

**Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce
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Main article

**FAMILY OWNERS, ENTREPRENEURS GARNER AWARDS
FROM FOX CITIES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

A family owned business with strong commitments to the community and the environment, as well as a young franchise that continues to show impressive growth are among the recipients of the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce 2011 Small Business of the Year Awards.

Additionally, one firm with fewer than five years in operation has been cited with the Chamber's Rising Star Award.

All of the honors were presented at an awards luncheon June 8 at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel attended by some 450 business people. The event was sponsored by First National Bank-Fox Valley and Schenck SC, in conjunction with WHBY 1150 AM and The Post-Crescent.

Hoffman, LLC received the award in the Service Category; Alpha-Prime, Inc. was honored in the Manufacturing Category, and Appetize, Inc., doing business locally as Hu Hot Mongolian Grill, was recognized in the Wholesale/Retail Category.

The Chamber presented the Rising Star to Insight Publications LLC.

Information on the Chamber's services and programs for small businesses may be found online at www.foxcitieschamber.com and click on Economic Development, or by contacting James Schlies, vice president of Economic Development, at the Chamber, (920) 734-7101.

**SERVICE CATEGORY WINNER: Hoffman, LLC
Paul J. Hoffman, Owner/CEO**

Leaders at this fourth generation family owned planning, design and construction firm cited three points of pride in their Small Business Award application. The firm received national recognition for designing and building a Madison monastery, the highest-rated LEED New Construction building in the United States. Secondly, they reported the company's best financial performance in the last 34 years despite

economic conditions. And, they stressed the company's ongoing commitment to living its mission through community service.

Hoffman, LLC offers an integrated staff of planning, design and construction professionals, but says its competitive advantage centers on the value and responsible business solutions they bring to clients. Anticipating the impending recession, Hoffman reduced its overhead expenses by two-thirds, partially due to relocating its corporate headquarters to downtown Appleton.

Hoffman redefined its growth and success strategy to measure "profit-per-employee". To build capacity, capabilities, experience, geographic expansion, and revenue growth they created the "Box Strategy" which connects them with strategic, collaborative business relationships with other companies, consultants, organizations and individuals.

For nearly two decades, Hoffman recognized the importance of sustainability, which led to the creation of Total Project Management: Vision Taken to the Power of Green. This in turn resulted in creation of "POWER of g," or true sustainability.

Paul Hoffman has served on the Chamber's Board of Directors, and has provided expertise as a presenter at many programs and panels for members and young professionals.

MANUFACTURING CATEGORY: Alpha-Prime, Inc.
Richard Bartosic, Owner/President

The winner in the Manufacturing Category operates under the philosophy that says "The difficult we do today. The impossible takes a day or two longer."

Founded in 1990, Alpha-Prime is a paper converting company operating sheeters, a rewinder, guillotine trimmers, die cutter, boxing line and pad stitcher. They provide sheets and rolls of paper, paperboard and synthetics cut to sizes specified by customers, including paper companies, carton manufacturers and printers.

The firm has adapted to market trends and expanded its niche by modifying much of its basic machinery and adding equipment to meet the needs of a broad customer base. They ship materials worldwide.

With its employees, the company stresses safety, quality and production/output. Average employment longevity is more than 10 years. Despite challenging economic times, Alpha-Prime has increased staffing and sales by more than 20% in the last two years. In fact, in first quarter 1010, they increased staffing by 12%.

Customized software enables efficient accounting, inventory, pricing, job costing, purchasing and maintenance functions. Three years ago the company engaged

business consultants to assist with Return on Net Assets, resulting in modifications to the pricing system and a new job costing system to track net profits.

The firm invested more than \$2 million in equipment and building improvements, including \$290,000 invested in the past 18 months.

Bartosic is a member of the Chamber's State and Federal Issues Committee.

Taking advantage of the "Smart Money" program 15 years ago, the company converted its lighting to metal halide, and two years ago they switched the entire facility to high efficiency fluorescent fixtures.

The company and its employees work to serve their community. Their service and contributions have benefited a number of schools, scholarship recipients, churches, Boy Scouting, local soccer teams, Wisconsin Timber Rattlers and the Appleton Baseball Club. The company also has hired college students for seasonal employment.

