



UNLEASHING INNOVATION & GROWTH

2015  
*Michigan Celebrates  
Small Business*



# What do thousands of Michigan companies have in common?

## The right connections.

In today's economic climate, business owners need all the support they can get. That's why more and more Michigan businesses are turning to Pure Michigan Business Connect. This free program connects you to billions of dollars in business opportunities that can help you expand your supply chain. Along with a variety of business support services, including complimentary legal, accounting and Web services. Putting Michigan to work for you.



To register your business, go to [michiganbusiness.org/MMPC](http://michiganbusiness.org/MMPC)



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Foresight Group, Lansing, Michigan

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**EDITORIAL**  
Miche Suboski, MiQuest  
Joy Kitamori, Edward Lowe Foundation  
Jennifer Deamud, SBDC  
Diane Durance, MiQuest

**DESIGN**  
Andrea Hunter, Michigan Economic Development Corporation

**COVER DESIGN**  
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Michigan Celebrates Small Business (MCSB) honors and recognizes Michigan's small business people and those champions and advocates that support them. Michigan Celebrates is presented by its founding organizations: the Michigan Economic Development Corporation; the Small Business Association of Michigan; the Michigan Small Business Development Center; the U.S. Small Business Administration—Michigan; Chris Holman, Small Business Advocate; and the Edward Lowe Foundation. Copyright © 2015 by Michigan Celebrates Small Business





May 7, 2015

Dear Friends,



I am pleased to join in celebration of this year's Michigan 50 Companies to Watch and all of the small businesses helping to accelerate Michigan's comeback.

Small businesses are the lifeblood that keep our economy pumping. These entrepreneurs and innovators represent more than 90 percent of all employers in the state. Not only does this mean jobs for Michiganders, it means new investment and revenue in every Michigan community.

That is why we have worked hard to create a climate that provides the means for small businesses to thrive.

We have lowered business taxes, cut red tape, partnered with the private sector to make new sources of capital available, and taken an entirely new approach to harnessing talent and connecting it to hiring businesses.

With the creation of the new Department of Talent and Economic Development, we are accelerating the state's effort to become a national leader in connecting highly skilled talent with in-demand jobs.

The focus is on people, not programs.

We are engaging partners across the state with the bold goal of tackling the skills gap head on through innovative and effective collaboration to meet the needs of businesses and create the river of opportunity for all.

Congratulations to the 2015 Michigan 50 Companies to Watch and to Michigan small business everywhere. Thank you for your commitment to your community and to our state as we continue to build a stronger Michigan and a brighter future.

Sincerely,

Rick Snyder  
Governor



## FOUNDING ORGANIZATIONS

### Founding organizations for Michigan Celebrates Small Business

#### *Michigan Business Network is your business connection*



Michigan Business Network is a 24/7 Internet broadcast and podcast platform focusing on Michigan-based business news. We are the resource for communication and information for the entire Michigan business community and beyond. Our online audio web-stream broadcast offers fresh programming daily. This provides our listeners the knowledge and resources needed to enhance their business and the ability to learn about other businesses around the state. Tune in on your computer or mobile device to hear great stories highlighting small to medium-sized enterprises, entrepreneurs, start-ups and inventors. Michigan Business Network's website showcases chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, all business organizations, Michigan-based business news, legislative updates, profiles, marketing, technology, event planning and many other subjects designed to help your business prosper.

Keep us in mind as you are preparing and scheduling your events—we have a statewide business calendar for your reference. Michigan Business Network is your toolbox for building a better company. Download our application on your Apple or Android mobile device by searching for "MBN Live" or "Michigan Business Network." Follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. For more information: [www.michiganbusinessnetwork.com](http://www.michiganbusinessnetwork.com)

#### *Working with organizations to help*



##### *second-stage businesses*

The Edward Lowe Foundation supports second-stage entrepreneurs —companies that are beyond startup with the aptitude and appetite for continued growth—along with the business communities that serve them. Established in 1985 and based in Cassopolis, Mich., the foundation is a nonprofit organization that delivers research, recognition and educational programs for second-stagers through entrepreneur support organizations (ESOs). Among the foundation's services are retreats for leaders of second-stage businesses who are clients or members of an ESO. For more information: [www.edwardlowe.org](http://www.edwardlowe.org)

#### *Assisting your company with growth strategies*



As your business grows, decisions become more complex and the expertise your company requires also changes. The Michigan Small Business Development Center (Michigan SBDC) business growth specialists provide no-cost services to prepare your company for the next stage. The growth specialists utilize a team approach to assess your company's strengths and areas for opportunity. Steps include developing new marketing and sales strategies, improving your processes, and benchmarking your financials using our comprehensive tools. The team has expertise in accounting, finance, marketing, operations, and strategic planning which are

customized for your company's needs. For additional information contact Nancy Boese, Business Growth Team Manager: [boesen@gvsu.edu](mailto:boesen@gvsu.edu), 616.331.7373, [www.sbdcmichigan.org](http://www.sbdcmichigan.org).

#### *Connecting Michigan companies to new business opportunities*



Pure Michigan Business Connect is a public/private initiative created to uncover and develop new business opportunities and support services for Michigan companies. This multi-faceted program helps Michigan companies connect to new procurement opportunities through matchmaking summits and [puremichiganb2b.com](http://puremichiganb2b.com), a dynamic online marketplace with more than 26,000 registered Michigan companies. Through its matchmaking summits, the program has hosted 70 global purchasers, netting more than \$250 million in bid opportunities and more than \$40 million in new contracts for Michigan companies. Additionally, Pure Michigan Business Connect has worked with some of Michigan's largest companies to initiate in-state procurement pledges of \$2 billion and secure commitments of more than 30,000 free business service hours ranging from accounting and legal services to marketing and website assistance. For more information: [www.puremichiganb2b.com](http://www.puremichiganb2b.com)

#### *SBA is your small business resource*



No other federal agency has as its core mission the responsibility to aid, counsel, assist-and-protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise, and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of our nation. We do this by focusing on the three "C"s—access to counseling, access to contracting, and access to capital. Our SBA funded resource partners provide free, confidential business counseling and low cost training. We help small businesses gain access to federal procurement opportunities and provide access to capital to America's growing businesses. We deliver these programs by having a presence in communities across the state, by being proactive in delivering solutions, and by partnering with organizations that can help us help small businesses succeed! The SBA Michigan district office congratulates all of the winners of the 2015 Michigan Celebrates Small Business event. For more information: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) or by phone at 313.226.6075 or via email at [michigan@sba.gov](mailto:michigan@sba.gov).

#### *Helping second-stage entrepreneurs connect and succeed*



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. With over 23,000 members,



## FOUNDING ORGANIZATIONS

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 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. Everything we do is designed save you time and money, connect you with fellow entrepreneurs and small business leaders, and help you succeed. Count on the Small Business Association of Michigan to get you what you need to tackle human resources issues, legal questions, operational challenges, government and regulatory issues and more. For more information: [www.sbam.org](http://www.sbam.org)

*Igniting, unleashing, and promoting  
a spirit of entrepreneurship*



MiQuest is igniting, unleashing, and promoting a spirit of entrepreneurship in Michigan by providing opportunities for

thousands of entrepreneurs to connect, learn and achieve greater success. Our vision is to see Michigan as *the* state of entrepreneurship. MiQuest continues the strong initiatives of its founding organizations, including managing the 50 Companies to Watch award program, Michigan Celebrates Small Business and ACE events, and the annual publication of the entrepreneurship score card. MiQuest has also taken a fresh look at Michigan’s entrepreneurial ecosystem and identified gaps where important work can be done to propel the growth and vitality of the entrepreneurial culture and improve Michigan’s entrepreneurial impact, climate, rankings and reputation. MiQuest has partnered with Crain’s Detroit Business to convene and develop a community of the state’s most ambitious and growth-focused entrepreneurs. This community, called CEO, provides the foundation for peer-to-peer advising and identification of mentor/mentee matches, and a focal point for support services and education opportunities that create measureable positive impact. MiQuest welcomes collaborative partnerships and invites entrepreneurs, coaches, educators, and investors to become involved with current and developing initiatives. MiQuest is the managing partner for Michigan Celebrates Small Business. For more information: [www.miquest.org](http://www.miquest.org)



## ECONOMIC IMPACT

### Economic impact of the 2015 Michigan 50 Companies to Watch

#### Economic impact in 2014

**\$308.8 MILLION IN TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE**

*15.9% increase in total annual revenue compared to 2013*

**1,748 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES**

*1,699 in Michigan; 49 out-of-state*

**798 NET NEW JOBS PROJECTED FOR 2015**

#### Increasing impact

From 2011 through 2014, these companies generated \$898 million in revenue and represented 5,050 full time jobs (both in Michigan and out of state). That translates into an average of 31 percent annual growth in revenue and an average of 28 percent annual growth in full-time jobs.

This year’s Michigan Companies to Watch have clearly implemented growth strategies that have been successful since 2011. If their projections hold, these companies will significantly impact Michigan’s economy yet again in 2015. We look forward to celebrating with yet another exceptional group of Michigan 50 Companies to Watch in 2016.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (projected)
Revenues in millions	\$140	\$183	\$266	\$309	\$461
Employees*	834	1,085	1,383	1,748	2,546

*\* full-time equivalent in Michigan and out-of-state*

#### Regional distribution

REGION	# OF COMPANIES
Southeast	16
West	11
Greater Washtenaw	8
Capitol	4
Northwest	3
Flint (I-69 trade corridor)	2
Great Lakes Bay	2
Northeast	2
Southwest	2

#### Sector distribution

BUSINESS SECTOR	# OF COMPANIES
Manufacturing	14
Information technology	8
Professional	6
Retail trade	4
Entertainment	3
Real estate, rental or leasing	2
Medical device	2
Life sciences	2
Health care or social assistance	2
Financial management	2
Waste management	1
Publishing	1
Construction	1
Embedded technology	1
Managed IT provider	1

CPAs BRINGING NEW  
“GOOD IDEAS!”  
TO MICHIGAN BUSINESSES.

*Congratulations 2015 Winners!*



*Where good ideas add up*





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Q&A



## Q&A WITH STEVE ARWOOD

Michigan's new point man for economic development and talent

STEVE ARWOOD HAS BEEN TAPPED BY GOVERNOR RICK SNYDER FOR ONE MISSION: ACCELERATE MICHIGAN'S REINVENTION. [by Nathan Pilon](#)

**H** HE MAY HAVE THE LONGEST TITLE on a business card in state government: Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) chief executive officer, Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) president and chairman, and Department of Talent and Economic Development (TED) director. While Steve Arwood is a man with many titles, he has been tapped by Governor Rick Snyder for one mission: Accelerate Michigan's reinvention.

Appointed MEDC CEO in January, Arwood is charged with implementing and executing MEDC's core mission of business development and attraction, community development, providing access to capital, and improving Michigan's image and brand.

Arwood also serves as MSF president and chair, where he oversees an 11-member board with broad authority to promote economic development and create jobs.





# “We now have a strong, new economic foundation in place that has re-invigorated business and job growth.”

—Arwood

In addition, he leads the newly created TED department created by Gov. Snyder to ensure that the state can efficiently and effectively develop, administer and coordinate Michigan’s economic, housing, and talent development initiatives and programs.

Prior to joining MEDC last August as executive vice president and chief operating officer, Arwood served as chief regulatory officer and director of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) where he led reforms of the state’s regulatory and licensing environment. Under his leadership, more than 1,500 unnecessary and duplicative regulations were eliminated across state government. He previously served as LARA deputy director overseeing the Unemployment Insurance Agency and Employment Security and Workplace Safety, which includes MIOSHA, Employment Relations and Workers’ Compensation.

He joined LARA in 2011 from Windlab Developments USA LTD, where he served as U.S. regional director. He has worked in wind energy development, conservation, and business development since 1999. He previously served as deputy director and other executive management positions at the Michigan Jobs Commission under Governor John Engler. He has also served as director for the House of Representatives Programs and Policy, and the National Federation for Independent Business—Michigan.

Below, Steve details Michigan’s reinvention and the new direction he is helping to chart for economic development and talent development in the state.

**Q:** Describe the Michigan of 2015 compared to where it was when you came back to state government in 2011. What has changed?

**SA:** I have been around state government a bit, and I don’t spend too much time looking backward, but comparing our position as a state a few years ago—to where we are today—is truly amazing.

Not too long ago, when I talked to business leaders, the conversation revolved around core economic issues:

The job-killing Michigan Business Tax, onerous business regulations, an unwelcoming business climate.

Over the past four years, Governor Snyder and lawmakers

have made sweeping policy changes to re-engineer and improve our business climate.

They replaced the Michigan Business Tax with a streamlined corporate income tax. This propelled our national business tax climate ranking to No. 3 among the 12 most populous states, according to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation in Washington D.C.

And, in a move that will improve our corporate tax climate even more, we are phasing out the personal property taxes that small businesses pay on office equipment and manufacturers pay on industrial equipment.

This move will cut taxes by \$500 million/year, create 15,000 jobs and increase private investment by \$450 million.

Other major policy changes include eliminating more than 2,000 burdensome business regulations, revamping the state’s economic development toolkit, and becoming a right-to-work state.

So, in just a few short years, we’ve demonstrated to CEOs, site selectors, small business owners, entrepreneurs and others, a commitment to making Michigan a business-friendly state.

We now have a strong, new economic foundation in place that has re-invigorated business and job growth.

**Q:** What indicators can you point to show that the economic development policies enacted in Michigan over the past four years are working?

**SA:** It starts with jobs. Michigan has gained more private sector jobs than any other Midwestern state since the end of 2010, and the state’s unemployment rate for February 2015 has dropped to 5.9 percent—the lowest since October 2001.

And, it’s happening in every region of the state. Over the past year, unemployment rates fell in all major regions and payroll job levels rose in all Michigan metro areas.

Michigan has created nearly 400,000 private sector jobs since late 2010, including a nation-leading 105,000 in manufacturing. Our state has created the fifth-most private sector jobs in the country, trailing only California, Texas, Florida and New York. There have been nearly 100,000 private sector jobs created overall in Michigan in the past year alone.

Other indicators show our policy changes are working, as well.



For two consecutive years, Michigan was ranked among the top five states for major new corporate facilities and expansions.

Michigan’s gross domestic product growth outpaced the national average last year. Our state output grew by 11.4 percent from 2009–2013, compared to 8.4 percent of the U.S. economy. State sales tax numbers trended up in 2014, and auto sales are the highest they have been in almost nine years.

On the small business front, Michigan ranks No. 2 nationally in growth in new business owners and in private lending to small business, according to the Entrepreneurship Score Card compiled by the Lansing-based nonprofit MiQuest.

In terms of entrepreneurial change, which MiQuest measures as the momentum of growth relative to other states, Michigan has jumped to No. 12 from No. 49 in 2008.

We aren’t where we want to be yet, but we’re quickly moving in the right direction.

**Q:** How important are small businesses to Michigan’s economy?

**SA:** According to a U.S. Small Businesses Administration, Office of Advocacy report published in 2013, approximately 856,000 small business in Michigan employ over 1.7 million. This year’s 50 Michigan Companies to Watch awardees alone were responsible for 1,748 jobs in 2014 and are expected to create over 2,500 jobs this year.

