



Theresa Payton

TECH INNOVATOR

Boards approve digital transformation programmes. They rarely have the intelligence to know what those programmes expose. The gap between the investment in innovation and the investment in protection is where most serious breaches begin. Organisations that conflate cybersecurity with IT compliance are solving the wrong problem – and senior leaders often don't know enough to challenge that framing.

Theresa Payton – the first female White House Chief Information Officer and founder of Fortalice Solutions – helps boards and executive teams close the gap between digital ambition and the governance structures needed to protect it.

Theresa Payton's 2026 Biography

AVAILABLE FOR

- Speaking

Why organisations work with Theresa Payton

THERESA'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Artificial Intelligence & Generative AI
- Cybersecurity
- Data Analytics
- Digital Transformation
- Leadership
- Risk Management

LANGUAGES: English

Biography highlights

- First female White House Chief Information Officer, serving under President George W. Bush, 2006–2008
- Founder and CEO of Fortalice Solutions, ranked in the Global Cybersecurity Top 500 by Cybercrime Magazine
- Prior senior technology executive roles at Bank of America and Wells Fargo
- Author of *Manipulated: Inside the Cyberwar to Hijack Elections and*

Distort the Truth, The Guardian Top 10 Books About Cybercrime list; revised edition published 2024

- Co-inventor on an approved U.S. patent in security design
- Recipient of the FBI Director's Award for Community Service; 2020 CISO MAG Cybersecurity Crusader of the Year; 2019 Woman Cybersecurity Leader of the Year
- Starred as Deputy Commander of Intelligence on the CBS reality series *Hunted*
- Regular security commentator on the Today Show, Good Morning America, CNN, CBS News, Fox News, and MSNBC

Biography

Theresa Payton ran cybersecurity for the White House. From 2006 to 2008, as Chief Information Officer for the Executive Office of the President under George W. Bush, she was accountable for the security of IT systems used by the President and 3,000 staff: not as an adviser, but as the person responsible. Before that, she spent sixteen years in senior technology roles at Bank of America and Wells Fargo. The combination is unusual: operational authority at the highest level of government, built on a banking technology foundation.

That background shapes how she approaches cyber risk with corporate audiences. The question she puts to boards is not whether their organisation will face a breach, but whether their governance structures are designed to know about it, act on it, and contain it. As CEO of Fortalice Solutions, listed in the Global Cybersecurity Top 500, she has spent fifteen years working through exactly that question with Fortune 100 clients.

Her book *Manipulated*, named one of The Guardian's Top 10 Books About Cybercrime, examines how AI-generated deepfakes, self-replicating chatbots, and coordinated disinformation campaigns are used to compromise institutions from the outside in. A revised edition was published in 2024. She is also a co-inventor on an approved U.S. patent in security design, and previously co-founded Dark3, a cybersecurity product company later acquired by Celerium.

Her profile extends beyond the conference circuit. She has testified before government bodies, served as Deputy Commander of Intelligence on the CBS series *Hunted*, and is a regular security analyst on networks including CNN, CBS News, and MSNBC. For organisations where the board genuinely needs to understand what it owns and what it is exposed to, she is one of the few speakers who has actually sat in that seat.

Key speaking topics

- Cybersecurity governance and board-level risk
- AI-driven threats and deepfake manipulation
- Secured digital transformation
- Election security and information integrity
- Data privacy and digital identity
- Fraud and social engineering
- Cybersecurity leadership and workforce

Ideal for

- Boards and non-executive directors navigating cyber and AI governance
- CISOs, CIOs, and CTOs developing organisation-wide security strategy
- Risk, compliance, and audit committees in regulated sectors

- Technology and transformation leaders in financial services, healthcare, and government-adjacent industries

Audience outcomes

- A board-ready framework for assessing the gap between digital investment and security governance
- Practical understanding of how AI-driven threats – deepfakes, disinformation, autonomous attack tools – operate in practice, not just in theory
- Clearer accountability structures for cyber risk at executive level
- Awareness of the specific ways social engineering and fraud are evolving, with concrete defensive steps
- Language and framing to take cybersecurity from a technical department concern to a strategic leadership conversation

Theresa Payton's 2026 talks & topics

AI and the Future of Us: Navigating the Promise and Perils of Artificial Intelligence

An accessible, jargon-free examination of how AI is reshaping organisational security, business operations, and individual decision-making – drawing on law enforcement intelligence and live demonstrations of current attack methods.

Key takeaways:

- How AI is altering the threat landscape for organisations, from deepfake fraud to autonomous attack tools
- The specific mechanics of modern cybercriminal tradecraft, illustrated with anonymised law enforcement cases
- A practical framework for deploying AI responsibly while maintaining customer trust and data integrity

Secured Digital Transformation: Innovating Without Compromising Trust

A practical framework for driving digital innovation at pace without creating the security exposures that most transformation programmes inadvertently introduce.

