

LISTS

Best of Business 2017

The best B2B vendors as chosen by our readers.

SEPTEMBER 01, 2017

ADAM PLATT

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Decisions made in the workplace have consequences. Whether choosing the right venue for an important meeting or a firm to reconceive a website, there are no do-overs. We may rely on online comments in our personal life, but we want to deploy our company resources having done due diligence.

Easier said than done. Sourcing the right vendor isn't simple. After all, who are you going to ask, your competitor?

That's where Best of Business comes in. TCB's annual subscriber survey exists to crowdsource the kind of business-to-business vendor advice you can't get from Yelp. In these pages are recommendations from companies with firsthand experience—whether it's hosting a happy hour or executing a multi-million dollar telecom RFP.

In the first half of 2017 TCB surveyed our readership asking executives for their picks in the most commonly used business services. Once the results were in, we took note of the awards and honors bestowed by recognized experts.

The results include companies big and small, primed to service businesses of all sizes and budgets. Thanks to those of you who shared your knowledge. We look forward to hearing from even more of you in next year's survey.

—Adam Platt, executive editor

COMMUNICATION

Mobile Phone Service Provider

Verizon Wireless

People love to complain about their mobile service provider, but Verizon Wireless is making that increasingly hard to do. For its business customers, Verizon not only provides a variety of integrated plans for companies of fewer than 500 people, it also provides a robust array of enterprise, internet, and wireless services for companies of more than 500. Local, state and federal government agencies also rely on Verizon to keep their communications running smoothly. One reason: Verizon uses the latest privacy and data-security technology to ensure mobile communications are secure, and relies on its vast network to deliver the speed and reliability that is its hallmark.

Finalists: AT&T | T-Mobile

Expert Honors: Verizon Wireless was one of LinkedIn's Top Companies 2017: Where the World Wants to Work Now; also named Fastest Mobile Network by *PC magazine*. **AT&T** was named one of *Fortune's* 2017 Most Admired Companies.

Telecom and Internet Service Provider

Comcast Business

A division of Comcast Cable, Comcast Business provides access to a full range of advanced communications options, including internet, voice, video and enterprise solutions. Comcast maintains its competitive advantage by designing and maintaining an independently managed network infrastructure, thus ensuring a stable tel-com platform for business. Comcast recently invested \$15 million to expand its fiber network to nearly 4,000 more Twin Cities-area businesses. It understands that the workforce is

increasingly mobile, and that businesses need networks with high bandwidth, iron-clad security and extreme flexibility.

Finalists: CenturyLink | Popp Communication

CONSTRUCTION / DEVELOPMENT

Commercial General Contractor

Doran Construction

Since 2010, Doran Construction has completed or is currently building 26 multifamily and mixed-use projects in the Twin Cities. With 44 employees and more than \$120 million in sales, the company's reputation as a general contractor stems from its proven ability to take on any project—including bridges, water-treatment plants and other specialized facilities—and execute it on time, within budget and according to plan. In 2016, the Minnesota Construction Association named Doran its General Contractor of the Year for the second year in a row, citing its "stellar reputation for excellence." Doran recently expanded into the Colorado market, breaking ground on a multifamily apartment project in Westminster, and continues to develop its custom end-to-end design/build service, which has yielded some of the most admired building complexes in town.

Finalists: Greiner Construction | Kraus-Anderson Construction Co.

CREATIVE SERVICES

Advertising/Marketing Firm

Fast Horse

Through such creative campaigns as a faux Super Bowl ad for Newcastle Ale or a fashionista-centered rollout for Diet Coke, Fast Horse has established itself as one of the ad industry's most innovative and iconoclastic agencies. "Impact per dollar" may be the best measure of Fast Horse's success, as its value proposition to clients is penetrating the modern media fog with smart, savvy messages that bear little resemblance to campaigns of yore. Fast Horse blends a sophisticated understanding of media (legacy, digital, social) with an intuitive grasp of human psychology to create thoughtful, integrated media strategies that reward clients with impressive results.