So, obviously, small businesses are critical. That is why much of our day-to-day focus at MEDC is on helping smaller businesses get beyond tough situations that can limit their progress.

For example, no other state does what Michigan does to fund an entire entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports innovative early-stage companies including high-tech incubators, business advisory support, and pre-seed funding programs.

In fact, over the past four years, the number of tech start-up companies in Michigan has more than tripled. We have seen an average of 240 new tech companies come online in each of the last three years with an average of 1,100 new tech jobs each year.

**Q:** What are some of the tools MEDC deploys to support small business growth?

**SA:** MEDC and our strategic service providers offer a wide range of resources and services to help Michigan small businesses and entrepreneurs gain access to capital, support services, commercialization assistance, high-impact connections with suppliers and customers, and talent enhancement tools.

We administer capital programs to bolster the collateral of many small businesses seeking loans that may not be otherwise not be able to get financing.

Examples include the Collateral Support Program, the Loan Participation Program, and the Capital Access Program, three programs funded under federal State Small Business Credit Initiative, and other public/private partnerships like the Pure Michigan Micro Lending initiative with Huntington Bank and a similar effort with Plymouth-based investment firm Grow Michigan.

Pure Michigan Business Connect helps Michigan businesses connect with one another and benefit from new relationships.

PMBC works to uncover and develop procurement leads both in Michigan and out of state and match those leads with Michigan suppliers. The program’s B2B network, [www.puremichiganb2b.com](http://www.puremichiganb2b.com), links Michigan companies with private sector procurement opportunities available from other Michigan companies.

PMBC can also help connect Michigan entrepreneurs and businesses with professional services like legal, accounting, consulting, business education, business lending, marketing and web support for little or no cost.

Our export team works with small businesses to enter into new overseas markets. Michigan has international trade offices in Canada, China, Mexico and Brazil.

Due to our export team’s matchmaking efforts and other assistance over the past three years, Michigan companies have exported well over \$325 million in goods and services.







## Q&A

**Q:** Going forward, what do you consider to be the number-one challenge in economic development?

**SA:** Today, when I speak with business owners, it's not about taxes, or bureaucratic red tape, or our business climate—it's all about talent.

They want to know where they'll get it and how they'll grow it.

In terms of both a challenge and an opportunity, talent is now the driver and the number-one issue going forward.

The future economic vitality of Michigan is dependent upon building a talented workforce, which starts with a quality education, includes career and college planning, and continues with life-long learning so workers can match their skills to those needed by Michigan businesses.

Thankfully, Michigan has a strong talent base from which we can build on.

Our 15 public universities, 60-plus independent universities and colleges, 28 community colleges and three tribal community colleges are producing the educated and skilled talent that advanced manufacturers, high-tech firms, and businesses of every size and in every sector are looking for.

Michigan is home to 65,000 engineers, 70,000 R&D professionals, we have the fourth-largest high-tech workforce in the U.S., and more than 181,000 skilled trade workers (assemblers, fabricators, first-line supervisors, welders, machinists, inspectors, press machine operators).

Yet, like all states, Michigan is facing an increasing skills-gap in the jobs employers are looking to fill today and those that will be available in the future.

Currently, there are over 180,000 job openings in Michigan, with more than 96,000 jobs posted on [www.mitalent.org](http://www.mitalent.org).

We have to get in front of the curve and create a larger and more diverse talent pool to meet the needs of employers in all areas across the talent spectrum (middle skills, skilled trades, IT, engineering, creative services, etc.).

The goal is to build a diverse talent pool, put people to work, and connect job seekers with employers.

**Q:** What is Michigan doing to accomplish this goal?

**SA:** One of the governor's top priorities has been to make Michigan a national leader in talent development by focusing



## Q&A

on workforce training for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

He has laid out a vision for an effective, efficient government that provides meaningful services to "real people," regardless of their stage in life.

To turn the vision into reality, he has created a new department, Talent and Economic Development, launched in March, where economic, community, and talent development are housed under one roof.

Under this structure, the three pillars of economic development—talent development, community development and business development—are part of one organization and share the same vision and goals.

As part of TED, the new talent investment agency has begun to coordinate all programs across the executive branch of government involving jobs preparedness, career-based education, skilled trades training, incumbent worker training, employment assistance, STEM training programs, and programs targeted at the structurally unemployed.

One of the initiatives that is generating a lot of excitement across the state is our new Community College Skilled Trades Equipment program.

Skilled-trade jobs require education beyond high school,

but not a four-year degree, and usually call for on-the-job training. The career range includes jobs in health care (lab technicians, dental hygienist), maintenance and repair, public safety, manufacturing (machine operators, welders), along with work as carpenters, plumbers and electricians. Collectively, these jobs represent about one-third of the state's employment.

CCSTEP is a \$50-million program that the state's community colleges can apply for grants of up to \$4.8 million to invest in equipment that provides students hands-on education and skills that translate directly to in-demand jobs.

This is an effort of the entire state pulling in one direction, and on a much larger scale, to align education and workforce development initiatives with business demand.

**Q:** Any closing thoughts?

**SA:** I'd like to offer my congratulations to this year's Michigan 50 Companies to Watch and thank them for their commitment to our state. These Michigan-made success stories and all of the small businesses that call Michigan home really are the engine of our economy, and we at MEDC stand ready to help them with any opportunity or challenge they may have down the road.

Supporting workers' compensation  
in small business  
for more than a century.



[AccidentFund.com](http://AccidentFund.com)

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Edge is a full-service marketing and public relations firm located in Michigan's capitol city. Backed by 100 years of expertise in communications, marketing, advertising and advocacy, Edge partners with clients who want to excel.

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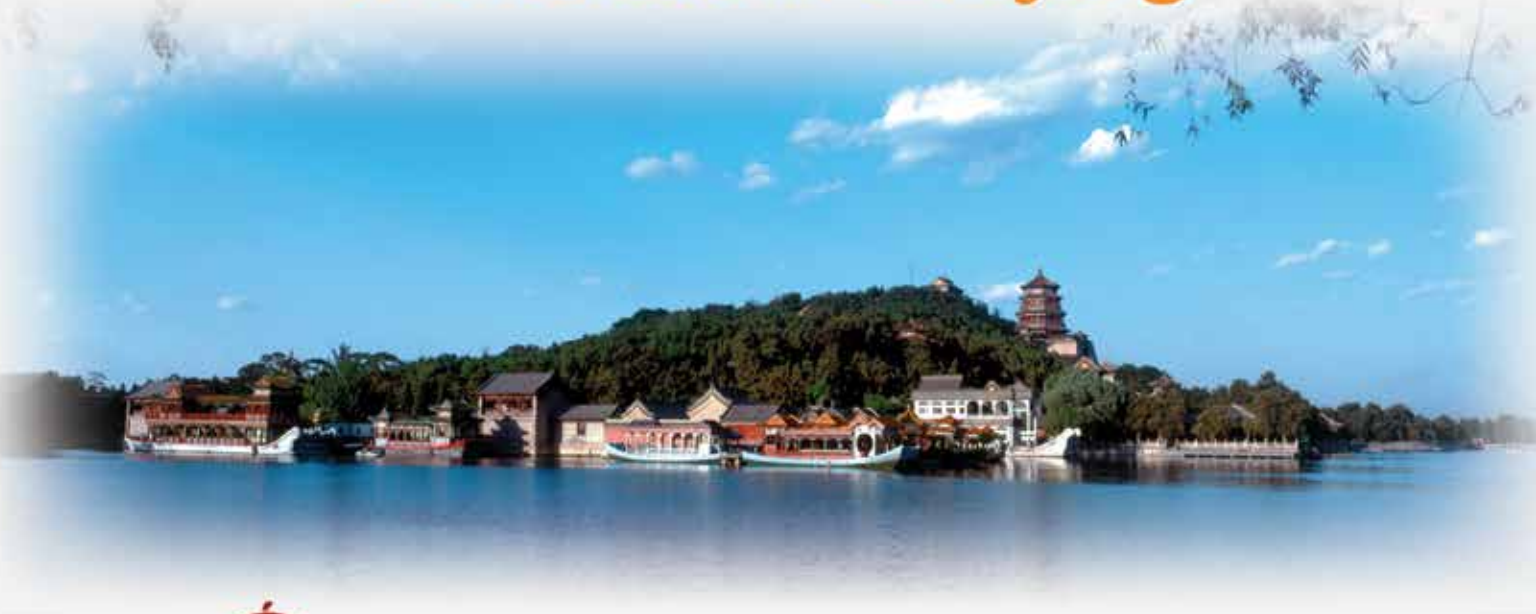
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Beijing, the world-famous ancient capital of China, has a history dating back more than 3000 years. Showcasing the brilliant and splendid Chinese culture, Beijing has 7 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Beijing has a rich imperial style and a strong local Chinese atmosphere. It is famous for its profound cultural foundation and features the world's modern fashions.

## Welcome to Beijing



Hungerford Nichols CPAs + Advisors is honored to serve as the due diligence officer for the Michigan 50 Companies to Watch. Our role is to verify that each business is in good standing and meets the due diligence requirements. Be assured, all information about your business is held in the strictest of confidence. It is important to us to make sure the companies being honored have passed the thorough due diligence testing. We hope you feel proud and honored to be selected as a winner!

We are energized to see the variety and quality of businesses honored this year. We are also pleased to learn that the businesses selected this year represented \$308.8 million in revenue and nearly 1,750 jobs in 2014. They reflect this year's theme, "Unleashing Innovation and Growth." Companies, such as those honored as the Michigan 50 Companies to Watch, are helping to create opportunities not only for today, but for our next generation of business leaders.

At Hungerford Nichols, we live by a similar philosophy of "Growth Creates Opportunities for All." For nearly 75 years, we've been partnering with Michigan businesses as a valued member of their team, in all aspects of their business cycles.

We are pleased to congratulate the 2015 Michigan 50 Companies to Watch and Small Business Award winners. Thank you for your commitment to making a positive impact on Michigan's economy.

## Helping Your Business Succeed

The Michigan Small Business Development Center (Michigan SBDC) business growth specialists provide services to prepare companies for the next stage. The specialists utilize a team approach to assess a company's strengths and areas of opportunity. Steps include:

- developing new marketing and sales strategies,
- improving a company's processes,
- developing a strategic plan, and
- benchmarking financials using our comprehensive tools.



Contact the SBDC to be connected with an SBDC business growth specialist in your area.

[www.SBDCMichigan.org](http://www.SBDCMichigan.org) or 616.331.7480.







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creators of experiences that transform

## INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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### EVENTS

Live events where experience is everything. Stage lighting, audio, projection, message, speaker, preparation, polling, social integration, and more come together for maximum result with minimal hassle.



### VIDEO

Storytelling through video, aided by full-service in house production and post capabilities. Many of our pieces use documentary technique or a high-energy concept or brand approach.



### LEARNING

Custom training programs crafted through advanced instructional design. We focus on measurable outcomes and transfer of new knowledge and skills from the learning environment back to everyday life.



### DESIGN

Print and web materials designed to support communications goals to many scales, from a handout or infographic to a full annual report or website community.



### BRANDING

Clear and distinctive brand identities that communicate a consistent personality through logo, font selection, color palette, copywriting, and image standards.



### ENGAGEMENT

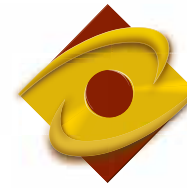
Messages amplified through traditional PR and earned media, social media platforms, and a web of relationships throughout the creative and media communities.

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## ALUMNI UPDATE



**MICHIGAN 50**  
COMPANIES TO WATCH™

### 2005-2014

The Michigan 50 Companies to Watch award is a celebration of second-stage company contributions—as economic powerhouses for the state, job creators for an empowered workforce, supporters of communities and groundbreaking innovators in their industries. Eligible companies must have 6–99 full-time equivalent employees and \$750,000–\$50 million annual revenue in the 12 months preceding the year in which the award was received. More compelling, however, is the growth potential demonstrated by these companies.

In this alumni update, 500 past winners were surveyed. Seventy-seven (15.4 percent) responded with their employee counts and revenue figures, which are presented here as an aggregate. Also featured are past-year highlights from 50 alumni companies, on the following pages.

### Alumni full-time equivalent employees

4,335 in 2014

5,155 expected in 2015

12 companies had more than 100 FTEs in 2014

4 exceeded 200 FTEs in 2014

2 expect to exceed 300 in 2015

### Alumni revenue growth

28 percent in 2014

32 percent in 2015 (projected)

27 companies had revenue growth of 25 percent or more in 2014

5 reported increases of 100–260 percent in 2014

5 expect 100–300 percent growth in 2015

## Congratulations to This Year's Award Winners!

**We're local and committed to serving the credit needs of our small business members.**







ALUMNI UPDATE

AWARD YEAR	COMPANY, CITY; COMPANY OFFICIAL	MILESTONES FROM THE PAST YEAR
2009	Achatz Handmade Pie Company, Chesterfield; Wendy and Dave Achatz, owners	Entered an agreement to take the Achatz Pie name into a nationwide franchise; will maintain control of production to keep quality at top-notch levels.
2014	Akervall Technologies Inc., dba SISU Mouthguards, Saline; Sassa Akervall, CEO	Purchased 15,000-square-foot facility. Received a \$750,000 SBIR Phase II grant from the National Science Foundation.
2010	Ameri Pro Restoration LLC, Grand Ledge; Ron Brown, president	Became the official restoration firm for the Michigan Capitol and moved to a 41,000-square-foot facility.
2011	Applied Imaging, Grand Rapids; John Lowery, president	Instituted a profit-sharing program, giving 10 percent back to employees. Has pledged more than \$1.2 million to the community.
2012	Axios Incorporated, Grand Rapids; Dan Barcheski, founder/CEO	Helped 2,322 Michiganders land permanent employment in 2014. A 100 percent employee-owned company.
2007	BB&E, Northville; Aaron Etnyre, president/CEO	Awarded an OASIS SB contract by the General Services Administration, competing with more than 330 bidders for 40 “Pool 1” contracts.
2005	Black Star Farms, Suttons Bay; Donald Coe, managing partner	Increased distributor base, added winery production capacity and increased winery processing efficiencies. Entered the Ohio and Wisconsin markets.
2014	Carbon Media Group, Bingham Farms; Hyaat Chaudhary, CEO	Expanded benefits package, including an unlimited vacation policy. Experienced greatest year for acquiring new business while keeping a solid base of existing customers.
2013	Check Corporation, Troy; Robert Check, president/CEO	Revenue reached an all-time high, product was shipped to all 50 states, saw increased revenue for export product.
2013	Constructive Eating Inc., Ann Arbor; Carter Malcolm, founder/owner	Awarded two patents and moved into a new 4,000-square-foot facility. Continued to expand international presence, adding distribution in new portions of Europe and Russia.
2011	Cops & Doughnuts Bakery, Clare; Greg (Ryno) Rynearson, co-owner/ president	Increased minimum wage to \$9/hour for non-skilled employees. In 2014, shipped paczki, the traditional Fat Thursday pastry, to all 50 states and Washington D.C. in a single day.
2010	Covenant Eyes Inc., Owosso; Ronald J. DeHaas, CEO	Awarded a significant patent, added disability insurance for employees, received and turned down a “very good” venture capital offer, and opened a fourth colocation facility.
2014	DASI Solutions, Pontiac; David Darbyshire, engineer/co-owner	Launched a U.S. Dept. of Labor-approved industrial design technician apprenticeship program for workforce development.
2012	DeWys Manufacturing, Marne; Jon DeWys, president	Earned “Fabricator of the Year” honors from the Fabricators & Manufacturers Assn., bringing national awareness and marketability outside the Great Lakes region.
2008	Food For Thought, Honor; Timothy Fitzgerald Young, founder/president; Gregory A. Young, CEO/CFO	Esch Road Foods is a new brand, found in all 235 Meijer stores; 1 percent of net sales is donated to organizations seeking to protect the Great Lakes watershed.
2009	Gantec Inc., Midland; Richard Olson, president	Three new distribution agreements, four new products developed in the agriculture sector, seeing strong results with commercial produce growers.
2013	Grand Traverse Distillery, Traverse City; Kent Rabish, president	Opened three new locations and expanding retail tasting rooms with six new spirits added.
2013	Gravity Works Design + Development, Lansing; Jeff McWherter, partner/ director of development	Organized the Lansing Give Camp, an event that works with 10 non-profits over a week to develop websites, mobile apps and branding, which the groups could not normally afford.



