

## **2012 Inner City 100 Winners**



**(add)ventures**  
Providence, RI  
**CEO:** Stephen Rosa

CEO Stephen Rosa founded (add)ventures at the tender age of 25 in 1989. From his previous work, he thought he saw a niche to serve the advertising, public relations, and marketing needs of technology firms in a unique manner. However, he quickly found that it was difficult to wean technology companies from their advertising relationships and, as a result, (add)ventures has serviced a diverse clientele from the beginning. Currently, they have offices in Providence (HQ), Miami, and New York City and serve vaunted clients such as Marriott Hotels and Hasbro.



**Accurate Autobody**  
Nashville, TN  
**CEO:** John Hughes

Accurate Autobody, headquartered next to the Tennessee Titan's stadium in Nashville, is an automotive collision repair company. The company was founded in 2004 by current CEO John Hughes and has since grown to employ nearly 150 workers in eight locations across the state. Accurate Autobody has even purchased the auto collision repair company Hughes worked for prior to 2004. The company prides itself on state-of-the-art equipment, a reliable, quality product and a passionate workforce. The company combines high-energy youngsters as apprentices with experienced hires who bring industry relationships and technical competence. Additionally, Hughes cites good relationships with insurance companies, which can provide a continuous revenue stream, for Accurate Autobody's success.

**Ace Exhibits**

Los Angeles, CA

**CEO:** Tom Hand

Ace Exhibits, located in Los Angeles, California, designs, manufactures and builds trade show units for a diverse clientele. With an innovative web-based delivery network, they strive to sell at lower cost and higher quality than their competitors. CEO Tom Hand, who started out simply helping a friend start the company in 2005, has seen the company grow from 2 people in an apartment packed with large displays to over 30 staff and plans for physical expansion closer to downtown.

**Adapt Engineering**

Seattle, WA

**CEO:** K.V. Lew

Adapt Engineering, Inc. is a Pacific Northwest engineering firm that provides a complete range of cost-effective geotechnical, environmental, civil, structural support and energy/sustainability services. Adapt services the financial, development and telecommunications industries in the region and has established trusted business relationships with regulators, jurisdictions and the local lending and legal communities. Founder and CEO K.V. Lew acquired Adapt from a former employer and has been profitable and growing ever since. When Lew is not providing loyal staff with an array of generous benefits and training, he's introducing clients to the diverse array of multicultural dining options located near his inner city office.



**AEP Books and Media**

Buffalo, NY

**CEO:** Scott Meacham and Kenneth Pronti

AEP Books and Media is a veteran-owned book and multimedia supplier with a difference, going beyond supplying just available titles by procuring rare and out of print items for clients such as libraries, K-12 institutions, and higher education. CEO Scott Meacham started the company in 1992 in Buffalo, New York while pursuing his MBA and it has since grown to become one of the nation's largest rare book suppliers, gaining transportation and HUBzone advantages from their inner city location.



**AIL**

Memphis, TN

**CEO:** Sandra Walls

AIL, proudly located in a Memphis HUBZone, is a military logistics support company that services both federal and commercial clients. CEO Sandra Walls had 22 years of logistics experience with the Air Force when, in 1997, she saw an opportunity to make money as a competitor within the market. In 2002, AIL acquired Flex Force, a staffing company that helped the company land its first federal contract – with the Department of the Interior – in 2003. The acquisition also enabled AIL to work with NASA, Boeing and Lockheed Martin, among others. Walls' five-year plan includes finding strategic alliances for international growth, an increase in commercial contracts and revenues in excess of \$100 million.



**AmericanChecked INC.**

Background Screening Solutions

**AmericanChecked**

Tulsa, OK

**CEO:** Julie Hakman

Founded in Tulsa in 2005, AmericanChecked is a national background screening company that services the Native American gaming and nonprofit markets. The three founders of this woman-owned company bring a collective 40 years of experience in the background-screening industry to the firm. AmericanChecked is situated in a designated HUBZone, and everyone who works at the company lives in the surrounding neighborhood. Both the community and the AmericanChecked's employees embrace the values that have made the company a success. Julie Hakman says that her company has always had a big vision, and today it proudly competes on a national scale against much big players.

**Aptera**

Fort Wayne, IN

**CEO:** T.K. Herman

Aptera, located in Fort Wayne, Indiana, specializes in helping companies become more competitive and efficient through the use of technology. Founded by current CEO TK Herman, the company focuses on custom software and web marketing and prides itself on superb employee retention. Herman cites rare competencies in design and technical savvy IT as reasons for the company's growth.

**Apto Solutions**

Atlanta, GA

**CEO:** James Kilkelly

Apto Solutions, founded in 2001, is an IT asset disposition business that services distinguished clients such as Fujitsu and Dell. The company started out as a bankruptcy practice in the basement of James Kilkelly's home in Atlanta but has grown into a lifecycle asset management company for IT equipment as an outsource-cosource provider. Apto's growth is correlated with the rate of growth in the information technology and environmental technology industries and has therefore been robust over the last decade. With a preference for hiring locally, the company has enriched the economic vitality of its West Atlanta neighborhood and also boasts locations in Austin and Silicon Valley.

**ARS International**

Port Allen, LA

**CEO:** Danny Coleman

ARS International, founded in 1993 in Port Allen, Louisiana, provides environmental, professional, and laboratory services to public and private actors. Their clients in recent years have included the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, and various commercial actors in which they've logged over a million man-hours of remedial action work. Also managing a radiological and hazardous materials laboratory, this innovative company has expanded from humble beginnings to employ over 70 staff. CEO Danny Coleman is further considered one of Louisiana's radioactive material experts, having assisted the state legislature in writing laws governing the field.

**Astyra**

Richmond, VA

**CEO:** Ken Ampy and Sam Young

Astyra, located in Richmond, Virginia, is an IT consulting and staffing services firm for the financial, health care and energy sectors. The company was founded in 1997 by Ken Ampy and Sam Young, former college roommates and computer science majors at Old Dominion University. Each worked as IT consultants for various firms and after a few years decided to create a company they would be proud to work for. Over the past five years, Astyra nearly tripled its workforce and proudly provides health insurance and generous benefits to its employees. The founders continue to educate themselves about running a business and have participated in management education programs at Dartmouth College (Tuck), the University of Virginia (Darden) and Northwestern University (Kellogg).

**Atomic Data**

Minneapolis, MN

**CEO:** James Wolford

Atomic Data is a full-service data and IT management firm with a progressive motto: *Simple, Safe and Smart*. Using their own capital, founders Jim Wolford and his business partner set out to create a better, more ethical IT management company than those already in operation. Standing on principle has served the Greater Minneapolis-St. Paul company well. Atomic Data is recognized as a top-shelf IT service that can truly be trusted, a reputation that has allowed them to grow in a fiercely competitive industry during an incredibly tough economic time. With strong roots in the local community and a workforce that loves to be there, Atomic Data looks to grow and succeed for years to come.



**Aztec Promotional Group**

Austin, TX

**CEO:** Patti Winstanley

Aztec Promotional Group, located in Austin, is a promotional licensing company that was rescued from bankruptcy by CEO Patti Winstanley in 2004. Beyond getting the company to a financially sound position, Winstanley had to rebuild the company's reputation with clients, showing that it was reliable and could follow through on projects regardless of the company's financial circumstances. Winstanley's continued investment in technology—making the company's printing processes more streamlined and efficient—has been a benefit to the company's growth and future sustainability.



