



MICHIGAN 50 Companies to Watch

Michigan 50 Companies to Watch celebrates the second-stage companies that make an impact in their markets, in their communities and in the state.

Michigan Celebrates Small
Business award winners
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"SBAM says state jumps in 'Entrepreneurial Climate.'"

—DETROIT.CBSLOCAL.COM

"Michigan's homegrown growth model draws attention."

—DETROIT FREE PRESS

"Inc. Magazine dubs Detroit 'Start-up City' for business."

—INC. MAGAZINE

"Michigan experiencing a manufacturing boomlet."

—CBS NEWS NETWORK

"Michigan No. 1 state for job growth."

—NEWSWEEK

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Dear Michigan Innovators,

Congratulations to the 2012 recipients of the eighth annual Michigan 50 Companies to Watch awards. Thank you for following your dream of going into business for yourself. You are making a difference in the lives of not only those around you, but your employees, investors and budding entrepreneurs who will take inspiration from your success.

We are reinventing Michigan and moving forward with a new economic certainty that is very attractive to investors and businesses making new location and investment decisions. Over the past year, we have steadily climbed major state climate rankings for entrepreneur and small business activity.

Thanks to your innovation and hard work, we have accomplished a great deal. Working together, we can continue our efforts in building a state that works better for everyone and a warm environment for business.

Sincerely,

Rick Snyder
Governor





Save energy. Save money. Use DTE Energy's business toolbox.

DTE Energy has many programs designed to help your business save energy and money. Incentives and rebates focused on energy efficiency projects, tips on insulation, energy efficient lighting, and customized energy audits are only a few of the items in a toolbox specifically designed for you. Invest in energy efficiency today and see the difference it will make in your business's bottom line.

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Looking beyond the numbers: Second-stage stars play a broad role



Congratulations to the 2012 Michigan 50 Companies to Watch honorees! These second-stage companies expect to generate \$535 million in annual revenue and create 408 new jobs this year.

And while it's important to recognize awardees' economic performance, their contributions extend far beyond job creation. Companies to Watch honorees also stand out because they are:

- **Clever competitors.** They're agile at adapting to industry trends and changing regulations. They've established national—and even global—markets that bring outside dollars into their local communities. Many are also attracting venture-capital dollars, which can raise investor awareness for other companies in their region.
- **Outstanding employers.** These companies practice diversity and have established strong corporate cultures and creative human-resource policies. The result is an inspired workplace where employees think and behave like owners.
- **Continually raising the bar.** Companies to Watch honorees are constantly improving themselves—from introducing new products to perfecting internal processes to setting new standards for customer service. A byproduct of their innovative operations and offerings, these second-stagers are helping clients be more competitive.
- **Good citizens.** Honorees are also committed to their communities. Some have revitalized blighted areas by building new facilities or renovating existing ones. Others have a strong track record of philanthropy; whether they support social or environmental causes, they are determined to make a difference.

Although Ed Lowe fell into all of these categories, it was this last one he was most passionate about. He used to say “all roads lead to Cassopolis” and supported the community not only by donating money but also by giving his time and taking leadership roles in civic groups. Ed also felt strongly about another important community—his fellow entrepreneurs—and in 1985 we created the foundation to build support and raise awareness for second-stage companies.

Among the foundation's many programs, Companies to Watch celebrates growing second-stagers and recognizes the important impact they have. From adding new jobs and strengthening the economy to transforming communities into more vibrant places to live, Michigan 50 Companies to Watch honorees play a critical—and multifaceted—role in our state's destiny.

Congratulations, class of 2012! We salute your current accomplishments and look forward to your future ones!

Darlene Lowe
Chairman
Edward Lowe Foundation



Michigan 50 Companies to Watch Champion

Open Systems Technology (OST) is the 2012 Michigan 50 Companies to Watch Champion. Led by president Dan Behm, OST embodies the spirit of the Companies to Watch award.



A provider of IT services for health care, manufacturing and financial institutions, OST was honored in 2009 as a Michigan 50 winner. The company has continued its growth trajectory with 92 percent growth over eight years, having reached \$69 million in 2011 with an annual increase of 40 percent in one year alone. Now with 90 employees, OST more than doubled its talent count in four years.

OST has invested in its organizational culture, with a hallmark 3 percent turnover rate compared to the industry standard of 20 percent. OST exudes personality—just look at their website, where their company description starts with, “Forgive us if our hair is a mess. Or if you catch us wearing a neck brace. It’s just that we’ve been on a wild ride for the past few years.”

The company’s passion extends to its West Michigan home base. Community giving is driven by employees, who participate in numerous social causes to benefit youth, underprivileged families and medical research charities.

Way to go, Open Systems Technology. You continue to be a Company to Watch!

ALUMNI UPDATE: A QUICK LOOK AT PAST HONOREES' PROGRESS				
Company, City Highest Ranking Official	2012 projected FTE* growth	Revenue Growth		Milestones
		2011	2012 (projected)	
Action Fabricators, Grand Rapids <i>Jon Rudolph, president/CEO</i>	8.3%	32%	10%	Continued diversification into the furniture, electronics, automotive and medical markets; broke off its Laminin Medical division into a separate company.
Airfoil Public Relations, Southfield <i>Lisa Vallee-Smith, CEO</i>	9.3%	20%	3–5%	Secured global projects from Microsoft and other companies that will enable it to expand into additional international markets. Enjoyed highest grossing year since launch in 2000.
Arrow Strategies, Bingham Farms <i>Jeff Styers, president/CEO</i>	19.1%	33%	46%	Named to the National Association for Business Resources’ 101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For in 2011—marking its third consecutive year on the list.
Bay View Food Products/ Mr. Chips Inc., Pinconning <i>Joseph Janicke, president</i>	22.3%	61%	15%	Increased market share from current industry segment; increased production capacity and product diversity to facilitate growth.
Billhighway, Troy <i>Vincent Thomas, CEO</i>	44%	65%	110%	Launched new program, expanded into two vertical markets, added 18 team members and CEO was named Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year.
Black Star Farms, Suttons Bay <i>Donald Coe, managing member</i>	25%	5.8%	9%	Reorganized business units, which increased production, modernization and growth. Introduced product outside of Michigan.
Charter House Innovations, Holland <i>Charles Reid, president</i>	11.9%	44%	25%	Became a global player through increased business with clients in Canada, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.
Chemico Systems, Southfield <i>Leon Richardson, president/CEO</i>	34.4%	30%	60%	Secured new contracts with Toyota, Boeing and Honeywell, hired 30 employees and moved to new corporate office.
Computerized Facility Integration, Southfield <i>Robert Verdun, president</i>	33.7%	20%	35%	Enhanced its consulting service and ability to identify and prove huge ROI on its solutions for clients.
Crypton Fabrics, West Bloomfield <i>Craig and Randy Rubin, co-owners</i>	5.5%	9%	7%	Began green initiative with Yellowstone National Park, recycling the park’s plastic bottles to use in carpet backing; launched CryptonHome, a B2C business that has skyrocketed sales.
Diversified Industrial Staffing, Troy <i>Todd Palmer, president</i>	20%	13%	15%	Integrated Zappos-like corporate culture and new corporate structure based on author Gino Wickman’s theories.

eFulfillment Service Inc., Traverse City <i>John Lindberg, president</i>	5.7%	23%	15%	Lowered pricing structure, simplified pricing model and expanded its customer service department to provide greater level of service to clients.
Emagine Entertainment, Troy <i>Paul Glantz, founder</i>	12.5%	20%	7%	Diversified into the boutique bowling industry; raised over \$200,000 for charity at its Royal Oak location during opening weekend.
Fluid Equipment Development Co., Monroe <i>Eli Oklejas, president</i>	15.4%	16.5%	20%	Expanded globally with sales office in Dubai, offered new product lines to gain entry into new markets and became ISO9001 and ISO14000 certified.
Forensic Fluids Laboratories, Kalamazoo <i>Bridget Lorenz Lemberg, CEO</i>	17.5%	77%	90%	Purchased LIMS software that will aid in 24-hour or less turnaround, secured large contract with Indiana’s Dept. of Child Services and expanded product line.
Global LT, Troy <i>Hortensia Albertini, president</i>	6.3%	58.7%	20%	Enjoyed unprecedented work volume as well as many awards, including Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year, Top 50 Hispanic Owned Business, and the 2011 Small Business Blue Ribbon Award.
ImageSoft Inc., Southfield <i>Scott Bade, president</i>	9.2%	5.4%	20%	Launched three products that will streamline judicial processes and differentiate them from others. Purchased new corporate building, which tripled workspace.
Information Systems Resources, Dearborn <i>Luther Elliot, president</i>	25.9%	5%	8%	Expanded business model to include demanufacturing, where electronics are disassembled and then introduced back into the manufacturing process as raw materials.
Ingenuity IEQ, Midland <i>Michael Fox, president/CEO</i>	13.7%	10.5%	10.5%	Added product line, participated in the Pure Michigan Business Connect Economic Gardening Pilot Program, and formed its first advisory board of directors.
KTM Industries Inc., Lansing <i>Tim Colonnese, president/CEO</i>	22.2%	15%	75%	Expanded export sales to China; diversified into the shipping-cooler and wine-shipping markets.
LookInTheAttic & Co., Romulus <i>John Coleman, president</i>	9.1%	10%	15%	Diversified into the wholesale and distribution sector, signed on with Lowe’s Home Improvement and purchased 12,000-square-foot distribution facility.
Marble’s Gun Sights, Gladstone <i>Craig Lauerman, president</i>	18.8%	55%	25%	Increased business with both existing and new customers and invested in new equipment.
Maximum Mold, Benton Harbor <i>David LaGrow, president</i>	30.8%	20%	15%	Gained new clients and purchased new equipment, which increased profitability and staff.
Online Tech, Ann Arbor <i>Yan Ness, CEO</i>	23.5%	25.4%	25%	Opened third data center with others planned throughout the Midwest. Released HIPAA-compliant hosting clouds.
Open Systems Technologies, Grand Rapids <i>Dan Behm, president</i>	40.1%	39.9%	25%	Grew sales from \$5.4 million in 2003 to \$69 million in 2011 and added 90 employees during that time.
Patriot Services Corp., Commerce Township <i>Stephen Potter, president</i>	76.7%	14%	100%	Diversified into the defense industry and long-term care market; won statewide contract that will result in 100 percent revenue growth.
Shelving Inc., Auburn Hills <i>Joe Schodowski, president/CEO</i>	10.6%	26%	20%	Won GSA contract; expanded product line on e-commerce sites. Donated time and money to Detroit’s Capuchin Soup Kitchen, raising over \$1 million to date.
Shorts Brewing Co., Bellaire <i>Leah Short, Joe Short and Scott Newman-Bale, partners</i>	26.6%	70%	50%	Reached \$5 million in sales, hired highly specialized employees and doubled capacity for growth.
SRT Solutions, Ann Arbor <i>Dianne Marsh, president</i>	24.2%	22.6%	20%	Developed apps for mobile phones and tablets. Worked with MEDC and Ann Arbor Spark on the Shifting Code program.
TES International, Troy <i>Jeff Lewis, president</i>	14.3%	N/A	100%	Awarded U.S. Army contract, made first software sale to China, and donated to Detroit soup kitchen by providing 940 lunches in one day.
TransPharm Preclinical Solutions, Jackson <i>Daniel Ross, president/CEO</i>	20%	15%	30%	Introduced one-month guaranteed turnaround service, gained several new clients and added new services including virology and parasitology work.
Tri-Star Molding, Marcellus <i>Nick DeKoning, CEO</i>	3.4%	13%	15–20%	Added product lines and gained clients; made numerous improvements to facility and equipment.
Underground Printing, Ann Arbor <i>Ryan Gregg and Rishi Narayan, co-owners</i>	25.5%	23%	30%	Opened 17th location in Nebraska, expanded primary production facility by 66 percent and donated nearly \$75,000 through cash and in-kind services to Mott Children’s Hospital at U of M.
Unified Business Technologies, Troy <i>Michelle D’Souza, CEO</i>	37.9%	50%	30%	Won five-year contract with the U.S. Army; will launch website focused on keeping jobs in the United States.
Wellco, Royal Oak <i>Scott Foster, president</i>	N/A	5%	60%	Developed Wellness Positioning System, a dashboard to track costs, effectiveness and ROI.

