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Nevada Entrepreneur Awards 2009

From the EDITOR

In Business

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Risk takers. Self-starters. Enterprising. Intuitive. Each of those words sums up our third class of honorees for the Nevada Entrepreneur Awards. In 2007, we began this program and discovered some amazing companies and remarkable people. The same is true again this year.

One thing is certain whenever you venture into the planning and production of an entrepreneur awards section — you become aware of some great individuals and companies.

Inside, you'll find this year's group of award winners. Eight companies are honored for their

success and entrepreneurship. We accepted nominations, had our writers and editors do some additional research and then a panel made the selections. The companies had to meet a few criteria to be eligible: • Must have been founded between Jan. 1, 2000, and Dec. 31, 2006

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Thanks to support from individuals, corporate underwriting and private foundation giving, this region can claim one of the highest performing public radio organizations in the nation. Recently, New York Festivals honored us for the documentary series Belonging Las Vegas, and the Western Region of the American Institute of Architects recognized our contribution to public understanding of the built environment.

We have "radio" in our name but we are

surrounded by fantastic grounds and an amazing pool. But without our team members, it's just an empty property. Our guests may come to see the resort once, but it's the special attention and service they get from our team that keeps guests coming back.

From our friendly Slot Ambassadors to our great Table Games team and Race & Sports book staff, each GVR team member is committed to offering the ultimate guest experience, every single day. It's something we constantly strive for — not just at Green Valley Ranch, but across all of Station Casinos.

Odds are — judging by the award you're receiving — you've already figured this out. Who knows, you and your employees may be a big factor in helping Nevada's economy bounce

· Founder/original owner must still be actively involved with the company • 2008 sales must not exceed \$1 billion

• Company cannot be a spinoff or division of a larger company

Dozens of companies received consideration. Some amazing stories came to light, and you can read about the risks that nearly all of these companies had to endure to reap the rewards they see every day now.

A special thank you goes out to our presenting sponsor, SouthwestU-SA Bank. Its participation on this publication, as well as the year-round involvement on other sections we produce, is truly appreciated. It's also great to have the support of Green Valley Ranch, which hosted our awards presentation in Ovation.

Rob Langrell

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Florence Rogers

President & General Manager Nevada Public Radio

PS: We're thrilled to announce a new distribution partnership for our bimonthly magazine Desert Companion. Complimentary copies are now available at The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf.



back. So here's to you, and your teams, entrepreneurs. And also to your continued success.

Tim Wright

Vice President and General Manager, Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino



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In the end, it's your people that matter most.

anything about success, it's this: At the end of the day, it's your people that make the biggest

difference. Sure, we have a beautiful building,



Jeff Grace

We very much see ourselves as a service (type of) business even more so than a technology business. Our goal every day is to make clients feel comfortable about technology.

NetEffect

eff Grace loves to make sure your company's technology is running smoothly. But he doesn't think he needs to see you everyday to achieve that goal. The CEO of NetEffect, a Las Vegas-based

technical support and technology consulting firm for small- and medium-sized businesses, is winning over clients on this theory every day.

A 1990 UNLV graduate, Grace initially envisioned a career in counseling. After practicing briefly on the East Coast, he became disenchanted with the field and took a job in tech support for an Internet service provider some 14 years ago, a time when the Internet was in its infancy.

"It was the type of company that took people with minimal experience and gave them a lot of opportunities," Grace said. "I read a lot and experimented and advanced pretty quickly."

In 2002, he started NetEffect, and today has 10 employees and projected revenues of \$1.2 million for the challenging 2009 year.

"We very much see ourselves as a service (type of) business even more so than a technology business. Our goal every day is to make clients feel comfortable about technology," he said.

In 2008, Grace felt it was time to shift to a predominantly remote technical support

platform for existing and new clients.

"We got to a point where we really couldn't grow anymore," Grace said. "Myself and my managers spent an enormous amount of time moving bodies around town."