**Babette**

Oakland, CA

**CEO:** Steven Pinsky

Babette is a unique clothing design, manufacturing and retail firm. The company is nearly 100% vertically integrated and manufactures its fabulous clothing in a 27,000- square-foot facility in inner city Oakland. Founder and CEO Babette Pinsky launched her firm with a serious passion for design and no formal business training whatsoever. Now, 43 years later, her company continues to grow and evolve. Pinsky has a five-year plan to launch an e-commerce site and double Babette's retail store outposts.



**Benefit Strategies**

Manchester, NH

**CEO:** Paul Smith

Benefit Strategies in Manchester is an employee benefits third-party administration firm specializing in design, compliance and administration benefits such as COBRA, FSAs and HRAs. The company has nearly 2,000 clients in the Northeast region, including major corporations and government organizations. CEO Paul Smith was a naval officer in the Reserves when he founded the firm in 1989. While off duty in 1984, Smith worked for another benefits administration company and recognized the opportunity to help small- and mid-size businesses understand their needs and growth opportunities. The company has enjoyed so much recent success that it recently moved into a new headquarters in the heart of the inner city.



**Bevilacqua Research Corporation**  
Huntsville, AL  
**CEO:** JoAnn and Andrew Bevilacqua

Bevilacqua Research Corporation in Huntsville provides knowledge management and scientific support for the Department of Defense and NASA. Bevilacqua has more than 1,000 competitors, at least 100 of which are in its own city. There is little to differentiate Bevilacqua from its competitors beyond the fact that CEO Andy Bevilacqua has found success not by chasing profits but by investing in employees who strive to do a good job. Finding qualified workers is an ongoing challenge in Warren County, a HUBZone and very rural area. While Bevilacqua Research Corporation was initially founded to provide R&D, the company has uncovered more business opportunities with less technical scientific support services.



**Brooklyn Brewery**  
Brooklyn, NY  
**CEO:** Stephen Hindy

Brooklyn Brewery, one of the top craft-beer producers in the world, distributes its fine wares in 25 states and 20 countries. Founded by Stephen Hindy, a former Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press, Brooklyn Brewery takes pride in creating excellent flavored beer. Hindy loves beer and became interested in brewing during a career stint in Beirut where he met U.S. diplomats who brewed their own beer to circumvent alcohol bans. Upon his return to the states in 1984, Hindy and Tom Potter, a friend with an MBA, started building his brand from his upstate New York apartment. In 1996, Brooklyn Brewery opened in New York City, and today, the company is completing an expansion project that will enable it to double production.



**Call One**  
Chicago, IL  
**CEO:** Chris Surdenick

Call One is a bundled telecommunications provider that caters to small- and medium-sized businesses in Chicago. The company understands its industry and works hard to stay ahead of the technological curve, which helps it compete with much larger firms. CEO Chris Surdenick values Call One's talented employees and "treats them as human beings rather than numbers." The result is a happy workforce that helps this inner city firm enjoy continued growth.

**Cellular Specialties**

Manchester, NH

**CEO:** Bruce Wilson

Cellular Specialties of Manchester, New Hampshire designs and manufactures amplifiers and related equipment for in-building wireless systems. The company is located in a renovated millhouse district of Manchester's center city. Cellular Specialties started as an incubator in Manchester's abandoned mills; however, as the company grew, it took over the whole building. CEO Bruce Wilson has led the company to work on some incredible projects including installing wireless antenna system in University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona so that there is wireless connectivity within the stadium.

# centresource

interactive agency

**Centresource Interactive Agency**

Nashville, TN

**CEO:** Nicholas Holland

Centresource Interactive Agency is a Nashville-based creative services firm with a strong accent on web-related applications as part of its offerings to clients. The company, started by CEO Nicholas Holland, was originally founded as an IT consulting firm. The scion of an entrepreneurial family, Holland—at just 23 years of age—had a strong desire to build his own firm. After college in New Orleans and a brief stint with an energy firm in Houston, Holland returned to his native Nashville to pursue his dream. He chose IT consulting as his entrée into business because, as he puts it, he wanted to start with something easy. Centresource, however, rapidly evolved from its IT beginnings to become a specialized website development provider. The company has what Holland calls a “results-only work environment” that does away with concepts such as designated office hours or vacation and sick time. Staff members are evaluated strictly on their output.

**Centro**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Shawn Riegsecker

Located in Chicago, Centro provides outsourced media logistics and software to the advertising and media industries. Ten years ago, Founder and CEO Shawn Riegsecker saw an emerging opportunity in the market: new technologies were going to create complexity for ad agencies and force them to place their ads across more devices. Centro was built to automate these operational processes and cut through the complexities so that ad agencies could focus on the creative aspects of their work. Riegsecker attributes Centro's success not only to its commitment to serving customers but also to the company's culture. Since its founding, Centro has been dedicated to the appreciation and betterment of each and every employee.



**ColorFX**

Sun Valley, CA

**CEO:** Razmik Avedissian

Color FX is a family-owned wholesale printing company located in Sun Valley. Since founded by CEO Razmik Avedissian in 1996, the company has grown to employ 43 people, 80% of whom are local residents. Color FX is unique because, unlike its competitors, the company lets customers have full say in the quantity and dimensions of its orders. The customers must appreciate this option because it is their word-of-mouth advertising that grows this family business.



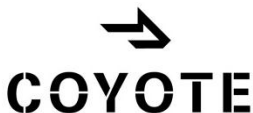
CONCEPT TECHNOLOGY INC.

**Concept Technology**

Nashville, TN

**CEO:** James Fields

Concept Technology of Nashville offers outsourced IT services to small- and medium-size businesses. Believing that outsourced IT was, generally speaking, not well-executed, CEO James Fields decided that his background would be an asset to this type of firms in handling their IT needs. Fields is a member of Entrepreneurs Organization (EO), which has been great organization for him from a mentoring perspective. In order to join EO, a firm has to be invited and must have at least \$1M in revenue. They conduct monthly five-hour forums with eight EO members. Participants come from a myriad of industries, providing Fields with advice based on years of experience.

**Coyote Logistics**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Jeff Silver

For Coyote Logistics, a transportation and logistics provider in Chicago, timing is everything. Founder and CEO Jeff Silver, who initially funded Coyote with his own money and some private equity dollars, refers to his third-party firm as "a trucking company without the trucks." A struggling economy has contributed to Coyote's success: Silver started the company just as shippers and carriers were looking for ways to make operations more efficient. Coyote enjoys a loyal customer base of both big and small clients, but the company's own employees – most of them inner city residents – are its biggest advocates. Coyote Logistics was recently voted one of the best places to work in Chicago.



### **CSI**

Oklahoma City, OK

**CEO:** Ken Novotny

Located within the Brick District of inner city Oklahoma City, CSI is an IT and engineering contractor for the U.S. Department of Defense. The firm is Native American-owned and located in a HubZone. CSI employs an estimated 60 to 80 inner city Native Americans and boasts a 98% retention rate. Over the last five years, CSI has created 210 jobs, which ranks fifth among 2012 Inner City 100 winners in this category. The company was also ranked as the top firm on the 2011 Inner City 100. To foster entrepreneurship, CEO Ken Novotny mentors a lot of small, up-and-coming firms and offers one key piece of advice to business owners: Always be a strong leader and have confidence in yourself and your team.