ALUMNI UPDATE

AWARD YEAR	COMPANY, CITY; COMPANY OFFICIAL	MILESTONES FROM THE PAST YEAR
2013	H&H Wildlife Design and Fur Dressing Inc., Reed City; Mark Marlette, president	Gained 211 new clients in 2014, expanding market territory and market share. Added a tool and machine business and now manufactures a machine used in commercial tanneries.
2008	iDashboards, Troy; Shadan Malik, CEO	Serving several hundred new clients worldwide, with more than 500,000 users in over 40 countries and eight languages.
2014	iNDIGO Health Partners, Traverse City; David Friar, president	Previously Hospitalists of Northern Michigan, the name change reflects expanded scope. Now includes broad spectrum healthcare and consulting throughout the state.
2009	Ingenuity IEQ, Midland; Michael T. Fox, president/CEO	Secured a \$4.5 million VA project and earned re-certification as a service-disabled veteran-owned small business. Introduced two new product lines.
2009	Iron Fetish Metalworks, dba I. F. Metalworks, Roseville; Karen Arondoski, president/owner	Continued to increase client base and diversification, including to the aerospace industry.
2013	ITB Packaging LLC, Holland; Julie Kortman, CEO	Added two packaging products and several new material choices.
2014	Journeyman Distillery, Three Oaks; Bill Welter, owner	Building out a new kitchen, bar and production facility that can increase output by nearly nine times of current levels.
2005	KTM Industries Inc., Lansing; Tim Colonnese, president/CEO	Expanded markets include the wine industry in Napa/Sonoma.
2008	LLamasoft, Ann Arbor; Donald A. Hicks, CEO	Grew in every way, into Europe and with new products. Implemented an employee-run community impact council; more than \$10,000 donated to local non-profits.
2012	Logic Solutions, Ann Arbor; Jimmy Hsiao, CEO	One subsidiary doubled its revenue in 2014. Another subsidiary, Showcase, pushed a product to market in China and gained 80 new corporate clients.
2013	Marvel Technologies Inc., Novi; Bala Rajaraman, president/CEO	Created MarvelTech Consulting Services, a new division; pursuing a clientbase nationally and in Canada and India.
2006	Menlo Innovations, Ann Arbor; Richard Sheridan, CEO/chief storyteller	Continues to expand geographic market beyond Michigan. CEO Sheridan published first book, “Joy, Inc: How We Built a Workplace People Love”.
2011	MFP Automation Engineering, Grandville/Hudsonville; Roger Betten Jr., president	Broke through a \$40 million sales target. Purchased a new building—the largest cantilevered building in America.
2014	Michigan Lake Products Inc., Indian River; Greg Welch, owner/general manager	Introduced the ADAWALK Beach Walkway System, which has given the company national reach.
2008	Motawi Tileworks Inc., Ann Arbor; Nawal Motawi, owner	Motawi received the “Economic Bridge Builder of the Year” award from the Arab American Chamber of Commerce in 2014.
2013	MPF Acquisitions Inc. dba Marshall Plastic Film, Martin; John Roggow, president”	Surpassed \$20 million in sales for the first time, continued to grow pharmaceutical offerings.
2011	Mr. Chips Inc., Pinconning; Joseph Janicke, president	Added additional products, acquired second manufacturing location to expand geographical reach.





ALUMNI UPDATE

AWARD YEAR	COMPANY, CITY; COMPANY OFFICIAL	MILESTONES FROM THE PAST YEAR
2011	Mutually Human, Grand Rapids; Mark Van Holstyn, president	Added a number of new national clients, opened an office in Columbus, Ohio.
2014	On Duty Gear, Port Huron; Marian (Cissy) Riddell, owner	Launched a second location, which has already exceeded sales projections.
2005	Online Tech, Ann Arbor; Yan Ness and Mike Klein, co-CEOs	Opened two new data centers, one to serve the Detroit market and another in Indianapolis to begin a Midwest expansion.
2010	Premier Food Supplies LLC, Troy; Amit Makhecha, vice president	Acquired a 32,000-square-foot building in Troy, doubling warehouse capacity. Established a sister corporation to take the company national.
2014	Prism Analytical Technologies Inc., Mt. Pleasant; Lester H. Keepper III, president/CEO	Filed three new patents. Introduced Office Air Check to the U.S. and European markets along with products for automotive test cells and environmental source testing.
2014	Smart Vision Lights, Muskegon; Dave Spaulding, president	Added global distributors, released several new products, continuing STEP grant efforts. Developed new products to diversify company into other industries.
2007	SPACE, Inc, Midland; Kathie Fuce-Hobohm, president	Awarded a two-year, multi-million dollar blanket purchase agreement from the General Services Administration. Developed a new business unit called “SPACE anew.”
2010	Standard Components Inc., Sterling Heights; James O. Wilkins Jr., president/CEO	Diversified offerings to serve aerospace and defense clients.
2010	Stewart Manufacturing LLC, Hermansville; Gregory Stewart, president	Completed a 21,000-square-foot expansion. Moved recently acquired medical device business to Hermansville.
2013	Supermercado Mexico, Grand Rapids; Javier Olvera, president	Added a bakery with international certification, completed a deal to distribute bread in two of Meijer’s heavily populated areas.
2005	ThermoAnalytics Inc., Calumet; Keith Johnson, president/CEO	International sales now exceed domestic sales and revenue from software products exceeds service revenue. Opened EU registered offices in Germany and France.
2011	TriStar Molding Inc., Marcellus; Nicholas DeKoning, co-owner/ president/CEO	Added new and reconditioned ancillary equipment such as die heaters, dryers and robots.
2013	Uckele Health & Nutrition, Blissfield; Michael J. Uckele, owner/CEO	Increased production numbers by 500 SKUs. Acquired a line of canine products and attracted several new contract manufacturing clients.
2014	Walker-Miller Energy Services LLC, Detroit; Carla Walker-Miller, president/CEO	Added new clients and negotiated two long-term contracts. Introduced employee fitness classes at work such as yoga, bokwa and self-defense.
2008	WSI, Kalamazoo; Jeff O’Brien, president/CEO	Client success: selected and onboarded 700 associates in a five-plant, three-shift food manufacturing environment, resulting in improved scheduling, labor usage and 60 percent decrease in overtime.

WE TIP  
OUR HAT!



**Congratulations to the 2015 Michigan Celebrates Small Business award recipients. We applaud your will to succeed, and thank you for working hard to support Michigan’s economy. Together, we can keep Michigan moving forward.**

For information about how Consumers Energy helps businesses, call us at 800-805-0490, or visit **ConsumersEnergy.com/businessmatters**



B7038





## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### A&B Packing Equipment Inc.

Lawrence

Bob Williamson, CEO

Founded in 1995; current leadership since 1995

Business industry: manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 3

[www.abpacking.com](http://www.abpacking.com)

This family-owned company designs and manufactures cutting edge equipment for the 21st century that enables growers to meet the challenges of cleaning, grading, weighing and packaging fresh product in the most innovative, gentle, accurate, and speed-efficient ways possible.

Starting in a small garage in 1995, A&B has become the industry leader in fresh-pack and processing equipment. Being growers ourselves, we are bonded to our customers because we share common goals.

We possess a unique understanding of our customers' needs and challenges—sanitation, gap, third-party audits—even their frustrations and dreams. Our patents enable us to offer pioneering ideas to both current and new customers.

A&B remains small enough to know our customers by name, but large enough to meet the demands of our customers with custom equipment worldwide. We are the “go to” company for challenging packing needs and are the problem solvers for growers and packers alike



### AirTime Trampoline & Game Parks

Novi

Jimmy Nafso, CEO

Founded in 2012; current leadership since 2014

Business industry: family entertainment; sports and amusement center

Sites in Michigan: 3

Full-time equivalent employees: 30  
[www.airtimetrampoline.com](http://www.airtimetrampoline.com)

“Jump on in” is the mantra of AirTime Trampoline & Game Parks. CEO Jimmy Nafso is excited for everyone to learn that AirTime is more than trampolines. We are very community oriented and give back to organizations as part of our services. We are the “Proud local sponsor of the American Heart Association for Oakland and Macomb County schools.”

AirTime has a compelling vision that enriches the lives of our employees and guests. From extraordinary birthday parties, school events and corporate team building, AirTime is all about making memories that last!

AirTime has wall-to-wall trampolines, including dodgeball, basketball and our famous mosh pit, which is designed for fun for all ages, shapes and sizes. We have live DJs every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. AirTime becomes a nightclub for kids with jumping and dancing. The innovative trampoline parks are engineered for fun and powered by music.

AirTime Trampoline & Game Parks offers the key to a healthy lifestyle. We have enjoyable activities that keep both kids and adults coming back for more. AirTime is a one of a kind experience for all ages, which helps encourage “active fun!”



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Algal Scientific was founded after four graduate students won the inaugural DTE Clean Energy Prize competition at the University of Michigan. The business plan was based on the treatment of high-strength wastewater using algae. The goal was to reduce the impact that massive algal blooms have on our oceans and waterways. That business is now commercial with our technology deployed at one of the world's largest malt plants in the beer industry.

An outgrowth of that research led to a new focus: the production of a unique biochemical from algae that supports animal and human immune health. This compound has been tested in trials around the world, demonstrating that it can be an alternative to the use of antibiotics in livestock production. Overuse of antibiotics contributes to antibiotic-resistant diseases such as MRSA, which lead to more deaths than HIV/AIDS. We are now shipping commercial quantities to livestock producers, one of which is starting a trial with up to 25 million chickens.

Our ability to produce ultra-pure versions of this compound at much lower costs than ever before is now leading suppliers of human nutraceuticals and functional foods to incorporate it into products to support human health.



### Algal Scientific Corporation

Plymouth

Geoff Horst, CEO

Founded in 2009; current leadership since 2009

Business industry: biotechnology

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 9  
[www.algalscientific.com](http://www.algalscientific.com)



AlSentis develops touch recognition technology for human-machine interface. Founded by a pioneer in touch technology, Dave Caldwell, AlSentis set out to develop a technology that could overcome the limitations of

current technology: a touch technology that could work in water; work with gloves; and overcome the variances that make cell phones hard to answer on cold days or vehicle access systems fail when they are covered with road grime.

AlSentis® HSS™ touch recognition technology was launched in 2012 and has best proven its performance in an automotive application that has shipped almost 500,000 parts without a single defect (OPPM). “We have demonstrated that discrete touch buttons can be more robust and reliable,” said Dave Caldwell, founder and CTO, “and our next phase will focus on commercializing robust HSS™ touch screens.”

Through its qualified supply chain, AlSentis trains qualified developers to design products using AlSentis Intellectual Property. Instead of capitalizing endless production lines, AlSentis works with qualified suppliers to build products that embody AlSentis intellectual property. This supply chain strategy has made AlSentis a capital-efficient business. It has also begun to create an ecosystem of technology development that allows customers to adopt the technology through their existing supply chains.

### AlSentis LLC

Holland

Justin Teitt, CEO

Founded in 2008; current leadership since 2014

Business industry: embedded technology

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 10  
[www.alsentis.com](http://www.alsentis.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Apex Digital Solutions Sterling Heights

Jason Lambiris, CEO

Founded in 1998; current leadership since 1998

Business industry: technology consulting

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 19

[www.apexdigital.com](http://www.apexdigital.com)

Apex Digital Solutions originally started as a website hosting and development house in 1998. As the business environment began to change, we reassessed where Apex was in the technology world and compared that to where we needed to go in order to stay ahead of the game. In 2009, we hit the reboot button and transformed Apex into a full-service managed IT firm powered by Microsoft technologies. Since this refresh, we have been able to increase headcount, held a steady year-over-year increase in revenue and profitability.



These business points have enabled us to edge closer to the point where Apex can become a vehicle to having an impact outside of just growth, profitability or adding jobs. In the last year we were able to donate approximately 30,000 meals to No Kid Hungry; send 200 kids to the Detroit Thanksgiving Parade from the Children's Center of Detroit; and spend the day as a company volunteering at the holiday toy and gift shop run by the Children's Center. Apex's mission is, "To empower people to positively impact the lives of others through our passion for technology and business." Seeing these foundational pieces come together so that we can help others is the true reason Apex was started.

### ARMOR Protective Packaging Howell

John Holden, CEO; Robin McConnell, president; David Yancho, vice president

Founded in 1979; current leadership since 2004

Business industry: rust prevention and removal

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 30

[www.armorvci.com](http://www.armorvci.com)



To Serve and Preserve™

Armor Protective Packaging is a global leader in corrosion management solutions designed to protect metals before, during and after transport or storage. For more than 35 years, ARMOR has offered a full line of industrial packaging products that include: paper, poly film, emitters, and desiccants all infused with our proprietary vapor corrosion inhibiting (VCI) nanotechnology, which is a water-based rust preventative. Products Metal Rescue™ and Dry Coat™ are liquids designed to remove rust and prevent its return. All ARMOR products are clean, safe, easy to use and extremely effective.



In 2009, the consumer division Workshop Hero™ was created. Workshop Hero is a cutting-edge line of rust preventative and rust removal products designed to take the "work" out of workshop! Workshop Hero™ products, Metal Rescue™ Rust Remover Bath™ and Dry Coat™ Rust Preventative are clean, safe, easy to use. They are built on ARMOR's foundation of more than a 35-year history in providing expert corrosion management products and services to Fortune 500 companies all over the world. Whether your workshop is a garage, a potting shed or a workbench in your "man cave," the Workshop Hero™ line of products will take the "work" out of your workshop!



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



As a supplier of high-purity graphite consumable products used in industry, Bay Carbon has thrived as one of the only privately held companies in the world to offer the graphite technological resources demanded by our customers. The ability to offer precision machining, state-of-the-art purity, and silicon carbide protective coatings has enabled supply to both large multinational industrial operations as well as prototype work for universities and startup companies focused on the next generation of technology advances.

Bay Carbon was founded in 1978 by Bill Clare to supply silicon carbide coated, high-purity graphite to the emerging silicon semiconductor industry. As of today, Bay Carbon has expanded its global market reach to supply a wide variety of industries including high-sensitivity spectroscopy of impurities in materials to the manufacture of compound semiconductors used for LED lighting and power control.