Finalists: Antenna | Schermer

Expert Honors: Fast Horse came in third on Effie Index's Most Effective Independent Agencies North America 2015.

Schermer was named a 2017 Top B2B Shop by Chief Marketer.

Public Relations Firm

Olson Engage

Cutting through the clutter in the digital age is a formidable challenge, but Olson Engage has distinguished itself as a first-rate clutter-clearer through a potent mix of creativity, humor, intelligence and guts. Piggy-backing on major media events has been a particularly effective strategy. For the tiny nation of Belize, the Olson team created a campaign offering NFL kickers who missed a field goal or extra point a free vacation to de-stress. As an April Fool's joke, the firm's client Jim Beam announced a "Jim Beam Apple" watch that carries a 1.5-ounce shot of hooch inside. Clever as they are, Olson Engage's success is based on results. In early 2017, Adweek included Olson in its first-ever Agencies 3.0 list recognizing firms that are "transforming the agency business."

***Finalists:* Lola Red PR and Marketing | Padilla**

***Expert Honors:* Olson Engage** was a finalist for PR Week's 2017 Midsize Agency of the Year

DINING/ENTERTAINING

Catering Company

D'Amico Catering

Anyone in the Twin Cities who has attended a swanky event with hundreds of people—at a wedding, conference, gala, museum, corporate event or country club—has likely sampled the culinary alchemy of D'Amico Catering. It's not only the exclusive caterer for some of the area's most elegant venues (Calhoun Beach Club, Loring Social, the Museum of Russian Art, International Market Square, etc.), but also has catered events ranging from 20 to 20,000 people. Regardless of crowd size, the food itself is always fresh and imaginative, sourced and prepared with sustainability in mind. In addition to using local food sources, D'Amico reports that it composts and uses biodegradable materials for events, and offers its customers choices "that align with their tastes, budget and values."

***Finalists:* Chowgirls Killer Catering | Mintahoe Catering and Events**

Bar (and Restaurant)

Cru Restaurant & Wine Bar



Cru Restaurant & Wine Bar

One of the many pleasures of a trip to the Grand View Lodge in Nisswa is time spent (and ultimately savored) at Cru, the lodge's restaurant and wine bar. Cru's décor strikes a balance between woodsy charm and effortless class. You'll find more than 2,000 bottles from all over the world, and the bar serves up more than 25 by the glass. So, whether you're up at the lake for business or the outdoors, plan on a serious meal at this Wine Spectator's 2016 Award of Excellence winner. Come for the chops; stay for the Super Tuscans.

Finalists: Cedar & Stone | The Freehouse

Business Breakfast

Good Day Café

If you're getting up at rooster's crow for a breakfast meeting (do people in other states talk shop before 8 a.m.?), dull the pain by ordering the Big Luigi at Good Day Café—or, if you need to, just go straight for the maple bacon pancakes. This pillar of short-order suburban dining does it all from scratch, but with such speed that you're in the office faster than you want to be. Good Day makes mornings both delicious and interesting; whether you're in the mood for sweet-potato pancakes, a mushroom/spinach soufflé omelet, or a homemade sticky bun, it's the place to get your morning mojo working, even if your only breakfast companion is the morning newspaper.

Finalists: The Original Pancake House | Keys Cafe

Business Dinner

Manny's Steakhouse

Both The New York Times and Zagat Survey rave about Manny's, so it's hard to go wrong wooing a client over dinner there. Meat is the main attraction, but oysters Rockefeller is a good conversation starter, and if you're in the mood to show off, you can always order the must-be-seen-to-be-believed (but you won't believe it even when you see it) triple seafood tower. Beyond food, Manny's has perfected an atmosphere conducive to business. The dining room leans feminine, the bar masculine. Service, décor and buzz are calibrated to ensure guests have a consistent experience.