Key takeaways:

- How to balance innovation velocity with security governance across a transformation programme
 - Real-world case study lessons from organisations that have managed – and mismanaged – digital transformation risk
 - Actionable steps for leaders responsible for both driving change and protecting critical assets
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From the White House to Your House: Leadership & Life Lessons

A personal leadership keynote drawing on experience in the highest-stakes technology roles to explore resilience, purpose, and accountability under pressure.

Key takeaways:

- Leadership principles shaped by responsibility at the most senior levels of government technology
- How to navigate high-pressure decision-making without losing clarity or composure
- Reflections on aligning professional ambition with personal values and long-term purpose

Theresa Payton's Videos



What Theresa Payton's clients say

So well received — engaging, insightful, and we'd love to have her back.

Spark New Zealand

A highlight of CyberCon — inspiring, practical, and one of our best-attended keynotes ever.

Australian Information Security Association

Dear Theresa, it was very nice talking to you in Geneva. Your speech and the panel were one of the congress highlights, and it was so directly applicable! Hope you had a nice trip back.

Peter

PICTET Group Geneva Switzerland

Theresa was amazing. It was wonderful to work with you and we were so very grateful to have Theresa join us.

Maine Credit Union League

As the kickoff speaker she promised to begin our day with a “conversation to energize” and man oh man, did she deliver! The initial callouts were

- It takes a community.
- Human-Centered Design
- Human User Stories
- Protecting people's lives and finances

Prove Identity Inc.

Theresa: I was so impressed by you this morning on the AI Cybersecurity webinar. So wonderful to see another woman in leadership in AI/Cyber! You were spot on.

Dell, Inc.

WOW. You are a captivating presenter! I am an Enterprise Account Exec at Cisco and studied Marketing and AI in college as AI has been fascinating to me since the early 2000s. Thanks for taking the time to talk cybersecurity to us. ?

GDT and CISCO Webinar

Everyone loved them both!!! I will, no doubt, recommend them to others. Great content and good people! SO easy to work with! Thank you!

Healthcare Distribution Association

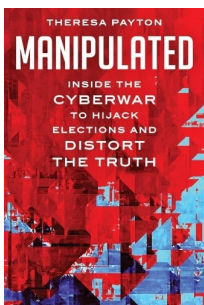
Theresa was absolutely wonderful, and her message and her personality was just the perfect fit for our audience. I received excellent feedback about her, and she was an absolute rockstar and all-round lovely human being who I was so grateful to meet.

CANARIE

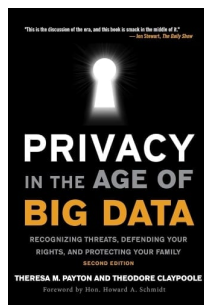
We had a lovely time with Theresa and the events she participated in all hit our internal objectives. We are very satisfied with the results!

Unico

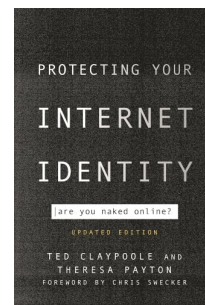
THERESA'S LATEST BOOKS



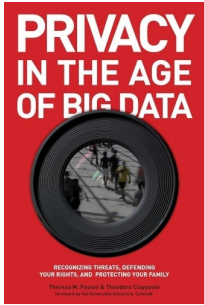
Manipulated: Inside the Cyberwar to Hijack Elections and Distort the Truth



Privacy in the Age of Big Data: Recognizing Threats, Defending Your Rights, and Protecting Your Family Second Edition



Protecting Your Internet Identity: Are You Naked Online?



Privacy in the Age of Big Data:
Recognizing Threats,
Defending Your Rights, and
Protecting Your Family

Theresa Payton's 2026 speaking fees

Specific fees fall within the ranges shown. These are presented as a guide only and are subject to change without notice.

| | EUR | GBP | USD |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Home Country | €12000 to €40000 | £10,001 - £35,000 | \$15000 - \$50000 |
| Asia Pacific | €40000 to €90000 | £35,001 - £75,000 | \$50000 - \$100000 |
| Europe | €12000 to €40000 | £10,001 - £35,000 | \$15000 - \$50000 |
| Middle East & Africa | €12000 to €40000 | £10,001 - £35,000 | \$15000 - \$50000 |
| South America | €12000 to €40000 | £10,001 - £35,000 | \$15000 - \$50000 |
| United Kingdom | €12000 to €40000 | £10,001 - £35,000 | \$15000 - \$50000 |
| US East Coast | €12000 to €40000 | £10,001 - £35,000 | \$15000 - \$50000 |
| US West Coast | €12000 to €40000 | £10,001 - £35,000 | \$15000 - \$50000 |
| Virtual | €12000 to €40000 | £10,001 - £35,000 | \$15000 - \$50000 |