Bay Carbon is now working to bring a next generation of products to allow us to compete in the markets of China, Korea and Taiwan. A unique example is a new product used in the fabrication of graphene. This new Bay Carbon product has been widely highlighted in research papers from both university and industrial laboratories, from the United States to Asia.



### Bay Carbon Inc. Bay City

Thomas J. Clare, president

Founded in 1978; current leadership since 2007

Business industry: carbon and graphite product manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 26

[www.baycarbon.com](http://www.baycarbon.com)



We are a company that is dedicated to developing and deploying process accountability system (PAS) for industrial automation. Our core product, ENVISION™, digitizes and visualizes every motion and intention of every operator and device in a process. All these captured data then weaves together to form the "Machine Heartbeat" of the process. ENVISION™ is created to answer these three questions: 1. What is wrong?; 2. What might go wrong?; and 3. Where is the hidden capacity?

Founded in June 2011 with six people, BEET has grown rapidly and gained industrial recognition. We were the winner of 2012 "Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Award" from Automation Alley. We were selected by the state of Michigan as one of the six startups to receive a \$250,000 investment in 2013. In 2014, we were the winner of "Entrepreneur of the Year" from Automation Alley and the "Next Generation Manufacturing Award" from Accelerate Michigan Innovation Competition (AMIC).

We have also been very successful with our customers. ENVISION™ was able to improve throughput by 5 percent to 10 percent within weeks. It predicted major failures days sometimes weeks in advance and had an 80 percent reduction in time identifying problem areas. Today, we are engaged with five of the top 10 automotive OEMs and established pilot projects in electronics and distribution industries.

### BEET Analytics Technology LLC Plymouth

David Wang, CEO

Founded in 2011; current leadership since 2011

Business industry: advanced manufacturing solutions

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 14

[www.beet.com](http://www.beet.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### **Benzinga** Southfield

Jason Raznick, founder/CEO

Founded in 2010; current leadership  
since 2010

Business industry: financial media

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 27

[www.benzinga.com](http://www.benzinga.com)

Five years ago, Jason Raznick founded Benzinga. With an infant upstairs, he left a stable job to pursue a crazy dream in his basement by starting a stock market blog that would grow into a financial media powerhouse.

Today, Benzinga is well on its way to achieving its goal with four successful business units and a client roster that includes TD Ameritrade, Microsoft and NASDAQ.



What began as a blog soon became a respected financial media outlet, scoring interviews with famous CEOs and hedge fund managers. Traffic soared, and Raznick's team began finding new ways to monetize. In 2011, the company launched Benzinga Pro—a news and data portal for investment professionals. Aside from selling individual subscriptions, Raznick closed content licensing deals with large corporate partners.

In 2013, the company formed a new e-commerce business called Marketfy, which sells subscriptions to premium content produced by third-party financial experts. The financial newsletter industry is old, and it was a perfect space for a disruptive upstart. As the only destination that verifies a newsletter's track record and shows real user reviews, Marketfy has quickly gained footing as a growing force in financial media.

### **Beyond Gaming LLC / GamerSaloon.com**

Royal Oak

Gabe Rubin, CEO

Founded in 2006; current leadership  
since 2006

Business industry: "esports"  
(competitive video games)

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 8

[www.gamersaloon.com](http://www.gamersaloon.com)

GamerSaloon.com was founded in 2006, when CEO Gabe Rubin wanted to play his brother in an NHL video game competition for \$10. The only problem was that Gabe was in Michigan and his brother was in California. After an extensive search online, Gabe did not find any sites in the world that enabled skill-based online video game competitions for real money. With the help of future CTO, Noah Krugel, Gabe met with a legal team who determined the legality of online skill-based gaming and GamerSaloon.com was formed.



Over the past nine years, GamerSaloon.com has grown to become one of the top sites in the world for competitive video games, called "esports." GamerSaloon.com currently has over 750,000 members and has awarded more than \$25 million in prizes.

While the most popular titles are Madden, NBA2k, and FIFA, GamerSaloon.com is currently expanding to other titles such as Call of Duty, Halo and Super Smash Brothers.

The GamerSaloon.com team is laser focused, highly motivated and always seeking creative ways to attract and retain players. Look out for GamerSaloon.com in 2015 to build on the 80 percent top-line growth over the prior year!



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Blackford Capital is a private equity firm based in Grand Rapids, which acquires, manages and builds middle-market manufacturing, distribution and service companies. The firm currently has seven portfolio companies operating in 12 states, employing more than 1,100 people and with combined revenues of approximately \$350 million. Blackford has 17 employees and 25 operating partners.

Blackford has received numerous industry awards including: Deal of the Year from MiBiz (2013 and 2014) for the acquisition of Custom Profile and Burgafflex; Deal of the Year from Crain's Detroit Business (2014) for the acquisition of Mopec; EPIC Award for Best Small Business of the Year from the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce; and was named an Economic Bright Spot four years in a row by Corp! Magazine (2011–2014).

In 2012, Blackford created the Michigan Prosperity Fund is the only fund within the state that provides: Michigan investors an opportunity to realize best-in-class investment returns; supports the Michigan economy by maintaining local ownership of Michigan companies; and protects and creates local jobs, talent, capital and resources. Currently, the Michigan Prosperity Fund has four portfolio companies under management across the state.



### **Blackford Capital** Grand Rapids

Martin Stein, CEO

Founded in 2000; current leadership  
since 2000

Business industry: private equity

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 17

[www.blackfordcapital.com](http://www.blackfordcapital.com)

Starting with the simple idea to create a bottled water brand that is kinder to the environment and gives back, one Grand Rapids-based company found that packaged water should not be bottled at all but boxed instead.

Triple-filtered for purity, Boxed Water sets itself apart with packaging that is made from over 75 percent paper, is recyclable and 100 percent BPA free. Flat shipping to their filling plants and the box's square shape also reduce shipping waste and carbon footprint.

For Boxed Water, the product is only one part of its mission. One percent of revenues annually are dedicated to reforestation and world water relief.

Boxed Water launched in 2009 with a few local coffee shops but kicked its efforts into high gear in 2014 with the addition of 17 sales people and over 60 distributors. As it heads into 2015, Boxed Water has set its sights on changing the face of the \$24 billion U.S. packaged water industry with new distribution in grocery, mass convenience stores and club channels. Their growth is also supported by entry into international markets including Mexico and Canada. If you have not seen it yet, keep an eye out. Boxed Water is a brand and a company on a mission.

### **Boxed Water is Better LLC**

Grand Rapids

Brett VanderKamp, president

Founded in 2009; current leadership  
since 2012

Business industry: packaged beverage

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 25

[www.boxedwaterisbetter.com](http://www.boxedwaterisbetter.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Care N Assist LLC

Corunna

Daniel Story, CEO

Founded in 2005; current leadership since 2005

Business industry: private-duty home care

Sites in Michigan: 4

Full-time equivalent employees: 69

[www.carenassist.com](http://www.carenassist.com)

Care N Assist began as an in-home care agency, but we quickly recognized our true goal was to help people to live at home. We have swiftly grown to have four offices and added to our continuum of care services including: emergency alert to improve communication and strengthen the connection with our clients; adult day care for the memory impaired; medication management; case management; and geriatric assessment services.



Our strength is our philosophy in customer service and the value we create for our clients. Our professional referral sources know us to be short-notice prepared and willing to communicate. Our clients appreciate the quality of our home care aides. Clients are often surprised when they learn what our home care aides are willing and able to do.

We are currently releasing our newest service called “Exclusive Care and Concierge Services.” In an effort to go above and beyond the common or routine, we have designed a service that will further reduce risk for the client and increase our ability to meet their household and wellness needs. This requires a team approach and we have that elite team.

### Creative Studio Promotions

Grand Rapids

Ann Vidro and Menda Wright, co-owners

Founded in 2012; current leadership since 2012

Business industry: branded merchandise/promotional products

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 9

[www.creativestudiopromo.com](http://www.creativestudiopromo.com)

Menda Wright and Ann Vidro started Creative Studio Promotions (CSP) in 2012. They saw a great opportunity to expand and fulfill a need in the e-store, warehousing and fulfillment markets, carving out a niche in the promotional products industry as well as a solution provider.



We are now the preferred supplier for companies such as Spectrum Health, Priority Health, Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital, Biggby Coffee and Steelcase Inc. We have hosted e-stores for each of these companies, and warehoused and shipped product globally.

We are one of the few advertising specialty companies that provides promotional products, builds e-commerce sites in-house, provides screen printing and embroidery, as well as warehousing, fulfillment and order shipping. We pick thousands of items off the shelf every year with 99% accuracy. We are also one of the few promotional companies that can provide one-offs for those who might not want to hold inventory on apparel items.

Our mission/vision is to exceed customer expectations and “wow” the customer while having more fun than you can imagine at work. We have streamlined procedures to meet the most demanding client’s deadlines and high quality standards while utilizing our high-volume purchasing power to keep prices low.



**Creative Studio**  
Promotions



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Detroit Gun Works (DGW) was founded in 2009 with the specific goal of redefining a manufacturing company to appeal to a new generation and a global market. DGW challenged traditional supplier precedents, and evolved over the last six years, with the eventual goal of becoming a world class, Tier 1 firearms, military and defense supplier.

Our foundation is built on technology, responsiveness and people. Coupled with a long-term vision of redefining manufacturing, this allows us to deliver unique manufacturing solutions to our customers. Our company is focused on maintaining a competitive advantage. We have hired engineers, CAD personnel, machine operators and more to support new programs. We have challenged our team to question the status quo and find better ways to operate our business. We have branched into new materials and new markets. Our flexibility, and the ability to change dynamically, is our biggest advantage. The coming years will offer opportunity in our current and new industries or applications that require our problem-solving and get-it-done mindset.

DGW will value its small business culture, recruit the best talent and provide solutions not possible before. In doing that, we will increase our differentiation and grow our business in the years to come.



### Detroit Gun Works (Central Screw Products)

Troy

Matthew D. Heller and Arnot B. Heller III, co-owners

Founded in 2009; current leadership since 2010

Business industry: manufacturing of precision components

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 18

[www.detroitgunworks.com](http://www.detroitgunworks.com)



Detroit Labs creates iPhone, iPad, Android, Windows phones, and in-vehicle applications, working with companies such as GM, Dominos Pizza and DTE Energy with millions of total app downloads.

Detroit Labs is a part of the Quicken Loans family of companies and one of the first companies created with Detroit Venture Partners. After outgrowing a tech incubator at the Madison building, Detroit Labs now has its own two floors on Woodward Avenue in downtown Detroit, with several team members also living in the city.

Detroit Labs invests 20 percent of its efforts to “lab time,” letting team members hack and learn new skills to help them improve their craft. Lab time is also spent turning passion projects into viable businesses of their own.

In less than four years, Detroit Labs has hired over 80 developers and designers. Several team members have come from an apprenticeship program, where people with little or no development experience spend three months training to be full-time team members while receiving full-time salaries and benefits the entire time. Twenty-two team members have completed the apprenticeship program with a third class of 11 apprentices currently learning JavaScript development.

### Detroit Labs LLC

Detroit

Paul Glomski, co-founder/CEO

Founded in 2011; current leadership since 2011

Business industry: technology

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 80

[www.detroitlabs.com](http://www.detroitlabs.com)



**DETROIT**  
LABS





## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Digital Roots

Northville

Jay Wolcott, founder/CEO

Founded in 2009; current leadership since 2009

Business industry: social media intelligence

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 25

[www.digitalroots.com](http://www.digitalroots.com)

Digital Roots is a leader and pioneer in the social data intelligence and customer engagement industry. In the constant changing world of social media, we leverage smart technology to help brands harness the power of the social web. Digital Roots offers the revolutionary LUCID social software suite that makes social media management relevant and meaningful for businesses. Our advanced software platform was designed around a proprietary natural language processing and machine learning system optimized for social content. This provides brands with the ability to listen, monitor and engage in customer conversations across the web in real-time. We have partnered to provide strategic support to over 20 Fortune 500 companies helping them; optimize their social media experience for measurable ROI through customer retention, revenue opportunities, product insights and brand reputation enhancement.



Digital Roots is on a mission to keep brands relevant in a dynamic market through smarter solutions and unparalleled support. This combination has allowed our clients to be acknowledged as leaders in this space driving quantifiable results. We have been recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in America, one of the coolest places to work and are honored to now be included in the "Michigan 50 Companies to Watch."

### Endurance Carbide

Bridgeport Township, Saginaw

Patrick Curry, president/CEO

Founded in 1961; current leadership since 1995

Business industry: automotive, defense, medical, aerospace, farm and heavy equipment

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 22

[www.endurancecarbide.com](http://www.endurancecarbide.com)



Endurance Carbide is a leading manufacturer of precision industrial carbide wear parts solutions. Since 1961, Endurance Carbide (recently changed from M. Curry Corporation) has been providing state-of-the-art solid carbide punches, dies, gages, bushings and form inserts for industries like; automotive, aerospace, medical, recreational, can tooling, battery, pen, arms and ammunition manufacturing across the globe. Our customers have become accustomed to getting a reliable, critical component for their manufacturing processes backed up by impeccable customer service. Endurance Carbide makes extremely tight tolerance tooling for demanding operations. These wear parts are the items in production that are sometimes overlooked but remain a very important cog in the overall process and could make a dramatic impact on the production manufacturer's bottom line.



Our customer is our driving force. We remain committed to improving our capabilities through innovations and constant training. In the last few years, Endurance has invested over \$939,000 in new technology and \$26,000 in employee training.

Endurance Carbide has a rich heritage as a small family-owned manufacturer who understands the customer's sense of urgency requiring them to be a valuable and competitive supplier.



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Charging forward with an advanced battery technology called planar layered matrix (PLM), Energy Power Systems (EPS) has plans to bring innovative energy storage solutions to the market by enabling new applications for low-cost batteries.

With a mission to be a leader in long-life and high-power storage batteries, EPS has assembled an experienced team of scientists and engineers to reinvent the world's most proven and safe electrochemistry. Under development for more than three years, the new PLM™ battery offers an

unmatched value proposition and enables new business cases for behind-the-meter commercial, industrial and residential energy management. By using PLM batteries, customers can generate more revenue with a much lower initial capital investment. PLM battery technology also provides superior dynamic charge acceptance needed for start-stop and micro-hybrid automotive applications.

EPS will soon be moving from its Troy facilities to a new 150,000-square-foot headquarters in the Center Point complex located in Pontiac, Michigan. The new facility will incorporate state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment capable of producing more than 500,000 automotive start-stop batteries when full production begins in early 2016.

In addition to the current recognition by Michigan Celebrates, EPS recently received the "Emerging Company of the Year" award from the Michigan Energy Innovation Council.



### Energy Power System LLC

Troy

Subhash Dhar, co-founder/chairman/CEO

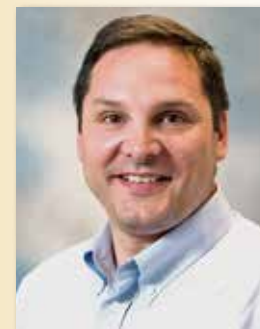
Founded in 2011; current leadership since 2011

Business industry: energy storage

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 65

[www.energypowersystems.com](http://www.energypowersystems.com)



Firstronic is a premier specialty provider of electronics manufacturing services (EMS) including turnkey electronic assembly and materials management services to OEMs in the electronics industry. Firstronic's electronic manufacturing services consist primarily of the manufacture of complex printed circuit board assemblies using through-hole and surface mount technology.

