

030718 - SMS Assist Hires a Longtime Amazon Exec as Its Chief Product Officer

By Jim Dallke | March 7, 2018

[SMS Assist](#), one of Chicago's "unicorn" tech companies valued at \$1 billion, has plucked a top Amazon executive away from Seattle to be its chief product officer.

SMS Assist announced Wednesday that it has hired Peter Commons, a longtime Amazon executive, to lead its product teams. Commons was previously the director of global product and technology for Amazon Fresh, Amazon's grocery delivery unit. Commons has relocated from Seattle to Chicago.

Commons worked at Amazon for 13 years, joining the company in 2005 to help launch the first version of the Kindle. He held several other senior-level roles at Amazon before eventually leading the 400-person product and tech teams for Amazon Fresh in 2016.

A computer science grad from Stanford University, Commons spent the first part of his career in Silicon Valley and worked at both Apple and Microsoft.

"I love building and developing great product and technical teams that change industries and make life better for customers. That's exactly what SMS Assist is doing for the people who own and manage the world's biggest asset class – real estate," Commons said in a statement.

SMS Assist raised a \$150 million round in 2016, [valuing the company at \\$1 billion](#). The company has raised over \$250 million to date from investors including Goldman Sachs, Insight Venture Partners and Pritzker Group Venture Capital. Last May, SMS Assist [hired](#) former Rackspace CEO Taylor Rhodes as its CEO, replacing founder Mike Rothman.

SMS Assist's cloud-based platform helps property managers maintain multiple buildings by tracking maintenance orders, providing instant invoicing, automatic service audits and data analysis on properties. The business was founded in 1999.

Commons' move to SMS Assist comes at [an interesting time in the tech world](#), as those in and outside of Silicon Valley wonder if top talent will begin to leave the West Coast for a cheaper quality of life in places like the Midwest. Though perhaps too early to draw any grand conclusions about a Silicon Valley exodus, Commons is proof that Chicago can attract top tech talent from the coasts.