

It's every entrepreneur's dream to leave a lasting legacy by launching an idea that improves the world around them. That's exactly what the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year™ Award winners are doing. And since 1986, through Entrepreneur Of The Year, EY has made it our purpose to shine a light on the accomplishments and legacies of pace-setting entrepreneurs across the U.S. and around the world.

In this feature we share the stories of the 11 2015 U.S. National award winners. These business leaders are challenging the status quo, redefining the way we live, work and play. Their track records creating new products and services, transforming organizations, enriching communities and contributing to the vibrancy of our national economy leave lasting legacies and inspire new generations to take their first bold steps on the entrepreneurial journey.

These National Entrepreneur Of The Year Award winners were announced during the culminating event of the EY Strategic Growth Forum®, the country's most prestigious gathering of high-growth, market-leading companies. This by-invitation-only CEO conference brings together more than 2,000 top executives, entrepreneurs, advisors and other business leaders each November. During four days, more than 100 speakers offer insights and anecdotes on everything from the U.S. and global political environment to effective team management and collaboration. Keynote speakers and panelists also share tales of personal and professional perseverance, along with their own tactics for accelerating growth in an ever-changing world. All this, plus great networking and entertainment!

2016 marks the 30th anniversary of the Entrepreneur Of The Year awards program in the U.S. Visit ey.com/us/eoy to follow our celebrations over the next 12 months as we continue to herald the inspiring accomplishments of the more than 11,000 U.S. Entrepreneur Of The Year alumni. We have much to learn from them!



Overall Award winner



Up, up and away

Technology

Andreas Bechtolsheim *Founder, Chief Development Officer and Chairman*

Jayshree Ullal *President and CEO*
Arista Networks

Santa Clara, California

Founded: 2004

With Arista Networks, Andreas Bechtolsheim had a very specific goal in mind in 2004: to build an IT company led by engineers that would provide disruptive, innovative solutions for the world's largest networking challenges. Over the next four years, he focused on building the foundation for Arista's network switching technologies. In 2008, he tapped industry leader Jayshree Ullal, a former Cisco executive, to serve as CEO.

Together, Bechtolsheim (working as Chief Development Officer) and Ullal have perfected the formula that has powered Arista's rapid ascent into the networking industry. The company currently counts more than 3,000 customers.

As veterans of the IT industry, both Bechtolsheim and Ullal realized that finding people with the right talent who fit within the company's culture was critical to sustaining Arista's growth.

"We're a company built by engineers, for engineers. We build the best technology, but we have some of the lowest egos, too," Ullal says. "High IQ and low ego is a great combination. There are a lot of individuals in our company who could build their own companies, but what we are doing is bringing the best of our talents together to build a team and company together."

"Our biggest challenge was that we first became an expert in one segment, and then we had to figure out how to transcend to another – the cloud," Ullal says. That meant that Arista had to examine its software technology and go-to-market strategy, she adds, "and basically change the company's direction from a niche to a more mainstream approach."

Moving to a cloud-based architecture enables Arista to offer scalable solutions, a key step in helping global enterprises keep pace with the rapid growth expected in internet traffic over the next five years. And as the threat from hackers and cyber-crooks intensifies, Arista will be challenged to provide more secure solutions for their customers.

But Bechtolsheim and Ullal are ready for that challenge. To ensure that Arista continues to develop leading-edge products, they funnel 25 percent of all corporate expenses into research and development efforts.

"Our vision is to keep innovating, to deliver new capabilities, new features, and new functionality to customers that solve their business problems," says Bechtolsheim.

And with an entrepreneurial, creative culture that's focused on achieving results, not stroking egos, Arista is already well on its way toward planting its flag as one of the strongest networking companies in the world.



Driven to excel

Distribution and Manufacturing

Berto Guerra

CEO and Chairman
Avanzar Interior Technologies, LTD

San Antonio, Texas
Founded: 2005



Safety first

Emerging

David Royce

Founder & CEO
Alterra

Provo, Utah
Founded: 2012

New to the automotive world just 10 years ago, Berto Guerra developed Avanzar Interior Technologies, LTD to produce door panels and car seats for Toyota Tundra and Tacoma trucks. Today, the San Antonio-based enterprise has evolved into a business with 900 employees and average year-over-year growth of 24 percent for the past five years.