* Full-time equivalent employees



Pure Michigan Business Connect: Economic Gardening in Action



Michigan is trailblazing a new path to opportunity and economic prosperity. The emphasis on “hunting” for out-of-state investment and jobs through tax credits and other incentives has dramatically shifted to growing existing Michigan businesses and nurturing new ventures through economic gardening.

PURE MICHIGAN[®] Business Connect At the core of this new economic gardening philosophy is Michigan’s \$8-billion Pure Michigan Business Connect (PMBC) initiative.

This multi-year, multi-faceted program sets a new standard for economic gardening. Entrepreneurs and growing companies in need of assistance are being offered new ways to raise capital, find talent and get access to expensive business services like accounting, legal counsel, market research, business tax estimating, and export and government procurement guidance at little or no cost.

Started less than a year ago, PMBC has already signed up nearly 1,000 participating companies. On the resource supply side, major funding commitments have been made by banks including \$3 billion from Fifth Third and \$2 billion from Huntington in addition to support from Comerica, Export-Import Bank, the Small Business Administration, the Michigan Credit Union League & Affiliates and the state’s Capital Access Program that offers business lending incentives to financial institutions.

State-based corporations and utilities have also pledged to direct millions of dollars in purchasing to Michigan-based suppliers.

TRANSFORMING Michigan’s economic ecosystem requires the broad involvement of our state’s business community



Growing our Own

For years, Governor Snyder said, growing Michigan startup and second stage companies have struggled with the challenges of finding the right talent and access to capital. Speaking from personal experience as a successful venture capitalist and business executive, he said: “Pure Michigan Business Connect is the cornerstone of a new toolkit for economic gardening we are developing that’s built on Michigan’s broad asset base of strong corporate enterprises, innovative entrepreneurs and rich technology resources.”

In a bold switch of focus engineered by the state’s chief executive, the entire foundation of the state’s economic development effort has been rebuilt. The new and improved business tax system is simple, fair and efficient, the former edifice of business-tax incentives has been dismantled. Today, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation is providing businesses the resources they need on a case-by-case basis, primarily through Pure Michigan Business Connect.

“It’s not a one-size-fits-all approach anymore,” MEDC CEO Michael Finney said.

In announcing the new approach last August, Finney said: “This is an invitation to Michigan’s business community, companies that have supply needs or funds to lend and those that are looking for new opportunities. All are encouraged to join Pure Michigan Business Connect. Transforming Michigan’s economic ecosystem requires the broad involvement of our state’s business community—our largest, most prominent companies along with the newest and least known and those of all sizes and sectors in between—working with local and state economic development agencies.”

Getting Results and National Recognition

Less than a year later, we’re seeing results. Michigan has been climbing steadily in rankings of state business climates for entrepreneurs and small business. It is especially gratifying that Michigan has been chosen to host the National Economic Gardening Conference in Grand Rapids this June for the first time in the event’s 10-year history. Can you imagine Michigan being considered for this honor a year ago?

In a column headlined “Michigan’s homegrown growth model draws attention,” business columnist Tom Walsh wrote about the “economic gardening” strategy being touted by Governor Snyder, focusing on nurturing home-grown businesses with a simpler, lower corporate tax in lieu of big tax credits. On March 13 this year, he wrote: “Now other states may start looking at the Michigan model because they, too, face looming fiscal deficits, or—like Georgia—they see diminishing returns as competing states also spend big bucks to attract a limited number of jobs.”

Corporate Community Is All In

Michigan’s corporate community has stepped up in a big way to assure the success of this innovative plan.

Huntington Bank announced a groundbreaking public-private lending partnership with the state of Michigan and the MEDC by committing \$2 billion over four years in commercial and small business lending throughout the state. Huntington is the first Michigan bank to enter into this partnership.

As a PMBC partner, Fifth Third Bank has the capacity to make new loans totaling \$2.5 billion to Michigan businesses in 2012. The bank’s participation in Pure Michigan Business Connect is the largest commitment by a financial institution to date.

Utilities are also bringing their considerable purchasing power to bear in the effort. Since joining the initiative, Consumers Energy has awarded state firms \$170 million in new multi-year contracts. The company is on track to meet

its commitment of increasing spending with Michigan companies by \$50 million in the first year of the initiative. DTE Energy has pledged to invest \$250 million over the next five years to do business with Michigan-based suppliers as part of the PMBC.

The latest addition to Pure Michigan Business Connect is the Economic Gardening pilot program. Fifty-four small and midsize companies from around Michigan were selected to receive business development support through this pilot. The program is being administered through the National Center for Economic Gardening and includes four areas of support: strategy and management; market research/competitive intelligence; Internet and social media strategy; and geographical information systems to help identify potential customers in other states.

Google has joined the effort with Michigan Get Your Business Online. This program is providing local businesses the tools and resources to get online. The smaller the company, the more daunting and expansive the process of getting a website up and running can be. For that reason, this has been one of the most popular and well-received aspects of the program. Dozens of companies have already taken the training, and there's a waiting list.

The success of MEDC's new economic gardening strategy outlined above depends on the involvement of each of the state's business enterprises, from large established corporations to small growth companies. If you're already in, thank you for participating. If you've not signed up yet and are ready to be a part of the Pure Michigan Business Connection, either as a recipient or resource, go to www.michiganadvantage.org/Business-Connect to get started.



It's not a
**one-
size-
fits-all**
approach
anymore."

**MEDC CEO
Michael Finney**



Michigan Credit Unions Committed to Small Business

In 2011, small business lending increased at Michigan credit unions by \$145 million. We're local and stand committed to serving the credit needs of our small business members today and tomorrow.

www.mcul.org

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Congratulations to the 2012 Award Winners

Small Business Person of the Year
John Charles Lowery, President
Applied Imaging

Young Entrepreneur of the Year
Amber Lynn (Smith) Williams,
Owner/President
*Power in Motion Gymnastics
& Fitness Inc.*

**Jeffrey Butland Family-Owned
Business of the Year**
Jami Margaret Moore, President
JEM Tech Group

**Small Business Exporter
of the Year, Michigan
and Midwest Region**
Laurence S. Slovin, President/CEO
*B&P Process Equipment
and Systems LLC*

**Minority Small Business
Champion**
Donald E. Snider, Sr. Vice President
Urban Development and Growth
*Michigan Economic Development
Corporation — Cadillac Place*

**Women Small Business
Champion of the Year**
Margaret Adams,
WBC Program Manager
Cornerstone Alliance

**Entrepreneurial Success
of the Year, Michigan
and Midwest Region**
William Deary, CEO
Great Lakes Caring

**Veteran Small Business
Champion, National, Michigan
and Midwest Region**
Keith King, President/CEO
Keith King & Associates

**Financial Services Champion,
National, Michigan and
Midwest Region**
Dave Adams, President/CEO
*Michigan Credit Union
League & Affiliates*

**Small Business Journalist
of the Year**
Larry T. Eiler, Co-founder/
Chairman/CEO
Eiler Communications

**MI-SBTDC Small Business
Counselor of the Year**
Stanley J. Pruski,
Growth Group Specialist
*Michigan Small Business and
Technology Development Center*

SCORE Counselor of the Year
James H. Muir, Mentor
SCORE Chapter 18

Innovation Award
Navid Yazdi, CEO
Evigia Systems Inc.

Government Contracting Award
Gale and Keith Merchant, Owners
B&P Manufacturing

**Main Street USA
Best Small Business**
John Mihelich, Owner
Woodward Auto

**Urban Small Business and
Entrepreneurship Award**
Amy Proos, CEO
Proos Manufacturing Inc.

Michigan 50 Companies to Watch
see pages 17–41



Michigan 50 Companies to Watch for

2012

criteria for nomination

- ✓ six to 99 full-time equivalent employees
- ✓ \$750,000 to \$50 million in annual revenue
- ✓ intent and capacity for growth
- ✓ special strengths that make a company worth watching

400

second-stage businesses have been celebrated over eight years

Since its launch in 2005, the **Michigan 50 Companies to Watch** awards program has celebrated the success stories of 400 second-stage businesses located throughout the state.

Companies chosen for this award have between six and 99 full-time equivalent employees and \$750,000 to \$50 million in annual revenue. They are also notable for other important traits. As second-stagers, they have moved beyond the startup phase and are focused on growth rather than survival. Compared to their big-business counterparts, they are

nimble and can seize opportunities as they arise. They're innovators in their industries and are introducing new products, services and technologies.

They also cultivate a corporate culture that empowers employees and can effect change in their communities through philanthropy and volunteerism."

The 50 companies honored this year were selected from a record number of qualified applicants. They underwent two

rigorous review rounds, including a final determination by a judging panel comprised of professionals from economic development, financial lending, venture capital, business counseling and private industry.

"Serving on the judging panel is one of the highlights of my year," says Jane Sherzer, president of the Michigan Certified Development Corporation. "I'm continually amazed at the number of highly qualified candidates, and we are challenged every year to name only 50 honorees. Every year I come away from this experience re-energized and excited about the business climate and the resources right here in Michigan."

Indeed, Companies to Watch reflects not only a recognition program, but also a statewide effort at the community level to create an environment where growth companies can be nurtured. In addition to the six organizations that founded Michigan Celebrates Small Business, 54 community partners from every nook and cranny of the state provide services to and advocate for these companies on a daily basis.

The Michigan 50 Companies to Watch program is an opportunity to recognize outstanding second-stage growth companies as well as the organizations and communities that cheer them on.

\$1.3 billion

revenue generated by the winning companies from 2008 through 2011



Argent Tape & Label Inc. Plymouth

Lynn Perenic, president/CEO

Founded in 1994
Current leadership since 2010

Primary business: manufactures adhesive products

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
8 in 2011 • 10 expected in 2012

www.argent-label.com



A manufacturer of custom labels and tags and an authorized distributor of 3M packaging and tape products, Argent Tape & Label (ATL) serves a wide variety of industries.

