



Business *with a* Global View

Top Company award winners excel beyond the bottom line

Photography by Sam Adams

As Colorado and the nation throw off the shackles of recession, it will take a certain class of entrepreneurs to ensure the emerging recovery becomes something more than simply relief from pain. Perhaps more than any time in modern history, there's a growing sense that business will never be usual again.

The 10 companies and one nonprofit selected as this year's Top Company winners exemplify a business ethic that transcends the bottom line, so it's fitting we're presenting profiles of them in our quarterly Planet-Profit Report issue.

This year's class includes:

- » A cooperative energy supplier wrestling with the rise of renewables versus the plentiful supply of coal.
- » A credit union that helps consumers living on the margins.
- » A health-care provider investing in preventive care to keep people healthy.
- » A community-minded law firm whose Denver roots date back to 1898.
- » A nonprofit that gathers surplus medical supplies and ships them to impoverished countries.
- » An asphalt paving company that asked its workers to sacrifice during tough times – and rewarded them when profit returned.
- » A natural foods grocer that trusted customers to embrace a "bag-free" policy to reduce waste.
- » A natural resources company that is helping to promote sustainability worldwide.
- » A technology firm that is helping corporations – and nonprofits – manage the flood of electronic documents.
- » A hospitality company that has been adopting schools and raising awareness for children's charities.
- » A solar company that sparked the interest of President Barack Obama as the country embraces a new-energy economy.

This year, Top Company sponsor Deloitte winnowed the nominations to 33 finalists in 11 categories. A panel of judges composed of business and community leaders selected the winners. All the finalists were honored at an awards luncheon in September at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts.

On the following pages, we present stories of the winners, a diverse group that underscores the passion and perseverance it takes to operate profitable enterprises – organizations that understand what's good for the planet is also good for business.

– Mike Cote, *ColoradoBiz* editor

COLORADOBIZTV

Top Company winners talk about their business success

ColoradoBiz conducted video interviews with the executives of this year's Top Company winners. Watch them on the Top Company channel at cobizmag.com.



REAL ESTATE/CONSTRUCTION | Colorado Asphalt Services Inc.

Wayne Leiser, CEO of Colorado Asphalt Services, says that in June 2008 he saw a “tsunami” coming into his industry.

“New construction was coming to a halt,” he says. “Contractors would say, ‘We’re glad you got the bid, but we don’t have the funding.’”

Leiser says he met with his management team – just three people, including himself – and they came up with an aggressive plan. They met with the heads of departments and gave them two options – they could take a 10 percent pay cut across the board, or they would have to cut 10 percent of the work force.

They voted, and it was unanimous that no one would lose their job.

Leiser also worked on making small cuts to the company’s spending; employees who were given clean workshirts every day were scaled back to every other day. The annual

holiday party was canceled.

But in November he got good news – it seemed the scrimping had paid off, and it looked like the company was actually going to make money. He reinstated the holiday party and waited until that night to tell all of the employees of his surprise.

“I got up and thanked the work force for working so hard and doing what they did to make sacrifices. And then I told them that every single person in the company gets an additional week’s pay,” he says.

Despite that success, Leiser says that there’s still a hard road ahead, and he’s worked to diversify Colorado Asphalt’s offerings. Though the company offers a full range of asphalt and concrete services, as well as producing its own asphalt, he also bought the company its own concrete truck, instead of hiring a middleman.

Colorado Asphalt Services is also one of the few producers of EZ Street, the

world’s only permanent cold asphalt.

Typically asphalt’s cold-weather mix is a temporary fix, but a company discovered a new polymer that allows the oil to bond to itself when a certain amount of pressure is applied. Once the bond is formed, the asphalt is permanent.

“When we fix a pothole, that fix will last longer than the asphalt around it,” Leiser says.

Leiser says the EZ Street founders are extremely choosy in partnering with asphalt companies, and that they won the contract because of their business rewards, reputation for being ethical, and involvement in community service.

Colorado Asphalt Services recently developed the Heart Friendly Parking Program. The company partners with merchants and offers to paint a heart in certain stalls farther from the stores, encouraging patrons to walk a few extra steps each day.

—Jennie Dorris