

Industry  
**CHRONICLE**

November, 2024

TOP **10** 

**ICONIC LEADERS  
OF 2024**

A GAME-  
CHANGING  
SYSTEM

**Chris Vandersluis**

CEO, HMS Software



# Industry CHRONICLE

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**Industry** CHRONICLE

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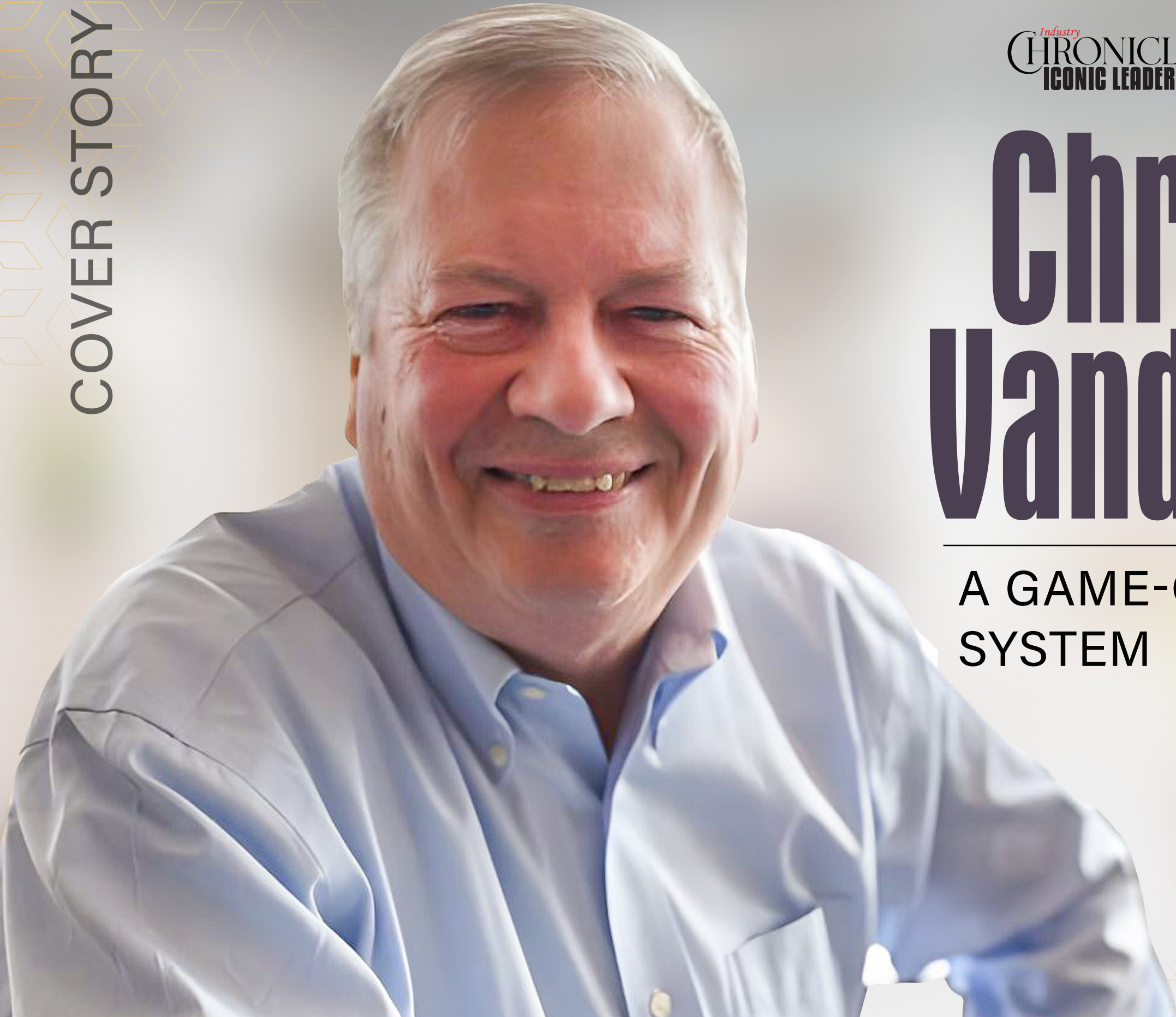