Our lean operating system has been developed and implemented by a team of executives with significant automotive industry experience. This approach has redesigned traditional electronics manufacturing and

resulted in rapid growth in an industry that has otherwise been in decline throughout North America.

We are focused on the complex EMS segments, primarily in the medical, industrial and automotive markets. Our customers rely on our broad range of capabilities, superior customer service and highly flexible manufacturing operations geared toward low-to-medium volume production.

We utilize sophisticated equipment in our manufacturing operations, providing synchronous flow with a high degree of flexibility. Our lean operating system utilizes standardized metrics to ensure consistent performance throughout our facilities. We have standardized on the latest Siemens high-speed vision based SMT equipment with state-of-the-art soldering, which is key to efficiently producing low-to-medium volume products in a high-mix environment. This synchronous flow approach enables us to reduce order lead times to days where others require several weeks.

### Firstronic LLC

Grand Rapids

John Sammut, president/CEO

Founded in 2000; current leadership since 2011

Business industry: electronic manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 85

[www.firstronic.com](http://www.firstronic.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### FirstSense Medical

Pontiac

Paul Angott, president

Founded in 2008; current leadership since 2008

Business industry: medical devices

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 13

[www.firstsensemed.com](http://www.firstsensemed.com)

FirstSense Medical® was established in June 2008 by founder and president, Paul Angott. Paul's mother had breast cancer and two mastectomies 13 years apart, the breast cancer spread and she died seven years later. Paul watched his mother go through physical and emotional trauma and vowed to attack this terrible disease. Years later, he had the idea for the FirstSense Breast Exam® and believed that a device such as this could have potentially saved his mother's life.



FirstSense Medical® has developed a revolutionary breast cancer tester with 95 percent projected sensitivity (detection rate). The exam is painless, radiation-free, takes approximately eight minutes, and is done automatically in a doctor's office. FirstSense has worldwide rights to technology that has been used to test over one million women. FirstSense enhances this technology with robotics and sophisticated software which analyzes scan data in the cloud.

This new test offers patients many benefits including: higher sensitivity; earlier detection; more comfort; less embarrassment; availability to adult women of all ages with any breast size or density at their primary care physician, and can potentially save thousands of lives. Clinical trials have started at a local hospital in metro Detroit and FirstSense will begin sales in October 2015.

### Genius Phone Repair

Grand Rapids

Garry Von Myhr, Jordan Notenbaum and Steven Barnes, co-owners

Founded in 2009; current leadership since 2009

Business industry: retail technology

Sites in Michigan: 9

Full-time equivalent employees: 70

[www.geniusphonerepair.com](http://www.geniusphonerepair.com)

Genius began as a repair service for family and friends out of Jordan Notenbaum's house in Kentwood. The demand quickly escalated, and the trio of Notenbaum, Barnes and Von Myhr opened their first retail store in 2011. Over the last three years, the organization has serviced over 70,000 consumer electronic devices. They currently have stores throughout Grand Rapids, Lansing and northern Indiana. "We couldn't have asked for a better city to grow up in and start our business," Barnes says about the three co-founders' hometown of Grand Rapids. In addition to repair, the company also sells accessories and certified pre-owned devices.



The owners attribute their success to the people they work with on a daily basis. "Our employees allowed us to open 12 retail stores and a distribution company in only three years. Talk about some great people," Notenbaum said candidly. Over the next two years, the organization hopes to add over 100 new employees, 25 more retail locations and several distribution hubs across the United States.

The tech-based company prides itself in the same core values it began in 2009. "Each customer is treated like the same friends and family that trusted us when we first started," co-founder Von Myhr said.



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Gillespie Group is a privately held real estate development and management organization, dedicated to economic, business and social progress. The growing portfolio includes 1,600 residential units in addition to over 450,000 square feet of commercial/retail space across the state of Michigan. In 2015 we celebrate twenty years of commitment to the communities in which we reside.

Gillespie Group is renowned for the quality and dedication we devote to all aspects of our developments. We make sure that each venture is something we can be proud of, and have been humbled by the recognition we have received from numerous organizations and governmental bodies.

Our team is made up of talented individuals that bring their own celebrated passions and skill sets to the table and use them to bring Michigan the best in creative living and commercial spaces. With each upcoming development, we will continue our quest to breathe new life into communities and show off all the amazing things Michigan has to offer. From our creative apartment communities to our highly visible commercial spaces, our team applies their passion for exceptional customer service to every facet of our business.



### Gillespie Group

Lansing

Patrick K. Gillespie, president

Founded in 1995; current leadership since 1995

Business industry: real estate developer/property management

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 54

[www.gillespie-group.com](http://www.gillespie-group.com)

Grand River Aseptic Manufacturing (GRAM) is proud to be a new leader in the growing life sciences industry in Michigan. GRAM is a parenteral contract manufacturing organization supporting new product development and cGMP manufacturing. With a state-of-the-art clean room and highly trained staff, GRAM provides clinical trial and commercial material in vials or syringes for the life sciences industry.



As a pharmaceutical company, GRAM has invested heavily in a sterile clean room and highly advanced laboratory and manufacturing equipment. GRAM is pleased to have received FDA approval to manufacture aseptically-filled drug products. Gaining that approval in 2013 was a significant milestone to achieving future growth. As a company, GRAM is committed to the highest level of quality to ensure safe and effective injectable pharmaceuticals. Notably, GRAM is dedicated to its mission of enriching and saving lives.

GRAM has exhibited a strong pattern of growth over the past few years and is projected to more than double its revenues in 2015. This growth is achieved in a competitive industry that requires significant investment in capital and highly trained people. GRAM is pleased to have launched a successful new company, taking it past the start-up phase and looking to future profitable growth.

### Grand River Aseptic Manufacturing Inc.

Grand Rapids

Thomas J. Ross, CEO

Founded in 2010; current leadership since 2013

Business industry: pharmaceutical manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 57

[www.grandriverasepticmfg.com](http://www.grandriverasepticmfg.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### HistoSonics Inc.

Ann Arbor

M. Christine Gibbons, CEO

Founded in 2009; current leadership since 2009

Business industry: medical devices

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 12

[www.histosonics.com](http://www.histosonics.com)

Imagine...surgery without incision. HistoSonics' mission is to use non-invasive sound energy to treat a variety of clinical conditions without incision; thereby, reducing patient trauma, improving clinical outcomes and lowering overall cost of care. We are a medical device company using a platform technology called histotripsy that non-invasively treats tissue with pulsed sound energy to mechanically destroy target tissue without incision or heat.



The company began in late 2009 based on intellectual property exclusively licensed from the University of Michigan (U-M). The technology had been developed over many years of research by an incredible team of scientific and clinical co-inventors at U-M. Today the company is advancing its first clinical application, applying the VORTX RX® device (currently limited to investigational use only in the United States and Canada), to the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). BPH is a prevalent condition causing difficult and/or frequent urination in men as they age. A clinical pilot/safety study for BPH treatment is currently in progress. "We are also in partnership discussions for clinical applications other than BPH, in a move towards realizing the full potential of this game-changing platform technology," says CEO Christine Gibbons.

### InfoReady Corporation

Ann Arbor

Bhushan Kulkarni, president/CEO

Founded in 2010; current leadership since 2010

Business industry: matchmaking and collaboration software

Sites in Michigan: 1

[www.infoready4.com](http://www.infoready4.com)

InfoReady Corporation is an Ann Arbor-based software company that creates innovative cloud-based workflow solutions that simplify how people interact and collaborate with business information. Founded in 2010, InfoReady's fresh approach to software development has led to 800 percent revenue growth since its inception and has quickly developed a national footprint. Recently, Ann Arbor SPARK recognized InfoReady as a 2014 FastTrack award winner for outstanding business success and an honoree for the Corp! DiSciTech award in science and technology for product innovation. InfoReady is poised to continue its accelerated growth by rapidly expanding its market share in the academic research and talent matchmaking areas while entering new markets in 2015.



InfoReady applications have high adoption rates vis-à-vis cobbled together software alternatives because they are tailored to suit the user's needs to simplify and accelerate their workflow. The applications contain familiar action-based, social media-type functionality throughout the application for ease of use all the way to the finish line. Using this reimagined approach to developing business software and powered by a rapidly scalable product configuration and pricing model, InfoReady has demonstrated the ability to quickly enter new vertical and horizontal markets either as a stand-alone solution or integrating with an existing software infrastructure.



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Innovative Learning Group (ILG) has demonstrated growth, exceptional leadership and staff, as well as a valued competitive advantage. ILG isn't just a training company. It's a custom learning and performance improvement solution provider with a goal of helping clients improve the performance of their employees and achieve business goals.

Lisa Toenniges started ILG 11 years ago when her employer closed. It was just her, six employees and six clients. Under Toenniges' hands-on leadership and philosophy of steady, profitable growth, ILG has flourished.

ILG has over 95 clients across 30 industries. It has been profitable every year since opening with a compound annual growth rate of 15 percent. In 2014, revenue increased more than 40 percent over its best year.

The quality of ILG's work is one of the key drivers of success. ILG provides clients with engaging and effective training solutions, including; learning strategies, mobile services, curriculum design, and training developed for classrooms, e-learning, and webinar delivery.

"The results we achieve working with clients has earned us many long-term relationships," says Toenniges. "Our clients tell me that what differentiates ILG from the competition is our focus on performance and business results. It's never about doing training for training sake. It's always about moving the needle on organizational performance."



The last thing any sane person would have done in the fall of 2008 was to start a mobile application development company. The iTunes App Store had been open only 90 days, and there was no certainty that apps would catch on. Additionally, the U.S. economy was in a free fall.

Armed with research, relationships in its core industry (radio) and a lot of confidence, jacapps was born and an instant success. Our original pricing model was \$900 per app because we felt that radio station general managers would need approval for any expenditure over \$1,000.

We sold 20 apps in the first eight weeks and today have developed 900 apps that have generated over 22 million downloads. According to Crain's Detroit Business, jacapps is the second-largest mobile app developer in the state of Michigan. Michigan-based clients include WRIF, WCSX, Michigan Radio, McLaren Hospitals, WDET and the Detroit Film Theater.

We are more than a software company—we are a local/mobile marketing solutions company. We refuse to outsource our work. Our customers need access to our team (100 percent Michigan residents and/or college graduates), and Michigan provides a wealth of smart, hard-working talent. We will remain lean and adaptable to changes and opportunities.



### Innovative Learning Group Inc.

Royal Oak

Lisa Toenniges, owner/CEO

Founded in 2004; current leadership since 2004

Business industry: training

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 18

[www.innovativelg.com](http://www.innovativelg.com)

### jacapps

Bingham Farms

Paul Jacobs, president

Founded in 2008; current leadership since 2008

Business industry: mobile application development

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 10

[www.jacapps.com](http://www.jacapps.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Jorgensen Steel Machining & Fabrication Inc.

Tekonsha

Matthew Jorgensen, CEO

Founded in 2000; current leadership since 2014

Business industry: manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 8

Full-time equivalent employees: 27

[www.jorgensen-usa.com](http://www.jorgensen-usa.com)

Jorgensen Steel Machining & Fabrication, Inc. is a minority-owned manufacturing company focused on customer satisfaction and exemplary quality. We are experienced in providing machined and fabricated components to the automotive, military, aerospace, and industrial markets. Jorgensen provides our customers with competitively priced prototype and production volume machined and fabricated components. We have a long history of providing our customers with products ranging from extremely simple to highly complex, tightly toleranced components. In other words, the breadth of our capability is one of the key aspects that sets us apart from our competition. In addition, we have implemented the appropriate quality systems (5S, Lean, ISO certified, AS9100 certified and soon to be TS compliant) to ensure that we accomplish our number one goal everyday: “to provide our customers with world-class service and superior product quality...the first time, every time.”



Machining, fabrication, assembly, laser cutting and inspection are a few of Jorgensen's in-house core competencies. By managing complex projects and handling quick turnaround work and production runs, Jorgensen has become an industry leader. Our associates, our customers, and our quality products are our focus at Jorgensen.

### Kuntzsch Solutions Grand Ledge

Rachel Kuntzsch, president/CEO

Founded in 2004; current leadership since 2004

Business industry: consulting and professional services

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 10

[www.kuntzschsolutions.com](http://www.kuntzschsolutions.com)

Kuntzsch Solutions helps its clients to plan, fund, and implement projects and initiatives that drive community and economic development in Michigan. They recognize that no initiative is one-dimensional and focuses on understanding their clients' unique needs to provide solutions that bridge the gap between ideas and action.



Kuntzsch Solutions is differentiated by the depth and integration of their solutions. They conduct research and analysis to translate data into knowledge that informs decision-making. They facilitate groups to develop plans and strategies with a focus on implementation. They also develop funding strategies and have helped their clients cultivate more than \$125 million in public and private funding. In addition, they design and develop reports, promotional materials, websites, and graphics to communicate their clients' messages.

Launched in 2004, Kuntzsch Solutions is not your “average” consulting firm. They hire talented, dedicated people and back them with proven processes and technology to deliver top quality work. Their commitment to their people is matched only by their commitment to their clients. A client recently shared, “You truly care about the success of your clients. Your team feels like a real extension of our team.”



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Marvel Apps is an independent software development company based in Royal Oak. Since 2008, Marvel Apps has produced multiple “Top 10 Apps” in the Mac App Store and has been a Crain's Detroit Business Top 10 app developer each year since 2011. Company founder, Michael Antaran, was selected by Goldman Sachs to participate in its 2014 10k Small Business Program. The company's team consists of the brightest engineers from the top schools in Michigan, and it has the ability to accommodate multiple programming languages and adapt in a start-up environment.

Their mission is to create “game changing apps,” and have recently developed what they consider to be a true game-changer in CARROT. Launched in December 2014, CARROT encourages consumers to lead a more active lifestyle by providing financial rewards—in the form of reward points that can be redeemed at CARROT-registered businesses—for activities such as walking, biking and shopping. At the same time, CARROT allows businesses to connect directly with customers through its iBeacon offers and seamlessly integrated social media messages. More information is available at [www.CARROTpass.com](http://www.CARROTpass.com).



### Marvel Apps LLC

Royal Oak

Michael J. Antaran, CEO

Founded in 2008; current leadership since 2008

Business industry: mobile software application development

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 8

[www.carrotpass.com](http://www.carrotpass.com)



Fresh is Good, Mighty Good. That's the mantra of our small batch artisan coffee roaster Mighty Good Coffee, located in Ann Arbor. Founded in 2006 with a passion for coffee and enthusiasm for small business, we have grown from a part-time business of one to a thriving local gathering place with; 12 employees, two retail locations and a wholesale business catering to other cafés, restaurants, offices as well as packaged coffee for specialty and mainstream groceries.

Through our nine plus years, we've maintained our core vision of ethical sourcing, stringent roasting processes, as well as open and engaging conversation with all of our customers. These are the values that have garnered the support of the community, which has ultimately allowed us to grow in the way that we have.

Our company culture is founded in teamwork, with the goal of fostering the professional and personal growth of our employees. We believe in empowering our employees. We do so through our training program and regularly sponsoring the national education and certification of our senior staff.