Finalists: Cru Restaurant | Bar LaGrassa

Expert Honors: Manny's made Men's Journal's 10 Best Steakhouses in the World list, was rated top five in the Twin Cities by *Zagat* guide and is a perennial *Wine Spectator* Award of Excellence winner.

Business Lunch

Ciao Bella

Locally farmed produce, vegetarian-fed meat, organic dairy products, hand-rolled egg pasta, and freshly baked bread—all are terrific ingredients transformed into the kind of culinary alchemy one expects from a Rick Webb restaurant. And while you may be drawn to lunch at Ciao Bella for the ahi tuna or summer linguini, make sure you take in the surroundings. There's something for everyone here, which makes it the ideal spot for parlaying professionals.

Finalists: Freehouse | Red Cow

Restaurant Patio

W.A. Frost and Co.

If you haven't dined on the patio at W.A. Frost, then you haven't been to St. Paul yet, no matter what your GPS tells you. Located in historic Cathedral Hill, the patio is tucked into the trees and bordered by the ivy-covered brick walls of the Dacotah Building, erected in 1889. The scene is enhanced by a stunning collection of libations, all of which can make a summer evening at Frost that much more special. But if you want to cool off with a Glacier or a Le Norseman gimlet, make sure to call ahead: You can't make patio reservations online.

Finalists: Psycho Suzi's | Redstone American Grill

EDUCATION

College/University

University of Minnesota



With five campuses and more than 50,000 students in the Twin Cities alone, the University of Minnesota is, of course, the largest educational institution in the state. But the U of M's reach goes well beyond its students. Minnesota businesses benefit from having one of the most respected research institutions in the world in their backyard. In addition to seeding the area with highly educated employees, partnerships between the U of M and local companies such as 3M, Medtronic and Cargill help spur innovations in technology, engineering, biomedicine and many other fields. These alliances create jobs, boost the economy, and help create a higher standard of living for everyone in the state. In 2017, U.S. News & World Report ranked the U of M No. 38 in its Best Global University rankings, and its medical, law and business schools regularly crack the top 10.

Finalists: University of St. Thomas | Bethel University

MBA Program

University of St. Thomas

There isn't just one MBA program at the University of St. Thomas's Opus College of Business, there are four, each structured to meet students where they are in their professional life. In addition to full- and part-time flex-MBA programs, St. Thomas also offers an executive MBA and a health MBA. The institution has close ties to the business community, including many alumni, so these programs are optimized to

develop the management and leadership skills Minnesota companies need. St. Thomas has been at the forefront of the movement to establish better communication between educational institutions and the communities they serve. Their MBA program is just one example; there are many more.

Finalists: Carlson School—University of Minnesota | Bethel University

Executive/Continuing Education Program

University of St. Thomas

In support of its goal to serve the community and create lifelong learners, the University of St. Thomas offers a wide variety of continuing education programs designed specifically for professionals who want to enhance skills and broaden their portfolio. In addition to its acclaimed MBA program, the university offers dozens of specialized programs in virtually every area of business: project management, analytics, digital marketing, Six Sigma and more. The university also has extensive continuing education programs for educators, engineers and software developers, as well as a complete roster of graduate certificate programs. All are designed to provide people with the skills to excel in today's competitive marketplace and meet the specific professional needs of local businesses and companies.

Finalist: University of Minnesota

EVENTS/MEETINGS

Country Club

Hazeltine National Country Club

Last September, the world watched as the United States regained the Ryder Cup from Europe for the first time since 2008. The extra player in that victory was Hazeltine National, the crown jewel of local links, and one of only two courses in the country that have hosted the U.S. Open, the U.S. Women's Open, PGA Championship, U.S. Senior Open, U.S. Amateur Championship and Ryder Cup. The mission of the club's founders was to create a course and surrounding facilities that could host such high-profile national championships. Members are proud of the club's reputation, but the daily vibe is one of casual elegance—unless you're attending a wedding, in which case it's formal elegance at its best.