At Avanzar, Guerra strives to create an environment that promotes and honors company loyalty, where employees never stop learning and applying new lessons for the betterment of the business. Guerra himself has learned more from Toyota than making quality truck parts. He's assimilated key tenets of the Japanese carmaker's philosophy.

Avanzar, which means "to advance" or move forward, relies on plant cleanliness, competitive pricing, high-quality products and customer service to differentiate itself in the industry. But loyalty, commitment and pure hard work have been staples of Guerra's entrepreneurial thinking long before he linked fortunes with Toyota.

At the age of 18, Guerra secured an \$80,000 loan and bought a local ice cream shop where he had worked several years earlier, before joining a movie theater franchise and Pizza Hut ("I didn't even like pizza at the time") and then moving up the management ranks at Southwestern Bell.

As for his own management style and what he seeks from his leadership team, Guerra stresses the basics.

"My dad always told me, 'Don't be afraid to surround yourself with people that are smarter than you in certain areas. Be fearless, don't be intimidated. It's OK for someone to be smarter than you. You are going to be the leader of the orchestra,'" he says.

The economic crisis of 2008 forced Toyota to mothball its San Antonio plant for 14 weeks as sales and orders dried up. Refusing to close his own plant, Guerra instead negotiated a deal with Toyota and Johnson Controls – Avanzar's production facility partner – that allowed him to keep his employees working full-time. They had no automotive work to do, he recalls, but his employees kept busy by helping renovate the facility and performing public service in San Antonio, among other things. "I did not want my people to go hungry, to send them home without a paycheck, to discontinue their insurance," says the father of 4 and grandfather of 10. "They had families to take care of."

Guerra's entrepreneurial reach has expanded over the years. He also owns two auto dealerships and is moving toward opening three more. In addition, Avanzar is making a global push outside its San Antonio base: the company is in discussions to occupy a plant in Mexico designed to supply Toyota Corollas.

While a student at Brigham Young University, David Royce accepted a summer job in California selling pest control products door to door.

The lessons of those early days have served him well in more than three years as CEO of Alterra, one of the fastest-growing companies in the U.S. pest control industry.

Royce founded the company with three particular principles in mind: provide the best, most ecologically sensitive products; establish high-quality training programs that translate to superior client service; and create a work environment that's fun for everyone and structured to retain talented staff.

Royce continued to refine his business model with the launch of EcoFirst in 2009. EcoFirst was his first national venture, expanding into 10 states west of the Mississippi River and serving nearly 100,000 customers before it was sold.

And in founding Alterra, from the Latin for "all" and "earth," Royce was guided by those lessons he picked up as a young salesperson. The concerns of homeowners about the toxicity of pest control products and the potential safety threats to their children and their pets left a lasting impression.

Today, the company uses the most progressive products with the lowest levels of toxicity available. Alterra is a member of the EPA's Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program, which accepts organizations adhering to a higher standard of ecological practices.

While the Alterra business model is centered on delivering safe products and executing a smart strategy, its cultural roots are the 10 core values developed by the company's more than 1,000 employees. They include "Elevate the Tribe," a call for positive team and family spirit, the "Platinum Rule" that counsels employees to treat customers the way they would want to be treated, and "All Ears on Deck" to make sure employees are always listening and learning.

Since its 2012 launch, Alterra has reported a 300 percent growth in revenue and projects a total of 300,000 customers by the end of the year. The company was ranked earlier this year as the fastest-growing pest control company in the country by *PCT Magazine*, an industry publication.

The 38-year-old married father of two is committed to continuing to expand the business. In 2016, he said, Alterra expects to pass an important milestone in annual revenue. "Cracking the \$100 million mark will be pretty exciting," he says. "We're growing like gangbusters," he said. "It's exciting, with more people wanting to take advantage of opportunities."



The energy to change

Energy, Cleantech and Natural Resources

Eric Dee Long

CEO
USA Compression

Austin, Texas
Founded: 1998



Taking chances to succeed

Family Business

Andrew D. Peykoff II

President & CEO
Niagara Bottling, LLC

Ontario, California
Founded: 1963

Eric Dee Long moved 17 times before he finished high school. To say his itinerant youth had an impact on his personality – not to mention his character, his tenacity, his resilience and his drive – is like saying nothing succeeds like success. The truth is self-evident.