We have a strong commitment to several local advocacy groups—from teen shelters to the sustainable food movement—and serve the national coffee community through our involvement in the Specialty Coffee Association of America.

### Mighty Good Coffee Roasting Co.

Ann Arbor

David Myers, managing partner

Founded in 2006; current leadership since 2006

Business industry: coffee roasting and cafés

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 12

[www.mightygoodcoffee.com](http://www.mightygoodcoffee.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### New Eagle

Ann Arbor

Rich Swortzel, president;  
Mickey Swortzel, CFO

Founded in 2008; current leadership  
since 2008

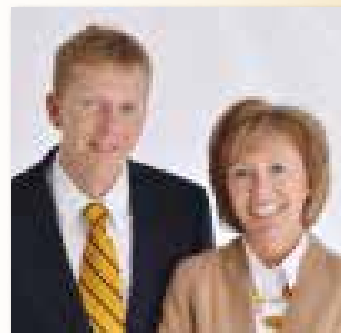
Business industry: electronic controls

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 23

[www.neweagle.net](http://www.neweagle.net)

New Eagle has grown from engineering software solutions to providing production control systems in a variety of industries and applications from electric/hybrid vehicles to power generation and everything in between. Using our Raptor™ control system platform, we are able to do what other companies find difficult or impossible. By offering a complete platform, New Eagle is able to leverage the capabilities of the individual components and provide a synergy that allows rapid, development—an “intelligent machine,” if you will. The company has clients throughout the United States and around the world.



While Raptor™ is our unique intellectual property, it's not all that makes New Eagle special. The management team is led by husband and wife, Rich and Mickey Swortzel. They lead their team in living out the company's core values: excellence, teamwork, integrity, passion and charity. For New Eagle, these words are more than wall art. Each year a core value is chosen as the emphasis and goals are set to improve in that area.

Among the many accomplishments, New Eagle is most proud of the over 1,000 volunteer hours given by its team to the Ann Arbor community in 2014. Founded on the verse from Isaiah, New Eagle is using their strength to serve others.

### NewFoundry

Ann Arbor

Richard Chang, CEO

Founded in 2012; current leadership  
since 2012

Business industry: branding, design and  
engineering services

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 12

[www.thenewfoundry.com](http://www.thenewfoundry.com)

NewFoundry is an idea manufacturing company that fuses application design, user experience and brand development expertise to create next generation market opportunities, products and services.

We frame, fabricate, forge and finish marketplace tools, ideas and experiences for emerging and global businesses.

NewFoundry is not an advertising agency or a web development firm—think of us as a hybrid innovation services firm. We are an experienced, interdisciplinary team of brand designers, strategists, digital developers, and software engineers, aligned to bring to market original, ground-breaking tools and experiences that span multiple technologies, platforms and media.

By bringing together expert viewpoints from engineering, design and branding—from project start to finish—NewFoundry delivers smarter, more effective solutions at a pace and quality level that are unmatched in the marketplace.

We are headquartered in downtown Ann Arbor, and our clients range from innovative startups to category leaders, such as; Bosch, Renesas, Clark Hill, Roush and the University of Michigan.



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



NxGen MDx is a molecular diagnostics company that focuses primarily on the women's health industry. NxGen provides genetic screening for over 120 genetically inherited diseases that can cause devastating health problems. The company works directly with doctors across the country to provide pre-screening for women of childbearing age to help educate and prevent genetically inherited disease during family planning.

Using state-of-the-art technology called Next Generation Sequencing, NxGen MDx is able to provide one of the most accurate genetic screening tests available across all ethnicities. By using this advanced technology, NxGen is able to sequence the entire gene and find all disease-causing mutations. This allows the company to offer one of the most accurate tests on the market.

Over the past two years, NxGen has experienced exponential growth with no signs of slowing down. The company has expanded its reach across 13 states with plans to offer screening to more. Its partnership with Ferris State University's molecular diagnostics department has created internship opportunities for students and job opportunities for recent molecular diagnostic graduates.



### NxGen MDx

Grand Rapids

Alan Mack, president

Founded in 2012; current leadership  
since 2012

Business industry: women's health;  
molecular diagnostics

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 22

[www.nxgenmdx.com](http://www.nxgenmdx.com)

### Oxford Companies

Ann Arbor

Jeff Hauptman, CEO

Founded in 1998; current leadership  
since 1998

Business industry: commercial real  
estate

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 50

[www.oxfordcompanies.com](http://www.oxfordcompanies.com)



Investment in and management of commercial property is the backbone of Oxford Companies, but creating community is at the center. As a provider of well cared for properties that enriches lives and enhances productivity, Oxford focuses on acquisitions where we can create value in otherwise faltering properties.

Founded in 1998, Oxford grew steadily by acquiring properties and property management contracts in the greater Ann Arbor area. Then in 2012, Oxford doubled in size when it acquired Arch Realty, a campus real estate company. This purchase offered Oxford the opportunity to move into the student housing market, along with the challenge of turning around a less-than-stellar reputation Arch had generated in the community. Oxford launched a successful campaign to rehabilitate the image by making customer service the focal point, utilizing efficient systems and professional staff.

Today, Oxford is the largest campus landlord and commercial property manager in Ann Arbor. Our service response time for emergencies is within three minutes, and we train our staff to use and follow “The Oxford Guide to Remarkable Service.” We hold ourselves accountable for delivering on our great service model.







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Petoskey Brewing LLC Petoskey

Louis Gostinger and Patrick Dowd,  
co-owners

Founded in 2011; current leadership  
since 2011

Business industry: micro brewery

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 25

[www.petoskeybrewing.com](http://www.petoskeybrewing.com)

Petoskey Brewing is a micro-brewery producing craft beers in Petoskey, Michigan. Beer enthusiasts may enjoy tasty, handcrafted brews at the brewery's tap room restaurant or at over 400 Michigan retailers. The brewery's beer is offered to the market in both keg and 16-ounce aluminum can formats.



Petoskey Brewing is located in the historic building known locally as "The Old Brewery." The iconic brick building was built as a brewery in 1898 and was home to the original Petoskey Brewing until it ceased operation in 1915. The brewery building is unique in stature and also in geography. The original brewers chose its site for the free-flowing artesian wells located under the property. Today's brewery still draws from this pure water source.

Under the ownership of Patrick Dowd and Lou Gostinger, a 2012 renovation made beer once again flow from the brewery. Phase two of the brewery expansion, underway in 2015, will more than double current output. Petoskey Brewing has made a positive impact on the local community by resurrecting a historical building, producing locally-made craft products, and creating over 25 full-time and seasonal jobs.

### Polly Products Mulliken

Kevin Dingle, president

Founded in 2010; current leadership  
since 2010

Business industry: manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 22

[www.pollyproducts.com](http://www.pollyproducts.com)

Companies all over the world are joining the green movement. Polly Products is one such company that has taken the recycling challenge head on by revolutionizing the way we reuse the materials that are harmful to our environment. Polly Products is a Michigan-based company that specializes in the manufacture and sale of outdoor furniture that is made from recycled plastic. Our green mission is to help communities move toward a sustainable future by creating socially responsible products that are made from 100percent recycled plastic.



"Green products for a green world" is in the forefront of our minds every day. Sustainability governs our business practices from encouraging recycling efforts in the office and plant, to the way we melt, mold and mix our recycled materials. The consumer starts this process by recycling plastic materials on curbside collection day! Plastic is then transported to recycling facilities and cleaned for reuse. Bottles are cut into small flakes and delivered to our manufacturing facility in Mulliken, Michigan. We melt these pieces down and add color along with UV protectants to shield them from the sun and protect against discoloration. The result is beautiful furniture with such great detail that you will be surprised that it is plastic!



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Redi-Rock International, founded in 2000, is a company that has taken a seemingly boring concrete block manufacturing idea and turned it into a brand and a technical authority that has transformed the entire industry.

Redi-Rock is a licensor of a proprietary steel forming system used to manufacture 2,000-pound retaining wall blocks. Today, 130 independently owned and operated licensees around the globe provide retaining wall solutions for incredible projects, like the New

England Patriots' stadium, a Donald Trump golf course, an FBI regional headquarters, college campuses and the downtowns of some of the largest U.S. and Canadian cities.

"This may sound trite, but our biggest asset really is the people," says Ben Manthei, founder and managing partner of Redi-Rock. "Our team is coming up with the tools, technology and strategy that no one else is doing. We lead the pack, and we need sharp people to lead with us."

Redi-Rock is located in the beautiful, small town of Charlevoix. "Often, people tell us it's their dream to retire 'Up North', but they never thought they'd be able to have a career here," Manthei says. Redi-Rock expects to add several new production, engineering and marketing people each year for the foreseeable future.



### Redi-Rock International Charlevoix

Ben Manthei, managing partner

Founded in 2000; current leadership  
since 2000

Business industry: manufacturing

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 21

[www.redi-rock.com](http://www.redi-rock.com)



Rickman Enterprise Group, LLC (REG) is a minority- and veteran-owned small business headquartered in the city of Detroit. REG has over 26 years of working environmental remediation experience. Our firm specializes in residential and industrial environmental remediation, facility decommissioning, demolition, waste management and industrial cleaning.

REG has successfully established itself as the environmental remediation contractor of choice for some of the largest corporations in the world, including General Motors, Ford Motor Company and Delphi.

Rickman Enterprise Group is founded by its president and CEO, Roderick Rickman. He is a native Detroiters whose roots are firmly planted in the community. Rickman earned his degree in business administration from Wayne County Community College as well as a certificate of advance executive training from the Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois, and Amos Tuck/Dartmouth College in Dartmouth, Connecticut. He has over 25 years of owning, managing and providing environmental as well as industrial services nationally.

Our mission is to provide our customers "Best-in-Class" services utilizing technology and equipment that is sensitive to and responsible for the preservation of our environment. We are confident that we will fulfill our goals through all of our business units by optimizing our resources with the finest people in the industry.

### Rickman Enterprise Group LLC Detroit

Roderick K. Rickman, chairman/CEO

Founded in 1998; current leadership  
since 1998

Business industry: industrial and  
environment services, facilities  
management, demolition

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 98

[www.rickmanenterprise.com](http://www.rickmanenterprise.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Rubicon Genomics

Ann Arbor

Dr. James Koziarz, CEO

Founded in 2009; current leadership since 2009

Business industry: life sciences

Sites in Michigan: 8

Full-time equivalent employees: 30

[www.rubicongenomics.com](http://www.rubicongenomics.com)

Rubicon Genomics was born out of a desire to advance the translation of human genetics “laboratory knowledge” into practical medical applications. Launched in 2000 by University of Michigan faculty members, Dr. John Langmore and Dr. Vladimir Makarov, Rubicon has grown from two scientists with ideas for improving the human condition to a company of 30 full-time employees and a healthy product pipeline.

Rubicon’s breakthrough product is based on its PicoPLEX™ technology used worldwide for pre-implantation genetic screening and diagnosis. Each of Rubicon’s technologies consistently provides reliable, unambiguous results from small or degraded sample material. Rubicon technologies are currently contributing across the in-vitro fertilization, infectious disease testing and cancer platforms.

Rubicon Genomics’s corporate culture promotes development, work-life balance and service. Employees are encouraged to participate in continuous development and to have an active voice in the trajectory of their careers. Flexible scheduling and a generous paid-time off structure allow for a healthy balance between job duties and life outside the workplace. Rubicon Genomics is actively involved with community service agencies that include Habitat for Humanity, Food Gatherers and Adopt-A-Family. “Our mission is to positively impact health and well-being at the global level by fully utilizing our greatest resource—our employees,” says CEO Jim Koziarz.



### SpinDance Inc.

Holland

J. Michael Ellis, president

Founded in 2000; current leadership since 2000

Business industry: software engineering

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 42

[www.spindance.com](http://www.spindance.com)

SpinDance helps build the “Internet of things” by providing software engineering services that transform everyday products into connected, smart solutions. SpinDance’s work can be found in connected vehicle systems, smart appliances, commercial building controls and weather monitoring.

Founded in 2000, SpinDance initially set out to develop games on cell phones. Finding that it was too far in front of the technology, it refocused on providing technology consulting services to the automotive industry. A string of successful engagements integrating portable devices into vehicles grew an expertise around connectivity, embedded software and complex system design. Branching out into other industries, SpinDance leveraged that expertise to develop many different types of smart-connected products. The wider focus on the “Internet of things” has fueled growth with many varied project opportunities.

The team at SpinDance has a passion for innovation, design and quality. Helping companies create great products that are part of the “Internet of things” is the embodiment of that passion.

“We believe the world has just begun to see what products with built-in intelligence and connectivity can do,” says SpinDance president, Mike Ellis. “The future is bright and will provide us many opportunities to create even smarter products.”



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



Spud Software’s mission is to grow with our clients. As they grow, we grow. As we grow, we can do that much more to help the community around us thrive. Innovation and passion are the foundation of everything we do as a company and as good neighbors. Integrity, loyalty, leadership and commitment to excellence are what we deliver to our customers.

Derek Sommer started Spud Software in 1997, providing simple, customized software solutions.

Before long, Derek and his small team caught the attention of the likes of General Motors and MSX International.

After completing several successful large-scale projects, Spud developed a reputation for delivering high quality solutions quickly but at a much lower cost than big name software companies.

The Spud team has worked with more than 200 clients ranging from start-up businesses to Fortune 500 companies. We are a leader in the industry, specializing in programming, database and software development. Our software is used in all 50 states and has been written in Spanish, French, German, Italian and Japanese.

Spud’s competitive edge is the direct result of our passion to help our clients thrive. Our dedication is just one reason Spud Software has experienced continuous growth throughout our history.



### Spud Software Inc.

Grand Blanc

Derek Sommer, founder/president

Founded in 1997; current leadership since 1997

Business industry: information technology, software development

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 50

[www.spudsoftware.com](http://www.spudsoftware.com)



An online retailer and wholesaler specializing in cremation urns, jewelry and other funeral products, Stardust Memorials has revolutionized the way that people select and purchase quality customized memorial products by taking the process online.

Stardust Memorials offers a superior range of choices; fast, free shipping; an in-house engraving department; friendly and compassionate 24-hour customer service; a 100 percent satisfaction guarantee; and budget-friendly low prices. The company is also recognized as a Google Trusted Store.

Stardust Memorials is more than a retailer and wholesaler. Working directly with manufacturers has been a key part of their success. Memorial products are purchased by the pallet and by the container. They are received and stored in their northern Michigan warehouse for national and international distribution. The company has designed and launched a number of unique products only available from Stardust Memorials.

“We are a deeply customer-centric company and we operate with a strong, shared sense of mission,” says founder Jordan Lindberg. “We are focused on making the best possible range of quality products available to the families we are honored to serve while also striving to make them available to customers at all income levels.”

### Stardust Memorials

Traverse City

Jordan J. Lindberg, founder/president

Founded in 2010; current leadership since 2010

Business industry: memorial product sales

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 10

[www.stardust-memorials.com](http://www.stardust-memorials.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### SunFrog Shirts LLC

Gaylord

Josh Kent, owner/CEO

Founded in 2012; current leadership since 2012

Business industry: retail

Sites in Michigan: 8

Full-time equivalent employees: 98

[www.sunfrogshirts.com](http://www.sunfrogshirts.com)

Within a small town in northern Michigan lies a growing monster with immeasurable growth potential. SunFrog Shirt's avant-garde style matches Josh Kent's unique enthusiasm and approach to business.