Finalists: Golden Valley Golf and Country Club | Edina Country Club

Expert Honors: Hazeltine National ranked 107 in *Golf Digest's* America's 200 Greatest Golf Courses, *Golf Magazine's* Top 100 U.S. Courses in the U.S.

2015, *Golfweek's* America's 100 Best Modern Courses 2017 and was listed at No. 8 on Golf's Top 45 Courses Since 1959.

Hotel for Business

JW Marriott Mall of America



“Approachable luxury” is the motto of Marriott’s upscale JW brand, and its Mall of America location embodies that ethos. The hotel’s common spaces are a study in clean, understated elegance, and its meeting and restaurant venues are designed with a sense of class and professionalism. Whether meeting one on one, in small groups or large conferences, executives can feel at home here and get their work done. The hotel has 20,000 square feet of event space, with six event rooms and 12 breakout rooms, and its Diamond Ballroom can accommodate up to 1,725 people. At the JW Marriott, art, music, fine dining, comfort and service all come together in a seemingly effortless orchestration of excellence that reflects on those who choose to stay there.

Finalists: Hilton Minneapolis | Minneapolis Marriott Southwest

Expert Honors: JW Marriott Mall of America received a *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine 2016 Readers’ Choice Award, 2016 Award of Excellence from *Wine Spectator* and AAA’s Four Diamond Award.

Hilton Minneapolis received AAA’s Four Diamond Award.

Meeting and Event Space (Hotel)

Grand View Lodge

Nestled on the shores of Gull Lake near Brainerd, Grand View Lodge delivers the quintessential Minnesota resort experience. Twin Cities professionals like it for conferences and retreats because—if they let it—the resort gives them a whole new perspective. The conference and catering facilities are top-notch, and when the business of the day is concluded, there are plenty of head-clearing activities to enjoy: Two championship golf courses, spa, compelling restaurants and idyllic scenery.

Finalists: JW Marriott Mall of America | Madden's on Gull Lake

Expert Honors: Grand View Lodge was named a Readers' Choice Top Midwest Resort by *Condé Nast Traveler* in 2015 and 2016.

JW Marriott Mall of America received a *Condé Nast Traveler* 2016 Readers' Choice Award and 2016 Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator.

Meeting and Event Space (Non-Hotel)

Hazeltine National Golf Club

The course gets all the glory, but Hazeltine is also a fantastic place to have an off-site meeting or event. The facilities are first-rate, and the catering receives regular accolades from customers, who are often surprised by the quality and care that go into each element of the experience. Hazeltine may be in Chaska, but it feels like another world. For business professionals, the chance to get away without going very far is often the key to a successful off-site. They'll even set up a private golf tournament for you, in case you and your colleagues are the types who would rather do business with a club in your hands.

Finalists: Aria | Nicollet Island Pavilion

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Accounting Firm

CliftonLarsonAllen

Though CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) is a full-service accounting firm with 100-plus locations in the U.S. and more than \$850 million in annual revenue, its roots—and headquarters—are in Minneapolis. With more than a dozen offices in Minnesota, CLA works closely with the local business community, providing a wide range of services, from specialized business consulting and corporate tax services to individual wealth-management strategies. Governments and nonprofits are among CLA's clients, but entrepreneurs and privately held businesses are the firm's core constituents. Helping other businesses succeed is CLA's mission, and it accomplishes that through a deep

understanding of client businesses and the larger competitive/regulatory frameworks they operate in.

Finalists: Wipfli | Lurie

Expert Honor: Lurie received 2016 Diversity & Inclusion and Women in Leadership awards from the Advisory Board.

Bank (Business)

U.S. Bank



U.S. Bancorp is big—\$450 billion in assets, with 3,091 offices in 25 states—but that doesn't stop it from providing its business customers with banking solutions that fit their needs. The size advantage allows U.S. Bank to provide a comprehensive line of banking, investment, mortgage, trust and payment services to businesses and institutions, as well as consumers. Fortune magazine includes U.S. Bank on its list of World's Most Ethical Companies, and its policies supporting LGBT equality and veterans have earned the company accolades from several human-rights organizations. "Building a unified customer experience" is one of U.S. Bank's primary goals for the future, as is its pledge to become "our customers' most trusted choice."