### **Dean Media Group**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Jon Dean

Dean Media Group is a Chicago-based company that is unique in both what it does and how it does it. With funding from grassroots efforts, founder Jon Dean started the company as a financial marketing boutique agency. The company has since grown to encompass more offerings, including media services, creative services and an advertising network, but maintains its focus on financial clients only. This specialization enables the company to truly understand its clients' needs and effectively add value to what the clients are doing. Because the firm serves a niche with a high demand, it has been profitable from its first month, making capital a non-issue. Dean Media Group is located in a redesigned 100-year-old loft warehouse and attracts young and talented workers from the local Chicago area.



### **DeatschWerks**

Oklahoma City, OK

**CEO:** David Deatsch

DeatschWerks, located in Oklahoma City, has been creating and selling high performance fuel injectors since 2004. Originally born out of a personal hobby of CEO David Deastch, the company now services customers in 13 countries. Deastch has a degree in microbiology and worked in a cancer lab before starting to help friends with fuel injectors. In 2004, he began selling his performance fuel injectors via eBay. Two years later, Deastch quit his job as a microbiologist to focus on his fuel injector business full time. In addition to servicing automotive companies and individuals, DeatschWerks recently landed contracts to supply injectors to the Department of Defense.



**Dero**  
Minneapolis, MN  
**CEO:** Hans Steege

Dero manufactures and designs bike racks and bike parking solutions. The company was founded in 1995 by Rolf and Dirk Schultz and joined by CEO Hans Steege in 2003. The three colleagues recalled the pleasure and convenience of getting around the city of Berlin on bicycles and turned their passion into profit. Located in inner city Minneapolis, Dero uses its proximity to the University of Minnesota to develop new ideas and establish customers. As the niche for their product continues to grow rapidly, Steege hires “mindset over skill-set” employees in order to sustain the company’s success and ensure continued growth.



**Discover Gymnastics**  
Houston, TX  
**CEO:** Carolyn Markesich

Discover Gymnastics has grown to become an essential fabric of its inner city neighborhood in Houston. With a staff that’s passionate about gymnastics and children, Discover Gymnastics has been able to drive the community’s participation in its classes, events and teams. As her business grows, CEO Carolyn Markesich is able to care for the evolving needs of the community. Markesich is expanding her facility offerings to include child health club classes and a program to help fight childhood obesity.



**DMC Consultants**  
Detroit, MI  
**CEO:** Darshita and Mike Chaudhary

DMC Consultants started small and now does it all, providing general consulting, construction, demolition and environmental work to the city of Detroit, the state of Michigan and beyond. In 2005, President Mike Chaudhary, a former employee of past Inner City 100 company FutureNet Group, started DMC with small contracts to paint residential houses in Detroit. Under the direction of a strong management team, the company has expanded its offerings and now secures contracts in the millions. Chaudhary’s belief in diversification – of DMC’s services, infrastructure and customer base – has contributed to the company’s overall growth and success. And DMC is committed to its home: as the company expands, it will continue to buy up vacant lots and spend money to improve and stabilize inner city Detroit.



**Down East Seafood**  
Bronx, NY  
**CEO:** Edward Taylor

Down East Seafood is a supplier of seafood for restaurants, hotels, private clubs and other vendors. In 1990, Edward Taylor started the company with a friend's credit card and a \$500 loan. Last year, Down East Seafood had over \$20 million in revenue and distributed seafood to seven states across the nation. Located in the Bronx, this reliable, responsible company displays a unique commitment to sustainability intertwined with a value proposition that draws customers in and keeps them coming back.



**E.C. Ortiz & Co.**  
Chicago, IL  
**CEO:** Ed Ortiz

E.C. Ortiz and Co. is an accounting and consulting services firm led by CEO Ed Ortiz. Originally from the Philippines, Ortiz believed that the best way to attain wealth for both him and his family was to start his own company. He attributes the firm's incredible success to his team, which maintains an energetic culture of professionalism. Located in inner city Chicago, the company will go anywhere in the country to do business and—according to Ortiz—will work “24 hours a day, eight days a week” when necessary. Ortiz and his employees also provide pro-bono services to local non-profit organizations and volunteer for Junior Achievement.



**Edibles Rex**  
Detroit, MI  
**CEO:** Tammy Tedesco

Edibles Rex was founded two decades ago when Tammy Tedesco purchased a 700-square-foot yogurt shop and turned it into a deli. Using personal capital, she grew the deli into a catering business serving major corporations, social events and charter schools in and around Detroit. Schools now make up the majority of the company's revenue as Edibles Rex provides nutritionally sound, high-quality meals to children on free and subsidized meal plans. With innovative offerings such as black bean brownies and blood oranges, Tedesco continues to envision new ways to help kids eat healthy.



**El Clasificado**  
Los Angeles, CA  
**CEO:** Martha De La Torre

El Clasificado, founded in 1988, is a free, Spanish-speaking weekly classifieds newspaper serving the Latino populations of Los Angeles and Orange County. Besides consumer-to-consumer classifieds and local business advertisements, the company offers editorial coverage aimed at empowering readers, often working class and low-income, to improve the quality of their lives. Founder and CEO Martha de la Torre cites the fast-growing Hispanic population as a key reason why her paper reaches over a million people.



**Emma**  
Nashville, TN  
**CEO:** Clint Smith

Emma's founders, Clint Smith and Will Weaver, set out in 2001 to create an email marketing product for small businesses that was both stylish and accessible. Over a decade later, they boast over 100 staff in their Nashville location. Philanthropy is additionally woven into the character of the company through innovative programs like the Emma250 in which each employee is given \$250 to invest in a charity of their choosing and a decided emphasis on giving back in the form of small gifts through [kiva.org](http://kiva.org) and [donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org).



**Federated IT**  
Washington, DC  
**CEO:** Kyle von Bucholz

After retiring from military service in the late 1990s, former US Army Special Operations Communications Officer Kyle von Bucholz and former US Marine Corps Officer Matthew Bucholz were not finished defending the security of the United States. The result of their efforts was Federated IT, a Washington D.C. – based company that specializes in all aspects of building and maintaining IT networks for commercial, federal, and intelligence clients. Founded in 2002, they are involved in local charitable initiatives like the Wounded Warrior Project and Toys for Tots.

**Fennick McCredie Architecture**

Boston, MA

**CEO:** Deborah Fennick and Jonathan McCredie

Fennick McCredie, located in the Downtown Crossing area of Boston, is an architecture and engineering firm that specializes in designing buildings, managing projects and helping clients understand their architectural needs. Founders Deborah Fennick and Jonathan McCredie were working for a larger A/E firm, but did not like the direction in which their employer was moving. The entrepreneurs believed they could perform the same job, but better and with more personalization for customers. Funded by the owners' modest capital and supported by extensive networks, Fennick McCredie proved that it could deliver as well as big competitors on large, complex projects. The company finds much of its talent via the Northeastern University and Wentworth University co-op programs, which specialize in professional development for college students.



**FoBoGro**

Washington, DC

**CEO:** Kris Hart and Devlin Keating

FoBoGro, aka Foggy Bottom Grocery, is a grocery store and sandwich shop located in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood of Washington D.C. With funding from investors they met through their alumni network, former George Washington University students Kris Hart and Devlin Keating bought the failing business and turned it around. The entrepreneurs added a convenient eatery to the grocery store and offered what the GW community had been missing: a one-stop shop to meet all of the food needs of area college students. Foggy Bottom Grocery largely employs a staff of local students that have helped formulate the FoBoGro brand as a warm and fun place to get a sandwich or pick up some groceries.



