



Cerence People of the Month – September

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By Rocky Graziano

"Culture does not make people. People make culture." – Chimamanda Adichie

The term "corporate culture" has been thrown around for decades as a core element of the modern-day work experience. But with the onset of the pandemic, its meaning has changed for most people. Coffee breaks, team lunches, and in-person brainstorming have given way to Teams calls, online collaboration forums, and virtual toasts to a job well done. Still, at its core, culture – corporate or otherwise – is about people, and in keeping with that theme, we're featuring Cerence team members and the types of activities outside of work that shape who they are.

A crossfitter, a cross stitcher, a musician, and a pageant G.O.A.T. make up September's Cerence People of the Month.

"Outside of work, you can often find me coaching CrossFit and mixed martial arts. I love helping people get in shape while having fun. I thrive on helping people accomplish things they never thought possible." – Tara, Senior Manager, IT Operations, USA



"For stress relief and the pure enjoyment of creating something beautiful, I cross stitch. It helps me focus my energies on creating something and helps reduce my stress level by focusing on the rhythm of making small xxx repeatedly. Through my hobby, I've gone to conventions across the country, met some fabulous people who share my passion, and spent a small fortune on all of the accoutrements. Over the years, I've won Best in Show at my hometown fair, Best in Category at the Eastern States Exposition, and quite a few ribbons at the Topsfield Fair. " – Barbara, GTS Portfolio Manager, USA



"I like to spend my time experimenting with musical instruments, recording and editing mainly covers of other artists' pieces. As a child I was signed up, as are so many, to piano and sol-fa lessons, but it didn't stick with me at the time out of a lack of interest. It was only later that I decided to pursue music through digital sequencing, bass and guitar (the latter for all the usual teenage reasons all the rock-stars cite, and it being easier to look cool than with skateboarding without frequent visits to ER). Since then, I've expanded out my collection to well over a dozen guitars, bass, banjos, mandolins, and I'm now learning the accordion when I have the chance (Weird Al, I'm coming for your crown!). I enjoy the opportunities to just play music for my own enjoyment, collaborating with others online, and helping the next generation to get involved in their own musical pursuits and discover the joy of listening to a piece they like and trying to recreate it themselves. I still wish I had stuck with those piano lessons, though, as it's proving a lot harder to re-learn it now. One of my daughters' favourite songs is still a cover I recorded for them of the song Code Monkey (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lkeK9byrE>), which was always very apt given my career in IT." – **Kassidy, Manager, Operations Center (UK)**



"Life is a pageant: you don't always have to be the best looking, most talented, or have the most money to walk into every life situation like you already won. My mother knew I wasn't going to grow up and play for the New England Patriots, and instead of forcing me into typical 'male' activities, she fostered my creativity and love of pageantry. Twenty-five years later, I sit on the executive board of the Miss Massachusetts Scholarship Pageant after a 10-year dominance as executive director of the Miss Boston program. During that time, I saw an unprecedented eight state winners, numerous placements and awards at the state level, and a top 15 semi-finalist and 4th runner up to Miss America. Pageants have given me an extended, chosen family, and for that I can never repay them." – Rocky, HR Business Partner (USA)