Finalists: Klein Financial (KleinBank) | Wells Fargo

Expert Honors: US Bank was named a Best Bank for Business by Greenwich Associates.

Klein Financial received a 2015 Better Business Bureau International Torch Award for Ethics.

Wells Fargo received several 2016 *Global Finance* honors: Best Developed Markets

Bank in the U.S., Best Developed Markets Bank North America, Best Bank North America.

Bank (Consumer)

Wells Fargo



Despite—and partly because of—its recent troubles, Wells Fargo has redoubled its commitment to consumers by strengthening its dedication to customer satisfaction, loyalty and ethics. In addition to providing the banking services customers use most—personal banking, loans, insurance, investments—Wells Fargo’s website contains a trove of information to help consumers manage money and make wiser financial decisions. Helping customers understand and navigate the complexities of modern financial life is one reason it was voted the best consumer bank in our region. Wells Fargo’s LIFT programs also help individuals and businesses in underserved communities to take control of their financial future.

Finalists: U.S. Bank | KleinBank

Expert Honors: Wells Fargo received several 2016 Global Finance honors, including Best Bank North America.

U.S. Bank was named one of the World’s Most Ethical Companies in 2015 according to Ethisphere Institute.

Credit Union

Top Line Federal Credit Union

Founded in 1935, Top Line is a full-service financial institution. As a member-owned cooperative, Top Line's profits are returned to its members, which allows the company to provide competitive loan rates and fewer fees, lowering overall costs and making it easier for members to reach their financial goals. One way Top Line helps customers is through its Sum-It-Up savings program, which automatically rounds every purchase to the nearest dollar and deposits it in a savings account. Since the program started in 2011, members have saved more than \$800,000 by putting their spare change into an electronic cookie jar. The company's robust website takes the mystery out of financial planning and helps members make smart financial decisions at every stage in life.

Finalists: Spire Federal Credit Union | Wings Financial Credit Union

Expert Honors: Top Line Federal Credit Union won a 2016 Diamond Award from the Credit Union National Association for financial education.

Investment Bank

Piper Jaffray and Co.

Helping companies and investors succeed while building long-term relationships and providing reliable market guidance has been the heart of the Piper Jaffray formula for more than a century. Offering a full suite of products and services, Piper Jaffray advises clients throughout the entire business lifecycle, offering deep expertise in business sectors such as agriculture, energy, health care, technology, finance, manufacturing and more. In 2016, Piper Jaffray reported \$692 million in net revenue (a 14 percent increase over 2015), citing its advisory service business and expansion into energy investment banking as key drivers.

Finalists: Klein Financial | Wells Fargo

Mortgage Company

Marketplace Home Mortgage LLC

For most homeowners, the process of buying a house is the most complex, inscrutable—and important—financial transaction of their life. Marketplace Home Mortgage's business is built around making the process as painless as possible. By getting its arms around the whole transaction—processing, underwriting, closing and funding—Marketplace exerts a greater degree of control over the process as well as outcome. What distinguishes it most, however, is that its employees seem to genuinely enjoy helping people make their homeownership dreams come true. Last year, the company opened offices in Denver and Sioux Falls, expanding its reach to six states—a solid growth path for an organization that has been serving the Twin Cities market for more than 20 years.

Finalists: Bell Mortgage (Bell Bank) | Wells Fargo

Wealth Management Firm

Wipfli Hewins Investment Advisors

As a CPA-based financial advisor, Wipfli Hewins recognizes that clients' needs extend far beyond the confines of traditional financial planning and investment management. By pairing the power of interactive planning technology with the knowledge of a personal advisory team, Wipfli Hewins empowers clients' financial lives. That means evaluating prospective risks and trade-offs, helping give direction to their decisions and providing answers to their most pressing financial questions. Instead of a static, one-size-fits-all solution, Wipfli Hewins is committed to integrating clients' financial, tax, insurance and investment strategies into a cohesive long-term plan.