The company's Total Tech Assurance offering enables NetEffect to handle most tech support issues remotely for its clients, allowing technicians to only come on site for more severe problems. A client is billed a flat monthly fee for the service. By not having to be on-site, Grace and his engineers can now meet regularly to problem-solve and brainstorm new strategies, ultimately bringing better service to his clients. Rolling the program out in fall 2008 was a challenge, to say the least, Grace acknowledged.

"It was a tough time to be telling people, 'We're going to need a little more money, but you'll be very happy," Grace said. "I explained to them that in the old days we were billing you by the hour. The more problems you had, the more money we made. Honestly, we didn't think that was fair."

Remote technology also has allowed Grace to focus more on growing his business. He expects to increase revenues by 50 percent within two years.

By Brian Sodoma

Special Publications writer brian.sodoma@gmgvegas.com

HealthDataInsights

very penny saved is a penny earned, especially in tough economic times. No one may know this better than the leadership of HealthDataInsights, a Las Vegasbased company committed to making sure medical claims are paid accurately.

HDI, started in 2001 by Andrea Benko and Victor Chaltiel, uses automated analysis systems that help identify and recoup improper payment on medical claims processed by payers. For HDI, that can include public agencies such as Medicaid, some of the nation's largest health plans and major employers.

"We ensure the health care claims are paid accurately; we audit what was supposed to have been paid and if the claim was paid accurately, appropriately and provided in the correct setting of care," Benko said.

HDI saves health claim payers 0.5 to 3.5 percent on their total claim payouts, which Benko says is relatively significant for a changing industry such as health care. She says new technologies and procedures, and a constant shift of services from inpatient to outpatient situations, can complicate things.

"Billing health care claims accurately is very complex because health care is changing so much," Benko said. "Because of all that change there was an opportunity to ensure the integrity of the claims."

The CEO started in the health care field as a nurse then moved to the business side after a couple of years. Before founding HDI, she was a vice president for publicly held Total Renal Care, now Davita, the second largest provider of renal dialysis services in the U.S. Previously, Benko founded Total Physician Services Inc., a physician practice management company.

Between 2005 and 2008, HDI grew from \$6.1 million to \$43.6 million in revenues, according to this year's *Inc. 500* listing. The company employs 150 people and also has another 100 independent contractors, added Benko, who sees HDI becoming one of the largest players in its niche within a few years.

The company splits its work fairly evenly between public and private sector clients. HDI recently was awarded the five-year Recovery Audit Contractor contract by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for the agency's 17-state Western region. In a RAC demonstration program, HDI recovered more than \$396 million in Medicare overpayments collected for the Medicare Trust Fund between 2005 and 2008.

By Brian Sodoma Special Publications writer brian.sodoma@gmgvegas.com Andrea Benko

ScripNet



Dennis Sponer

ennis Sponer likes happy people. And he's acutely aware that too much paper in an increaspaper-less ingly society can result in human misery.

Sponer spent time as legal counsel for a managed care organization that serviced workers compensation benefits for the Nevada State Industrial Insurance System in the 1990s. He realized that under the system in place, case managers were overwhelmed with phone calls from pharmacies; data entry workers were overloaded with paper pharmacy bills; and injured workers were forced to pay cash out of pocket for medications.

In 1997, he founded ScripNet. And with its first electronically adjudicated prescription executed in July of that year, he effectively changed the face of workers compensation prescription benefits in the Silver State forever.

Taking over the administration of prescription benefits via an electronic system isn't new, Sponer said.

"We just took what was being done in private managed care and applied it to this," the CEO acknowledged.

ScripNet is able to save clients – private or public sector workers compensation payers - about 10-20 percent on prescription costs by negotiating lower payments with pharmacies. But pharmacy owners are happy to do so, Sponer said, because ScripNet is able to guarantee payment within 30 days, instead of 60-90 days in the past. And with electronic processing, much of the administrative hassles are cut as well.

"I get to bring insurance companies and pharmacies together and make them both happy. Then I can help injured workers get medicine without a hassle," he said.