**Freedom Metals**

Louisville, KY

**CEO:** Bruce Blue

Freedom Metals, based in Louisville, processes all grades of both ferrous and non-ferrous scrap materials for the Kentucky and Indiana communities. In addition to buying iron-laden material, Freedom Metals also processes plastic, cardboard and electronic scrap. The company was founded in 1983 with three employees collecting cans for scrapping, and now 70% of their clients are industrial. Run by Bruce Blue, a CEO with a lifetime of experience in the scrap processing business, Freedom Metals takes pride in its 150 employees and creates jobs in a city that has seen larger employers shut their doors and lay off workforces.



**Frontline Public Strategies**

Springfield, IL

**CEO:** Kim Robinson

Frontline Public Strategies delivers full-service public relations, marketing, event management and public affairs services for clients that include large Fortune 500 corporations, private companies, associations, non-profit organizations, universities and government agencies. Operating in Springfield, Frontline has been successfully led by CEO Kim Robinson, who is highly active with her local chambers of commerce as well as the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC). Robinson joined the company in 2002, one year after her husband founded the firm with \$2,000 in startup capital, and the company has enjoyed a consistently solid growth trajectory.



**Funnel Design Group**

Oklahoma City, OK

**CEO:** Sean Cobb

Funnel Design Group is an interactive corporate branding agency located in Oklahoma City. Founded in 2000 by CEO Sean Cobb and his business partner Bryan Ellison, the company is situated in a neighborhood known as "Automobile Alley." Funnel Design Group has grown in tandem with the recent boom of downtown Oklahoma City that resulted from recent capital and political investment in the inner city community. The company's designers also double as their sales force.

**Gelato Giuliana**

New Haven, CT

**CEO:** Giuliana Maravelle

Once a small gelato shop in New Haven, Gelato Giuliana is now a gelato manufacturer with distribution across much of the Northeast U.S. Founder and CEO Giuliana Maravelle grew up in Italy, self-funded the venture and prides herself on making the most authentic gelato in the country. Gelato Giuliana's products appeal to a high-end specialty boutiques and well-educated clients with a sophisticated palette. Manufacturing authentic-tasting gelato is a cumbersome process, so cutting corners and mass producing are not options. Maravelle has taken great steps to carefully nurture her company's growth to make sure it doesn't diminish her gelato's taste. The company is at a crossroads: should it scale into new products (such as kosher gelato) or expand geographically with its existing product?



Construction Management & Engineering

**Gonzalez Companies**

St. Louis, MO

**CEO:** Anthony Gonzalez-Angel

The Gonzalez Companies is a civil engineering and construction management firm that serves municipalities and quasi-public agencies, such as waterworks companies. The company is the real-life success story of Tony Gonzalez, the son of penniless Cuban immigrants in pursuit of the American Dream. Gonzalez started his company while attending college in Chicago and focused on apartment repair and cleaning. Post-college, the entrepreneur nurtured the fledgling firm (funded with personal savings) while working full-time at a day job. Gonzalez still abides by old-fashioned business practices: his firm is not leveraged and is careful to spend only within its means. Beyond its engineering and management offerings, the Gonzalez Companies puts a premium on community service. Every year, for example, the company pays its staff to spend two working days on a joint community project. How's that for giving back?



## **Gorilla Commerce**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Brian Grady

Gorilla Commerce specializes in web design, development and marketing and helps mid-size companies start and enhance ecommerce capacity. Located in the up-and-coming West Loop neighborhood of Chicago, Gorilla Commerce was founded in 1994, and purchased by current CEO Brian Grady in 2008. Grady was drawn to the company's outstanding culture and dedicated employees. The workforce enjoys 40-hour weeks, a buddy system for training and a positive and collaborative environment.



## **Gourmet Guru**

Bronx, NY

**CEO:** Jeff Lichtenstein

Gourmet Guru is an organic food manufacturer and distributor that focuses on natural and perishable foods. In fact, Gourmet Guru was the first American distributor of Greek yogurt. Gourmet Guru has helped a lot of organic food startups to get up and running and has been helped by them in return. With a mission to make *the world a better place to eat*, CEO Jeff Lichtenstein has turned this values-centric Bronx company into a high-growth success.



## **Hillard Heintze**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Arnette Heintze and Terry Hillard

Hillard Heintze, located in the heart of Chicago, Illinois, provides strategic security and investigative services primarily to Fortune 500 companies and governments. It was founded by two former law enforcement professionals: Arnette Heintze, former head of the Chicago Secret Service office, and Terry Hillard, the former superintendent of Chicago police. Each put in \$3,000 of his own money to start the business and now operate completely debt-free. The company prides itself on identifying talent to bring into the fold – it doesn't matter where an employee comes from if he or she has talent and makes positive contributions to the organization. Senior leadership encourages a collaborative and interactive environment that encourages input from all employees. Hillard Heintze differentiates itself not only with a wealth of experience and superior expertise, but also through a prevention-oriented rather than crisis-response approach.

**InfoPeople Corporation**

New York, NY

**CEO:** Shyam Gulati

InfoPeople Corporation is an IT services and solutions company specializing in staffing and software development. Based in New York City, the company serves the tri-state area and broader nation. Shyam Gulati relied on his engineering and computer science background when he founded InfoPeople in 1998. InfoPeople Corporation makes every effort to provide excellent service by thoroughly evaluating each and every client's unique needs.

**InGenesis**

San Antonio, TX

**CEO:** Veronica Edwards

InGenesis in San Antonio is more than just a healthcare staffing company. Led by a CEO with high-growth vision, the company provides personnel solutions, full-service account management and consulting within the healthcare industry. After losing her job with a Fortune 500 company in 1998, a highly driven Veronica Edwards founded InGenesis to provide staffing solutions to telecommunications companies. Thanks to a long-term business plan, a solid understanding of the market her company served and insightful forward thinking, Edwards soon predicted a telecommunications implosion and immediately began researching other industries. As a result, she shifted InGenesis' focus from telecommunications to healthcare and soon landed her first big client: the Mayo Clinic. Edwards believes that inner city San Antonio benefits as her company grows and that the best way to help her community is to continue to think big.

**Intellect Corporation**

Baltimore, MD

**CEO:** Rohit Patel

Intellect Corporation is a one-stop shop for solutions in telecommunications, cellular, intelligent transportation, IT, video surveillance and electrical systems. Given that competitors typically provide just one specific type of service, Intellect's diverse offerings have enabled it to expand rapidly. Difficulty accessing capital, however, has stunted the company's growth as it has been unable to build a much-needed sales team. But CEO Rohit Patel is confident his company will power through, and he urges aspiring urban small business owners to embrace their passions and follow their dreams.



**J.P. Licks**  
Jamaica Plain, MA  
**CEO:** Vincent Petryk

Vincent Petryk, founder of J.P. Licks, is creating a world of ice cream lovers... one customer at a time. Since 1981, Petryk has been driven by his love of ice cream and his desire to help others create wonderful memories of this magical treat. His passion guides his business decisions, and he offers his delicious ice cream as his personal contribution to the world. Petryk has mastered a recipe not only for ice cream but for business success as well: a sincere respect for customers and employees makes everybody happy.