“My dad worked for a major corporation,” Long explains. “I was forced to meet a lot of people.” The effect, he says, was simple: “I extroverted.” It is not surprising that he turns the noun into a verb. After all, everything about him suggests action.

Long was fascinated by the drilling, production and reservoir aspects of petroleum engineering in college. Today, he sits on the Advisory Board of the Department of Petroleum Engineering at his alma mater.

Long’s entrepreneurial spirit went into overdrive when he realized that industry conditions were changing rapidly, so he sought an opportunity to build quality compression equipment. With the funding support of a highly successful Caterpillar dealer, he founded USA Compression and implemented an organic growth plan to build equipment designed to better adapt to climatic conditions.

USA Compression is now one of the top public independent providers of compression services, with a diverse customer base made up of producers, processors, gatherers and transporters of natural gas.

He is the first to say that he accomplished none of this alone. “I’m the original founder of a business that is now a New York Stock Exchange publicly traded company,” Long says. “But it isn’t, quote, ‘my company.’ A lot of times entrepreneurs let their egos get in the way. They use the ‘I’ word instead of the ‘we’ word. It is a team, not just one guy.”

“What really makes us successful is the empowerment of our workforce,” Long says, pointing out that USA Compression provides some 450 jobs, many of them in lower-economic environments. He says four “Pillars of Excellence” keep the company strong, and the first one is people. The others: equipment, culture and service.

At 57, Long finds himself growing increasingly reflective about the blessings of family and success, including his wife, two sons and a granddaughter.

Under his leadership, USA Compression has a history of supporting the communities in which the company operates. This includes a partnership with Texas Advocacy Project, which provides legal assistance to women and children in crisis.

“We’re just getting started,” he says.

When Andy Peykoff’s father suffered a stroke and could no longer run the family business, Niagara Bottling, it was in character for Andy – the seventh of eight children himself – to step up and take over. Never mind that he was just 26.

Since then, Peykoff has multiplied Niagara’s revenues by 38 times over his first year in charge. The company is now the nation’s largest private-label bottled water supplier with 2,600 employees and 19 production facilities throughout the U.S.

“We are very growth-oriented, and we are very teamwork-oriented,” he says. “There are not a lot of walls. We have a sense of urgency. Our mentality not only has a lot to do with how we relate to our customers but also how we relate to those in the manufacturing and engineering space.”

Peykoff says this mentality promotes innovative thinking and risk-taking. “It’s perfectly OK in our company if you fail,” he says, adding that the practice of trying and failing often leads to ultimate victory. One example of this trial-and-error route to success is the company’s creation of the “nested pack,” which increases the density of packages and accommodates 17 percent more bottles per pallet.

“That has eliminated more than a million pallets a year,” he says. The company was the first to manufacture its own caps, and some 70 percent of the plastic has been taken out of its bottle since Peykoff assumed leadership. Today, Niagara has the lightest bottles, lightest caps and fastest lines in the industry.

At 39, Peykoff now leads a large company that retains its small-company mindset. “It’s a culture that has worked,” he says. “The entrepreneurial spirit is not found in just one person. The entrepreneurial spirit is in the whole company.”

And what precisely is the entrepreneurial spirit? “The willingness to fall on your face,” he says. “The sense that when you climb one mountain, you look to climb another.” Even as Niagara has grown under his leadership, Peykoff’s commitment to family remains paramount. Last year, he spearheaded the creation of Niagara Cares, which supports initiatives geared toward serving disadvantaged children and their families.

“I have a soft spot in my heart for kids,” he says. “The smile of a child – there’s nothing better.”