With his wife Jae overseeing the technology for the company, ScripNet quickly established itself in the Silver State. Then the State of Texas became a client, which led to more contracts with cities, counties, school districts and businesses in the Lone Star State. Clients tend to be large employers, Sponer said, often with 20,000 to 30,000 people.

In 2005, ScripNet billed \$23.4 million. By 2008, revenues had climbed to \$35.4 million, capping a three-year run on the Inc. 500 list of fastest-growing companies. Sponer expects to bill about \$50 million in 2010.

While growing his business is a priority, Sponer is focused on his core mission.

"We like to maintain this laser-like focus on the one thing we do really well," the CEO said. "We're in a nice underserved niche. ... There's plenty of growth potential in this business."

By Brian Sodoma

Special Publications writer brian.sodoma@gmgvegas.com

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Frank Gatski (left) with Richard Aggen, a client since 1999.

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be around for the

next transaction

- we have to be

accountable for

- Robert L. Moore, President,

Gatski Commercial

Real Estate Services

the first one."

1993

· Company formed with 2 employees

- 427,000 square feet under contract
- Frank Gatski serves as Vice President

1999

· Frank Gatski acquires company

2003

· Landscaping and building maintenance formed

2006

 Branded company Gatski Commercial **Real Estate Services**

2007

· Moved company to the Dean Martin Drive location

· Ranked on Inc. 5000 list

2008

- · Expanded brokerage division
- Ranked on Inc. 5000 list for the
- second time

2009

- · Launched tax abatement and cost segregation divisions
- Nearly 7 million square feet under contract
- Ranked to Inc. 5000 for the third time



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Les Silver

Falcon Technology

any successful businesses are the result of individuals recognizing an area of need and then dedicat-

ing themselves to serving it well. Russell Suzuki has done just that. The CEO of Falcon Technology has taken an understanding of converting paper-based medical record arrangements into electronic medical record, or EMR, systems and made it a profitable business.

Starting in 2005 as a home-based business, Falcon Technology has grown to eight employees and a projected \$1 million in revenues in 2009.

"We hope to grow by another 10 or 20 percent in 2010," Suzuki said.

As a member of the Air Force, Suzuki spent time at Nellis in site hospital administration. After transferring to the Los Angeles Air Force Base hospital, Suzuki implemented an EMR system at the site's small medical facility and used that experience to establish Falcon years later. The technology firm now has clients in Nevada, Arizona, Utah and California.

"I always saw there was definitely a need for this in and outside the military," Suzuki said. "We have to reform health care (information technology). So much of the focus is on managing the paper."

Falcon works with a variety of small-to-

medium-sized businesses, offering comprehensive hardware and IT solutions, remote and on-site customer support, phone and surveillance systems, and also member management solutions for nonprofits, chambers of commerce and other groups.

While Falcon serves all industries, Suzuki estimates about 50 to 75 percent of his clients are doctors. With federal stimulus dollars earmarked for helping doctors transition from paper medical records to electronic, Falcon's future focus is clear, particularly in an industry that, Suzuki estimates, is only about 15 percent converted to EMR systems.

Suzuki also has partnered with health care records and management software giant, Allscripts, to form Certified Healthcare Systems. Suzuki sells the Allscripts software and Falcon handles the clients' hardware and other IT needs.

"One business (software) drives the other," Suzuki said.

Suzuki is also actively involved in shaping the future of EMR and health care IT in general. He was named to the Nevada Health Information Technology Task Force, a governor-appointed group that is looking to create a health information exchange network made up of doctors' EMR systems.

By Brian Sodoma

Special Publications writer brian.sodoma@gmgvegas.com

Service Repair Solutions Inc.

es Silver loves cars. But he loves the car business even more.

The CEO and founder of Service Repair Solutions Inc. – a software and service organization for the automotive repair

and dealership markets – has spent more than two decades bringing technology solutions to the automotive industry, and has no plans to stop any time soon.

"I have a great deal of admiration for the entrepreneurial spirit of auto dealers. They're great people, risk takers. Each has a personality to his own, all a little bit different. I find it to be a very interesting community of people," Silver said.

