John Atkinson  
**Executive Vice President, Managing Director, Willis Towers Watson**

John serves as a Managing Director for Willis Towers Watson in Chicago. Willis Towers Watson is a leading global advisory, broking and solutions company that helps clients around the world turn risk into a path of growth. With roots dating to 1828, Willis Towers Watson has 39,000 employees in more than 120 countries. WTW designs and delivers solutions that manage risk, optimize benefits, cultivate talent, and expand the power of capital to protect and strengthen institutions and individuals.

Prior to that John was the Managing Partner of one of the nation's top 100 privately held risk management brokers through 2006 when he led the integration and merger of his firm into Willis Group Holdings. John founded and co-leads the Senior Living Center of Excellence for WTW and is part of the North American Leadership Team for the Commercial Risk and Broking Segment of Willis Towers Watson.

In addition, John leads the firm’s community engagement through his involvement in various civic and philanthropic organizations. John serves as the Chairperson of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and he Chairs the State University Retirement System Pension Fund. John is a Director for Cradles to Crayons, Illinois Business Immigration Coalition, and as Director Emeritus of One Million Degrees. He is on the Board of Advisors of Catholic Charities of Chicago, and the American Seniors Housing Association. John is a member of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Economic Club of Chicago.
Kavitha Babu
Assistant U.S. Attorney, Northern District of Illinois

Kavitha Babu is an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. While working for the U.S. Attorney's Office, Kavitha has tried numerous jury trials and argued before the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. She has also led a variety of federal criminal investigations, including investigating allegations of racketeering, violent crimes, health care fraud, embezzlement, narcotics, and cyber fraud.

Kavitha received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and then graduated from law school at the University of Michigan. Immediately after law school, she worked at the law firm of Arent Fox in Washington, D.C., specializing in white collar criminal defense, health care, and government contracts. Kavitha left private practice to join the Department of Justice in 2010, where she was a Trial Attorney with the DOJ’s Civil Division, Fraud section. She was born and raised in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. Kavitha is fluent in Tamil, a language originating in southern India, and loves international travel.

Lisa Chrzasc

Lisa received her Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and has been a part of the transportation industry for ten years. She is known as the “bucket list friend” with her buddies, using her spare time to travel and try to learn as much as she can about whatever she can outside of work. This year, she welcomed her first child into her family, becoming a project manager of a mini human in addition to road and bridge design projects.
Marianne O’Brien Markowitz
Chief Executive Officer, First Women’s Bank

Marianne O’Brien Markowitz currently serves as Chief Executive Officer for First Women’s Bank. First Women’s Bank will be an innovative, women-led commercial bank on a mission to serve the needs of today’s diverse banking clients, support the small business economy and advance the role of women within it by bridging the gender gap in access to capital.

Marianne previously served as Acting Administrator of the Small Business Administration (SBA) where she also served as Regional Administrator for SBA's Midwest Region, Region V. During her time with SBA, she was responsible for the delivery of the agency’s financial assistance, technical assistance and government contracting activities throughout Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. As part of her work in the region, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel appointed Marianne to serve on the City of Chicago's Small Business Advisory Council in March 2013. For more than 17 years, Marianne has provided finance and risk management expertise to a host of leading global institutions including a multinational organization based in Switzerland, where she served as a lead international treasury/financial operations consultant.

In addition to designing and implementing financial operations departments, Marianne has a deep background in running treasury and risk management departments, assessing insurable risks and evaluating insurance, treasury and financing alternatives. In all her roles, Markowitz specialized in helping private sector companies successfully design and implement new systems or scale their existing processes, systems and staffing to meet the needs of a hyper-growth environment. She received a B.S. from the University of Missouri and an M.B.A. from DePaul University. She sits on the board of the Lycee Francais de Chicago and is a member of the Chicago Economic Club.
Kathy Monahan  
Monahan consulting

Kathy Monahan specializes in helping organizations achieve success through organization development, change management and executive coaching. Specifically, Kathy works with organizations, teams, and individuals to clearly define their purpose and strategic direction; and then provides guidance in creating optimal organizational design and leadership competencies necessary for success. Through her consulting work, Kathy provides the following services to clients: organization and business strategy advisement, vision and strategy facilitation, organization design, change management facilitation, competency modeling, leadership development, team building, and team/individual coaching.

Kathy believes that in order to attain ultimate success, an organization must have a well thought out human capital strategy that is aligned with its core values and operational strategies, and then consistently implemented throughout the organization. Kathy's people-centric philosophy is rooted in her 15 years of brand and operational management experience in both Fortune 500 and entrepreneurial environments. In increasingly senior level positions held within Kraft Foods, Kathy managed national brand franchises and led numerous high-performing cross-functional teams. In addition, Kathy was VP of Marketing and Strategy for Signatures Network, a technology start-up where she helped build the brand and organization from the ground up.

Kathy's passion for improving interpersonal and organizational effectiveness led her to establish a consulting practice that leverages her experience and addresses the organization development needs of a wide variety of clients including both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. In addition, Kathy is active on not-for-profit boards providing human capital and strategy advisement.

Kathy earned her MBA from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management and her MS in Organization Development from Loyola University. She has a BS in Business Administration from Villanova University. She is certified to utilize all the development tools created by the Center for Creative Leadership, including 360-degree feedback instruments and tools assessing change, culture, and innovation. In addition, she is qualified to facilitate the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® that aids in understanding personality and relationships.
George Tsao-Wu
Pediatrician, Northwest Pediatric Center

George Tsao-Wu is a pediatrician at Northwest Pediatric Center in Centralia, Washington. He is Grace Tsao-Wu’s younger brother and grew up with her in Colorado until they left home to pursue their education. George studied Chemical Engineering before entering the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. He completed his residency at the Children’s Hospital in Denver, Colorado and then went on to work as a general pediatrician, working in such varied places as the Navajo reservation in Arizona, a charity clinic in Vietnam, and Anchorage, Alaska. George has enjoyed the privilege of working with medical students and residents from the University of Washington in their pediatric training. He is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Differencemaker fellowship in honor of his sister’s efforts.

Gabriela Vazquez
Diversity Relations Coordinator, IES Abroad

Gabriela Vazquez is a first generation Mexican-American who was born in Chicago but grew up in West Michigan. She enjoys learning about cultures, and higher education. She studied abroad in Spain, worked as an English teaching assistant in Madrid, and worked at a Study Abroad company as a Diversity Relations Coordinator. Gabriela majored in public accounting but felt her calling was in the education space. She is currently exploring opportunities directly in higher education, ideally in admission or advising.
Swetha Viswanatha
Project Manager, Vail Systems, Inc.

Swetha was born and raised in Bangalore, India. She moved to the United States to pursue her degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Michigan. After her graduation, she worked at Ford Motor Company as a Design & Release engineer. She enjoyed working in a cross-functional team on a complex product which inspired her to pursue her graduate degree in Product Design and Management at Northwestern University. Swetha is currently working at Vail Systems as a Technical Product Manager since 2018. Throughout her college and professional career, she has been lucky to find mentors, coworkers, and managers who have helped her learn and grow. She is excited and looks forward to working with the Differencemaker Fellowship this year.