**KS Engineers**  
Newark, NJ  
**CEO:** Kamal Shahid

KS Engineers is a full-service construction and engineering firm servicing both public and private clients. Driven by a desire to be his own boss, founder and CEO Kamal Shahid saw a need for an MBE engineering firm within NYC and New Jersey. He started KS Engineers in New York City in 1991, and moved the business to Newark in 1994. The company has found success through relationship building, solid work and customer retention: existing customers continue to give KS Engineers bigger, more lucrative projects all over New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

**Luggage Forward**

Boston, MA

**CEO:** Zeke Adkins and Aaron Kirley

Luggage Forward is a doorstep-to-destination luggage delivery firm that promises peace of mind for its traveling customers. The company has positioned itself as a travel company, not a shipping company, and has delivered to over 200 countries and territories since its founding in 2004. CEO Zeke Adkins and a high school friend started Luggage Forward from their Watertown condominium. Today, the company's location in the Downtown Crossing area of Boston enables it to take advantage of the city's large population of recent college graduates. The lack of barriers to entry in the industry has served as a unique opportunity for Luggage Forward to acquire many of its competitors, keep new entrants out of its space and grow its market share accordingly.

**Mahaffey Tent & Awning**

Memphis, TN

**CEO:** William Pretsch

Located in Memphis since 1922, Mahaffey Tent and Awning has been providing tent rental services for nearly a century. The company has come a long way since its modest beginnings as a tent supplier to traveling fairs and WWII GIs. Mahaffey Tent and Awning can now provide "tents" with such luxury features as glass walls and hardwood floors to a host of clients ranging from major corporations to professional sports leagues.

**Mainstream Global**

Lawrence, MA

**CEO:** Juan Yepez

Mainstream Global, of Lawrence, Massachusetts, is a distributor of used and refurbished computer equipment that also handles leased computer recovery and data erasure. Mainstream's target market is Latin America and its customers include manufacturers, resellers, e-tailers, retailers and independent distributors. Within the industry, Mainstream Global has earned a solid reputation as an honest, serious and reliable company. CEO Juan Yepez founded the company after working as a bi-lingual sales representative for a similar firm. Mainstream Global uses the Merrimack Valley Career Center to hire new employees to sustain the company's growth as well as create jobs in a largely economically distressed city.



**Marlin Steel Wire Products**

Baltimore, MD

**CEO:** Drew Greenblatt

Established in 1968, Marlin Steel Wire Products manufactures wire baskets for defense contractors, pharmaceutical companies and a wide variety of public- and private-sector clients. CEO Drew Greenblatt purchased Marlin Steel Wire Products in 1998, using his own funds and a bank loan. The company's unique product demands a workforce with unique skills, which means that finding employees with the right engineering background is an ongoing challenge. Once found and hired, says Greenblatt, these employees become essential to the company's success and future sustainability.



**MMO Behavioral Health Systems**

Baton Rouge, LA

**CEO:** Rob Miller

MMO Behavioral Health Systems is a mental health services provider based in inner city Baton Rouge. MMO, a bootstrap operation at its inception, has experienced substantial growth through its acquisition of other firms. These acquisitions have positioned the organization to provide exciting opportunities to its employees. In fact, the company's success has led to the establishment of MMO University, an internal program to create a workforce of leaders.



**MSDSonline**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Glenn Trout

MSDSonline, located in downtown Chicago, sells environmental health and safety software. The company's software suite enables customers to maintain a database of chemicals and comply with environmental laws such as OSHA. An MSDS, Material Safety Data Sheet, is a document that OSHA requires for every chemical a business keeps onsite. Founded from a failed dot.com at the height of the tech bubble in 1999, MSDS Online services a unique niche made possible by the ubiquity of the internet – its primary competition is the large paper binder consisting of 3,000 pages of Material Safety Data Sheets. Last year, the company was voted one of Chicago's top 10 places for millennials to work. One look at their ping pong tables, glass walls and culture club makes it easy to see why.

**Navigator Management Partners**

Columbus, OH

**CEO:** David Schoettmer

Navigator Management Partners, founded in 2001 in Columbus, Ohio, is a regional consultancy servicing clients around its geographic location. Founded by former Accenture consultant and current CEO Dave Schoettmer, the company now staffs 70 employees and has won numerous awards for employee satisfaction and the company's growth. Excelling not only in private industry but also in the public sphere, Navigator can boast that over 1/3 of its employees serve on the board of a nonprofit.

**Net Health Systems**

Pittsburgh, PA

**CEO:** Patrick Colletti

Net Health Systems, founded in 1998 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, creates disease-management software to measure, compare, and improve best practices for medical facilities that manage the healing process. Its main product, WoundExpert, is used by over 14,000 healthcare providers across the country and represents the largest independent source of chronic wound benchmarking data in the industry. CEO Patrick Colletti takes pride in turning the company around since he and Christopher Hayes took over in 2001 and credits "the passion of the team to make this company a success."

**Network Deposition Services**

Pittsburgh, PA

**CEO:** Terri Urbash

Network Deposition Services, headquartered in inner city Pittsburgh, is a woman-owned full-service court reporting and videography company. CEO Terri Urbash was an independent court reporter for many years before deciding that being her own boss would let her spend more time with her family. Given her long career in court reporting, Terri knew all of the very best court reporters in Pittsburgh and brought them on board. Additionally, the company enjoys a close proximity to the local community college, providing a steady pool of recent graduates from which to hire. The company has offices all over Pennsylvania and is appearing on the Inner City 100 for the second consecutive year.

**Neutron Interactive**

Salt Lake City, UT

**CEO:** Dan Caffee

Neutron Interactive of Salt Lake City, Utah, specializes in online lead generation. The company serves a broad client base and has carved out a particular niche in the higher education marketplace. Partners Dan Caffee and Shaun Ritchie started Neutron Interactive with a handful of initial clients and funding from their credit cards. The company originally recruited students for truck driving schools but was forced to make a change when the 2008 financial crisis resulted in a decline in the demand for truck drivers. Caffee immediately put into place his mantra: *Don't mistake opportunities for obstacles*. The recession was the catalyst for Neutron to diversify its client base. Once located in the suburbs, Neutron Interactive now makes its home in a converted candy factory in central Salt Lake City.

**NewBath**

New Orleans, LA

**CEO:** Larry Closs

NewBath, founded in New Orleans in 2003, remodels bathrooms for customers – particularly those with mobility problems – in Louisiana and Texas. Rather than trying to expand geographically, affable founder Larry Closs envisions growth in product lines that will let NewBath compete in the broader home improvement market. A proud resident of the Broadmoor community, Closs reaffirmed his commitment to New Orleans by returning post-Katrina. New Orleans central location, public incentives and tax breaks have made the firm's choice of location ideal. Today, both NewBath and the surrounding area are up-and-coming, with higher revenues, better schools and ever-increasing local vitality. The company finds employees via executive searches and consultants as well as on the regular market and encourages regular feedback from its workers. "If you care [about customers, about employees] and when you really mean it, it shows," says Closs.