Silver worked at a car dealership to pay for college. Through the years, he sold cars, worked in the finance department, then other areas of the business. After getting a master's degree in computer science, he spent six years in the computer industry before being drawn back to the automobile world. He founded Newgen Results Corp. in 1983, a software company whose products track repairs for auto dealerships and then offers maintenance reminders to their customers; he sold Newgen after 20 years.

SRS, which he started in 2003, consists of three branches, each serving the automotive industry in its own unique way. The first is called MPI, for Mobile Productivity Inc., which provides dealers with vehicle inspection software that not only finds problems but also can remind technicians of upcoming required maintenance, ultimately increasing a mechanic's productivity and driving parts counter sales.

SRS also owns Identifix, a hotline and online database for repair shop technicians, and IATN, for International Automotive Technician Network, the world's largest online network of auto repair professionals. About 40,000 repair shops subscribe to Identifix and 68,000 auto mechanics to IATN.

Combined, the three companies will generate about \$55 million in revenue this year. To Silver, the sky's the limit for the growth of SRS in the \$600 billion automobile parts and service industry. He envisions an initial public offering in SRS's future, growth in the core business and the addition of complementary services as well. With headquarters in Las Vegas, SRS has 120 local employees.

"We're really pleased we've chosen to come to Nevada. We have an able and willing workforce ... and we're able to provide quality employment opportunities outside the hospitality industry," he said.

By Brian Sodoma

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Russell Suzuki and his wife, Jonelle

BRAINtrust Marketing and Communications



Kurt Ouchida, left, and Michael Coldwell

urt Ouchida and Michael Coldwell don't have that familiar story of longtime friends who decided to go into business together. A meeting over cof-

fee a few years ago was all it took for the two now-former casino public relations executives to realize they had similar visions for starting a marketing and public relations agency.

Begun in 2006, BRAINtrust Marketing and Communications offers brand development, event marketing, advertising, media buying, graphic and Web design and a host of other communications, marketing or public relations offerings tailored to a client's needs.

Naturally, gaming and entertainment clients continue to be key for Coldwell and Ouchida, just as they have from the start. The approach has worked so far. BRAINtrust has grown from two employees billing under \$80,000 in 2006 to 10 producing a projected \$1 million-plus in 2009 revenues.

The founders have always sought to deliver more than interesting or unique promotional events or public relations campaigns. Instead, their focus has been on making a direct impact on a client's bottom line, whether it's a simple Twitter campaign or services for a large casino opening or a world movie premiere. "We want to approach companies that want to buy a service that could help them move their financial needle," Ouchida said.

With years of experience in the gaming arena, the two pride themselves in understanding the needs of hotel, gaming and leisure clients, which stretch across the country and include Renaissance Las Vegas, Trader Vic's, Buca di Beppo, Famous Dave's BBQ Restaurant, the Silverton Casino Hotel and Lodge and numerous others.

"We had been in the shoes of the same people we are now courting," Ouchida said. "We have a pretty good sense of the breadth and depth of what is needed to be accomplished, especially in terms of (return on investment)." BRAINtrust also recently established a formal partnership with Omnicom Group, and its OMG Entertainment and Sports division, whose client list includes Pepsi, Best Buy, Hershey's, JCPenney and Lowe's. But even with access to larger clients Ouchida and Coldwell are in no hurry to speed their expansion.

"We've grown organically. We have no outstanding credit. I think the long-term plan is to continue to grow the company as smart as we can," Coldwell said.

By Brian Sodoma

Special Publications writer brian.sodoma@gmgvegas.com



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Providing cutting edge information technology and management systems to the automotive service industry. SRS is proud to be part of the Las Vegas business community.

Gatski Commercial Real Estate Services

s a property manager, Frank Gatski knows how to be responsive to his clients' needs. Today, he is being responsive to an entire mar-

ket's needs.