Founded in 1994, ATL suffered a bleak period from 2006 to 2009 when the loss of a major customer forced it to vacate its residence and downsize staff by 90 percent. Lynn Perenic stepped into the CEO role in 2010 and transformed the company by expanding into new markets and entering key business alliances.

Perenic also introduced open book management, working with employees to reduce expenses and increase efficiency. As a result, ATL's annual revenue more than doubled in 2010 and increased 28 percent in 2011.

Perenic also strengthened ATL's competitive edge by becoming a solutions provider. For example, when an automotive client wanted a product to cover the wheels of vehicles during transport, ATL researched a variety of solutions until it came up with the perfect marriage of product design and price point. "Another example is that a medical equipment manufacturer needed a medical grade film that could be die cut to shape for their instrument," says Perenic. "ATL contacted 3M's medical products division and tested a variety of products until we found the perfect solution."



Avalon International Breads Detroit

Ann Perrault, CEO

Founded in 1997
Current leadership since 1997

Primary business: artisan bakery

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
38 in 2011 • 64 expected in 2012

www.avalonbreads.net



"Eat well, do good" is the mantra of Avalon International Breads. A pioneer of social enterprise, the company set up shop in Detroit's Cass Corridor in 1997 with a focus on making high quality baked goods—and revitalizing downtown Detroit.

Specializing in artisan breads and rustic pastries, Avalon uses 100 percent organic flour in all its products. The company has developed a vegan sweets line, which is now the fastest growing part of its sweets department.

From 2008 to 2011, Avalon more than doubled its staff. It expects to add 25 employees this year and increase annual revenue by more than 50 percent.

Driving the company's culture and business practices is a "triple bottom line" that focuses on the well-being of employees, community and the earth. Avalon pursues environmentally friendly practices at every opportunity. It began recycling in 2000 and is now piloting industrial composting, reducing its landfill waste by more than 30 percent.

Leading with its values has given Avalon a competitive edge, says CEO Ann Perrault. "Our use of organics, local sourcing, recycling practices and healthy products continues to drive traffic. We've never paid for advertising. Our customers are so enthusiastic and loyal that they provide amazing word-of-mouth marketing."

AXIOS INC.

Axios Inc. Grand Rapids

Dan Barcheski, CEO

Founded in 1988
Current leadership since 1988

Primary business: human
resource services

Sites in Michigan: 8
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
42 in 2011 • 44 expected in 2012

www.axiosincorporated.com



Named after the Greek word for “worthy,” Axios provides job placement, training services and employee benefit offerings—combining its three divisions into one cohesive organization to help clients reduce their costs while increasing quality and profitability.

Initially Axios focused on staffing services, but in 2000 it moved into human resource management, adding outsourced services such as payroll processing, group benefit packages, workers’ compensation and unemployment claims management. This expansion of services greatly strengthened Axios’ competitive muscle and differentiated it from other staffing companies.

Another important endeavor has been to adopt Lean Sigma principles that eliminate waste and defects from systems. Although Lean Sigma is more commonly associated with manufacturing companies, Axios has benefitted considerably: increasing sales without adding overhead, becoming more profitable and reaching the highest customer satisfaction rates in its history.

The company also sets itself apart with a number of proprietary tools, including an automated calling system that can quickly reach employees to put them on assignment at client locations. “This allows our employees to earn a paycheck faster, our clients get workers faster, and our company has become much more efficient in our ‘speed to fill’ metrics,” says CEO Dan Barcheski.

BENECOR

Benecor Inc. Brighton

Brendan Foster, president

Founded in 2008
Current leadership since 2008

Primary business: manufactures
DEF pumps and systems

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

www.benecor.com



This honoree is definitely pumped up. A supplier in the diesel engine industry, Benecor makes diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) pumps, storage and delivery systems used in construction, marine and farm equipment. The young company has achieved triple-digit revenue increases for the past two years and predicts a 76 percent increase for 2012.

Brendan Foster founded Benecor in 2008, recognizing that EPA mandates would require new technology and equipment. In response, Benecor has designed an automatic dispensing system that provides better control. Instead of requiring operators to interact with the pump, Benecor’s technology allows pumps to automatically turn on and off via electronic pressure devices—preventing pump failure caused by operators leaving them running.

In contrast to competitors that serve multiple industries, Benecor focuses narrowly on diesel exhaust fluid, and all employees are experts in the field, from the controller to the plant assembler. As a result, customers see Benecor as an extension of their companies—more as a subsidiary than a supplier, says Foster.

With its successful track record in North America, Benecor is now expanding into South American and Asian markets as they adopt similar diesel emission standards.



BikerGarage101 Oscoda

Chad Faszczewski, owner

Founded in 2008
Current leadership since 2008

Primary business: online
retailer of power-sport parts

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
11 in 2011 • 13 expected in 2012

www.bikergarage101.com



An online supplier of motor-sport parts and accessories, BikerGarage101 has carved a niche market by buying in large quantities and then passing on the savings. From clothing and helmets to exhausts and spark plugs, its customers can purchase quality parts at rock bottom prices.

The company started operations in a small garage in 2008 as an eBay-based company. Yet launching its own e-commerce website sparked considerable growth and enabled BikerGarage101 to move into its current 30,000-square-foot facility—a building at a former air base that had been vacant since 1992.

Currently BikerGarage101 is adding four lines of outdoor equipment that will help it appeal to a wider range of customers. The company is also developing its own auction site, along with a website for the outdoor equipment and one for a scooter distribution business.

Extremely active in its community, BikerGarage101 launched Oscoda Biker Daze in 2011, an event that brought thousands of tourists to the area. The company has also opened Michigan’s only motorcycle museum.

The company has a number of benefit rides planned for 2012, with all proceeds going to local charities. It also has a blood drive planned in addition to the second annual Oscoda Biker Daze. “We realize that without a strong, healthy, economically sound community we will not survive,” says owner Chad Faszczewski.



Brute Industries Inc. Escanaba

Richard Heinz,
president

Founded in 2004
Current
leadership
since 2004

Primary business:
manufactures automotive ramps

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
15 in 2011 • 18 expected in 2012

www.raceramps.com



Because of their wide tires and low profiles, high-performance cars like Corvettes, Vipers and Mustangs are difficult to drive onto standard car ramps. In response, Brute Industries has developed unique ramps that make it easier—and safer—for such vehicles to be repaired, hauled, displayed and stored.

Brute constructs its products from high-density expanded polystyrene foam and then coats them with a hybrid polyuria. The foam core makes the products very lightweight, while the coating provides extreme strength and nonslip properties. Brute’s technology allows it to create ramps of any shape and size without a mold. Another competitive advantage, the company is able to do custom work without charging much more than its stock products because products are cut in-house.

Innovation is a hallmark of Brute, and the company has already won four patents with others pending. Listening carefully to customers has helped spark product development, and the company has won a number of awards including several from the Specialty Equipment Market Association.

Although the automotive industry is Brute’s sweet spot, the company is applying its Race Ramps technology to other applications, such as wheelchair ramps and dance floors. “The original patent is very broad, which allows us to develop products in a wide variety of industries,” says president Richard Heinz.



Chateau Chantal Winery & Inn Traverse City

James Krupka, president/CEO

Founded in 1991
Current leadership
since 2004

Primary business: winery

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
60 in 2011 • 59 expected in 2012

www.chateauchantal.com



A pioneer of agritourism, Chateau Chantal has been advancing Michigan's culinary and winery industries since 1991 with a business model that blends a winery with a bed-and-breakfast at its Old Mission Peninsula location.

In the early 2000s, the company transformed itself from a local, family-owned company to an international operation by purchasing a 55-acre vineyard in Mendoza, Argentina that makes red wine from the Malbec grape. The company also sends its staff to wineries around the globe to search for cutting-edge technologies to use in processing and product analysis.

With the help of a state grant, Chateau Chantal has implemented mechanization in its vineyards, which is radically improving grape-growing economies. It has also embraced green farming techniques and has replaced chemical fertilizers with compost containing organic nutrients and mulch. Chateau Chantal also works with Michigan State University in wind energy and viticulture research studies.

Among its various awards, Chateau Chantal has been recognized by Gayot.com among its "Top 10 Wine Country Inns in the U.S." Chateau Chantal prides itself not only on its distinctive local wines, but also a creative portfolio of experiences that range from wine tasting and cooking classes to private events and corporate meetings. "We can tailor each experience to meet our guest's wishes," says CEO James Krupka.



Cherry Republic Glen Arbor

Bob Sutherland, president

Founded in 1989
Current leadership since 1989

Primary business: specialty
food products

Sites in Michigan: 4
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
56 in 2011 • 59 expected in 2012

www.cherryrepublic.com



For this company, business is far more than a bowl of cherries. Cherry Republic has over 150 products that celebrate the bright red fruit—from food products such as jams and salsas to bath salts and wooden bowls.

Founder Bob Sutherland launched the business in 1989 with a single product: a T-shirt that proclaimed "Life, liberty, beaches and pie." Fast forward to 2012: Cherry Republic has its own production facility and distributes its diverse products via a catalog, website, three company-owned stores and 450 other Midwest retailers.

Cherry Republic's corporate culture promotes individuality—and flexibility. "Employees may move from their offices to a cubicle if a co-worker needs the space to do their job during a busy season," explains Sutherland. Or a staffer may put regular duties on hold and head for the warehouse to help pack boxes for the holiday rush.

Giving back to the community is a priority at Cherry Republic. In 1995 it began to donate 1 percent of sales to regional causes such as Friends of the Sleeping Bear Dunes and Homestretch Affordable Housing Agency. And when customers purchase products at Cherry Republic stores, they are charged a refundable 1 percent "tariff," which is donated to agricultural programs in northern Michigan.



Criterion Comstock Park

Jeanne Rathbun, CEO

Founded in 1987
Current leadership
since 2009

Primary business:
manufacturing solutions

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
20 in 2011 • 22 expected in 2012

www.criterionms.com



A designer and manufacturer of automation equipment, Criterion specializes in programmable motion technology used in cutting machines, measurement machines and robotic parking systems.

The company sets itself apart by being able to deliver savvy, cost-effective solutions quickly—and on a tight budget. Case in point: A building developer wanted to include an automated parking system in a university medical center, but had a hard time finding a source that could meet the project's specific needs. One of the difficult criteria: nothing could be embedded in the garage floor under vehicles. Criterion solved the problem by creating an innovative new product, eValet, for which it's seeking patent protection.

Industry observers have applauded eValet and praised Criterion for setting a new performance bar in automated parking. "The high visibility of this project will provide new opportunities to make others aware of Criterion's capabilities," says CEO Jeanne Rathbun.

Criterion also leverages its problem-solving prowess to benefit its community. For example, the company has installed a wireless lighting system and welded unique hand railings for a local church. Its facilities have been used by youth organizations for activities and by nonprofit agencies for storage, and Criterion staffers have taught in elementary schools—helping students understand how businesses take an idea from concept to market.