Finalists: Alerus Wealth Management | RBC Wealth Management

Expert Honors: Alerus Wealth Management EY named chairman, president and CEO Randy Newman a 2016 Upper Midwest Entrepreneur of the Year.

LEGAL SERVICES

Law Firm

Gray Plant Mooty

Having celebrated its 150th anniversary last year, Gray Plant Mooty is well poised to go 150 more. These days, the firm of 180-plus lawyers is a full-services outfit that operates in more than a dozen industries and has practice areas in virtually every sphere of business, from corporate, banking and finance law to intellectual property, labor, real estate and emerging technology. Over the years the firm has received several awards for its dedication to diversity and equality in the workplace, and has been named countless times in various publications as one of Minnesota's best places to work. But the work they do on behalf of clients is where the firm truly shines. The firm prides itself on providing the personalized service of a small firm, but with the resources and backing of large one.

Finalists: Faegre Baker Daniels | Winthrop & Weinstine

Expert Honors: Gray Plant Mooty placed 81st on Law360's 2016 list of 100 Best Law Firms for Female Attorneys; *Franchise Times* named 15 attorneys from the firm's Franchise & Distribution Practice group as 2017 Legal Eagles, and *U.S. News & World Report* listed the firm in its 2017 Best Law Firms rankings among national and metropolitan firms.

Faegre Baker Daniels ranked among 2017 Best Law Firms by *U.S. News & World Report* for Commercial Litigation, Corporate Law, Franchise Law, Real Estate Litigation

and Mass Tort Litigation/Class Action.

Winthrop and Weinstine ranked among 2017 Best Law Firms by *U.S. News & World Report*.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Staffing/Recruiting/Executive Search

Salo Minneapolis

Salo isn't an ordinary search firm. Specializing in finance, accounting and human resources talent, it calls its people "super connectors." Driven by curiosity, positive energy and professionalism, its award-winning team, co-located in Minneapolis and Chicago, connects companies with expert consultants who are passionate about solving problems. Salo has a finger on the pulse of the changing job market, and realizes that the contingent work force is no passing fad: it's projected that in the not-too-distant future 50 percent of the workforce will be made up of independent contractors. Salo recognizes that the best and the brightest are in high demand, and that today's business challenges require innovative, relationship-based staffing solutions. Matching the right consultant to the right work is equal parts art and science, and Salo does both admirably.

Finalists: CorTalent | Versique Inc.

LOGISTICAL SERVICES

Auto Dealership

Luther Automotive

Rudy Luther started selling cars in 1952, and although Rudy himself died in 1997, his business has grown into a Midwestern institution, with 33 dealerships in four states and an inventory of more than 13,000 cars. Friendly service, fair prices and generous customer benefits such as discounts on gasoline and car washes are the building blocks of Luther's success. Generations of Minnesotans (some from the same family) are loyal to Luther. Luther salespeople work to turn the ordeal of car shopping into a pleasant experience that makes customers feel appreciated and supported at every stage of the ownership cycle.

Finalists: Walser Automotive Group | Poquet Auto

Logistics Company

C.H. Robinson Worldwide

Supply-chain logistics, managing the complicated shuffle between supply and demand is what sets C.H. Robinson apart, which employs 2,000 in Minnesota and more than 14,000 around the world. The company serves small businesses to global brands, providing a portfolio of logistics solutions that includes supply-chain consulting, and global and local logistics and transportation. “We help companies get their products where they need to go, when they need to be there,” is how it describes its mission. Whether by truck or rail, ship or plane, C.H. Robinson helps move goods efficiently and cost-effectively, while providing plenty of tools to manage inventories and scheduling. Heavy loads, oversized equipment and other tricky situations are a particular specialty.

