

## **CTOs of the Year 2021 are Jyrki Ovaska of UPM and Duleepa Wijayawardhana of Supermetrics – Innovation Professor of the Year 2021 is Mikko Möttönen of Aalto University and VTT**

This year, the jury consisting of leading Finnish technology influencers selected EVP and CTO Jyrki Ovaska of UPM and CTO Duleepa Wijayawardhana of Supermetrics as the winners in the CTOs of the Year 2021 Awards. As a new recognition, the Innovation Professor of the Year 2021 was also awarded, and it was given to Professor Mikko Möttönen of Aalto University and VTT.

The CTO of the Year Awards are given by Technology Industries of Finland, Business Finland and innovation consulting company Spinverse to highlight the importance of Chief Technology Officers' work on the future competitiveness of Finnish industry. This year, also the work of Innovation Professors collaborating with companies was recognised. The awards were published and given on the 16th of February 2021 at the CTO Forum, an event which this year was themed around digitalisation and sustainability.

The jury's chairman **Jaakko Hirvola** from Technology Industries of Finland said: "The awarded CTOs and the Innovation Professor represent strong sustainable digital transformation in industry and services, enabled by bold R&D&I investments, long-term development work, know-how and top research supporting industry. When the operating environment is competitive and encouraging towards investments, the companies will take bold steps to invest and grow."

### **UPM is tapping into sustainable future through innovations**

**Jyrki Ovaska**, whose career in the forest industry expands to more than 30 years, was awarded the CTO of the Year 2021 in the large enterprise category. He has worked as the Chief Technology Officer of UPM forestry company since 2013. He has played a central role in the transition of UPM from a traditional paper company to an innovative actor, and his contribution has been remarkable in the development of investments and research projects based on wood biomass. Ovaska has held various key positions in the UPM paper business and in his current position as CTO, Ovaska is in charge of R&D, IPR, investment operations, and leadership for innovations and digital development.

Ovaska's list on concrete examples regarding his work over the past 5-10 years is highly impressive. UPM has, among other things, initiated the production of biofuels in Lappeenranta in 2015 and generated new products where current raw materials and side streams are used in an innovative way. Ovaska and UPM have also created a new bio refinery concept producing renewable biochemicals, which is enabled by a 500 million € investment. Ovaska has also held positions of trust in Eurograph, AmCham Finland and CLIC Innovation. In addition, Ovaska was participating in the work of Research and Innovation Council when it set the target for Finland to invest four per cent of its GDP to R&D by 2030.

"I am delighted and humbled by this award. It is also a recognition to UPM which has transformed into a new-age bioforest products company. Innovation activity is not an end in itself, at the end of the day it is the results that matter. This can be measured by successful commercialization, scale up and profitable growth of novel businesses. There is a lot of discussion in the public about the R&D-spend but not enough is discussed about the impact achieved with these investments and how they are connected to the value generation of the company. Impact and relevance are the key," Jyrki Ovaska emphasises.

## Supermetrics – one of the most promising start-ups in Finland

In the small and mid-sized enterprise (SME) category, the CTO of the Year 2021 award was given to **Duleepa Wijayawardhana**. Duleepa joined Supermetrics as its CTO in 2017 upon his relocation to Finland from Canada. At the time, the company had just ten employees and one million € in turnover. Three years on and Supermetrics boasts 140 employees with over 13 million € in turnover (2019). Duleepa has made an enormous impact on the growth of the company in helping to develop and expand the Supermetrics product portfolio and R&D team to serve the growing number of global customers to meet their data analysis needs. The tools developed by Supermetrics help companies to analyse their marketing activities on various digital platforms.

Supermetrics is growing at a remarkable speed and attracts international investors and visibility. It has over 14,000 customers from all over the world, including large companies such as Canon, Dyson, Pfizer and Nestlé. Notably, Supermetrics was awarded the 2020 Internationalization Award for Finland.

Overseas top experts are very much in demand in Finland. Duleepa represents this group that Finland hopes to see grow in the future. Duleepa Wijayawardhana said: "It is a great honour to represent Supermetrics' talented developers and other team members, all of whose hard work is reflected in this award. Our international team consisting of over 20 different nationalities is a huge source of pride for me, and it has been amazing to witness the rapid growth of both these individuals and the company over the past four years. The best thing is that we are only starting our journey and wish to continue to be a positive force in the technology sector both in Finland and abroad."

## Innovation Professor of the Year 2021: At the top of quantum technologies

The renewed CTO Forum selected Professor **Mikko Möttönen** of VTT and Aalto University as the first Innovation Professor of the Year 2021. Möttönen is internationally known as being one of the leading researchers of quantum information and has engaged in remarkable work both in the theoretical and experimental research of quantum physics.

The breakthroughs in his research have enabled the development of commercial application using quantum computing. On the industry side, Möttönen is one of the four founders of IQM Finland, working as the leading scientist of the company. The company develops commercial quantum computers in Otaniemi, Espoo, and has successfully applied for more than 70 million € in public and private funding since 2017. The company was recently selected to deliver the first quantum computer in Finland.

Möttönen was taken aback on his recognition and said: "We are on the verge of the biggest technology transition of our times. I am very touched upon receiving this award and the large number of stakeholders who want to contribute to the development of quantum technologies."

In selecting the Innovation Professor of the Year 2021, the jury evaluated the amount of funding Möttönen's projects have received, collaboration with the industry, and the amount of new business and jobs created as a result of his research work. The achievements of Mikko Möttönen are remarkable indeed.

The Director General and CEO of Business Finland **Nina Kopola** welcomes the new award category: "The collaboration between companies and universities is at its best in ecosystems led by companies and where the professors have the full support of their organisation for the activities. It is important to have more and more of such collaboration in Finland."

## Great snapshot of Finnish innovation

**Simo Säynevirta** of ABB and **Mats Sundell** of Mirka were chosen as the finalists in the CTO of the Year 2021 Award in the large enterprise category, whereas in the SME category, **Pasi Keinänen** of Nanoksi Finland and **Juha Alatalo** of Finnos were nominated. The finalists in the Innovation Professor of the Year 2021

were professors **Juha Pyrhönen** of Lappeenranta University of Technology and **Marjo Yliperttula** of Aalto University.

”The winners and finalists for 2021 demonstrate an excellent representation of our innovation sector, offering a snapshot from the manufacturing industry to university spinoffs. We hope that they all inspire others to invest in innovations throughout these times of COVID-19 crisis,” sums up Spinverse founder **Pekka Koponen**, who has been part of the selection process for 11 times in a row.

**Additional information:**

Secretary of the jury: **Pekka Koponen**

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*The CTO of the Year Award is handed out for the 11th time this year. It is a recognition awarded to a chief technology officer who has improved the technologic competences and growth potential of their company or enterprise, is an inspiring leader, and an active participant in societal discussion. In 2021, the jury's chairman is Jaakko Hirvola from Technology Industries of Finland. Other members of the jury are Nina Kopola, Tomas Hedenborg, Jorma Turunen and the CTOs of the Year 2020 Jani Vilenius and Aki Mäkivirta. CTO Forum is a Finnish community of CTOs. It invites all innovation and technological officers of Finnish companies to network, discuss and share ideas between businesses. CTO Forum's mission is to promote the work of CTOs and businesses. CTO Forum is organised and the award is handed out by Business Finland, Technology Industries of Finland and Spinverse.*

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