Critical Signal Technologies Inc. Farmington Hills

Jeffery Prough, president/CEO

Founded in 2006
Current leadership since 2006

Primary business: provides
medical alert and life safety
solutions

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 1

Full-time equivalent employees:
99 in 2011 • 105 expected in 2012

www.cstltd.com



Technology is the backbone of Critical Signal Technologies (CST), but peace of mind is at its heart. A provider of medical alert and life safety systems, CST helps older adults, disabled and chronically ill individuals maintain their independence.

Founded in 2006, the young company doubled its size in 2009 when it acquired a 30-year-old personal emergency response system (PERS) provider in Massachusetts. Last year CST launched a proactive vital-signs monitoring solution designed for hospitals, managed care organizations and home care companies. The company also offers a wireless pull-cord system for multitenant facilities that enables tenants to alert emergency assistance from anywhere within the building.

Today CST is considered the fourth largest independent PERS supplier in North America and is supported by two multilingual, 24/7 care centers.

"CST is taking on an integral role in health care reform," says CEO Jeffery Prough. "Our ability to proactively alert health care providers of changes in their patients' status and our ability to intervene and assess an emergency, whether real or perceived, helps to drive down health care costs and reduce unnecessary hospital readmissions and costly emergency medical transportation."



Crystal Clean Auto Detailing Grand Rapids

Ross Timyan, owner

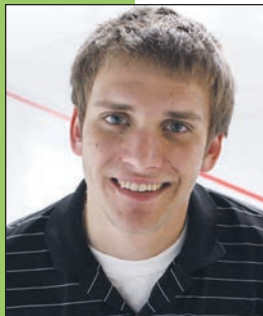
Founded in 2006
Current leadership since 2006

Primary business: automotive
detailing and reconditioning

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
96 in 2011 • 108 expected in 2012

www.crystalcleanautodetailing.com



With a passion for squeaky-clean cars, Crystal Clean Auto Detailing provides a wide range of services ranging from dent and paint repair to odor removal.

The company has set itself apart from competitors on a number of fronts:

- A vehicle photography studio where car photos are taken in a more refined environment instead of a crowded car lot. "It's very convenient for our dealership customers because before the car gets back on the lot, the photos of it are already online," says owner Ross Timyan.
- Free airport valet service that enables customers to have vehicles cleaned or repaired while they're out of town—saving parking fees that can offset a large chunk of the detailing cost.
- An online portal that gives dealers fast access to vehicle estimates, photos of damage, invoices and repair status.

In December 2010 Crystal Clean leased a 60,000-square-foot building next door and launched a heated storage business for cars, boats, RVs and other vehicles, which has helped fuel the company's impressive growth.

The company also leverages clever marketing events to raise visibility. For example, the company holds a "Dirtiest Car Contest" on its Facebook page. Fans determine the winners, and then Crystal Clean details those cars—posting "before" and "after" photos.



CURO Grand Rapids

Lina Kalvyte, owner/president

Founded in 2009
Current leadership since 2009

Primary business: provides
pharmacy services to health
care facilities

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
20 in 2011 • 28 expected in 2012

www.curorx.com



Named after the Latin word "to care for," CURO offers pharmacy services to long-term health care providers, including rehabilitation centers, retirement communities, adult foster care homes, nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

The company's business model combines technological investments with old-fashioned attentiveness. For example, its multiple dosage packaging systems, advanced electronic billing and medical record systems enable CURO to monitor dosages and prevent potential negative medication interactions.

At the same time, personalized attention is a priority. Each customer has its own dedicated customer service individual, and when calling CURO, no one has to navigate through a maze of automated voice options. "We accept no excuse for disappointing a customer," says president Lina Kalvyte.

A pivotal moment in the company's history occurred when its largest competitor suddenly went out of business, putting the prescriptions of thousands of patients in jeopardy. CURO's clientele increased 50 percent practically overnight. And though this put a strain on its systems and staff, CURO rallied quickly and was able to recruit additional highly qualified personnel and obtain more office space to meet the challenge.

The company continues to enjoy strong growth and forecasts a revenue increase of 30 percent for 2012.



Dancin' Dogg Golf Traverse City

Brandon Theophilus,
president/CEO

Founded in 2005
Current leadership since 2009

Primary business: develops
golf technology products

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
10 in 2011 • 10 expected in 2012

www.dancindogg.com



A developer of golf technology products, Dancin' Dogg Golf is enabling more golfers to improve their game from the comfort of their homes.

Traditionally, simulated golf systems were only available to the affluent, bearing price tags of \$10,000 or more. Yet Dancin' Dogg has developed an affordable solution, the OptiShot Infrared Golf Simulator, which sells for \$399 and enables users to replicate some of the world's most famous golf courses. OptiShot leverages the company's patent-pending golf swing calculation analysis software and features 16 advanced optical sensors that accurately measure the golf club through the impact zone, capturing shot impact conditions.

The OptiShot simulator has won numerous awards, including SCOREGolf magazine's 2010 R&D award, and the product has been featured in Golf, Golfweek, Sports Illustrated and Wired magazines, as well as television's Golf Channel.

Last year Dancin' Dogg was named No. 358 on the Inc. 500 list of fastest-growing U.S. companies. Annual revenue growth has been in the triple digits for the past two years, and the company expects to double its business in 2012.

"Having our development team in-house makes us very nimble, allowing us to constantly tweak and improve our OptiShot software," observes CEO Brandon Theophilus. In addition to its simulator, Dancin' Dogg is creating other innovative golf technologies and accessories.



DaySmart Software Wixom

Mark Jackson, president

Founded in 1999
Current leadership since 1999

Primary business: designs
computer software

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
30 in 2011 • 36 expected in 2012

www.daysmart.com



A player in an extremely competitive industry, DaySmart Software has created powerful solutions to help several niche markets save time and better serve customers.

The company's flagship product was an appointment book and business management solution for beauty salons, day spas and massage therapists. Since then, DaySmart has developed proprietary software for three other industries: medical spas and plastic surgery clinics; pet groomers and supply stores; and tattoo parlors. Its Salon Iris software has won prestigious awards from American Salon, Nails and Launchpad magazines.

All products are written in .NET and have cloud-based technology, which allows DaySmart greater flexibility to expand its product portfolio. Another hallmark, DaySmart provides software options for any sized business. "We develop the software so it can grow with the client," explains president Mark Jackson. "They can easily transition from a solo version, to the next level, and eventually to a multi-location package that connects multiple business locations together."

Supporting the community is a priority for DaySmart. For example, the company is involved in programs for computer science and software engineering students at the University of Michigan. In 2009 the university awarded DaySmart its "Co-Op Employer of the Year" award, an honor previously held by Detroit Edison, NASA and the Ford Motor Co.



Delta Manufacturing *Escanaba*

Jean Ross, president

Founded in 2006
Current leadership since 2006

Primary business: manufactures
railroad components

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
18 in 2011 • 20 expected in 2012

www.deltamfg.net



Delta Manufacturing has devised an affordable solution for one of the railroad industry's biggest problems: wheel repairs.

A provider of gear cases, wear plates and specialty fabrication, Delta has created a portable computerized numerical control (CNC) lathe that turns locomotive wheels without moving the wheel set. The lathe produces a highly accurate profile to remove flat spots, high flanges and worn tread. It's easy to set up and operate and can be used to make repairs in the shop or out in the field. In addition to saving time and money, the lathe also increases employee safety.

Delta continues to innovate by adding items that complement its portable CNC lathe. This includes: a stationary freight car wheel truing system, a mobile and stationary traction motor combo wheel truing system, and an AC drive control for turning AC traction motors.

About 45 percent of Delta's customer base is international. "The Internet has been crucial to sales by our ability to demonstrate our products and how they work," says president Jean Ross, noting that Delta is working on an international website that visitors will be able to access in Spanish, German and French as well as English.



Detroit Trading Co. *Southfield*

Donald Campbell,
president/CEO

Founded in 2004
Current leadership since 2004

Primary business: provides
automotive leads

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
19 in 2011 • 19 expected in 2012

www.detroittrading.com



An automotive matchmaker, the Detroit Trading Co. provides Internet leads to car manufacturers and dealers.

Founded in 2004, the company began as an open exchange, creating an infrastructure for companies and dealers to trade leads. Yet when car sales plummeted during the recession, Detroit Trading revised its business model. Instead of remaining a middleman, it entered the retail space and began to directly buy and sell leads—which required the company to transform everything from its sales pitch to its accounting system.

The payoff: Detroit Trading not only survived but thrived. During the past three years, it has averaged annual revenue increases of 67 percent. On top of this expanded revenue base, it projects a healthy 31 percent increase for 2012.

Among the company's innovations:

- A lead-trading exchange platform that enables lead sellers a single point of connection, fee collection and legal agreement.
- A scoring system that dramatically improves lead quality.

Detroit Trading also prides itself on superior customer service. "To enable this, we empower each employee to make decisions without having to refer to too many rules or having to wait for management's approval," says CEO Donald Campbell.



Your complete metal solutions company™

DeWys Manufacturing Inc. *Marne*

Jon DeWys, president

Founded in 1977
Current leadership
since 2005

Primary business: provides
metal fabrication services

Sites in Michigan: 2
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
94 in 2011 • 124 expected in 2012

www.dewysmfg.com



"Run with precision" is the goal at DeWys Manufacturing. The metal fabrication shop offers a wide array of services that include machining, stamping, powder coating, product assembly and international sourcing—providing customers with a one-stop shopping source.

DeWys is constantly investing in new technology to improve its manufacturing techniques and customer service. For example, software that allows offline programming of brake press equipment enables younger team members to be as productive as those with years of experience. Inventory management technology interacts with customers' software to keep major parts ready. "This allows customers to issue a blanket purchase order and not worry about receiving product for the balance of the contract," says president Jon DeWys.

In 1998 DeWys began to embrace lean manufacturing, and today all team members are formally trained in lean methods. The company has become a showcase for the implementation of lean manufacturing techniques and provides lean training for several customers. DeWys is also a proponent of safe environmental practices and became green certified in 2010.

Workforce development is another way that DeWys is preparing for future growth. In addition to developing training programs with local high schools and universities, the company has created an in-house program that gets new employees up to speed and expands the skills of current employees.



DMC Consultants Inc. *Detroit*

Mike Chaudhary, CEO

Founded in 2005
Current leadership since 2005

Primary business: construction
and remediation services

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
19 in 2011 • 24 expected in 2012

www.dmcgroupusa.com



One of Michigan's fastest-growing general contractors, DMC Consultants provides construction, demolition and environmental remediation services.

Launched in 2005, the company first focused on environmental remediation of residential houses. Yet during the recession, it diversified into demolition and general construction services—a strategy that sparked significant growth. Over the past three years, the company has achieved an average annual revenue increase of 67 percent.

Earning a number of licenses and certifications, DMC has become a leading contractor in government rehabilitation projects. These projects initially challenged the company because it couldn't find inventory management software suited to its needs. Making lemonade out of lemons, DMC began to design its own software to track inventory, tools and vehicles. This will increase internal efficiencies and savings—and give DMC a proprietary product to market.