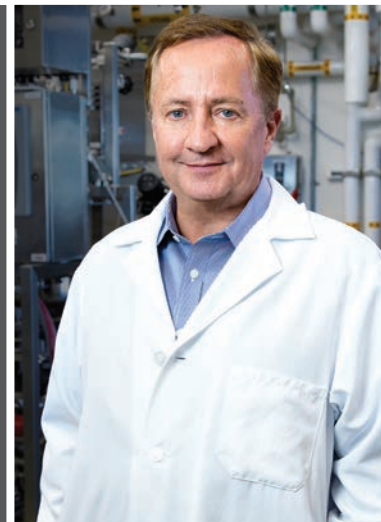


Foresight, 20/20

Financial Services

Alfred P. West, Jr.
Chairman & CEO
SEI

Oaks, Pennsylvania
Founded: 1968



Tenacity with a global perspective

Life Sciences

Jean-Jacques Bienaimé
Chairman & CEO
BioMarin Pharmaceutical

Novato California
Founded: 1996

Al West's first foray into business was markedly different than where he is now as Chairman & CEO of SEI. After high school, West pursued his dream of becoming a pilot. He enrolled at the Georgia Institute of Technology as an aeronautical engineering student and Air Force ROTC cadet. Then, as it often does, fate stepped in. While West was still a cadet, his eyesight deteriorated to 20/30. This disqualified him from the Air Force and scuttled his flying ambitions.

"So I had to change course," West says. "I had figured I was going to fly for five years and then start a business. I always wanted to start a business. So I switched that around."

In short order West proved that although his eyesight may not have been perfect, his "vision" certainly was. After completing his undergraduate coursework in Georgia, he headed to the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, where he pursued his Ph.D.

He and two fellow Ph.D. students created a computerized simulation that included 50 case studies on loans. Knowing he was on to something, West took the loan case study to the credit department of the then-largest bank in town, which bought it.

"This was the start of SEI," notes West. "[It] basically taught people how to lend money."

Today SEI is a leading global provider of investment processing, investment management and investment operations solutions. Its offerings help corporations, financial institutions and advisors, and ultra-high-net-worth families create and manage wealth.

To sustain and grow the business, West next focused on bank trust departments and "built a trust system around real-time computing. It was very advanced," he says. With sustained energy and drive, West spent the next 10 years automating trust departments.

The SEI Wealth Platform, which serves as a stand-alone solution delivering wealth managers with the infrastructure, operations and administrative support necessary to achieve their strategic objectives. It supports trading and transactions on 131 stock exchanges in 50 countries and 35 currencies.

Throughout SEI's more-than-40-year history, West's mission has remained constant: to help clients achieve success by developing consistently relevant solutions delivered through outstanding client experience. He continues to move SEI forward with the introduction of new products and services. "About every 10 years we kind of reinvent the company."

Today SEI employs approximately 2,700 people in locations around the world, including its Oaks, PA, headquarters and offices in Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and the U.K.

Moving from one country to another while growing up served to educate and ultimately provide a mission for Jean-Jacques Bienaimé, Chairman and CEO of BioMarin Pharmaceutical.

Born in a small town in France, Bienaimé first moved to Italy, then Sardinia, before moving to Iraq and farther afield. He graduated with a BA in Economics from the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris. After moving to the U.S. he earned an MBA from Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

Bienaimé's travels brought him understanding and sensitivity to others. "As I moved around the world, I got perspective on the need to be flexible," he says. "There are very many cultures, and people look at the world in many different ways."

In his job just before joining BioMarin, he was Chairman, CEO and President of a company focused on industrial bioproducts and targeted cancer biotherapeutics.

When the opportunity came for Bienaimé to join BioMarin, many of his colleagues advised that moving would not be in his best interests. "BioMarin was not in great shape when I joined," he remembers. "It was running out of money and moving in an unfortunate direction. My sense was that all of these problems were fixable. But there were a few decisions to be made quickly to save the company, which I did. We downsized by a third and raised money."

BioMarin specializes in developing treatment for rare and ultra-rare diseases. These orphan diseases are defined as having small patient populations of 200,000 or fewer.

"We are very patient-centric," explains Bienaimé. The company is very close to the patient community, supporting it in many different ways to improve access to treatment and offer financial support for treatment.

For Bienaimé, innovation is the key to company success. BioMarin currently has five drugs on the market for which there are no direct competitors. His knowledge and ability to describe benefits of the company's experimental therapies for rare diseases has garnered FDA approval for every product. These approvals have come in 5 years, whereas industry averages are 10 years.

In the past, BioMarin was known for small successful acquisitions. "Most recently," says Bienaimé, "the company made a big acquisition that brought a line of products for muscular dystrophy." He looks forward to gaining FDA approval of those products by the end of 2015 and launching them the following year in the U.S. and Europe.

BioMarin has direct commercial presence in 55 countries around the world. Its next move is to expand the size of its commercial international organization with the same enthusiasm, tenacity, resilience and perseverance that have led to Bienaimé's and BioMarin's success from the start.