Chris Vandersluis  
CEO  
HMS Software

10 MOST  
ICONIC LEADERS

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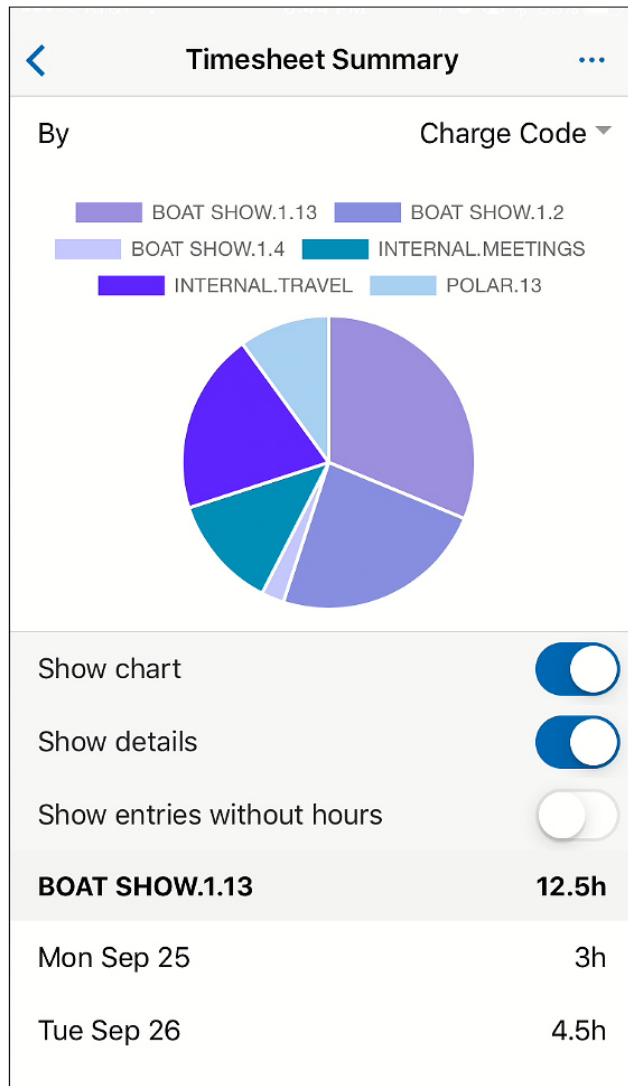
*Industry*  
**CHRONICLE** **TOP 10**  
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# Chris Vandersluis

CEO, HMS Software

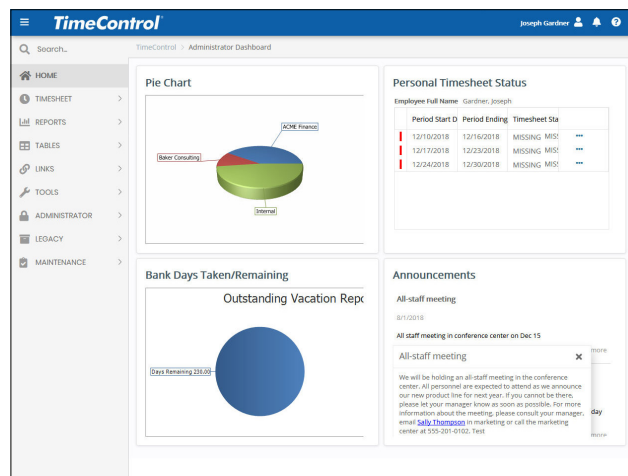
A GAME-CHANGING  
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“  
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”



Like many new companies, creating HMS and what Chris Vandersluis, along with his colleague, would do with the company came as an opportunity. In 1984, they were a two-person programming and consulting team with some project management experience. A family friend had a contact at Philips Electronics in Montreal, and that helped the duo get a contract to choose, customize, and implement a project management tool and, as part of that work, create a timesheet.