Diversity is not only a hallmark of DMC, but also part of its competitive edge. "Technology has made this world a small globe, and diversity is the key to success in the years to come," says CEO Mike Chaudhary. DMC strives to diversify its services, clients and geographical boundaries—and has employees from numerous races, cultures, genders and ages.



Dr. Shrink Inc. Manistee

Michael Stenberg,
president/CEO

Founded in 1992
Current leadership since 1992

Primary business: supplier of
shrink wrap systems

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
15 in 2011 • 16 expected in 2012

www.dr-shrink.com



Dr. Shrink helps its clients get closure. A supplier of shrink wrap and accessories to commercial industries, the company is also adept at adapting to challenges.

Case in point: when a large customer went bankrupt after receiving a very large shipment, Dr. Shrink faced a six-figure loss in 2003. “Although painful, it turned into a very good learning experience,” observes CEO Michael Stenberg, noting that his team rallied quickly, initially reevaluating credit policies and terms and then examining all aspects of the business to increase efficiencies.

Today Dr. Shrink prides itself on being a flat organization that is nimble in both manufacturing and marketing new products, and the company has been able to diversify into many new markets such as wind power, agriculture and scaffolding.

Customer service is another key ingredient in the company’s success recipe. All staff members are knowledgeable about products and able to assist customers with any questions at anytime. Similarly, its warehouse has all products in stock and ready to ship, usually within the same day.

“All layers of Dr. Shrink, from management to warehouse, are technologically savvy and in constant communication,” adds Stenberg. “Changes and improvements that help our customers can be implemented immediately.”



Duo-Gard Industries Inc. Canton

David Miller, president

Founded in 1984
Current leadership since 1991

Primary business: manufactures
daylighting systems and
custom shelters

Sites in Michigan: 3
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
61 in 2011 • 71 expected in 2012

www.duo-gard.com



Let there be light: Duo-Gard Industries makes translucent daylighting systems and outdoor structures for architectural and design markets.

A pioneer in green buildings, the company traces its roots to 1984 when founder Al Miller designed a patented polycarbonate system that saved energy without sacrificing natural light by overlazing existing glass.

Today as a custom systems integrator, Duo-Gard researches technologies from around the world to select components for its proprietary systems—adding value with design, engineering and fabrication services and its expertise in polycarbonate glazing technology.

During 2011 alone, Duo-Gard introduced five new products:

- A maximizer skylight for high-performance daylighting that’s targeted for each specific climatic region.
- Turnkey solar photovoltaic (PV) charging stations for electric vehicles.
- Solar PV canopies for architectural use.
- Bicycle shelters in a wide array of styles.
- A translucent low-profile canopy roof system for stadiums.

Duo-Gard’s systems innovation and education have helped transform translucent polycarbonate glazing technology from something few architects would even consider years ago to a sought-after option for today’s green buildings, says president David Miller. “Visitors to our trade show booth stare and say, ‘Wow! I didn’t know bike shelters could look like that!’”



Dynamic Captioning Grand Rapids

Jay LaBine, owner/CEO

Founded in 2010
Current leadership since 2010

Primary business: provides
captioning services

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 2

Full-time equivalent employees:
26 in 2011 • 30 expected in 2012

www.netcapinc.com



A rising star in a competitive market, Dynamic Captioning serves the hearing impaired community with both real-time and offline captioning services.

Among its innovations, the company has developed a more efficient way to provide offline captioning. Its proprietary application, Media RT, leverages real-time technology in an offline format so that programs are captioned as if they are in a real-time environment. This provides savings for clients and improved margins for Dynamic Captioning.

Dynamic has also acquired a captioning technology company, XOrbit, which will enable it to not only provide closed captioning services but also the required hardware and software technology that allows this service to be performed. “The move from traditional phone line delivery of real-time captioning to Internet protocol digital delivery of captioning will accelerate in the next few years,” says CEO Jay LaBine. “The synergies of Dynamic and XOrbit position us to be on the leading edge of this transition.”

Another initiative expected to spark future growth: moving into the Spanish offline captioning market. Dynamic Captioning already has a strong Spanish real-time division, says LaBine. “With the increase in Spanish language programming, we are well positioned to grow in this market.”



Facility Solutions Inc. Clinton Township

Thomas Cullen, president

Founded in 2001
Current leadership since 2001

Primary business: consultant
and project management
for restaurants

Sites in Michigan: 2
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
74 in 2011 • 95 expected in 2012

www.facilitysolutionsinc.com



As a consulting and project management company, Facility Solutions focuses narrowly on the restaurant industry, installing equipment and remodeling interiors.

Among the company’s strengths is its hands-on experience. All members of its leadership team have either owned, managed or constructed restaurants and thoroughly understand the challenges clients face.

Investing in technology is a priority for Facility Solutions, and it has developed a proprietary Web and iPhone system to execute nationwide projects. This system enables real-time photos and data to be posted online and accessed by customers and team members at anytime.

Facility Solutions believes in promoting from within. It has forged a partnership with Central Michigan University to seek interns and recent graduates for employment. “The success of this program has allowed us to keep the pipeline of talent fully within our organization,” says president Thomas Cullen.

The company generates most of its revenue through word-of-mouth referrals and repeat business. In the past two years, however, Facility Solutions expanded its sales and marketing team, enabling it to attract new customers and increase service to existing clients. Indeed, in 2011 annual revenue increased 85 percent, and the company forecasts a healthy 27 percent increase this year on top of its expanded base.



FAVI Entertainment Sterling Heights

Jeremy Yakel, president/CEO

Founded in 2007
Current leadership since 2007

Primary business: designs
and manufactures consumer
electronics

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 2

Full-time equivalent employees:
11 in 2011 • 24 expected in 2012

www.favientertainment.com



A designer and manufacturer of projectors, projector screens, televisions and accessories, FAVI Entertainment is on the fast track.

The company doubled annual revenue in each of the past three years and expects a triple-digit increase for 2012. In addition to North America, FAVI products can be found at retailers across Europe, Australia and Asia.

Fueling its strong growth is a penchant for home-theatre innovation. FAVI has created one of the world's smallest projectors and developed a fan technology for video projectors that increases bulb life by more than four times. Most recently, the company has developed a handheld projector that runs independently on the Android platform with built-in Wi-Fi.

The company targets its products to consumers in the 18- to 35-age range—a demographic group that is fashion-conscious as well as technologically savvy. In response, FAVI concentrates on bringing unique designs to the market, such as televisions that are available in white, pink and black.

FAVI's pink products also play a philanthropic role and are used to promote breast cancer awareness, with a portion of sales generated to the cause. The company is also involved with a local benefit for childhood cancer research.



Grid Logic Lapeer

George Caravias, CEO

Founded in 2009
Current leadership since 2009

Primary business: manufactures
superconducting materials

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

www.grid-logic.com



A rising star in the alternative energy market, Grid Logic develops superconducting devices for the distribution, generation and storage of electrical power.

Superconductivity has long held promise for improving efficiency and reducing costs for the electric utility industry. Yet widespread use of superconducting devices has not occurred because of the high cost of materials and the instability of systems needed to keep the conductors in a superconducting state, explains CEO George Caravias. "Grid Logic's innovation overcomes these barriers."

For example, Grid Logic is introducing superconducting magnets for wind turbines that have higher magnetic fields than conventional magnets, require no more frequent maintenance than other wind turbine components, and enable substantial cost-of-energy reductions.

As it advances technology for the wind industry, Grid Logic is transforming its community in a number of ways:

- Purchasing an automotive metal stamping plant in Lapeer in late 2010 that had been shuttered since 2007.
- Attracting engineers and scientists to the area—and training staff in advanced manufacturing and materials technologies.
- Convincing a California-based refrigeration company to expand part of its manufacturing operation to Grid Logic's facility.



Katech Inc. Clinton Township

Stephen Chue, president

Founded in 1977
Current leadership since 2011

Primary business: develops
engine technology

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

www.katechengines.com



A developer of high performance engines, Katech has a long track record of innovation.

In the 1980s it pioneered technology to test engine valve train dynamics. Widely received by OEMs and racing teams, Katech's technology has become one of the standard testing procedures for evaluating any engine performance and durability.

Winning seven Trans-Am championships and three NASCAR "Engine Builder of the Year" awards led Katech to supply engines for General Motors' Corvette racing team in 1999, which competed against famous sport car manufacturers like Ferrari, Aston Martin and Lamborghini. Katech won six championships and 72 victories in 11 seasons and was named the Global Motorsports Engine of the Year in 2006.

The company hit a speed bump in 2008 when the loss of GM contracts caused the biggest financial setback in its history. Yet Katech rallied by transferring its technologies into new markets.

Among new customers is the Navy. In 2010 Katech completed a Phase I SBIR program and designed an innovative power system for a Navy combatant craft. "Our final design performance exceeded the program requirements," says president Stephen Chue. Katech has also diversified into the motorcycle and armored truck markets, and in 2011 it introduced the world's first direct-injected gasoline motorcycle engine.



Keltech Inc. Delton

Ken Lutz, president,
and Melody Lutz,
vice president

Founded in 1987
Current leadership
since 2011

Primary business:
manufactures tankless water heaters

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
27 in 2011 • 33 expected in 2012

www.keltech-inc.com



For Keltech, being in hot water is a boon. A designer and manufacturer of tankless electric water heaters, Keltech's highly efficient products are used in place of boilers in stadiums, on Coast Guard ships, for hospital instrument sterilization, radiant heat for buildings, industrial parts washing systems and other applications.

The company currently holds two patents and recently applied for a third one for its SwiftCycle technology, which resolves bottle-testing challenges in the plastics industry. Devices incorporating this technology save water, energy and space while providing precise temperature-controlled water up to 210 degrees.

Listening closely to customers is a priority for Keltech. The company has a series of base models, but all sales are made to order, stresses president Ken Lutz. "Our sales/application engineering team spends a great deal of time with clients discerning the operating environment along with the goals and specifications of the application."

In addition to its technological advances, Keltech has embraced savvy marketing techniques. For example, instead of relying on industrial catalogs to market its products, the company now targets trade publications for specifying engineers—a strategy that is generating the strongest growth segment of Keltech's sales.



Kremin Inc. Lansing

Bryce Moe and Mike Grossi,
co-owners

Founded in 1983
Current leadership since 2010

Primary business:
advanced manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
17 in 2011 • 21 expected in 2012

www.kremininc.com



In late 2010 Mike Grossi and Bryce Moe acquired a 27-year-old tool and die shop focused on the automotive industry and began its metamorphosis into an advanced manufacturer serving diverse markets.

During the first year under new ownership Kremin has achieved a number of milestones that include:

- Completing dual ISO 9001 and 13485 certifications and expanding into medical devices, defense and aerospace industries.
- Implementing enterprise resource planning and customer relationship management systems that allow it to interact more effectively with customers and vendors. For example, customers can check a portal to view inventory availability and project status.
- Officially branding its proprietary line of stone and glass fabricating computer numerical control tools. (Although the tools had existed for five years, there had been little marketing support.) Under the new name, Kremin Onyx Tools, the line is supported by an official catalog release and marketing campaign.

