

## TOP 150 PRIVATELY HELD COMPANIES

“Cautiously optimistic.”

Roughly one-fourth of the executives we interviewed at St. Louis' largest private companies used that phrase — cautiously optimistic — to describe the outlook for 2009. I bet the other three-fourths were thinking it, if they're optimistic at all.

It's the reality of today's business landscape, not just in St. Louis, but around the globe. No matter the industry, every company is feeling the effects of this recession. And although business leaders are hopeful that we're near the bottom and that a recovery will begin at some point this year, they're not being Pollyannas about it.

I don't need to point out all the troubling stats and signs that lead to caution. Instead, I'll mention a potential bright spot for those seeking a reason for optimism.

The housing industry is often viewed as a leading indicator for where the economy is heading. It's one of the first sectors to slump,

and one of the leaders of the rebound. If that's the case this time, we can be encouraged that the Commerce Department reported a 22.2 percent jump in housing starts in February. Meanwhile, St. Louis' largest homebuilder, McBride & Son Homes, said it sold 300 homes in the first two months of the year, compared to 1,400 homes total in 2008.

I'd like to thank Business Journal researchers Evan Binns and Lucie Wolken, who did a commendable job putting together this year's list of the top 150 privately held companies. As our researchers quickly found, it's much easier to get revenue information from private companies when business is going well rather than when the economy is slumping. Evan, in particular, spent countless hours seeking the most accurate and up-to date revenue and employee figures, and then double- and triple-checked it all. This year's list includes nine newcomers and fewer pure estimates, a testament to the researchers' hard work.

**Rob Hurtt, Section editor**

### TOPS IN TOWN

## 122. Whelan Security

2008 revenue: \$110 million +11.3%

Whelan Security is hiring. The security firm, which added 250 employees in 2008, plans to hire 400 more this year because of continued geographic expansion, said President Greg Twardowski. The firm saw revenue jump 11.3 percent last year as a result of organic growth and expansion in two new markets, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. The company is expanding into northern California and is evaluating opportunities in Ohio, south Florida and Atlanta.

In 2008, Whelan launched a specialty services division to provide security response services nationwide in the event of natural disasters or catastrophic loss, as well as for companies involved in labor disputes and strikes. The company is owned by the Twardowski family. Industry publications rank Whelan among the top 15 contract security firms in the U.S. based on revenue.



**GREG  
TWARDOWSKI**

**LEADERSHIP:** Chairman Patrick Twardowski, President Greg Twardowski

**2007 REVENUE:** \$98.8 million (rank 122)

**EMPLOYEES:** 800 local, 3,750 total