**NFF**

Washington, DC

**CEO:** Hess Fatemi

Located in the nation's capital, NFF is an IT solutions provider that specializes in data center visualization, unified communications, network infrastructure, and information security. The company was founded in 1998 to integrate business strategies with technology while also emphasizing customer service as a competitive advantage. CEO Hess Fatemi cites proximity to federal customers as his primary rationale for working out of D.C. along with a Local Small Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (LSDBE) certification.



### **On-Demand Services Group**

Minneapolis, MN

**CEO:** Heather Manley

The On-Demand Services Group prides itself on bringing passion, commitment and fun to IT consulting. Founded in 1995 by Richard and Noel Manley, the father and older brother of President Heather Manley and COO Sean Manley, the company has quickly risen to success thanks to the family's commitment to investing profits directly back into the company. This Minneapolis-based firm embraces and supports the eclectic and trendy small business environment of its up-and-coming inner city neighborhood, which benefits greatly by On-Demand's presence.



### **Orbit Media Studios**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Andy Crestodina

Orbit Media Studios is a digital marketing agency in Chicago. Principal and Strategic Director Andy Crestodina started the company with a high school friend, a combination of their 401Ks and some credit cards. Orbit is located in a very diverse neighborhood with populations hailing from Romania, Germany and Latin America. Crestodina and the rest of the "Orbiteers" are also involved in doing online overhauls pro-bono for local non-profit organizations.

## **ORTEGA GROUP**

General Contractors • Construction Managers

### **Ortega Group**

Mount Vernon, NY

**CEO:** Kirk Ortega

The Ortega Group is a building design firm founded by former baseball player Kirk Ortega and his brother. As an athlete, Ortega knows a thing or two about persistence: four- and five-game losing streaks happen, but if you love what you're doing, you'll stick with it and eventually have success. This mantra has carried over into the Ortega Group. The brothers started the company at the height of the market, only to watch the housing industry come crashing down. Armed with an in-depth knowledge of the industry, Ortega was able to nurture relationships and position the Group well throughout the recession. This proactive approach – coupled with outstanding money management skills – enabled The Ortega Group come out ahead in an industry (CHRE) where so many others have faltered.





**Park Inc.**  
Charlotte, NC  
**CEO:** Brian Haupricht

Park Inc. provides parking and facilities management services throughout the eastern USA. Founded in 1994 in Charlotte, North Carolina with just a few employees and one customer, they have since expanded to twelve states and boast over 400 employees. CEO Brian Haupricht cites proximity to customers and cheaper rents at their downtown location as significant competitive advantages that have aided their growth. They are living, job-creating proof that the inner city represents an untapped periphery of potential success for firms facing location decisions.



**PCE**  
Lincoln, NE  
**CEO:** Sam Featherston

PCE, located in Lincoln, Nebraska, creates plastics and software products for large data centers. Their clients include but are not limited to large banks, insurance companies and the Pentagon. This inner city firm has increased its workforce by over 50% in the past five years.



**Petrelocation.com**  
Austin, TX  
**CEO:** Kevin and Angie O'Brien

Petrelocation.com, based in Austin, Texas, is a worldwide facilitator in the movement of pets and animals. *Anywhere, any pet, any time* is the slogan of this company, which has relocated animals ranging from cats to poison dart frogs. Petrelocation.com was founded by Kevin O'Brien and his wife to provide a high-quality experience during stressful moves by individuals and corporations, a process often made worse by other service providers (i.e. movers). O'Brien, who previously operated a doggy daycare and pet taxi, founded Petrelocation.com in 2004 to offer his caring local approach to the world. The company's team consists of very diverse people from all walks of life. And social media involvement has helped Petrelocation.com build a devoted following, a rare occurrence for a moving company.



**PMG Project Management Group**

Houston, TX

**CEO:** Ben Mendez and Vladamir Naranjo

PMG Project Management Group, located in a historical area of Houston, offers a unique combination of professional and construction services. PMG is a small company and strives to hire and contract with other small companies. CEO Ben Mendez firmly believes that small businesses must help each other and create a supportive community of entrepreneurs. Houston is a welcoming city for local companies such as PMG, catering to them with ordinances, friendly tax policies, a small business advisory program and Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses. At PMG's startup, Mendez struggled with the typical business challenges many small businesses face. With limited funding, there was no budget for marketing, so finding work was an initial challenge. Mendez credits networking for his growing client base and encourages other small business owners to "network, network, network!"



**Postmodern Company**

Denver, CO

**CEO:** David Emrich

A creatively driven production and post-production studio, Postmodern Company has been enriching its Denver, Colorado location since its founding in 1991. With only 7 employees after 9 years in business, this company's story just goes to show that growth doesn't always happen immediately. Today, the company boasts over 30 employees and has successfully adjusted its business model to the evolving media landscape. CEO Dave Emrich says the company benefits from its urban location in an arts district and credits his people for their continuing success.



**Powerlink Facilities Management Services**

Detroit, MI

**CEO:** Link Howard

Powerlink Facilities Management Services is a full-service building management company that helps customers reduce costs, improve efficiency and gain higher customer satisfaction. The ISO 9001-certified company is headquartered in Detroit, with a professional service staff seamlessly integrated at more than 250 client sites in the Midwest and Ontario. Powerlink prides itself on quality and service and has not lost a single customer since it was founded by Link Howard III in 2002.



**Prairie Quest**  
Fort Wayne, IN  
**CEO:** Stacey Smith

Prairie Quest of Fort Wayne, offers a diversified suite of analytical and consultative services in areas such as procurement, IT and staff training. The company is located within a HUBZone and frequently hires from the surrounding neighborhood. CEO Stacey Smith and his Prairie Quest team are highly active in their community, and every employee has is permitted and encouraged to devote 40 hours annually to local organizations. Prairie Quest team members are also able to wear jeans every Friday for a fee of two dollars—the “jeans fund” is then disbursed to charity.



**Premier Organics**  
Oakland, CA  
**CEO:** Santiago Cuenca-Romero

Oakland-based Premier Organics was founded in 2002 by current CEO Santiago Cuenca-Romero. Cuenca-Romero was enthralled by peanut butter when he came to the U.S. from Spain and realized that he could apply his previous background in meat grinding to creating other nut butters, such as those made with almonds or cashews. Cuenca-Romero attributes the growth of the raw foods market—especially within Canada and Europe—for Premier Organics’ solid growth trajectory. The company has paired up with Inner City Advisors, also located in Oakland, to help the firm optimize its operations and social marketing efforts.



**PrintGlobe**  
Austin, TX  
**CEO:** Dan Steinborn

PrintGlobe is an online business printing supply and design store that offers “one-stop shop” for all business printing needs. The company was founded in 1995 with \$2000 of personal capital from current CEO Dan Steinborn, money which was given to him by his mother to be put into an IRA. Dan attributes his growth over the past few year to his proven marketing/outreach model. PrintGlobe operates under what Dan considers to be a proven growth strategy: online customer conversion. This conversion involves: creating a customer-friendly website (clean, attractive, customer service phone number everywhere), pushing people to go to that website (Google Adwords, etc.) and ensuring that your accounting and turnaround procedures are efficient. Dan believes this emphasis on the customer has helped his company stand out among his competitors, leading to new clients as well as acquisitions. He also plans for PrintGlobe to continue to be a forerunner in green printing and promotional products.