A pioneer on the frontier

Media, Entertainment & Communications

Maggie Wilderotter

Chairman & CEO
Frontier Communications

Stamford, Connecticut
Founded: 1935

When Maggie Wilderotter joined Frontier Communications in 2004, the company was flailing. Phone revenue was declining, customers were leaving and employee morale was low.

That would be a daunting scenario for any new president and CEO to step into (she became Chairman in 2006), but Wilderotter, a self-identified trailblazer, knew she was more than prepared for the challenge.

In 1978 she responded to a newspaper ad for a job at Cable Data in Sacramento. She moved up the ladder, ascending to the role of Vice President at age 29, and later Senior Vice President, before she left for McCaw Cellular, which had found its niche in software and cable television “before either of those was cool.”

After high-profile stints at Wink Communications, AT&T Wireless and Microsoft, Wilderotter landed at Frontier. As directors retired, they were replaced by a diverse group of men and women with strong experience in varied industries. Women were promoted to senior leadership positions across the company.

“All companies have obstacles, but one of the biggest ones for Frontier was employee culture,” she explains.

“I went out and met with thousands of employees to make sure that they understood we were all in it together,” says Wilderotter.

As the head of a communications company, Wilderotter sees herself as a “servant CEO” who emphasizes communicating with her employees and customers. Every employee and customer has her email address and can send her their ideas or concerns. Her policy is to respond to messages within 24 hours.

Wilderotter is passionate about Frontier and giving back to the community. In September 2014, she established a program called America’s Best Communities (ABC) with cosponsors DISH, CoBank and The Weather Channel. The \$10 million initiative was created to stimulate growth and investment in rural America, particularly in cities of 10,000 to 80,000 people.

Though still in its premier year, Wilderotter reports that communities have presented such entrepreneurial ideas as waterfront development, downtown revitalization, the creation of tech incubators, and playgrounds and farmers markets.

“Entrepreneurs come in many shapes and sizes, but you have to have the combination of passion, innovation and creativity; along with a sense of company and a way to attract, retain and motivate employees; along with a good handle on how to create sustainable value” in order to succeed, she explains.

Ultimately, she says, ABC is what entrepreneurship is all about: “Entrepreneurship is not about a flash in the pan. It’s not about something that lasts a year or two. “It’s about something that lasts for generations.”



There is no “I” in “we”

Real Estate, Hospitality, and Construction

Adam Neumann

Co-Founder & CEO
WeWork

New York, New York
Founded: 2010

Adam Neumann has always exhibited a flair for entrepreneurship. Born in Tel-Aviv, he moved to New York after serving as a naval officer in the Israeli military. All the while, the experiences that shaped him, such as the complexity of managing a military operation and the collaboration and virtues of living in an Israeli kibbutz – a communal settlement – would go on to inspire the pillars of WeWork.

The idea behind WeWork is to provide budding entrepreneurs with a platform to create what could be their life’s work – but in a communal environment. The company leases space in an office building, divides it up into smaller work areas and charges a virtual or physical membership for start-ups.

“I had already owned three businesses [before WeWork], and the most difficult thing ... is starting it and finding the offices rather than doing the thing that you love,” he says.

Through a roommate, Neumann met Miguel McKelvey, and the two hit it off. “We both had very interesting childhoods and very simple backgrounds that had a lot to do with sharing,” he says.

Neumann and McKelvey hit upon the idea of leasing space and subletting individual cubicles. They eventually struck a deal with the landlord to see if their idea would gain traction. The business, called Green Desk, was a success.

They eventually sold their stake in Green Desk and cofounded WeWork to reimagine the way entrepreneurs work by providing access to services, resources and a work environment that empowers creators to pursue their dreams.

One desk at WeWork affords a member access to 29 physical locations around the world with an instant connection to the more than 23,000 (and growing) members who work in those cities. Nothing had prepared Neumann for the stunning growth of the company in such a short period of time. “One of the difficult things in a high-growth company is that, even with the best intentions, the company moves so fast and growth happens so regularly,” he says. “When you move at that rate, you have to be willing to change and you have to be willing to take advice.”

He says, “If you are going to build a business today and your business does not have a real intention behind it, something positive that it actually brings to people and makes their life better, and if you also don’t mix with that doing something that you love, then I don’t believe you are going to be truly successful.”



