

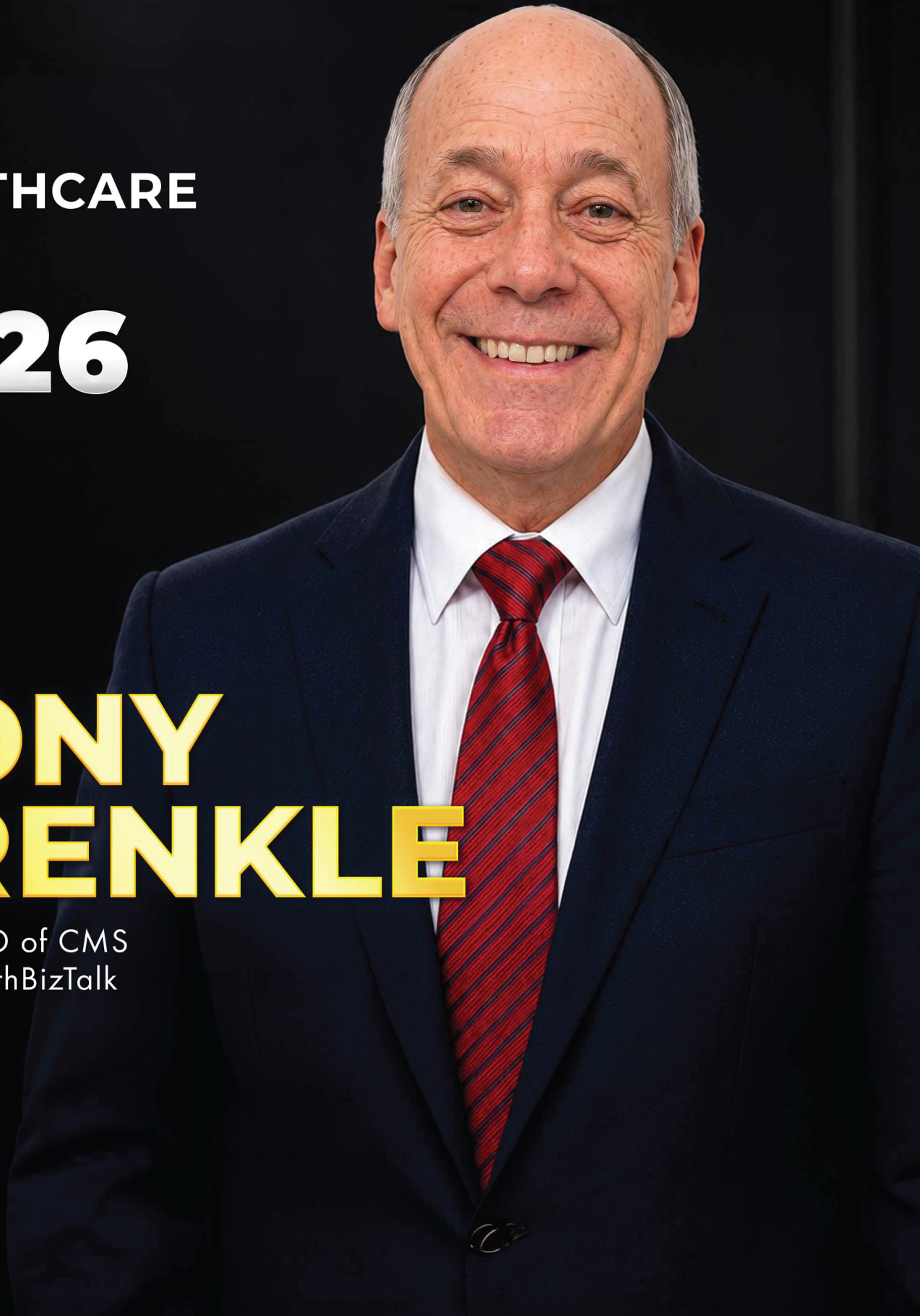
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HEALTHCARE
ICON
2026

**TONY
TRENKLE**

Former CIO of CMS
Host: HealthBizTalk



TONY TRENKLE

Tony Trenkle has built a career in the difficult space between policy ambition and operational reality. As Chief Information Officer of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, he led technology strategy and operations for an institution whose decisions reach across American healthcare. He later carried that perspective into IBM as Chief Health Information Officer and today continues the industry conversation as host of HealthBizTalk.

Across those roles, one principle has remained constant: progress begins by defining the real problem, but leadership is measured by whether a workable solution reaches the people who need it.