Officially founded in 2012, Kent's passion dates back much earlier to his childhood. "I designed the artwork and logo on the shirts for my father's company," he says. "I probably burned through 20 shirts learning the science of iron-on transfer."



SunFrog Shirts has come a long way since then, currently doing business internationally. The process has been refined, expanded and now uses direct-to-garment printers, rather than iron on designs. This sets SunFrog apart allowing for unique designs and individual orders.

Having a strong infrastructure in place allows the rare opportunity to team up with artists and affiliates around the world. Artists post their designs to SunFrog's website and earn commission when their designs sell. Affiliates are able to select any design on the website, push the design via social media, and earn commission on all shirts purchased. By inventing this unique model, Kent has been able to generate 2,500 percent growth, in the last year, with no signs of slowing.

### Sun Title

Grand Rapids

Thomas W. Cronkright II, co-owner/CEO

Founded in 2005; current leadership since 2005

Business industry: title insurance

Sites in Michigan: 7

Full-time equivalent employees: 52

[www.suntitle.com](http://www.suntitle.com)

Providing a great transaction experience is the essence of our identity. Whether our client is buying or selling a new home or building to create or expand a business, we are dedicated to making sure the process is smooth and enjoyable for all parties involved.

Started out of frustration by best friends and attorneys, Lawrence Duthler and Tom Cronkright, Sun Title has continued to deliver on the promise of great communication, stellar work ethics and a willingness to do whatever it takes to get the deal closed.



Since 2005, the company has grown through the attraction and retention of great people, never-ending innovation, as well as commitment to the customer and the community. We continually focus on what is possible and what our clients need as regulation and market trends create new challenges and opportunities.

We continue to develop and refine a culture that promotes leadership, fun and assisting each other for the betterment of the client. We are proud of our beginnings and continue to acknowledge the blessings we have been given.



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



"Right to the Finish" is how we approach each day. Tawas Plating Company and Tawas Powder Coating Incorporated, located in northern Michigan, provides world-class metal finishing services to the automotive, heavy truck and a variety of other manufacturing industries.

Our customers look to us for finishing services that add value to their products by enhancing appearance, corrosion protection and wear resistance. We leverage the strength and assets of our supply chain to provide proven finishing technologies or innovative solutions to meet improved product life cycles.

TPC can provide customers fast turn-around time along with high volume capabilities. Our people are reliable and our processes are repeatable, offering our customers predictable and consistent performance. We continue to focus on three core values: Improving the skill set of our team members; reducing waste in our processes; and providing unique and innovative solutions to our customers' product performance problems.

We take pride in being a stakeholder in our community and encourage our team members to also be engaged where they live. TPC's success is directly related to the high performance of our engaged workforce and a relentless pursuit of satisfying our customers. TPC is "Right to the Finish!"



### Tawas Plating Company and Tawas Powder Coating, Inc.

Tawas City

Kevin T. Jungquist, president

Founded in 1995; current leadership since 1990

Business industry: metal finishing

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 41

[www.tawasplating.com](http://www.tawasplating.com)



Toby and Julie Buechner created Troy Gymnastics from scratch nine years ago. We are a full-service gymnastics facility with impressive statistics: providing 300 classes and 50 hours of open-gym time weekly; hosting 400 birthday parties annually; operating two retail stores; facilitating over 320 competitive kids teams; hosting weekly facility usage for around 3,000 kids ages one thru 23; and employing over 100 employees many of whom are part-time. We became the largest gymnastics facility in Michigan a few years ago and have tripled in size since then. We have

82,000 square feet of state-of-the-art gymnastics space. We grew double digits every month for the first eight years. In late 2014, we added a full-service daycare and preschool for ages six weeks and up that grew to 60 percent of capacity after only a few months.

Instructing children is what we do. We realized we were preparing young children for school by developing listening and social skills as well as fostering good habits in work ethics, time management and competitive training all of which are making thousands of kids more prepared for life. We have a program for every child and look forward to several more years of giving back to our community.

### Troy Gymnastics Inc., Troy

Toby Buechner, owner/president

Founded in 2005; current leadership since 2005

Business industry:

Sites in Michigan: 3

Full-time equivalent employees: 50







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Varsity News Network Grand Rapids

Ryan Vaughn, founder/CEO

Founded in 2011; current leadership since 2011

Business industry: sports technology

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 63

[www.varsitynewsnetwork.com](http://www.varsitynewsnetwork.com)

At Varsity News Network (VNN), we know that school sports create a healthy community and influence strong character in participants. It is our goal to make sure educators have the opportunity to fulfill that promise.

By creating easy-to-use, time-saving communication channels for athletic departments, we are working toward making sure those educators can be a positive influence in their schools, recognize the great things their athletes are doing and bring their community together through sports.



In the beginning, we were a scrappy tandem of bloggers working the beat. Now, our 65 employees are trusted by over 800 schools nationwide to help manage their programs. Our SportsHub website, Pressbox score reporter, and the Alerts messaging system work together to make athletic directors' lives easier.

If there is one thing we have learned about our company culture, it is that VNNers love a good physical competitive challenge. In the short time we have been at our office on Ionia street in Grand Rapids, we have seen: a pull-up face-off vs. the Jimmy John's guy; a company-wide slam dunk contest; a broomball Christmas party; a lunchtime CrossFit; and over two-hundred games of mini-hoop horse.

No matter how far we have come, we are still highly influenced by our roots —content is king, community is important, and sports are awesome.

### XG Sciences

Lansing

Dr. Philip Rose, CEO

Founded in 2006; current leadership since 2014

Business industry: material sciences (graphene manufacturer)

Sites in Michigan: 3

Full-time equivalent employees: 31

[www.xgsciences.com](http://www.xgsciences.com)

Lansing-based XG Sciences Inc. (XGS), formed in May 2006, is a first mover and market leader in the design and manufacture of graphene nanoplatelets. Graphene nanoplatelets are particles consisting of multiple layers of graphene and are considered a game changer for numerous industries. XGS's graphene nanoplatelets, trademarked under the name xGnP®, have demonstrated performance impacting multi-billion dollar markets and have unique capabilities for energy storage, thermal conductivity, electrical conductivity, barrier properties as well as the ability to impart strength when incorporated into plastics or other matrices.



XGS has sold products to over 850 customers in 47 countries that are in various trial stages of its products for numerous applications. XGS has also licensed elements of its technology to leading supply chain and distribution partners.

XGS is a "platform play" where the company's proprietary processes produce varying grades of graphene nanoplatelets, which can be mapped to a variety of applications in many market segments. XGS's focus markets are energy storage and thermal management where they currently have a portfolio of products undergoing design with a range of marquee customers. They also target the inks and coatings market with products in development and are engaged in R&D activities for the composites market.



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### MICHIGAN SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION AWARD

In the manufacturing sector, minimizing losses means reducing unexpected downtime. As such, a system that can provide plant managers with a forewarning of equipment failure can help any manufacturer's bottom line by allowing maintenance tasks to be scheduled in advance. Civionics' intelligent wireless sensing system does exactly that.

As a 2009 spinout of the University of Michigan, Civionics' core technology was originally designed to monitor degradation in large civil infrastructure (bridges, buildings, etc.), but it can be used to assess the health of any engineered system. The key difference between Civionics' approach and other sensing solutions is the fact that Civionics takes the "smarts" of a traditional monitoring system and embeds them inside their low-cost, low-power wireless sensing devices. This embedded intelligence allows Civionics to reduce wireless bandwidth, increase battery life and provide customers with actionable information (not raw data) that they can use to facilitate their decision-making processes.

In 2014, Civionics unveiled their new Constellation line of wireless sensing products and cloud-based data services, which have already gained traction with two of the three Detroit-based automotive OEMs. This year, Civionics hopes to continue to build its presence both within Michigan's manufacturing community and beyond.



### Civionics LLC

Ann Arbor

Gerry Roston, CEO

Founded in 2009; current leadership since 2009

Business industry: wireless sensing and analytics

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 2

[www.civionics.com](http://www.civionics.com)

### MAIN STREET USA

Walker-Miller Energy Services LLC (WMES) is dedicated to offering innovative energy waste reduction solutions that; leads to greater operating efficiencies, contributes to occupant safety and comfort, decreases consumption, shrinks carbon footprint, and improves air quality for both commercial and residential customers.



Founded in 2000, the company consists of experienced energy experts, including; electrical and mechanical engineers, building analysts, certified energy managers

and technicians. WMES performs energy efficiency services, such as; energy audits and assessments, weatherization measures, project management, project implementation, procurement support and other energy-related systems and services. The business successfully provides solutions that are innovative and cutting edge.

### Walker-Miller Energy Services LLC

Detroit

Carla Walker-Miller, president/CEO

Founded in 2000; current leadership since 2000

Business industry: energy efficiency

Sites in Michigan: 1 (Also have one site in Ohio and one site in Illinois)

Full-time equivalent employees: 40

[www.wmenergy.com](http://www.wmenergy.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Oldenburg Group Inc.

Kingsford

Wayne C. Oldenburg, CEO

Founded in 1848; current leadership since 1988

Business industry: engineers and manufactures heavy equipment for the Navy

Sites in Michigan: 3

Full-time equivalent employees: 2

[www.oldenburggroup.com](http://www.oldenburggroup.com)

### CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR

Founded in 1981, Oldenburg Group Incorporated specializes primarily in the design and manufacture of engineered heavy equipment. Since its 1988 acquisition of Lake Shore, Oldenburg Group has built on a 167-year history to become a leader in the demanding marine defense industry with equipment on nearly every major ship program in the U.S. Navy.

For both the marine defense programs and the company's underground mining equipment division, Oldenburg Group prides itself on being, "the best supplier to our customers—the best as defined by our customers." This mantra is what drives the employee involvement and continuous improvement mentality that has fueled growth and success over nearly three decades.

One of Oldenburg Group's unique strengths is the ability to fully design, engineer, manufacture and support their products in-house. While others in the industry rely on outside engineering or outsourced manufacturing, Oldenburg works directly with the customer from design and bidding to delivery and field service. This level of control and expertise ensures the customer gets the right product for the job and the support necessary to keep working through harsh, at-sea conditions.



### MeritHall Inc.

Rochester Hills

Alex Riley, CEO

Founded in 2011; current leadership since 2011

Primary business: supplies labor to construction contractors, landscaping, facility maintenance and industrial staffing

Sites in Michigan: 2

Full-time equivalent employees: 210

[www.merithall.com](http://www.merithall.com)

### 2015 YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

MeritHall helps contractors acquire, manage, and monitor their resources—including labor, materials, and operational support—so they can focus on performing work and completing projects. Since its founding in 2011 MeritHall has achieved tremendous year over year revenue growth resulting in its inclusion on this year's *Inc. 500* list of the fastest-growing privately held companies in the United States.

MeritHall's staffing division provides over 200 field employees to contractors throughout Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. In April 2015, MeritHall opened its third office location—a hands-on testing facility in St Clair Shores—to increase the quality of labor it provides to its clients. MeritHall continues to find new ways to contribute to their clients' success by providing them with the resources they need to compete in the marketplace.

The company is run by three 27-year-old Michigan-raised entrepreneurs: Alex Riley, the company's chief executive officer and Crain's "20 in their 20s" honoree; Paul Kaser, chief financial officer; and Patrick Beal, chairman of the board. As a result of their combined success their organization was selected to the Youth Entrepreneur Council (YEC), an invite-only organization of successful entrepreneurs 40 and younger.



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### 2015 WOMAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Carla Walker-Miller formed Walker-Miller Energy Services LLC in 2000 after 18 years of corporate experience. Walker-Miller Energy Services (WMES) is an energy efficiency and energy optimization company, and a distributor for energy related products for the utility industry.

Serving as president and CEO, Carla has led the organization to tremendous growth in the energy industry. WMES is a client-focused company that leverages its experience and capabilities in the energy industry on behalf of its customers. With their complementary blend of products and services, they are uniquely positioned to assist clients in expertly navigating the ever changing energy landscape. WMES provides support and services in areas of energy consulting, planning, project implementation, training, measurement and verification. Walker-Miller

Energy Services was reinvented from a utility equipment supply company to an energy efficiency services company that serves residential and commercial customers. The company has experience tremendous growth of more than 40 percent in each of the last three years.

The company was recognized in *Inc. Magazine* as one of the fastest growing companies in the city of Detroit. The business has been featured in publications such as *EBONY*, *JET*, and *Black Enterprise* magazines, highlighting its unique capability to excel in a city experiencing economic challenges and high unemployment. In 2013, Carla was recognized by the *Michigan Chronicle* as a "Woman of Excellence."

In 2003, she started a nonprofit organization called the WAVE (Water Access Volunteer Effort) Fund. WAVE provides assistance to low-income citizens of Detroit with water and sewerage bills. It has distributed more than \$2 million and assisted over 9,100 families.

She sits on the board of the University of Detroit Jesuit High School and is a member of many organizations including the Detroit Regional Chamber, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., InForum, and many others.

### 2015 SMALL BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

EBW Electronics was founded in 1992 to be a captive electronics supplier for its parent company. When that company was sold in 2000, EBWE developed a more diversified customer base, focusing its engineering and expertise on illumination. The company is highly automated with a very strict focus on lean manufacturing. In 2014, EBWE expanded for the second time in three years and today it boasts 250,000

square feet of manufacturing space. EBWE was a 2007 Top 50 Companies to Watch in Michigan. In 2013, *Inc. Magazine* named them the fastest growing privately held manufacturing company in the Midwest region. During that period, revenue grew at an astonishing rate of 675 percent and employment went from 35 to 151. Forecasted sales in 2015 are expected to be 35 percent higher than in 2014. Employment is expected to exceed 200 in 2015.

Through all its success, EBWE is proud of its growth, facility, and state of the art automation, and most importantly, its ability to maintain a family like atmosphere among its work force.



### Walker-Miller Energy Services LLC

Detroit

Carla Walker-Miller, president/CEO

Founded in 2000; current leadership since 2000

Business industry: residential, commercial and institutional audits

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 40

[www.wmenergy.com](http://www.wmenergy.com)

### EBW Electronics Inc.

Holland

Pat LeBlanc, owner and chairman

Founded in 1992; current leadership since 1992

Primary business: design and manufacturing of print circuit board assemblies. (PCBA)

Sites in Michigan: 1

Full-time equivalent employees: 151

[www.ebw-electronics.com](http://www.ebw-electronics.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Julie Oldham, CPA, CGMA

Metro Detroit  
[www.sbdcmichigan.org](http://www.sbdcmichigan.org)

### 2015 SBDC CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR

Julie Oldham, CPA, CGMA is the business growth specialist with the Michigan Small Business Development Center (SBDC) office in Grand Rapids. Julie Oldham serves Macomb and Oakland counties' small businesses. SBDC, a statewide organization, provides no-cost assistance and counseling to growing companies with revenues in excess of \$1 million and nine or more employees. She analyzes a company's financial performance to determine impending issues in the next stage of growth. Julie provides strategic analysis and information on international exporting and SBA loans. Recipient of 2014 "Out of the Box" award for the highest amount of capital formation in the SBDC's history and in 2015, "Outstanding Oakland County Volunteer of the Year" by the Center for Empowerment and Economic Development.