Chris and his colleague wrote what they thought was a winning design, and the Finance people were delighted. Across the table, the Project Management people were not. Undaunted, they went back to the drawing board and came up with an even better design. This time the Project Management people were all smiles. Across the table, the Finance people were not. In the end, they wrote the timesheet almost three times because the essential requirement was that the same timesheet system would work for the project management team to update project progress and, at the same time, work for finance to provide information for payroll, HR, and financial reporting for R&D tax credits. That became a unique and winning product.

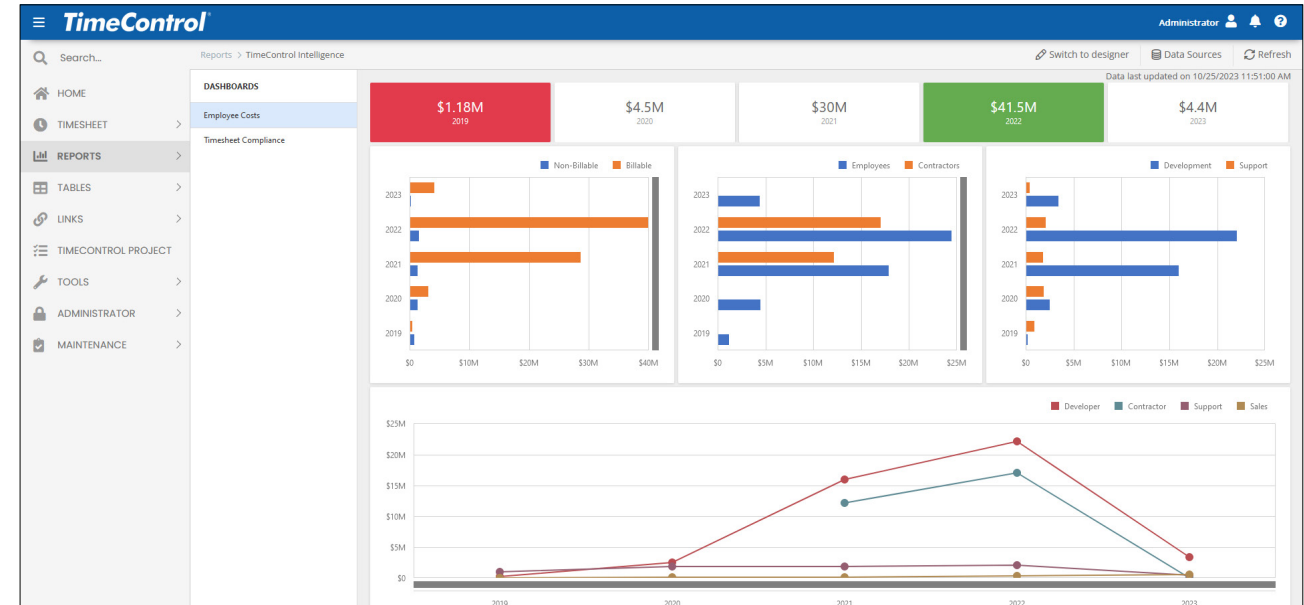


That work took over a year. By the time they were done, HMS had become the exclusive distributor of a project management tool in Canada, leading them to work with some of the largest companies imaginable.

For example, a Fortune 500 company engaged HMS because it had tried four unsuccessful times in the early 1980s to find a complete project management tool to do what it had imagined it needed. "It's hard to remember now what the project management software industry looked like then. The IBM PC was only released in August of 1981. By the time we got into business in 1983, there were very few project management tools for PCs to choose from," says Chris. "Project Management software before 1982 was all on mainframe or minicomputers. We found a handful of options, so flexibility was important to us."

They had numerous thoughts about functionality, most of which weren't helpful. Ultimately, Chris learned to work backward from the business requirements to what they needed on a screen and custom-write whatever there was a gap for. This early work would lay the groundwork for what would ultimately become HMS' timesheet business with TimeControl some ten years later. In 1994, ten years after HMS was founded, they shifted the company from consulting/distribution to being a publisher. They had already created numerous timesheets for different clients and knew that their internal expertise and experience could quickly create a commercial product for publication. That product would be named TimeControl.