**WHOLESALE/RETAIL CATEGORY: Appetize, Inc. dba Hu Hot Mongolian Grill
David Lindenstruth, CEO/Owner**

Cited as the Fox Cities Chamber's 2009 Rising Star Award recipient under its Hu Hot name, Appetize has achieved strategic growth driven by innovation and process

improvements. Its Grand Chute Hu Hot location returns over 100% of its initial investment each year, and has grown from a staff of 1 in 2007 to eight full-time equivalents currently.

It was recognized as Hu Hot's 2010 Franchise of the Year, The Post-Crescent's Small Business of the Year, and just recently, the National Restaurant Association's 2011 Restaurant Neighbor Award for mid-size businesses in Wisconsin.

Innovations include creation of drop-off, event and grilling on-site catering; construction of multiple labor planning tools; producing a value engineered restaurant design; redeveloping the training program with its franchisor, and devising a restaurant sales process focused on guests' personality style and needs.

Appetize has employed social media and creative marketing strategies beyond traditional advertising.

One example of its "zany" offers is its "Skyscraper Appreciation Day," where guests who were six-foot-two or taller received 50% discounts. Another is its "International Take Your Houseplant on a Walk Day" which rewarded guests with discounts for bringing in their houseplants.

Social media tools such as foursquare and Gowalla help drive business to the Grand Chute location. Beginning in 2010, Appetize significantly reduced its traditional advertising budget and instead donated 1.5% of its sales at each location to a non-profit organization each month. This “Making Community Impacts” effort resulted in more than \$39,000 in donations in the Fox Cities.

In 2010, the company documented seven core values. Each morning, managers meet to discuss how they will proactive one of these core values. The company’s mantra, Making Impacts, means that employees need to make a positive impact on every guest, the company needs to make a positive impact on its employees, and together the company intends to make a positive impact on the community.

**RISING STAR AWARD: Insight Publications LLC
Margaret LeBrun & Brian Rasmussen, Co-Owners/Co-Publishers**

In its three years in existence, Insight Publications LLC has endeavored to become the “go-to place for sharing information and connecting people within the business communities” it serves in the New North region. In the past year, they have added events and built an online presence.

Insight Publications was established in Appleton in January 2008 by co-owners and co-publishers Brian Rasmussen and Margaret LeBrun. They enlisted Rick Berg as managing editor of a quarterly publication, Insight on Manufacturing.

The founders recognized a desire among business people throughout the region to communicate with one another in a way they had not until the launch of the New North brand. With 1.2 million people in the 18-county region, they felt the time was ripe to create a high-profile, business-to-business magazine that would reflect the talent and sophistication that exists in the region.

Insight magazine is mailed monthly to a qualified list of some 14,500 business owners, C-Level executives and professionals throughout Northeast Wisconsin. Content is intended to contain a mix of well-written articles presented in a package with high-quality photography and graphic design.

Insight on Manufacturing was developed out of discussions with leaders of the NEW Manufacturing Alliance, aiming to share information about workforce issues, best practices and how to attract young talent into manufacturing careers. Launched in December 2007, it is mailed to some 4,000 manufacturers four times a year.

Insight produces the New North Annual Report and Mid-Year Report. The management claims to provide in-kind services to New North and to efforts to promote the regional economy valued at \$53,635 each. They also produce annual reports for the United Way in the Fox Cities and Brown County.

Insight deployed a technology that presents the magazines digitally, including page-turning technology. New this year is the ability to view the digital product on smart phones. The web site was revamped in 2009 to include text versions, archived articles and videos, and a blog updated several times weekly.

Employment has grown to six full-time equivalent employees and there are plans to add a new part-time position soon.

Despite economic conditions, the publication has been profitable from the start. In 2009, total revenues increased 50%, month over month, from the first year. The 2010 total sales were 14% over the preceding year.

The company has added event coordination and contract publishing for existing organizations. It is realizing benefits from association with its InDevelopment --

conferences in 2010 and 2011. Additional events include the G2B Conference for green business concerns, and the BLEND Leadership Conferences in 2010 and 2011.

The publishers helped the MEW Manufacturing Alliance promote manufacturing careers for youth and assisted with the launch of the NEW Manufacturing All Stars. Insight is a sponsor of the St. Norbert College CEO Breakfast & Strategy Series.