His company has gone from managing 400,000 square feet of property in 1993 to about 7 million square feet today, a growth rate he concedes has been downright dizzying. The firm has been on the *Inc.* 5000 list of fastest-growing private companies for the past three years, and recently was designated by *Inc.* magazine as the 28th fastest growing real estate company.

But in today's market, Gatski has had to shift his company's focus to a more comprehensive real estate services offering, encompassing the needs of traditional property owners as well as lenders and receivers taking over foreclosed properties and distressed assets.

"We want to be regarded as a company that is handling the commercial real estate investment for our clients from acquisition to disposition," said Gatski's Rob Moore, "and being able to advise them, in the interim, on the status of the market."

Today, Gatski Commercial Real Estate Services is a little more focused on sales, leasing and advising clients on appropriate timing for purchases and disposal

of assets – areas right up Moore's alley. Gatski brought Moore on board in September 2008 and recently promoted the 30-year Las Vegas real estate veteran to president.

"I want to get back to the basics of where it started, to resubmit and rekindle relationships with clients," Gatski said, explaining his need to step away from day-to-day operations. "I'm going to be spending a lot of time trying to find in this economy where we are going to have opportunities for clients, spending a lot of time forming that part of the company. ... That's hard to do when you're down in the trenches of the operation every day."

While weathering a massive economic downturn, Gatski also has decided to focus on employee retention, even adding staff in the past year, while turning to new technologies and other processes to make operations more efficient.

"The people are what got us here. ... We're not going to increase net profit by laying people off," Gatski said. "I'm biting the bullet (by adding employees). I'm trying to make sure my foundation is in place; when the economy starts to turn I want to hit the ground running."

By Brian Sodoma Special Publications writer brian.sodoma@gmgvegas.com



The management team of Gatski Commercial Real Estate Services; seated from left: Rob Moore, Frank Gatski, standing from left: Susan Cotton, Lisa Brady, Robert Strehlow and Sharon Strehlow

I want to get back to the basics of where it started, to resubmit and rekindle relationships with clients.



Boyce and Kay McCary

Finally Products Inc.

exual dysfunction may be grist for many insensitive jokes. But a Las Vegas-based company, Finally Products Inc., is finding entrepreneurial

success with an all-natural product that specifically addresses female sexual dys-function, or FSD.

Finally the Solution for Women entered the marketplace in 2005 after several years of research and formulation. FPI President Boyce McCary and his wife Kay, the company's vice president, were inspired after he read a Journal of the American Medical Association article in 1998 about FSD.

"It's caused by a blood circulation issue in women, just like (FSD) in men," Boyce said. The article indicated that 43 percent of women between 18 and 59 experience some form of sexual dysfunction. "I read that, and it seemed very disturbing to me."

So Boyce and Kay set out to find medical professionals who knew about FSD and chemists who could formulate a natural cream for those in need. So far, the formula made with 26 natural ingredients has yielded impressive results for customers while creating a demand for new FPI products, according to the McCarys. "We put bounce-back cards in each box (of Finally The Solution for Women)," said Kay. "From that we learned that people wanted something to mentally get in the mood."

Today, FPI also sells Finally On Demand (a sexual dysfunction product for men) and Finally In the Mood for women.

FPI projects sales of \$4.5 million in 2009 versus \$1.9 million in 2008. Its products are sold in Wal-Mart, on the CVS Web site, in other regional drug store chains and on Finally's online site.

Originally from Memphis, the McCarys owned Boyce McCary and Associates, a local hotel interior design and furnishings firm, for more than 25 years. After retirement, the couple weren't looking to start a business. But when the formulation came together and gynecologists reported great results for patients the McCarys rounded up \$400,000 from friends and family to start Finally Products, and put in more than that to ensure its growth. The McCarys expect to hit \$10 million in sales next year.

"We wanted it to be a highly pharmaceutical product; we stayed out of adult book stores, kept it in leading drug stores and places like that," Boyce said.

By Brian Sodoma Special Publications writer brian.sodoma@gmgvegas.com 3 decades ago our founder **took a risk.**

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