

St. Louis Business Journal

MARCH 26-APRIL 1, 2010

TOP 150

PRIVATELY HELD COMPANIES

TOPS IN TOWN

I went back through the Business Journal archives the other day to track down the original Top 150 Privately Held Companies list. It was 1999, and Enterprise Rent-A-Car was at the top. (*The Business Journal* did have Top Private Company lists before '99, but they went only 100 deep.)

Since that first Top 150, Enterprise has owned the No. 1 spot every year except 2001 and 2002. (Premcor temporarily knocked Enterprise to second those years.)

So it's no surprise that the top of the list this year once again belongs to the rental car giant, now known as Enterprise Holdings after its integration of Alamo Rent A Car and National Car Rental from a 2007 deal.

But don't think for one second that this is the same old list. Far from it.

For starters, the combined revenue of this year's Top 150 is about 15 percent below last year's group.

Here's another thing that sets this list apart: It includes 14 newcomers, more than twice as many as it had two years ago. Those 14 businesses saw a combined 6.1 percent revenue increase, so imagine how much bigger that 15 percent decline would have been without them. After all, 96 of the list's companies experienced revenue declines in '09.

Still, thanks to those new companies, the cut-off to the list rose more than \$7 million. Last year, homebuilder Fischer & Frichtel Inc., with \$61.6 million in 2008 revenue, rounded out the list. This time, No. 150 went to Medical Transportation Management at \$68.8 million.

As Publisher Ellen Sherberg alludes to in this week's Closer Look, getting these numbers was not easy. Business leaders

tend to clam up when they don't have good news to share, and that's particularly the case when it comes to revealing revenue. I would like to thank all of the writers and researchers who helped track down the numbers this year. Thanks also to the designers who stayed cool and calm even throughout the last-minute list changes.

Thanks also to our Top 150 sponsors: Bank of America, GFI Digital, Husch Blackwell Sanders LLP, RSM McGladrey and Stifel Nicolaus. Their support is crucial to the annual success of our Top 150 din-

ner, which this year will be Thursday, May 6. Once again, it will be held at the World's Fair Pavilion in Forest Park. Todd Epsten, CEO of Major Brands Premium Beverage Distributors, will be the featured speaker.

You can purchase tickets online at stlouis.bizjournals.com/stlouis/event/13541, or contact Kelly Rowland at (314) 421-8307 or stlevents@bizjournals.com.

We hope to see you there. It'll be good to have the chance to celebrate surviving a difficult 2009.

— Rob Hurtt, section editor

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Whelan Security

2009 revenue: \$113 million +2.7%

Despite slower revenue growth, Whelan Security continues to expand, adding new markets and 350 employees in 2009, according to President Greg Twardowski. In the past year, Whelan opened offices in three new states — California, Arizona and Kentucky — while also adding locations in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Ohio. "We don't work in a company that's recession-proof, but it is recession-resistant," Twardowski said. But a number of clients have reduced coverage or filed for bankruptcy, he said, which hurt revenue growth.

Last year Whelan created a new event services division that specializes in security for sports and other special events. The company provides security for the St. Louis Cardinals, the Edward Jones Dome and the Minnesota Vikings. Whelan ranks 13th in revenue among North American security firms, Twardowski said. The firm was founded in 1949 by his uncle, Jim Whelan, and remains owned by the family.



**GREG
TWARDOWSKI**

LEADERSHIP: Chairman Patrick Twardowski, President Greg Twardowski

2008 REVENUE: \$110 million (rank 121)

EMPLOYEES: 900 local, 4,000 total