



2024 Ones to Watch - Innovators in CRE: Robert Ioanna, PE, LEED AP, Syska Hennessy Group

November 26, 2024 - Spotlights



Robert Ioanna, PE, LEED AP
Executive Principal | Chief Technology Officer

Robert Ioanna is the chief technical officer and executive principal at Syska Hennessy, where he's worked since 2000. Starting as an HVAC engineer, he rose through almost every engineering role to now where he co-leads firmwide operations for a team of over 330. Robert oversees an internal Expert Teams group that has developed an in-house Retrieval-Augment Generation (RAG) model based on Syska's knowledge management platform, manages the National BIM team, and leads AI-focused research through the "AI Power Bunch." As head of Syska Innovation and a board member, he shapes the firm's strategic direction, emphasizing innovation and efficiency to drive high performance across the organization.

Innovative Solution:

In response to today's challenging market landscape, I've restructured our business strategies to foster resilience and innovation. By partnering closely with our clients, we pilot new technologies before they reach mass adoption, allowing us to drive change within the industry that our clients need. Our work portfolio has been carefully diversified, with a strong focus on healthcare, aviation, data centers, criminal justice, and manufacturing, ensuring stability across varied sectors. Recognizing the rise in AI and cloud technology, we've doubled down on our data center business to meet this growing demand. Additionally, we've been moving away from hourly-based pricing to value-focused, lump-sum models, aligning our efforts with client success. Finally, we're equipping teams to work within progressive design-build models, fostering adaptability and enhancing collaboration with clients.

Innovative Outlook:

I see major opportunities for innovation in several key areas. First, decarbonization is critical; we need sustainable solutions that reduce carbon emissions and help us reach ambitious climate targets. By focusing on energy-efficient systems and renewable energy integration, we can make a substantial impact.

Another exciting area is automation across engineering platforms. By streamlining design, analysis, and management processes, we can increase accuracy and efficiency while reducing human error. Additionally, digital project delivery offers incredible potential. By building projects virtually in 4D before construction begins, we can address issues preemptively, saving time and resources.

Finally, leaving a digital twin of the building after construction provides long-term value. This digital replica aids in maintenance, operations, and future renovations, ultimately enhancing building lifecycle management.

"Robert Ioanna founded and leads Syska Innovations, a subsidiary that invests in seed-stage companies, promotes ideation internally within Syska Hennessy & develops software & products for

the AEC market. As Chief Technical Officer, Robert drives the firm's forward-thinking approach, ensuring it stays ahead in a competitive industry. His thought leadership extends beyond Syska through participation in panel discussions, podcasts, and authored articles, all of which highlight his role as a transformative leader." - Michelle Galindez, LEED AP, Syska Hennessy Group.

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