Over the thirty years that HMS' TimeControl timesheet system has been on the market, they have focused their attention on looking at the present and history. A timesheet system stands in the present and looks back at the week, the month, the year, or even the duration of a project and lets you track progress. In the case of TimeControl, progress is made by project and by task. HMS has made TimeControl to do that very, very well. However, TimeControl is hyper-focused on Project Actuals and believes their work in the latest edition of TimeControl, TimeControl Project, gives them the opportunity to look into the future for work on project plans. "More and more of our attention will bring the power, flexibility, and success of the TimeControl timesheet to TimeControl Project. We believe the combination of both TimeControl and TimeControl Project will be a powerful one,"



elucidates Chris.

HMS has always focused on a global market and is fortunate to have numerous multi-national clients. Both foreign and domestic clients have shown increasing interest in how they manage challenges like data sovereignty. The company's short-term focus in the next quarter is to release TimeControl version 8.6. They have multiple editions of TimeControl to be updated, including TimeControl on-premise, TimeControl Industrial on-premise, TimeControl Online, their SaaS subscription in the cloud model, TimeControl Industrial Online, TimeControl Project and TimeControl Mobile. Chris and his team expect to do the on-premise releases first, then the subscription upgrades, which they do centrally for all subscribers who don't have to take any action to enjoy the new features and enhancements.

HMS Software has been in the project management and timesheet software industry since 1984. Over 40 years, the company has seen revolutionary changes, so living in an industry where dramatic changes that no one would have predicted is familiar territory for them. Forty years ago, the Internet wasn't even a thing. Smartphones weren't in existence, and even PCs were relatively new and not ubiquitous.

Chris has no idea what changes might come in the long term but in the short and medium terms, he can see a shift of enterprise applications from primarily large web-browser interfaces to more mobile options. The great shift of employees to work remotely has, in part, reversed. Still, it is not over, and he anticipates there will be a portion of technology industry employees who will continue to work remotely for at least part of their week for the foreseeable future.

Preparing for change at HMS means being tuned into the clients, their industry, competitors as well as technology as a whole. For example, there has been much talk in the last 24 months about AI. Many software companies feel compelled to shift their development efforts to include Artificial Intelligence architecture or at least options. HMS has taken a pragmatic approach to AI and is already seeing pushback from the market to software publishers

asking not just if they understand AI but how they are monetizing the technology.

"We place a high priority on value at HMS, so we are making sure that our efforts are focused on how our clients can benefit from such new technology, not just promoting that we have it," says Chris, who seems to wear every hat in the company. In a single day, he can be having technical, marketing, sales, administration, finance, or partnership conversations, but that is his personal choice, in his role as a CEO, he concentrates on promoting the mission of the company foremost in his mind and making sure that all their investments and efforts are in support of that. "I'm highly focused on making sure our employees are taken care of and that they are taking care of our clients. I try to have meetings that include every staff member in some way every week so that everyone who might want to make a point to me personally gets a chance to do that," he adds. "If our mission isn't accomplishable, if we're not profitable, part of every week is making sure that our medium- and long-term financial goals are being met and, if needed, intervening to make sure they stay on track."

Chris thanks HMS for giving him the opportunity to make a small difference to some of the largest and most prestigious organizations in the world. A timesheet system or project planning system might not be a huge part of every employee's week. Still, TimeControl is often distributed to literally every employee and sometimes every contractor at a client. So, HMS represents a tiny part of everyone's effort there and the clients do some amazing things. "They make things that cure disease and things that go into space or under the sea. They make amazing structures, or they help govern huge numbers of people or huge projects," he states. "They make the lights go on and make people safe. I'm a small part of that, and our team is a small part of that, but I can't imagine doing anything that will ever make as huge an impact that I've made with HMS. That gets me up every morning."

For Chris, leading the people at HMS is a privilege that he hopes to have for many years to come, but it is the team that produces the result. IC

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Iconic Leaders of 2024



# Chris Vandersluis

CEO, HMS Software