Staying focused

Retail and
Consumer Products

Reade Fahs

CEO

Bruce Steffey

President & COO

National Vision, Inc.

Duluth, Georgia

Founded: 1990



Transformation, ahead of the curve

Services

Y. Michele Kang

Founder & CEO

Cognosante

McLean, Virginia

Founded: 2008

To take a chain of eyeglass stores from bankruptcy to more than 50 consecutive quarters of growth requires, well, vision.

In 2002, National Vision, Inc., a publicly held company based in Duluth, GA, derived 95 percent of its sales from the Vision Centers it leased in Walmart stores across the country.

Then Walmart announced that it would not renew those leases when they expired over the next decade. The company's market cap collapsed. The board searched for a savior. And it found one in Reade Fahs, a seasoned vision industry executive.

When Fahs took the reins as CEO, he recruited retailing veteran Bruce Steffey as his President. The pair immediately set off on a road trip, visiting as many stores as they could.

The duo also assembled a team of talented and experienced retailers. And they made it clear that the entire organization existed solely for its customers.

"If you aren't serving a patient or customer directly," says Fahs, "then you'd better darn well be serving someone who is serving a patient or customer directly."

The goal, Fahs says, is to encourage all employees to stay with National Vision for their entire careers. The company's track record is impressive: retention rates are 85 percent in National Vision's retail stores. And under Fahs' and Steffey's leadership, only 1 of 25 senior executives has left the company.

"Our stores are by far the lowest-cost places in America to get eyeglasses, contacts and eye exams," Steffey says. "And if you ask our doctors, 'Why do you like practicing here?' they'll say, 'Because I know that if not for National Vision, many of my patients wouldn't be able to afford eye care.'"

National Vision has created a nonprofit organization called Frames for the World that provides vision correction for those in need. The organization collects new eyeglass frames from manufacturers that have overstock and distributes them to clinics in developing countries.

National Vision fuels its philanthropic endeavors through a business that is now thriving. The company today has more than 800 stores and 21 e-commerce websites. Together, these brands comprise the largest "bricks-and-clicks" optical retailer in the world and have served more than 33 million customers.

And what happened with that imperiled Walmart contract?

Walmart not only renewed the leases for nearly 200 Vision Centers, but when a relationship with 1-800-Contacts dissolved in 2012, Walmart awarded the entire online contact lens contract to National Vision.

Starting a company in June 2008, just months ahead of the financial crisis, may appear to be bad timing. But Michele Kang, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Cognosante, knew it was the time to act if her company was going to get ahead of the curve and lead the coming transformation in the U.S. health care industry.

Kang, who had run Northrop Grumman's health care business prior to founding Cognosante, believed that the health care information technology agenda outlined by President George W. Bush in 2004 would have major implications for the industry. Her instincts were correct. Cognosante is now a leading provider of IT, consulting and outsourcing services to key federal and state health agencies.

Using the money her parents had saved for her dowry in South Korea to help fund her education, Kang moved to the U.S. Kang eventually joined Northrop Grumman, where she was soon tapped to lead its health care business. In her role there, Kang saw the opportunity for a major transformation of the IT systems used to support health care in the U.S.

Selling her Northrop Grumman stock to fund the business, Michele started Cognosante above her home's garage in the Washington, D.C., metro area.

Kang made the "big bet that health care had to transform because of the financial pressures" brought on by aging baby boomers. She also bet that "Medicaid would be the center of gravity for this health care transformation. Medicaid is a full-blown health plan, and all 50 states have an infrastructure, so it was the best platform to roll out this transformation."

As an early mover, Cognosante was well-positioned to take advantage of the market trends and provide services to help state and federal health agencies adopt electronic health care records for their patients. Cognosante also provides business process outsourcing services and call centers to state and federal health agencies.

Once she completed the merger with Fox Systems, Kang had the major pieces in play to fulfill her vision of leading the transformation in health care IT. Cognosante has expanded rapidly since 2010, growing from 216 employees to more than 1,500. And as the Affordable Care Act, passed by Congress in 2010, moves forward, Cognosante is poised to continue enhancing its leadership position.

Despite her success, she considers herself an accidental entrepreneur. "I always thought I would be the CEO of a Fortune 500 company," Kang says, adding that the real stress of starting a company "wasn't worrying about what I'd do to support myself, but in realizing that all these people depended on me."