## PROMETHEUS | RESEARCH™

**Prometheus Research**  
New Haven, CT  
**CEO:** Leon Rozenblit

CEO Leon Rozenblit started Prometheus Research when he was in graduate school. What began as a consulting business has evolved into a software management program that helps scientists and researchers effectively manage their data. Yale University, National Institutes of Health, Harvard University, Columbia University and Baylor College of Medicine are among the prestigious research institutions utilizing Prometheus's platform to comprehensively manage phenotypic, genetic and other research data. Rozenblit believes Prometheus' urban location and proximity to Yale University have been critical drivers in the growth of the company. "We see our location as a great advantage in the competitive global marketplace."



**R.W. Garcia Company**  
San Jose, CA  
**CEO:** Robert Garcia

R.W. Garcia Company out of San Jose, California, has been manufacturing premium tortilla chips for nearly 3 decades. In 1982, founder and current CEO Bob Garcia started the company by borrowing \$500 from his mother to rent a van. From those humble beginnings, the company now manages a 60,000 square foot manufacturing plant in North Carolina in addition to its San Jose operation. Garcia attributes his company's rapid growth to the quality of both its product and processes. In addition to a slew of reputable certifications, the firm makes the best tasting product in its category, is 100% organic, and strives to be first to market with innovations that make their product healthier.



**Red Door Interactive**

San Diego, CA

**CEO:** Reid Carr

Red Door Interactive is an internet presence management firm that helps clients create an integrated online strategy including online marketing, web traffic analysis, search engine promotion, website content updates and comprehensive website design. The company also does print, offline marketing, signage, packaging and collateral. This San Diego-based firm was founded in 2002 by Reid Carr, who credits mentoring and networking organizations such as Vistage and Young Presidents Organization (YPO) for his development as a business leader.



**Research Into Action**

Portland, OR

**CEO:** Jane Peters

Research Into Action in Portland specializes in program evaluation and research for utilities and energy agencies. Founded in Jane Peters' basement in 1996, RIA is at the forefront of the greening of the U.S., and the company's fortune tends to move with the changes in regulatory environmental policy. Until 2000, Peters was the company's sole employee but now employs 26 staff. The company seeks out experienced hires that require less training. Living the firm's mission, roughly one-third of the RIA workforce bikes or takes public transit to work. And Peters credits the company's Portland location for the Research Into Action's high rate of retention.

**Revolution Foods**

Oakland, CA

**CEO:** Kristin Richmond and Kirsten Tobey

Revolution Foods is a double bottom-line company that provides healthy, fresh, affordable meals to school districts in over 20 cities across the United States. Founded by CEO Kristin Richmond and UC Berkeley classmate Kirsten Tobey, the company now boasts 770 employees and is growing at an astonishing rate. Richmond and company are driven by a mission to combat childhood obesity by providing a robust nutritional education program to schools. As the only company of its kind, Revolution Foods serves large school systems and underserved schools as well as grocery stores. Revolution Foods is headquartered in inner city Oakland and hires primarily from underserved areas via partnerships with local job development partners across the country.

**Rise Interactive**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Jon Morris

Rise Interactive in Chicago focuses on strategies to drive traffic to client websites and to turn website visitors into customers. The firm, whose clientele includes blue chip firms, sprang from a business plan that then-MBA student Jon Morris submitted in a University of Chicago competition. The \$10,000 prize served as startup capital for Morris' firm. Morris attributes timing as a factor in Rise's growth: the company was started just as businesses in general began to recognize the potential of Internet marketing. Beyond that luck, however, is Morris' prescience to hire financial analysts versus traditional marketers, giving RI a competitive edge in terms of being able to organize and analyze data useful to clients. Rise Interactive will have to maintain its relentless focus on customer retention as it faces increasing competition from both traditional advertisers and other Internet marketing agencies.

**S&W Contracting of WNY**

Buffalo, NY

**CEO:** Shandra Spicer

S&W Contracting of WNY is a general construction firm located in Buffalo. The company was founded in 2002 by 19-year-old Shandra Spicer and with her father. Spicer recognized the need for minority- and women-owned construction firms in and around the city. As CEO, Spicer has relied on the management education offerings at the University at Buffalo's Central for Entrepreneurial Leadership to help her responsibly scale her operation. Spicer says that inner city Buffalo has been a benefit for her business, thanks to an incredible pool of available workers that have helped her grow the company for the last five years.

**Sandstorm Design**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Sandy Marsico

Sandstorm Design is a marketing and web design firm that specializes in branding and web development in Chicago. CEO Sandy Marsico started the company in 1998 because she wanted a job at a boutique agency but couldn't find one. Finding clients was Sandstorm's biggest startup challenge, but today the firm's customers consist of B2B professional services companies and higher education institutions. Marsico built Sandstorm Design to be the kind of company she would want to work for and attributes her company's success to finding the right people to whom she can delegate difficult tasks. Today, she is proud to offer opportunities to her employees that Sandstorm's larger competitors do not provide.



**SEER Interactive**  
Philadelphia, PA  
**CEO:** Wil Reynolds

SEER Interactive is a search marketing and search engine optimization company located in Philadelphia. Prior to becoming an entrepreneur, Wil Reynolds managed big-name search campaigns for a large firm, but his work schedule didn't allow him to volunteer with a nearby hospital. In 2002, Reynolds set out to create a company he could be proud to work for. Reynolds endured the challenge of moving from a big company with illustrious clients to going door to door to generate business. Reynolds believed that if he continuously did the right thing, big clients would find their way back to him. His persistence paid off: today, there are so many clients lined up that Reynolds has to turn some away in order to make sure the clients he serves receives his utmost attention.



**Sensis**  
Los Angeles, CA  
**CEO:** Jose Villa

Sensis, based in downtown Los Angeles, is an advertising agency that specializes in interactive digital and online marketing to multicultural audiences. The firm was founded by Jose Villa shortly after he graduated from college. The venture was easily self-funded since initial start-up costs were low. Sensis makes a practice of bringing in a number of employees that have no advertising background whatsoever in an effort to make the company more analytical than its competitors. Sensis effectively leverages its workforce's ability to speak nine languages and does business in every one of them. The company's clients are split equally between the private sector – health care, utilities, energy firms – and the public sector – federal clients in line with the Sensis' 8(a) certification.



**SiteCrafting**  
Tacoma, WA  
**CEO:** Brian Forth

SiteCrafting, out of Tacoma, Washington, develops unique, web-based solutions to help companies create and sustain success. Started by current CEO and former elementary school teacher Brian Forth in 2001, they now have 3 offices and host of clients. With a mentoring program that exposes employees to growth opportunities and a preference for promoting from within, this company can boast about having almost no turnover.





### **Specialized Therapy Services**

Amarillo, TX

**CEO:** Karen Day

Specialized Therapy Services of Amarillo provides physical therapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy to special needs children. The company was started by CEO Karen Day, a speech pathologist, after she was laid off from another company. Day, an entrepreneur with no business experience, was able to obtain advice from a local entrepreneur who taught her how to launch her own operation and put the company in a strong position for growth. In an effort to give back, STS is highly involved in with the local Down Syndrome Guild and other causes that help children with disabilities.



### **Sperry Van Ness/William T. Strange & Associates**

Oklahoma City, OK

**CEO:** Tim Strange

Sperry Van Ness/William T. Strange Associates is a full-service commercial real estate advisory firm located in Oklahoma City. The company handles all facets of real estate, including brokering, leasing, property management, operations, and maintenance of commercial real estate. The Associates enjoy a prime location in the city's central business district, where they are part of a thriving metropolis that has benefited tremendously from public-private partnerships and competent local leadership.