The payoff: an initial revenue increase of more than 20 percent for the tool line. Kremin plans to further expand its Onyx Tools brand and pursue international markets this year. “This product line has significant export promise,” Moe says.



Level One Bank Farmington Hills

Patrick Fehring,
president/chairman/CEO

Founded in 2007
Current leadership since 2007

Primary business:
community bank

Sites in Michigan: 7
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
92 in 2011 • 135 expected in 2012

www.levelonebank.com



Level One Bank is a full-service community bank that offers sophisticated financial products and services to local businesses and families.

For example, one of its products can be used to enhance cash flow and collection for commercial clients, allowing additional working capital not available through a traditional line of credit.

Since its launch in 2007, Level One has acquired two banks and now operates six local banking centers. It has quadrupled staff in the past three years and expects to hire more than 40 new employees this year.

The young financial institution has also won a number of industry accolades. Among these, the Independent Community Bankers of America named Level One in the top 20th percentile of U.S. banks for its 2010 financial performance. Last year BauerFinancial, the nation's leading independent bank rating and research firm, recognized Level One as a 5-Star Superior Bank, the highest attainable rating.

Last year Level One was selected as one of six banks nationwide—and the only one in Michigan—to be awarded funds through the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Small Business Lending Fund. As a result Level One will be making \$100 million in loans to qualifying small businesses in Michigan.



Logic Solutions Inc. Ann Arbor

Jimmy Hsiao, CEO

Founded in 1995
Current leadership since 1995

Primary business:
information technology

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 1

Full-time equivalent employees:
30 in 2011 • 35 expected in 2012

www.logicsolutions.com



“Be smart, use Logic” is this company's motto. Playing in the competitive IT field, Logic Solutions develops websites, Web applications and mobile technology for clients across the country and around the globe.

Founded in 1995, Logic Solutions has been savvy at reinventing itself in response to ever-changing Internet technology. In the past three years, it's invested heavily in mobile technology, and it acquired a systems engineering firm with expertise in integrating multicarrier shipping systems with warehouse management, enterprise resource planning and accounting systems.

Specializing in sales automation solutions, Logic recently launched its own proprietary product, Showcase. The tablet-based software offers a slew of features including: an interactive product catalog, quote creation, order transaction, inventory access, customer lookup, a sales-material library, merchandise comparison, cross-sell and upsell suggestions, geolocating and two-way (delta) syncing between the remote user and company database.

Customers can even add customized features, tailoring the software to the specific needs of their organizations.

By enabling sales reps to more easily show, quote and transact orders, Showcase accelerates the sales process. And by enabling reps to sync orders for immediate fulfillment or processing, the software minimizes human error and reduces costs. “Showcase is more than an application—it's a revolution,” says CEO Jimmy Hsiao.



Lorin Industries Muskegon

Park Kersman, president/owner

Founded in 1943
Current leadership since 2011

Primary business: provides
aluminum finishing solutions

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

www.lorin.com



A third-generation family-owned business, Lorin is a global provider of aluminum finishing solutions.

In the 1990s the company supplied about 90 percent of the shutter-door market for floppy disc drives. Yet as the computer industry shifted to other forms of memory, Lorin witnessed a significant decline in volume. In response, it changed its business model and began to target the architectural market with such innovations as:

- A patented process for creating an adhesive-ready surface.
- New ultraviolet (UV) stable colors.
- New process to apply antimicrobial coatings to hard surfaces.

Unlike many other companies, Lorin's anodized products do not emit hazardous volatile organic compounds, giving it an important green competitive edge. What's more, Lorin has invested heavily in systems to reclaim its process chemicals and treat the water. “This consciousness has carried over into our research with the development of a new UV curable coating which reduces energy usage over conventional coatings by 70 percent,” says president Park Kersman.

Armed with its revolutionary technologies, Lorin is gaining the attention of architects around the world. Today its products can be found in numerous large projects, ranging from the exterior skin of the Louisiana Superdome to a national monument in South Korea's Gyeongju Expo Park.



Lynx Network Group Kalamazoo

Gerald Philipp, principal

Founded in 2003
Current leadership
since 2003

Primary business: provides
telecommunication
services

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

www.lynxnetworkgroup.com



A wholesale and retail provider of telecommunication services, the Lynx Network Group has successfully carved a niche in an extremely crowded market by supplying cost-effective communications lines to rural and underserved areas of Michigan.

Competitors typically ignore these markets because of high entry costs. Yet Lynx has been able to overcome this challenge with creative pricing and network design.

The company achieved an important milestone in 2010, when it partnered with a nonprofit service provider and secured a grant from the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA) to build a state-of-the-art, fiber optic backbone. The NTIA grant enabled Lynx to make an overnight transition from being a reseller of services to a facilities-based service provider, with more than 1,200 miles of owned-fiber assets.

"This project provides us the ability to build upon our current successes and continue to bring cost-effective services into the rural communities of Michigan," says Gerald Philipp, principal. "Through the fiber project, we are bridging the digital divide that will attract and retain businesses and citizens throughout the state in nonmetro and rural areas."

In 2011 Lynx more than doubled its annual revenue, and it's forecasting a healthy 34 percent increase this year.



Mango Languages Farmington Hills

Jason Teshuba, CEO

Founded in 2007
Current leadership since 2007

Primary business: develops
language-learning software

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
54 in 2011 • 75 expected in 2012

www.mangolanguages.com



A provider of language-learning software, Mango Languages serves a diverse clientele ranging from large corporations to public libraries.

Initially Mango was a distributor for an established language-learning brand, but in 2007 it began to create its own proprietary products. This sparked a love affair with innovation that hasn't stopped. The company has evolved from 12 languages to more than 50—including a mobile application, Mango On the Go, which can be used with iPhones or MP3 devices.

One of the company's hallmarks is its "stealth grammar" approach, which leverages color mapping, literal translations, grammar notes and critical thinking exercises. It intuitively teaches how words are combined to construct meaning; this enables students to more easily apply what they learn to a broader range of similar situations.

Another competitive edge, Mango practices what it preaches. Staffed by linguists, teachers, software developers, writers, voice talents and designers, almost every Mango team member either speaks another language, has lived abroad, or has experienced another culture.

"This builds an ingredient of learner empathy into our products that is hard to compete with," says CEO Jason Teshuba.

The company has averaged 100 percent annual revenue growth over the past three years and looks for a robust 57 percent increase in 2012.



Medbio Inc. Grand Rapids

Christopher Williams, president

Founded in 2005
Current leadership since 2006

Primary business:
contract manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
43 in 2011 • 46 expected in 2012

www.medbioinc.com



A contract manufacturer, Medbio specializes in injection molding, assembly and packaging for medical and biotechnology companies.

Launched in 2005, Medbio has developed several proprietary technologies that allow it to make products with extremely complex geometries and close tolerances. The company also sets itself apart from other medical molders with its creative use of machinery. For example, its presses feature a closed-loop feedback system that monitors conditions within a molding cavity and controls the molding process based on these conditions. The payoff: more complex parts than competitors can produce.

Over the past two years, Medbio has achieved average annual revenue increases of 30 percent, with a 19 percent increase expected this year. Preparing for future growth, Medbio moved to a new facility last year that nearly doubled its floor space.

Unlike most companies that only offer bonus programs to high-level managers, Medbio has an incentive program for its frontline workers (including temps), which enables them to earn 10 to 25 percent of their annual salary. "Having employees that truly share in the success of the company not only builds a strong, loyal and committed workforce, but also provides a profit-sharing program that can really make a big difference in their lives," says president Christopher Williams.



MedHub Inc. Ann Arbor

Peter Orr, president

Founded in 2003
Current leadership
since 2003

Primary business: provides
medical education
management solutions

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
6 in 2011 • 12 expected in 2012

www.medhub.com



A provider of Web-based solutions, MedHub helps teaching hospitals manage residency programs by tracking residents' schedules, medical procedures performed, conferences attended, test scores and other information related to program accreditation as well as Medicare reimbursement.

When the company launched in 2003, it faced an extremely competitive environment. Yet MedHub quickly became a major player by focusing on large entities and requiring that they deploy the system across the enterprise. "This was challenging because most large academic hospitals have hundreds of residency and fellowship programs that operate as independent fiefdoms," explains president Peter Orr.

With a breadth of features not available in competitors' products, MedHub has attracted an impressive array of clients including Duke University Health System, Cleveland Clinic and The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. The firm has averaged 44 percent annual revenue growth over the past three years and looks for a 59 percent hike this year.

A fanatic about continuous improvement, MedHub releases three upgrades a year, and each reflects customer and user recommendations.

MedHub is likewise devoted to Michigan, even though 90 percent of clients are outside the state. It recently purchased a 112-year-old grain mill that had been vacant for decades and intends to restore the structure for its corporate offices.



MiDAS Foods International Oak Park

Richard Elias, president/CEO

Founded in 1980
Current leadership since 1990

Primary business: manufactures
custom food products

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
31 in 2011 • 34 expected in 2012

www.midasfoods.com



The success story at MiDAS Foods International is a sweet one. From puddings and baked goods to specialty glazes and fillings, the company develops and manufactures a wide range of custom dry mix food products for restaurant chains and food processors.

MiDAS has honed its competitive edge through a holistic approach:

- Its R&D department constantly assesses industry trends and customers' needs to create great products.
- Its flexible plant can produce anywhere from a few hundred pounds of finished product at a time to multiple truckloads daily.
- An extensive quality control process ensures that all food is safe and industry documentation is in perfect order.
- The company provides culinary support for customers—along with in-field training—to make sure products are properly prepared and performing as required.

As a result, even during the recession the company has grown. MiDAS' annual revenue increases averaged 17 percent over the past three years, and it projects a 25 percent increase for 2012.

"We do not simply take orders," says CEO Richard Elias, noting that the company shares information in terms of product availability, time lines, supply chain glitches, government regulations and new product ideas. "We do everything we can to make MiDAS exceptionally easy to work with."



Moran Iron Works Onaway

Thomas Moran,
president/founder

Founded in 1978
Current leadership since 1978

Primary business:
custom metal fabricator

Sites in Michigan: 2
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
67 in 2011 • 86 expected in 2012

www.moraniron.com



A custom welder and metal fabricator, Moran Iron Works designs and installs a wide variety of products such as ductwork, silos and bins, platforms and stairways, exhaust diffusers and trash rack systems. The company stands out from competitors with innovative fabrication, superior quality and on-time delivery.

In 2008 Moran began a more proactive approach to growth by hiring a salesperson and launching a concentrated marketing campaign. Since then, the company has increased its customer base and gross revenue by 300 percent—and its facility is filled to capacity with production contracts through 2013.

The area's largest employer, Moran believes it should also be the largest contributor. In 2004 it established an education foundation to provide vocational education and training opportunities for local communities and school districts; these welding classes have recently been accredited through Alpena Community College.