Venture Capital Award of Excellence™ 2015 winners

Three entrepreneurs were selected as recipients of our 10th annual Venture Capital Award of Excellence, which recognizes the role that venture capital plays in the U.S. economy and in the development of high-growth, high-impact companies.

Venture capitalists provide more than funding; their knowledge and experience help turn entrepreneurs' vision into reality, lead to the creation of new jobs, and have a profound and growing impact on the U.S. economy as a whole. Investment levels for the first nine months of 2015 reached \$54.6 billion, already nearly eclipsing the \$57.6 billion invested in all of 2014.

Seventy-three of the Entrepreneur Of The Year 2015 finalists are from venture-backed companies. Over the past two years, these VC-backed companies have grown their revenue by 82 percent and their workforce by 53 percent, compared with 32 percent and 26 percent, respectively, for the finalists as a whole.

"Venture capital firms help grow our economy by funding disruptive companies whose products and services change the way people work, live and play," says Jeff Grabow, EY's U.S. Venture Capital Leader. "Venture capital firms give these young companies advice, guidance and the ability to scale."

The award is sponsored by SolomonEdwards.

This year's judges were: **Steve Goldberg**, PhD, Operating Partner, Venrock; **Richard Heitzmann**, Founder and Managing Director, FirstMark Capital; **Dr. Kim Puloma Kamdar**, Partner, Domain Associates, L.L.C.; and **Evan Morgan**, Partner, Revolution Growth.



Dr. Richard Heyman
CEO
Aragon Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
Seragon Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
San Diego, California
Founded: 2009



Adam Neumann
Co-Founder & CEO
WeWork
New York, New York
Founded: 2010



Marcus Ryu
CEO, President &
Co-Founder
Guidewire Software, Inc.
Foster City, California
Founded: 2001

EY Entrepreneurial Winning Women™ Growing to scale

The EY Entrepreneurial Winning Women™ program is a national competition and executive leadership program that identifies a select group of high-potential women entrepreneurs whose businesses show real potential to scale – and then helps them do it. To date, there are 83 entrepreneurs in the eight-year-old North America program.

Results show the program is spurring rapid growth. According to an independent impact assessment directed by the Babson College Center for Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership, North America program participant companies' total 2014 revenue was 54% higher than their total revenues in the years before they joined the program. Individual participants average 20% revenue growth annually; in the second year of participation, however, their companies have been known to grow up to 50%. Winners also report increases in entrepreneurial confidence, growth goals, networks and media visibility, to name a few.

The Entrepreneurial Winning Women program has gone global, and is now supporting women entrepreneurs in more than 30 countries – including Brazil, Israel, Russia, South Africa and China. Find out more: ey.com/entrepreneurialwinningwomen.



Claudia Mirza, Akorbi, Plano, Texas | Founded: 2005

Since it was founded a decade ago, Akorbi has evolved from a home-based translation business into a multimillion-dollar company providing language, technology and staffing services around the world. Its success has been in leveraging technology and developing business processes to simplify the translation system, reduce costs and increase speed-to-market. The company has been growing aggressively in the past few years and counts among its clients the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and many FORTUNE 500 companies.



Nikki Barua, BeyondCurious, Los Angeles, California | Founded: 2011

BeyondCurious, an innovation agency specializing in mobile experiences, aims to help market leaders and disrupters innovate better and faster than their competition. In the few years since it was founded, BeyondCurious has established itself as a significant force in Los Angeles, with a premier, recognizable client roster that spans the market. It was recently voted Boutique Agency of the Year by marketing collaborative thinkLA. BeyondCurious' philosophy is "Innovation @ Speed," employing Silicon Valley techniques for rapid results.



Jody Greenstone Miller, Business Talent Group, Pacific Palisades, California | Founded: 2007

Business Talent Group is a marketplace that brings businesses and top talent together outside of the traditional full-time framework. The company, with its roster of more than 4,000 professionals, has now served 25 percent of the FORTUNE 1000 as well as top equity firms and major nonprofits. Business Talent Group was recently named by Forbes as one of the most promising companies in America. In this high-growth emerging market, the company has grown over 60 percent annually for the past three years.