Julie's involvement in the launch of the SBA's Getting to Yes program was critical to its success. Not only did she provide in-depth consulting to her clients, she was a mentor and inspiration to them as they navigated their way through the lending process. Her clients were extremely well prepared to meet with the financial community and they attribute their success in the program to Julie.

She is currently involved in the Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants, Canada and United States Business Association (CUSBA), American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Accounting Aid Society, and is a NASBITE Certified Global Business Professional, and a SBA certified export specialist.



### MI-SBDC, Southeast Region

Detroit  
Richard King, Regional Director; Wendy Thomas, Associate Regional Director  
[www.sbdcmichigan.org](http://www.sbdcmichigan.org)

### 2015 SBDC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION AWARD

The Michigan Small Business Development Center's Southeast Region has a long history of supporting the small business community in the area. Through training, programming and consultation, this center has made a transformative impact on the community. Leadership of the center is provided by Richard King, regional director, and Wendy Thomas, associate regional director. Both are seasoned SBDC employees who have made significant difference in the region's small business ecosystem. They have excelled in providing counseling, training and other program services to small businesses. The SBA Michigan district office calls upon this center to conduct most of the outreach activities, special event, new initiatives, SBA headquarters-directed projects, as well as the core programs routinely offered by SBA.

The Southeast Michigan SBDC team possesses a superior level of operational, technical, and relational expertise. They have been and continue to be a one of the most valuable services in the region.



## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### 2015 EXPORTER SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

James Miller, president of Air and Liquid Systems Inc. formed in 2002 to serve the industrial and paint finishing industry with quality separation and filtration equipment. Miller has over 30 years of experience in the paint finishing and industrial applications industry. Air and Liquid Systems Inc. is a vertically integrated manufacturer of liquid filtration

systems and industrial ventilation equipment. The company has designed, manufactured and sold equipment throughout the world, including Russia, china, South Korea, Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico. The company continues to commit significant resources, both time and money, to increase their business footprint and sales in markets outside the U.S. They recently participated in the Michigan/China trade mission 2014 and subsequently spent four weeks in the China and South Korea to develop new business.



### Air & Liquid Systems Inc Rochester Hills

James E. Miller, president  
Founded in 2002; current leadership since 2002  
Primary business: serves the industrial and paint finishing industry with quality separation and filtration equipment  
Sites in Michigan: 1  
Full-time equivalent employees: 31  
[www.airliquidsystems.com](http://www.airliquidsystems.com)



### 2015 VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Luciano Hernandez, CEO of Tiger Studios, started his company in 2000 and it has steadily grown over the last 14 years in market share, team make-up, and capabilities. The studio specializes in market research and validation, concept development, feasibility engineering, product design, prototype development, user experience and user interface, brand strategy and

visual communications. The company has built a solid portfolio of start-ups to small businesses to corporations. Clients include Herman Miller, Whirlpool, Bissell, Stryker, the University of Michigan and Johnson Controls. Hernandez is an active client of the SBA funded VetBizCentral, where he contributes to the mentorship and growth of veteran owned small businesses. He is a member of the West Michigan Veterans Coalition. The company is committed to making the word a better place through its stewardship across the globe and locally in Michigan.

### Tiger Studio

Zeeland  
Luciano Hernandez IV, president  
Founded in 2000; current leadership since 2000  
Business industry: market research and validation, concept development, user experience/interface design, brand strategy and visual communications  
Sites in Michigan: 1  
Full-time equivalent employees: 12  
[www.tigerstudiodesign.com](http://www.tigerstudiodesign.com)







## 2015 WINNER PROFILES



### Steve Feinman, SCORE Michigan District Director

[www.score.org](http://www.score.org)

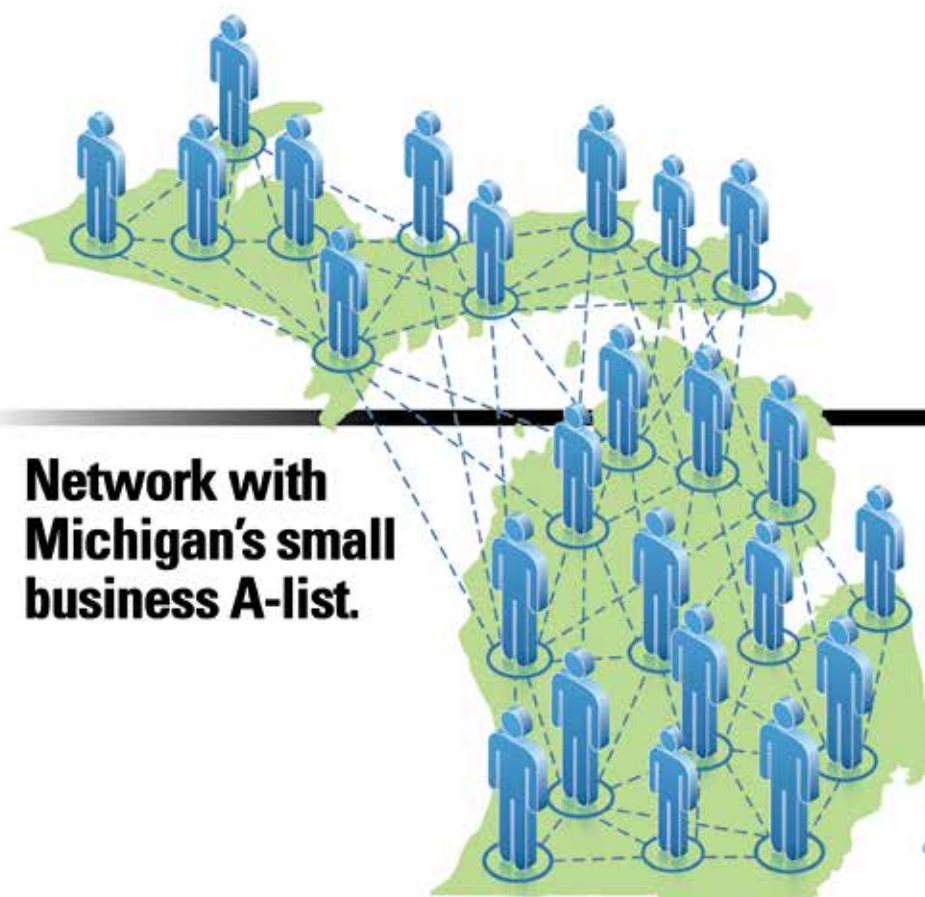
### 2015 SCORE COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR

Steve Feinman is district director of Michigan's SCORE chapters and is responsible for nine local chapters and over 300 SCORE mentors. He is active in the Ann Arbor chapter, ranking third with the highest number of clients in the chapter and has the second best retention rate. He consistently scores 100 percent in the metrics used by SCORE and receives glowing reports from his clients.



Steve frequently makes presentations to recruit new members and clients. He has spoken to the Rotary Club, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, libraries, cities, townships and other government agencies. His work has resulted in an increase in counseling activity and SCORE membership. He is considered by many to be the face of SCORE in Michigan.

Steve works closely with the SBA Michigan district office staff on many projects and special events, including the Great Lakes Lenders Conference, for which SCORE served as fiduciary and helped with staffing and presenting during the event. He is considered by the SBA Michigan district office to be an integral player in marketing and outreach efforts.



### Network with Michigan's small business A-list.

If you run a small business in Michigan, there's one list you want to be part of: the Small Business Association of Michigan. It's the only organization that connects you statewide to the 23,000+ entrepreneurs you need to know and who need to know you. It's valuable networking — so no matter what you sell, what you want to buy or what services you need to use, the opportunities are here. You just need to join.

Connect today by becoming an SBAM member.  
It's the smart way to grow your business.



800-362-5461 [www.sbam.org/joinNow](http://www.sbam.org/joinNow)

## Empowering Michigan Entrepreneurs



IGNITE  
IDEAS



UNLEASH  
VISION



PROMOTE  
LEADERSHIP



[MiQuest.org](http://MiQuest.org)

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EXECUTIVE  
ORGANIZATION

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS AND MIQUEST HAVE TEAMED UP  
TO CREATE THE CRAIN EXECUTIVE ORGANIZATION (CEO)  
MONTHLY PEER-ADVISORY GROUPS EXCLUSIVELY FOR  
CEOs OF GROWTH-STAGE COMPANIES IN MICHIGAN

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT  
[WWW.CRAINEXEC.COM](http://WWW.CRAINEXEC.COM)





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Accident Fund	Sarah Garcia, <a href="mailto:sarah.garcia@accidentfund.com">sarah.garcia@accidentfund.com</a>	<a href="http://www.accidentfund.com">www.accidentfund.com</a>
Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development	Ren Chang, <a href="mailto:chren@hotmail.com">chren@hotmail.com</a>	<a href="http://english.visitbeijing.com.cn">english.visitbeijing.com.cn</a>
Biggby Coffee	Bob Fish, <a href="mailto:contact@biggby.com">contact@biggby.com</a>	<a href="http://www.biggby.com">www.biggby.com</a>
Clark Hill	Don Lee, <a href="mailto:dlee@clarkhill.com">dlee@clarkhill.com</a>	<a href="http://www.clarkhill.com">www.clarkhill.com</a>
Comcast Business Network	Pamela Dover, <a href="mailto:pamela_dover@cable.comcast.com">pamela_dover@cable.comcast.com</a>	<a href="http://www.comcast.com">www.comcast.com</a>
Consumers Energy	Fiona McKenna, <a href="mailto:fmckenna-dailey@jrhompson.com">fmckenna-dailey@jrhompson.com</a>	<a href="http://www.consumersenergy.com">www.consumersenergy.com</a>
Crain's Detroit Business	Eric Cedo, <a href="mailto:ecedo@crain.com">ecedo@crain.com</a>	<a href="http://www.crain.com">www.crain.com</a>
Dean Transportation	Patrick Dean, <a href="mailto:pdean@deantrans.com">pdean@deantrans.com</a>	<a href="http://www.deantrans.com">www.deantrans.com</a>
DTE Energy Foundation	Jennifer Whitteaker, <a href="mailto:whitteakerj@dteenergy.com">whitteakerj@dteenergy.com</a>	<a href="http://www.dteenergy.com">www.dteenergy.com</a>
Dynamic Edge	Sebastian Kruger, <a href="mailto:kruger@dynedge.com">kruger@dynedge.com</a>	<a href="http://www.dynedge.com">www.dynedge.com</a>
Edge Partnerships	Lorri Rishar, <a href="mailto:lorri@edgepartnerships.com">lorri@edgepartnerships.com</a>	<a href="http://www.edgepartnerships.com">www.edgepartnerships.com</a>
Edward Lowe Foundation	Joy Kitamori, <a href="mailto:joy@lowe.org">joy@lowe.org</a>	<a href="http://www.edwardlowe.org">www.edwardlowe.org</a>
GDI Infotech	Madhuri Deshpande, <a href="mailto:madhuri@gdii.com">madhuri@gdii.com</a>	<a href="http://www.gdii.com">www.gdii.com</a>
Hitachi Business Finance	Katie Mullin, <a href="mailto:kmullin@hitachibusinessfinance.com">kmullin@hitachibusinessfinance.com</a>	<a href="http://www.hitachibusinessfinance.com">www.hitachibusinessfinance.com</a>
Hungerford Nichols	Heather Halligan, <a href="mailto:hhalligan@hungerfordnichols.com">hhalligan@hungerfordnichols.com</a>	<a href="http://www.hungerfordnichols.com">www.hungerfordnichols.com</a>
InForum	Rachele Downs, <a href="mailto:rdowns@inforummichigan.org">rdowns@inforummichigan.org</a>	<a href="http://www.inforummichigan.org">www.inforummichigan.org</a>
Message Blocks	Len Gauger, <a href="mailto:len@messageblocks.com">len@messageblocks.com</a>	<a href="http://www.messageblocks.com">www.messageblocks.com</a>
MessageMakers	Linda Burman, <a href="mailto:burnham@messagemakers.com">burnham@messagemakers.com</a>	<a href="http://www.messagemakers.com">www.messagemakers.com</a>
Michigan Business Network	Erica Bills, <a href="mailto:erica@michiganbusinessnetwork.com">erica@michiganbusinessnetwork.com</a>	<a href="http://www.michiganbusinessnetwork.com">www.michiganbusinessnetwork.com</a>
Michigan Credit Union League	Jordan Kingdon, <a href="mailto:jordan.kingdon@mcul.org">jordan.kingdon@mcul.org</a>	<a href="http://www.mcul.org">www.mcul.org</a>
Michigan Economic Development Corporation	Vince Nystrom, <a href="mailto:nystromv@michigan.org">nystromv@michigan.org</a>	<a href="http://www.michigan.org">www.michigan.org</a>
Michigan Small Business Development Center	Jennifer Deamud, <a href="mailto:deamudj@gvsu.edu">deamudj@gvsu.edu</a>	<a href="http://www.sbdcmichigan.org">www.sbdcmichigan.org</a>
MiQuest	Diane Durance, <a href="mailto:ddurance@miquest.org">ddurance@miquest.org</a>	<a href="http://www.miquest.org">www.miquest.org</a>
MITechNews.com	Mike Brennan, <a href="mailto:brennan@mitechnews.com">brennan@mitechnews.com</a>	<a href="http://www.mitechnews.com">www.mitechnews.com</a>
Online Tech	Shawn Fergus, <a href="mailto:sfergus@onlinetech.com">sfergus@onlinetech.com</a>	<a href="http://www.onlinetech.com">www.onlinetech.com</a>
Phimation	Dave Haviland, <a href="mailto:dave@phimation.com">dave@phimation.com</a>	<a href="http://www.phimation.com">www.phimation.com</a>
PNC Bank	Jennifer Morris, <a href="mailto:j.morris@pnc.com">j.morris@pnc.com</a>	<a href="http://www.pnc.com">www.pnc.com</a>
Rehmann	Laura Reindel, <a href="mailto:laura.reindel@rehmann.com">laura.reindel@rehmann.com</a>	<a href="http://www.rehmann.com">www.rehmann.com</a>
U.S. Small Business Administration, Michigan	Constance Logan, <a href="mailto:constance.logan@sba.gov">constance.logan@sba.gov</a>	<a href="http://www.sba.gov">www.sba.gov</a>
Small Businesss Association of Michigan	Lori Birman, <a href="mailto:lori.birman@sbam.org">lori.birman@sbam.org</a>	<a href="http://www.sbam.org">www.sbam.org</a>
Suboski and Company	Kevin Suboski, <a href="mailto:kevin@suboski.com">kevin@suboski.com</a>	<a href="http://www.suboski.com">www.suboski.com</a>
The Henry Ford	George Moroz, <a href="mailto:georgem@thehenryford.org">georgem@thehenryford.org</a>	<a href="http://www.thehenryford.org">www.thehenryford.org</a>
Upper Pennisula Business Today	Audra VanDamme, <a href="mailto:generalmanager@upbiztoday.com">generalmanager@upbiztoday.com</a>	<a href="http://www.upbiztoday.com">www.upbiztoday.com</a>
Varnum	Joan Andrew, <a href="mailto:jmandrew@varnumlaw.com">jmandrew@varnumlaw.com</a>	<a href="http://www.varnumlaw.com">www.varnumlaw.com</a>



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