The company also is involved in numerous philanthropic activities. Among these, Moran hosts a holiday celebration each December for the community, providing refreshments, music, fireworks and sleigh rides to thousands of people. Santa Claus is also on hand, and last year 699 children received footballs, volleyballs and basketballs. "We are told by letters and comments after the event that this celebration is the only Christmas some of the families will have," says president Thomas Moran.



OPTIMAL SOLUTIONS INC.

Providing the next generation in eTechnology

Optimal Solutions Inc. Wyoming

Jeff Ingle, president

Founded in 1993
Current leadership since 1993

Primary business: software and
systems engineering services

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
18 in 2011 • 23 expected in 2012

www.evideon.com/healthcare
www.harmoniahd.com



A provider of software and systems engineering services, Optimal Solutions focuses on two key markets: education and health care.

The company launched in 1994 as technology consultants for K–12 schools. In 1999 it created its first proprietary product, SchoolFinance, an accounting software package designed for novice users and packed with report capabilities.

In 2007 Optimal Solutions further flexed its innovative muscle—and diversified into the hospital market with eVideon Healthcare, an interactive system that uses the patient's in-room TV and pillow speaker to provide entertainment, education, clinical information and Internet access. The system connects with hospitals' electronic medical records and then tailors educational content, enabling patients to watch videos related to their condition.

Few systems have such functionality. What's more, eVideon Healthcare is the first end-to-end Internet network-based interactive patient television system. Already deployed in Michigan, the system is expected to attain high growth in both national and international health care markets.

Most recently, Optimal Solutions unveiled its latest new product: an in-house video channel for hospitals that combines the beauty of nature with musical compositions to provide an escape for patients. "Harmonia takes the patient on an audio-visual journey that is specifically created to improve mood, reduce stress and anxiety and promote feelings of well-being," says president Jeff Ingle.



Premium Hydro Solutions Inc. Alpena

Dustin Prevost, president

Founded in 2008
Current leadership since 2008

Primary business:
specialty contractor

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 1

Full-time equivalent employees:
8 in 2011 • 9 expected in 2012

www.hydrodemolition.us.com



Premium Hydro Solutions is a leader in hydrodemolition, a technique that uses water jetting to remove unsound concrete from bridges, dams and parking structures.

The hydrodemolition market is very specialized due to the expensive equipment and experienced crews that are required. Yet even though few companies provide hydrodemolition, it remains a challenging field because most of the work is for government-owned structures. That means Premium Hydro operates in a low-bid arena, and to be profitable, it needs to remove concrete faster and at a lower operating cost than competitors.

With that in mind, Premium Hydro buys high-pressure pumps from NLB, a Michigan-based company known for quality products. In addition, Premium Hydro designs the robots that control cutting heads (the most specialized piece of equipment) in-house at its Alpena facility. "Our robots are the most robust in the industry, cost less to operate and have very low downtimes," observes president Dustin Prevost.

And though all of Premium Hydro's projects are located outside the state, Prevost says his company's Michigan roots are another competitive advantage. "It is hard to quantify, but the work ethic of the people who support us and the staff who have joined us keep our costs low and our operation running smooth."



Proos Manufacturing Inc. Grand Rapids

Amy Proos, CEO

Founded in 1919
Current leadership since 2004

Primary business:
metal fabricator

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
75 in 2011 • 80 expected in 2012

www.proos.com



A 93-year-old family business, Proos Manufacturing has evolved from making casket hardware and cookie die stamps to being a full-service manufacturer of metal fabrications and assemblies with a reputation for high quality, cost effective parts.

Hit hard by the recession, Proos rallied by tightening its belt, becoming savvier at financial management and increasing communications with employees. As a result, both 2010 and 2011 were record years.

Another response to the recession, the company has added engineering services to assist customers with product development. "This proved to be valuable, as we helped two of our largest customers while they were acquiring new companies and inheriting those products," says CEO Amy Proos.

Technology investments have also been critical to the company's success. Proos' engineering department uses the latest computer aided design software, and its fabrication department leverages computer numerical control technology for rapid prototyping. This allows customers to get functional parts for trials as well as getting product to the market quicker.

Positioning itself for future growth, Proos has leased an additional 30,000-square-foot facility and purchased larger equipment. The company is also investing in its workforce by providing free classes at the local community colleges to welders in its fabrication department.



SpeedConnect Saginaw

John Ogren, president

Founded in 2000
Current leadership since 2000

Primary business:
telecommunications provider

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 2

www.speedconnect.com



Smooth surfing is the goal at SpeedConnect. A provider of broadband Internet and telephone services to northern Michigan, SpeedConnect (under the SpeedNet name) connected its first customer in 2002 in Alpena utilizing its newly built network and exclusively licensed 2.5-gigahertz radio spectrum.

Fast forward to today: The company has made additional private investments of more than \$2.5 million to build a new state-of-the-art wireless 4G network in Huron, Tuscola and Sanilac counties. This new network, which launched in January 2012, offers significant upgrades in both download and upload speeds, enabling customers to use advanced applications and video streaming services. In addition to enhancing fixed broadband connections, SpeedConnect's new network is built for mobile broadband applications as well.

Other recent growth activities, the company has been expanding its geographic footprint. In March 2011, it began to establish a presence in Iowa and plans to enter Nebraska soon.

SpeedConnect also invests in its community via philanthropic activities. For example, it provides hundreds of free broadband connections to students who may not be able to afford a monthly fee—and yet need high-speed Internet to be successful in their studies. In addition, the company offers technology scholarships to graduating seniors from local high schools who are headed to college.



Superior Extrusion Inc. Gwinn

Daniel Amberg, president/CEO

Founded in 1996
Current leadership since 2005

Primary business:
aluminum extrusion

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
82 in 2011 • 96 expected in 2012

www.superiorextrusion.com



A producer of aluminum extruded shapes, Superior Extrusion Inc. (SEI) not only sets itself apart with dimensional tolerances and surface quality that exceed industry standards—but also its culture of continuous improvement.

Case in point: In 2008 SEI responded to the downturn in the economy by fearlessly expanding. For starters, the company added a second, larger extrusion press. This enabled it to double production capability and offer a wider array of products to customers.

At the same time, SEI integrated Kevlar technology into its handling system (which includes the run-out table from the press, a cooling table and the in-feed table that leads to the extrusion saw). The new technology reduces surface abrasions as extrusions move across the table and produces a higher quality architectural finish.

In late 2010 SEI began a new quality initiative with the goal of becoming ISO 9001-2008 compliant. The company has also enhanced its secondary operations during the past three years with more punching, drilling and cutting capabilities. The majority of its extrusion customers now utilize one or more of these secondary services, says CEO Daniel Amberg.

The payoff: 2011 was a record sales year for SEI, and the company looks for an 18 percent increase in annual revenue for 2012.



Team Support Services Kalamazoo

Charles Fierke,
Renee McParlan and
Judy Lewis, members

Founded in 2000
Current leadership
since 2003, 2010 and 2011

Primary business: information and records
management

Sites in Michigan: 2
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
99 in 2011 • 120 expected in 2012

www.teamsupportservices.com



This honoree is winning the paper chase for customers. A provider of information management solutions, Team Support Services (TSS) serves clients in highly regulated industries by transforming their information assets into business knowledge.

To achieve this, the company designs and implements enterprise-level information and records management programs that enable clients to:

- Control the creation and growth of records.
- Reduce operating costs.
- Access information faster.
- Implement defensible record disposition.
- Minimize litigation risks.
- Ensure regulatory compliance.

As a result, TSS customers are better able to meet legal, regulatory and tax obligations—and leverage legacy information for future business decisions.

With the addition of new owners in recent years, TSS has not only been able to expand its portfolio of services but also its physical facilities, which offer secure and environmentally controlled storage for long-term record preservation. The company also offers onsite records management consulting and will establish document-scanning stations at companies for clients who do not want records to leave their premises.

Since 2009 TSS' annual revenue has increased tenfold. It expects to double revenue this year and add more than 20 new jobs.

TEKNA

TOTAL SECURITY SOLUTIONS

tribal

Twin Bay Medical, Inc.

Biopharmaceutical Fluid Handling Products

TEKNA Kalamazoo

Kris Eager, CEO

Founded in 1988
Current leadership since 1988

Primary business: product
development services

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
40 in 2011 • 44 expected in 2012

www.tekna-link.com



Total Security Solutions Fowlerville

Jim Richards, president

Founded in 2004
Current leadership since 2004

Primary business: manufactures
bulletproof systems

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
49 in 2011 • 53 expected in 2012

www.tssbulletproof.com



Tribal Manufacturing Inc. Marshall

Dominic Ismert, owner

Founded in 2009
Current leadership since 2009

Primary business: manufactures
metal components and
assemblies

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

www.tribalmfg.com



Twin Bay Medical Inc. Williamsburg

Albert Werth, president

Founded in 2000
Current leadership since 2000

Primary business: manufactures
pharmaceutical products

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
21 in 2011 • 25 expected in 2012

www.twinbaymedical.com



A full-service product development firm that specializes in medical devices, TEKNA has helped develop more than 350 products for clients, ranging from surgical helmets to endoscopy cameras and video carts.

Launched in the late 1980s as an engineering and industrial design consultancy, TEKNA added manufacturing capabilities in 1996—enabling it to offer clients production services from prototyping samples to long-term manufacturing. “TEKNA is one of the only product design firms on earth that can translate ‘napkin sketches’ into a manufactured product, ready for worldwide distribution,” says CEO Kris Eager.

TEKNA’s 34,000-square-foot facility in Western Michigan University’s Business Technology and Research Park is a physical testimony to its creative culture. Mobile white boards abound and many walls feature dry-erase paint, allowing employees and customers to write on them to outline projects and brainstorm. Flat-screen monitors that broadcast inspiring images of new products, artwork and trends are spread throughout the building. Fused deposition modeling (FDM) machines help designers quickly verify computer aided design data with physical prototypes to speed up development and improve human factors and ergonomics.

Although most of TEKNA’s patents are signed over to clients, last year it obtained approval on two patents for a line of athletic training equipment that the company is distributing nationally under the brand name Impact Athletic.

This honoree will take a bullet for its clients—literally. Total Security Solutions designs and manufactures bulletproof glass and barriers, and its products help protect employees of banks, convenience stores, government facilities and pharmacies across the country.

Launched in 2004, the company sets itself apart in a crowded marketplace by offering one-stop manufacturing where such security products as a bulletproof window with a cash tray can be custom-made for clients.

Another hallmark is TSS’ collaborative culture where “silo” is a four-letter word. From its front office to the shop floor to the installation department, employees work in concert to meet and exceed customer expectations—a team approach that improves both quality and productivity, says president Jim Richards.

Investing in new manufacturing techniques and infrastructure has also been important to the company’s success. TSS recently spent more than \$80,000 to double the size of its facility to 24,000 square feet, and it added new equipment including a water jet cutting system that creates custom bulletproof glass options. What’s more, significant improvements were made to shipping operations, including a new racking and a new product packing line.