Susan Catalano, Cognition Therapeutics (CogRx), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania | Founded: 2007

CogRx is a small molecule therapeutics company focused on the discovery and development of drugs for neurodegenerative diseases. Its research into blocking toxic proteins that cause progressive memory loss has resulted in a lead program in Alzheimer's disease set to begin clinical trials by the end of 2015. There are currently no drugs on the market that halt the progression of the disease, and the company is poised to become a market leader.



Aneela Zaib, emergiTEL Inc., Richmond Hill, Ontario | Founded: 2006

emergiTEL is a full-solution provider for staffing, outsourcing, consulting and training services in the Canadian telecom and IT marketplace. The company operates as an extension of its clients' human resources structure by sourcing hard-to-find IT personnel and partnering with clients for a hire's entire life cycle. In a short period, the company has become a market leader, and based on projected job growth in the IT sector and among independent contractors, emergiTEL is well-placed to continue its expansion.



Rachel Mielke, Hillberg & Berk, Regina, Saskatchewan | Founded: 2007

Since its founding, Hillberg & Berk has grown into one of Canada's foremost luxury jewelry brands, sold at 25 retailers across the country, online and in the company's two stores in Regina. Its designs have been spotted on Michelle Obama, Carrie Underwood and Celine Dion, and in 2013 Rachel Mielke was commissioned to design a brooch for Queen Elizabeth II. The company differentiates itself by being a female-driven and female-focused company, giving a minimum 2.5 percent of profits to charities that benefit women around the world.



Ariel Garten, InteraXon Inc., Toronto, Canada | Founded: 2009

InteraXon launched as a service-oriented company producing brain-sensing experiences for companies such as Microsoft. In 2014, the company's signature product Muse, a headband that measures the electrical activity of the brain using EEG sensors, entered the market. Muse sends brain-fitness information to a smartphone or tablet app that can be used to promote relaxation and focus. More than 75 institutions now use Muse as a tool to work with PTSD, ADHD, pain management and anxiety.



Leah Garrad-Cole, Love Child Organics, Whistler, British Columbia | Founded: 2011

Love Child Organics was founded in 2011 to offer parents an organic and nutritious alternative to the ready-made food for babies and young children commonly available in stores. The company's mission is not only to leave out the "bad stuff" (preservatives, fillers and sugars), but also to include as many nutritionally dense ingredients as possible. Love Child Organics started selling in Canada in 2013 and a year later in the U.S. Its products are currently available in more than 2,000 stores in Canada and 1,500 in the U.S.



Alissa Bayer, milk + honey, Austin, Texas | Founded: 2006

milk + honey is an award-winning day spa and salon, with five Texas locations and another under construction. It is also a brand of organic bath and body products sold in its salons and at retailers such as Whole Foods Market, with which it has one in-store co-branded spa. The company's focus is on creating a relaxing, design-forward environment, with passionate staff and all natural, organic ingredients. It was recently voted Best Spa in *The Austin Chronicle* Best of Austin Readers Poll.



Lisa Falzone, Revel Systems, San Francisco, California | Founded: 2010

Revel Systems has created a point-of-sale platform using cloud-based iPad technology to replace the clunky, inefficient cash registers of the past. Extending beyond the customer transaction, the Revel platform acts as a "central nervous system" for businesses, offering a full suite of features from payment processing to personnel scheduling and inventory management. The system can be tailored across industries, and its 10,000 terminals so far deployed are with companies such as Goodwill, Little Caesars Pizza and the San Jose Giants.



Michelle Vondrasek, Von Technologies, LLC, Oakbrook, Illinois | Founded: 2006

Von Technologies is an IT services corporation focused on network infrastructure, unified communications, wireless networks and cabling. Its services portfolio encompasses the network life cycle from planning and consultation, to design and deployment, to optimization and support. The company prides itself on being creative, nimble and flexible based on customer needs. Clients include AT&T, Hilton Hotels and Ford Motor Company. It was recognized in 2015 by the Women Presidents' Organization as one of the 50 Fastest-Growing Women-Owned/Led Companies in America.



Anne Wagner, WaveStrike, LLC, Crownsville, Maryland | Founded: 2011

WaveStrike provides custom software application development services to the intelligence community and the U.S. Department of Defense. Its software analytics, cloud solutions and cybersecurity applications aid its clients in the defense of national security. The company was conceived in part to bridge a gender gap in a predominantly male industry, and since its founding four years ago, it has already made an impact and experienced significant growth.