### **Stone & Grzegorek**

Los Angeles, CA

**CEO:** Kathleen Grzegorek and Lincoln Stone

Stone & Grzegorek is a law firm specializing in immigration law. Founded six years ago in the financial district of Downtown Los Angeles, the firm has watched its neighborhood transform from a run-down streetscape into a hip, up-and-coming section of this famous city. Kathy Grzegorek and Lincoln Stone brought their own startup funds and years of immigration law experience to the firm and now employ 35 (mostly female) immigration law experts. The law firm has enjoyed significant growth over six years, mostly related to a boom in investor visas. Stone & Grzegorek boasts the most specialized personnel in its industry in California.

**Sunago Builders**

Nashville, TN

**CEO:** Michael Tucker

Founded in 2004 and headquartered in Nashville, Sunago Builders is a full-service construction management company that services both public- and private-sector clients with subcontracting and general contracting. Founder Michael Tucker started the company out of a need for more diversity in construction management. Tucker and a coworker at a previous company identified a niche to service healthcare construction in Nashville and the broader southeastern U.S. Sunago has since acquired hospitals, universities and other anchor institution clients. Tucker hires heavily from the local community to satisfy not only HUBZone requirements but also the company's founding goals to promote diversity. Sunago Builders offers excellent benefits, healthcare for workers and competitive wages.

**Sunset Healthcare Solutions**

Chicago, IL

**CEO:** Chris Slosar and Greg Wood

Sunset Healthcare, located in downtown Chicago, is a company that sells post-respiratory medical products, such as those addressing home oxygen and sleep apnea needs. Co-founder Chris Slosar worked for a competitor for five years and discovered a niche on which he could capitalize: using an internal sales team to build relationships with customers. Sunset hires great people and its talented internal sales team differentiates the company from its competitors, most of which outsource sales. Sunset's customers are home medical equipment suppliers across the globe and they've grown from just the founders initially to a staff of 25 today. Sunset Healthcare is proud of its location and enjoys easy access to Chicago's great public transportation system. Since moving to its current location in 2006, the company has seen tremendous improvements in the surrounding community – and it likes to take credit for some of that.

**TCG**

Washington, DC

**CEO:** Daniel Turner

TCG is a 17-year old company specializing in IT, business processing and grants management. The company is located in Washington, D.C., and 98% of its business is done with the federal government, making the company's success heavily dependent upon federal spending. TCG's business actually increases during recession periods because the government pumps more money into their segment of the economy. Regardless of the economy, TCG's inner city location qualifies it for an Enterprise Zone designation, which means the company receives a \$3,000 tax credit for each full-time employee living in Washington, D.C. Daniel Turner, founder of TCG, believes in being a good corporate citizen and has watched his community grow and improve since locating there. The company is now surrounded by a variety of eateries, the population is more diverse and property values have increased 50%.

**The Matrix Companies**

Cincinnati, OH

**CEO:** Brent Messmer

The Matrix Companies started as an investigation firm and today is an innovative and aggressive risk management company specializing in claims administration and worker's compensation claims. The company's goal: to get healthy workers back on the job and exceed the expectations of every client... while having a little fun. President Brent Messmer attributes the firm's success to hiring dedicated individuals with the "Matrix Attitude" and training them thoroughly for maximum personal growth and professional development. This practice has created a *work hard/play hard* environment that has placed the Matrix Companies on Cincinnati's "top places to work" list for three years and counting.

**The Menkiti Group**

Washington, DC

**CEO:** Bo Menkiti

The Menkiti Group, a residential and commercial real estate developer in northeast Washington, D.C., got its start with the basic revamping of homes and has evolved into a full-blown commercial developer for urban properties. The Menkiti Group prides itself on being highly committed to making its surrounding community better; the company hires locally, and most of the workforce lives in the neighborhood. The employees' backgrounds are incredibly diverse and hiring is a long, challenging process as most training is done externally. To keep the team intact, Menkiti lets employees participate in strategic planning, goal setting and leadership opportunities. Employees are also able to invest their salary for equity in a single family home. To continue its current growth trajectory, says CEO Bo Menkiti, the company will have to harness equity capital.

**The Red Iguana**

Salt Lake City, UT

**CEO:** Luzmaria Cardenas

The Red Iguana is a full-service, casual Mexican restaurant. With two main locations and a satellite at a downtown mall, they have been a pillar of the Salt Lake City community since their founding in 1985. Admirably, this family-run restaurant has promoted four former cashiers to senior management positions and places a big premium on employee loyalty. In an age of globalization and quick turnover, Red Iguana is a restaurant with values that has stood the test of time.

**The Urban Group**

Woodhaven, NY

**CEO:** Ken Bharatlall

The Urban Group is a construction and general contracting company that designs and builds projects for its clients, 95% of which are from the public sector. CEO Ken Bharatlall founded the company in 2000 and has managed to grow it despite the economy. With a master's degree in construction management, Ken had the knowledge and experience to make The Urban Group a successful venture. While the company's growth has been funded by its own profits, accessing capital has been the biggest challenge Bharatlall has faced. The company is ideally located in the Woodhaven area of Queens and is currently looking to expand its manufacturing space. Bharatlall located the firm in the inner city to have access to its incredible workers, all of whom live within five miles of The Urban Group's offices.

**TPR Media/UbiCare**

Jamaica Plain, MA

**CEO:** Betsy Weaver

TPR Media, founded in 2002 in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, is a web-based healthcare content provider and communications services company. With a solution that is both turnkey and customizable, they allow healthcare providers complete control and measurement over how they interact with their patients. CEO Betsy Weaver wants to scale out the company to incorporate all forms of social media and texting and took a step towards this goal in January 2011 with the launch of UbiCare, the first healthcare content marketplace for social media.



**Tutta Bella Neapolitan Pizzeria**

Seattle, WA

**CEO:** Joe Fugere

Tutta Bella, founded by CEO Joe Fugere in 2003, is on a mission to be the best Neapolitan pizzeria in the world. Located in an Italian section of Seattle, they source many of their materials from local suppliers. In addition to bolstering local industry, they will never say no to a request for a donation and are proud of their urban location. Recently serving President Obama and his team during an Air Force One stop on the West Coast, the company's reputation continues to grow.



**World Pac Paper**

Cincinnati, OH

**CEO:** Edgar Smith, Jr.

World Pac Paper, a distributor of packaging solutions and high quality papers, services a diverse national clientele ranging from box manufacturers to Fortune 500 companies. Founded in 2004, the company makes its home in Cincinnati. CEO Edgar Smith worked for a variety of commercial printing and paper companies before founding World Pac Paper, and his deep industry expertise and veteran industry connections have helped establish relationships with paper mills. Smith attributes his company's success to the talented innovators with which he has surrounded himself.

**Zycron**

Nashville, TN

**CEO:** Steven Smith

Zycron is a customer-focused information technology services and solutions firm headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Since 1991, Zycron has offered IT solutions to a broad client base and today is the primary provider for numerous Fortune 500 companies. They provide qualified, cost-effective IT solutions in the form of individual resources, full project teams and project management services to many of the nation's largest corporations. Their team, which consists of experienced local executives and international partners, provides client-specific solutions across all industries, with extensive experience in health care, energy and utilities, and state and local government.