The payoff: TSS has been able to serve existing clients better—and expand into new markets, such as partnerships with architects.

A producer of components and assemblies for plumbing, heating, gas and appliance markets, Tribal Manufacturing prides itself on its highly skilled staff and ability to deliver high quality parts on time.

Tribal makes products from a wide range of nonferrous metal alloys that are primarily copper-based. It was among the first American manufacturers to use Eco Brass, a new lead-free brass alloy that is compliant with legislation for potable water applications. Tribal was also the first manufacturer to obtain listings with NSF (a third-party agency that certifies products) on its new lead-free products and has more Eco Brass products listed than any American manufacturer.

Tribal also distinguishes itself with a diverse line-up of equipment for machining both straight and directional fittings. The company’s automated equipment allows it to produce more parts in less time—and reduce pricing for customers. Tribal has also invested in sophisticated machinery for raw material handling, control and post-processing operations, along with continuous education for its staff.

The company bases its name and corporate culture on a team approach where people are regarded as its highest asset. “We are all members of the tribe, working together to provide the highest quality products in the world,” says owner Dominic Ismert.

With its single-use disposable products, Twin Bay Medical helps make drug manufacturing safer and more productive.

The company launched in 2000 as a medical device developer, but saw an opportunity in the single-use drug manufacturing industry, which was using cable ties to secure silicone tubing onto barbed fittings. In 2002 Twin Bay introduced BarbLock, an ultra-secure tubing retainer that eliminates leaks caused by the cable ties and is up to seven times stronger.

“BarbLock has been described as one of the most significant innovations in connective technology,” observes president Albert Werth. Since its introduction, BarbLock has been developed into an extensive product line, with applications for other industries.

With eight patents under its belt and others in the pipeline, Twin Bay continues to advance the pharma market with a number of “firsts” such as a:

- Sanitary connection device that allows two sterile systems to be joined in a nonsanitary environment without contamination.
- Hermetically sealed levitating mixing impeller for noncontact mixing, which eliminates the need for shafts and bearings.
- Magnetically driven impeller with a plastic bearing race that helps reduce the cost of mixing systems by 80 percent.

The company has been averaging annual revenue increases of 28 percent during the past three years and forecasts a 21 percent increase for 2012.

VantagePlastics

Vantage Plastics Standish

Paul Aultman, president

Founded in 1996

Current leadership since 1996

Primary business: manufactures plastic products

Sites in Michigan: 2
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
67 in 2011 • 72 expected in 2012

www.vantageplastics.com



A custom thermoformer, Vantage Plastics makes a wide variety of products that range from plastic pallets and returnable packaging to sleds, kayaks and children's wading pools.

Although the company doesn't put all of its eggs in one basket, it has designed something for handling them: a patented egg pallet and divider system made for the agriculture industry to transport eggs from farms to processors.

Other innovations: Working with a local Michigan compounder, Vantage has developed a proprietary material, VanTech, which enables it to control the friction component of plastic and speed up or slow down materials going through a conveyor system. Another formulation of the material has anti-chaffing characteristics that drastically reduce plastic shavings and chips that might create problems in customers' products or processes.

In 2007 Vantage purchased the manufacturing equipment of a Canadian recreational products company, which enabled it to extrude plastic sheet in-house. In addition, Vantage secured rights to manufacture the company's recreational products. Since then Vantage has expanded consumer goods from being a small portion of its business to more than 40 percent of offerings.

A good corporate citizen, Vantage not only supports local 4-H programs and charities, but also has started a community outreach program geared to help teenagers and young adults learn communication, entrepreneurship, team building and other life and leadership skills.



WaterSolve LLC Grand Rapids

Gregg Lebster, president/owner

Founded in 1999

Current leadership since 1999

Primary business: dewatering products and services

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
10 in 2011 • 14 expected in 2012

www.gowatersolve.com



A provider of dewatering products and services across the Midwest and western half of the nation, WaterSolve removes solids from a wide variety of water and wastewater systems ranging from municipal to industrial to agricultural applications.

Founded in 1999 as a chemical solutions provider, in the mid-2000s WaterSolve helped pioneer a new technology as a dewatering instrument—geotextile woven tubes, which were initially used in shoreline erosion. In contrast to traditional mechanical dewatering devices, these tubes require no energy to operate and have a flow rate capacity that's up to 10 times greater than traditional technologies—resulting in lower costs for customers. Although competitors have also begun to offer geotextile woven tubes, WaterSolve distinguishes itself with a proprietary turnkey solution that combines the tubes with chemical products and equipment.

In 2011 WaterSolve launched a new innovation: an automated mobile chemical treatment system for large remote projects. The trailer-mounted system analyzes dredged slurry solids and flow rates and adjusts chemical feed rates for instantaneous treatment control and data tracking.

"This allows WaterSolve to feed chemicals precisely for each project's needs so that our clients get the most efficiency out of their operations," says president Gregg Lebster. The automated system enables customers to take advantage of sophisticated equipment for smaller or short-term projects, he adds.

worksighted

Worksighted Inc. Holland

Mat Nguyen and Mike Harris,
co-founders

Founded in 2000

Current leadership since 2000

Primary business: information technology

Sites in Michigan: 2
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
20 in 2011 • 26 expected in 2012

www.worksighted.com



Farsighted when it comes to quality, innovation and efficiency, Worksighted provides enterprise-level IT services to small- and mid-sized businesses.

Since 2008 the company has made two acquisitions that have sparked significant growth. Indeed, during the past three years Worksighted has averaged 36 percent in annual revenue increases, and it projects a 29 percent increase this year.

Technology investments have helped contribute to Worksighted's success, such as:

- Integrating its enterprise resource planning, customer relationship management, accounting and support tracking systems.
- Investing in remote management and monitoring tools.
- Introducing cloud-computing products and a portfolio of "as a service" offerings such as "Backup as a Service."

The company is extremely active in its community, and co-founders Mike Harris and Mat Nguyen have served on the Holland Arts Council, the Holland Chamber of Commerce and the West Michigan Strategic Alliance. Worksighted staff have also chaired a capital campaign to renovate a historic theatre downtown and founded the Holland Young Professionals.

Worksighted has won numerous awards including the 2010 Entrepreneur of Distinction from Corp! magazine and being named to CRN.com's Next-Generation 250 list, which recognizes solution provider organizations in North America that are bringing new ideas and business models to the market.



ZON LED Romeo

Donald Frattaroli,
president/CEO

Founded in 2009

Current leadership since 2009

Primary business: provides LED light fixtures

Sites in Michigan: 1
Sites elsewhere: 0

Full-time equivalent employees:
6 in 2011 • 9 expected in 2012

www.zonled.com



The future is bright for this honoree. A designer and builder of light-emitting diode (LED) light fixtures, ZON LED provides commercial and industrial customers with next-generation lighting for interior high bays, outside wall packs, parking lots, streets and outdoor billboards.

Founded in 2009 by Donald Frattaroli, Paul von Zittwitz and Arnold Stoll, ZON is among the first companies in North America to use big chip technology in its light fixtures. In addition, the company has developed a patent-pending light splitter technology that allows the distribution of light across a plane via a single high-powered LED light source. This enables ZON to create energy-saving LED light fixtures that are brighter and smaller and can replace much higher wattage fixtures.

For example, ZON is achieving 125 lumens per watt with 1 watt input compared to a normal 40 watt incandescent bulb that gets 12.4 lumens per 1 watt input—making ZON LEDs 10 times more efficient than incandescent bulbs.

In addition to its revolutionary products, ZON prides itself on dazzling customers with superior service. The company achieved triple-digit annual revenue growth in 2011 and expects another robust increase this year.

Resources for second-stage business owners



Growing your company

As your business grows, decisions become more complex, and the expertise your company requires also changes. The MI-SBTDC Growth Group (G2) Specialists provide services to prepare your company for this next stage. Steps include guiding you in the evaluation and selection of strategies using our comprehensive tools and extensive network of consultants.

Companies with the potential and desire to increase their sales, hire more employees or diversify into new markets can use the Michigan G2 Initiative. The specialists will help your team prioritize strategies, develop implementation plans and monitor your progress towards achieving success.

Qualified business specialists provide expertise on business models, financing, market research, market diversification, strategic actioning and using metrics to monitor your business. Growth Group Specialist Nancy Boese will answer your questions regarding the program: boesen@gvsu.edu. More information: www.misbtdc.org



Small business is a big deal here

Pure Michigan Business Connect is a more than \$8 billion, multiyear initiative to help Michigan companies grow. This multifaceted program helps companies find new ways to raise capital, get access to various business services and connect with each other with business-to-business procurement opportunities. The effort includes the Pure Michigan Business Connect Economic Gardening Pilot Program and the Michigan Get Your Business Online program. More information: www.michiganadvantage.org/Business-Connect-Tool-Kit



SBA can help you grow

The U.S. Small Business Administration's mission is to preserve free enterprise and to strengthen the economy of our nation. We recognize that small business is where innovation thrives. Swifter and more flexible than big businesses, small firms lead the way in advancements in technology that drive our country forward. They keep intact the heritage of ingenuity and enterprise, and they help keep the American dream within reach of millions.

Every step of the way, SBA and our resource partners are there to help, from strategic planning to results-driven training, from long-term fixed asset financing at favorable rates to short-term lines of credit. We have the small business resources to help you manage your growth and take advantage of opportunities. Visit our website, call or email to see how we can help you. SBA Michigan District Office: 313.226.6075 or michigan@sba.gov. More information: www.sba.gov/mi



Helping second-stage entrepreneurs succeed in Michigan!

Thousands of companies like yours join the Small Business Association of Michigan to achieve more than they could on their own. Our vision is simple: Michigan needs to promote economic gardening, which fosters the growth and prosperity of our own Michigan-based small businesses. The Small Business Association of Michigan's political power helps us champion second-stage entrepreneurs by influencing policy and working to keep your business needs foremost in the minds of our elected officials. We hold them accountable so that you can manage and grow your business. Unlike many other business organizations, everything the Small Business Association of Michigan does is focused exclusively on small business with no conflict from big business. Running your small business is your passion—being your champion is ours.

Our products and services are designed to save you time, save you money and help you succeed. Count on the Small Business Association of Michigan to get what you need to tackle human resources issues, legal questions, operational challenges, government relations issues and more. You can even receive one-on-one help at no cost to you. More information: www.sbam.org



GLBM is your business connection

The first issue of the Greater Lansing Business Monthly hit the streets in June 1987. In its 25 years of existence, the magazine has become known for its consistent quality and the positive focus of its content. The Greater Lansing Business Monthly began as the project of entrepreneur Chris Holman. He saw a need for a publication that would promote, publicize and support local companies; provide a forum for ideas; and keep members of the community informed of the services and products offered by businesses in the area. The Greater Lansing Business Monthly looks forward to many more years of supporting area businesses through the production of the monthly magazine. More information: www.lansingbusinessmonthly.com

Free legal help for entrepreneurs and growing businesses.



To learn more or apply to the program go to www.mispringboard.com



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