCP) for the GE VBU. From the beginning, he was drawn to the humble-but-hungry culture that resonated with who he already was. Since then, the House of Quest Global has further enhanced and solidified the best of his nature – so much so that at the annual leadership meeting (ALM), Pete walked (or should we say “drove”?) away with the coveted Chairman's Award, which includes a year behind the wheel of a luxury vehicle. Which one did he choose...? To find out, read Pete's inspiring story.

### Full Article

You only need to speak briefly with current GE Aviation VBU strategic client partner (SCP) **Peter Messerle** to see how this humble-but-hungry man fell so quickly in love with Quest Global's hungry-but-humble culture and why it inspired him to sign on with the company even though, by his own admission, he was not that familiar with the organization at the time. Today, Pete is an impactful Quest Defense leader and role model whose remarkable achievements were recognized this past March at the annual leadership meeting (ALM) with the conferring of the company's highest honor, the prestigious Chairman's Award.

Pete built his career at GE Aviation. Bright and attentive, over the course of 21 years, he developed a deep understanding of every aspect of business operations: from developing products to optimizing their utility in the aftermarket and everything in between. He was successful and happy in his role, but he was “looking for something a little bit more,” something he couldn't quite grasp amid the enormity of GE, something that could satisfy the hunger of his entrepreneurial spirit. When he recognized that the opportunities he sought existed at Quest Global, he readily jumped on board.

That was in January 2020, shortly before a pandemic rocked the commercial aviation industry.

“We were serving as engineers reporting to GE [Aviation],” remembers Pete, “so there was immediate impact to the team: contracts being canceled, and then hard decisions had to be made.... It was tough because the team had built up over the years. They'd done a lot of great work to get where they were, and then, almost overnight, it went from 150, 160 people down to about 20.”

It was a grim time, but one during which many lessons were learned about himself and the leaders around him, about navigating an unprecedented downturn, about acknowledging what he and his team could do to help and what they couldn't, and about keeping relationships close so that once GE Aviation was ready to go the GE Aviation VBU would be ready as well, which is exactly what ended up happening.

Today, the pandemic is behind us, and Pete's VBU, which has since ballooned to over 300 engineers, continues to grow and thrive under his leadership as "a sort of mini CEO of the business unit." He has brought to that role an unwavering commitment to having conversations, even difficult ones, that identify pain points, reveal underlying issues, and ensure his team delivers as promised at every turn, along with a fierce determination to question longstanding practices as a means to unearthing and addressing areas where gaps exist.

None of that tremendous accomplishment, learning, and success has gone unnoticed, which brings us to March and ALM in India. At the front of the room, CBO Dushy Reddy stood before a photo display of four different luxury automobiles, all owned by CEO Ajit Prabhu and all up for grabs by the single recipient of the night's hallmark prize, the Chairman's Award. Considered the ultimate reward offered at Quest Global, the car is given to the SCP of the year's top-performing VBU. This luxurious year-long conferral is both a real and symbolic gesture — a nod to hard work, big dreams, and relentless learning that hearkens back to Ajit's younger days when the dream of owning any car at all seemed beyond reach.

When Pete's name was called, he walked to the front of the room feeling a bit "like a deer in the headlights," although no one noticed the nerves, and announced his selection: the Aston Martin, a car "that's pretty cool... James Bond... British." It was not a decision made on the fly nor on his own; the vehicle had already been chosen by Pete in joyful agreement with two of his counterparts, one on the delivery side and one in operation. "We decided all 330 people can't drive it, but we can at least share it amongst the three of us. So we're going to split it. We each get the car for four months." It was a genuinely authentic display of his indisputably collaborative nature on a uniquely momentous occasion. A fitting gesture, if not a surprising one, from this humble-but-hungry genius.