At CMS, that meant seeing technology as more than infrastructure.

National programs depend on

systems that must be reliable, secure, and capable of serving patients, providers, health plans, states, and government partners at enormous scale. A technology decision is never simply technical; it shapes operations, policy execution, and public trust.

Trenkle's approach is grounded in execution. Strategies and announcements can create direction, but they do not create results on their own. Leaders must stay close enough to the work to understand when a plan is realistic, when a workflow is breaking down, and when a team needs an obstacle removed.

That practical perspective is especially relevant as healthcare enters a new phase of interoperability. The industry has spent years working to make information available. The next challenge is to make it useful: delivered at the right time, in the right context, and in a form that helps a patient, clinician, payer, or policymaker make a better decision.

For Trenkle, meaningful innovation is not defined by novelty. It is defined by outcomes. The strongest solutions are the ones that survive contact with real operations, earn the confidence of users, and continue delivering value after the initial excitement has passed.



FOR HIS LEADERSHIP THAT HAS HELPED MOVE HEALTH INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY FROM POLICY AMBITION TOWARD PRACTICAL EXECUTION,

ICONS OF INDUSTRY
RECOGNIZES TONY TRENKLE AS A
HEALTHCARE ICON 2026.

Q

**Walk Us Through Your Career And
The Impact You've Sought To Make.**

TONY TRENKLE

My career began in federal service, where I learned how technology can support public programs operating at an enormous scale. I held leadership roles at the General Services Administration and the Social Security Administration before joining CMS in 2005.

At CMS, I initially led the Office of E-Health Standards and Services. Our work included healthcare transaction standards, electronic prescribing, and the implementation of important provisions of the HITECH Act, including the Medicare and Medicaid electronic health record incentive programs.

I later became CMS Chief Information Officer and Director of the Office of Information Services. That role expanded my responsibility across the agency's technology strategy, investments, infrastructure, and national operations.

After leaving government, I joined IBM, where I applied that public-sector experience to healthcare strategy and technology from the private-sector side. Today, as host of HealthBizTalk, I continue that journey by speaking with healthcare leaders, policymakers, and innovators.

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During Your Time At CMS, How Did You Help Change Healthcare In The United States?

TONY TRENKLE

CMS sits at the center of American healthcare, so technology decisions made there can have a national impact. My responsibilities included leading major health information technology operations and helping implement programs designed to modernize how healthcare information was captured, exchanged, and used.

No individual changes healthcare alone. Progress at that scale requires policy leaders, program teams, technologists, states, providers, health plans, and private-sector partners working together.

Q

**How Would You Describe The
Current State Of Healthcare
Technology?**

TONY TRENKLE

We have made real progress. More information is digital, interoperability standards have matured, and patients have greater access to their data. But healthcare remains fragmented — information may be available without being useful. The next phase is not simply about generating or exchanging more data. It is about turning that data into timely, practical information that improves decisions and outcomes.

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When You Look Ahead, What Will Define The Future Of Healthcare Technology?

TONY TRENKLE

The future will be defined by whether we can make healthcare more connected, intelligent, and easier to navigate. Interoperability will continue to be foundational, but exchanging information is not the final objective. The information has to be accurate, understandable, secure, and available at the moment it can make a difference.

AI will play an important role, but leaders should begin with the problem, not the technology. The most valuable innovations will be the ones that reduce friction, support better decisions, and consistently improve the experience of patients and the people who care for them.

Q

What's The Biggest Challenge Standing Between Healthcare And That Future?

TONY TRENKLE

The technology is only one part of the challenge. Healthcare has complicated incentives, regulations, workflows, legacy systems, and organizational boundaries. Data quality is another major issue. The industry also has to become better at execution: clearly defining the problem, assigning accountability, testing with real users, and continuing to improve after launch.

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CMS Has Advanced Interoperability Through Rules Like CMS-9115-F, CMS-0057-F, And CMS-0053-F. Where Does Regulation Fit Into This Future?

TONY TRENKLE

These rules are a turning point, but only a beginning — they create a stronger foundation for patient access, payer and provider data exchange, electronic prior authorization, and more consistent digital workflows. The real test is implementation.

Q

What Advice Would You Give The Next Generation Of Healthcare Leaders?

TONY TRENKLE

Stay grounded in the mission and remain close to the people affected by your decisions. Be willing to enter the problem, listen carefully, make a decision, and take responsibility for the result. Do not confuse visibility with impact.

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