***Finalists:* King Solutions | Logistics Planning Services**

***Expert Honors:* C.H. Robinson Worldwide** was named one of *Fortune’s* World’s Most Admired Companies in 2017.

PROPERTY SERVICES

Commercial Property Management Firm

Cushman and Wakefield

Cushman and Wakefield employs more than 380 people in Minnesota and manages more than 40 million square feet of retail, industrial and office assets. One key to its success in property management is its dedication to specialized expertise in real estate sectors such as retail, industrial, land, office, multifamily and hospitality that require more than just a watchful eye. Though the firm does most of its business in Minnesota, it has the capacity to help institutions and companies around the world through its connection with Cushman and Wakefield’s global platform. The company’s recent merger with DTZ created a new corporate entity that employs 43,000 worldwide and boasts more than \$5.5 billion in revenue.

***Finalists:* Doran Companies | CBRE Group**

Commercial Property Brokerage Firm

Cushman and Wakefield/Northmarq

Because Cushman and Wakefield/Northmarq has such deep expertise in every area of the commercial real estate market, it is ideally positioned to provide brokerage services on either side of a transaction. The company’s consulting services offer investors and developers the intelligence they need to make wise business decisions, and its corporate-finance arm has broad access to global capital markets, as well as a long history of data and market analysis to draw from. Specialties in health care, hospitality, law, banking and finance set it apart in the Twin Cities.

Finalists: CBRE Group | Jones Lang Lasalle

Expert Honors: CBRE Group was named one of 2015's Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere Institute.

Jones Lang LaSalle ranked 21 out of 50 on LinkedIn's 2017 Top Companies Where the World Wants to Work Now. Glassdoor named Colin Dyer one of the Top 50 CEOs in the U.S. Large Company category in 2016.

Commercial Real Estate Developer

United Properties

Twin Citians are waiting to see what will become of the former Macy's/Dayton's building in downtown Minneapolis, and whatever happens, United Properties will be at the center of it. A partner with New York developer 601W Cos., United has a long history in the Twin Cities, including its recent emphasis in the North Loop. Health care and senior housing are a focus. United recently moved its headquarters downtown, a decision it says is a reflection of its motto, "Creating deep roots."

Finalists: Doran Development | Ryan Companies

Title Company

TitleSmart

If you've bought or sold real estate, you know that an experienced, competent title company can make all the difference. TitleSmart guides clients through every step of the process, including title, escrow and closing. Named one of Inc.'s 5,000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America for three years running (2014-2016), White Bear Lake-based TitleSmart has six Twin Cities offices. Co-owners—and sisters—Cindy Koebele and Angela Shackle opened their doors in 2007, in the midst of the housing crisis. As recently as 2009, the company had nine employees, but now employs 66. A Certified Women's Business Enterprise, TitleSmart built its reputation through old-fashioned customer satisfaction.

Finalists: Tradition Title | Bankers Title & Closing Services

RECREATION/WELLNESS

Executive Health Program

Mayo Clinic

Mayo Clinic's Executive Health Program is designed to help busy executives, business

owners and entrepreneurs maintain a healthy lifestyle. It involves a comprehensive health/lifestyle assessment and medical history review, as well as a one-on-one interview with an executive health physician—but the evaluations themselves are scheduled and executed with maximum efficiency in mind. Those involved in the program say its true value lies in the enduring relationship it establishes with the hospital and its network of physicians. Many companies end up sending an entire executive team, in the belief that healthier executives make for a healthier company.

Finalist: Allina Health

Health Insurer

HealthPartners

These are fraught times for medical providers, but HealthPartners has been diligently trying to change the way modern health care is delivered through its “Triple Aim”: improve the health of the population, enhance the patient experience and make health care more affordable. As the largest nonprofit HMO in the country, HealthPartners hopes to wield influence by setting a progressive example. Expanded health and wellness programs, incentive-based disease prevention, greater cost transparency, targeted services for chronic disease, data-based cost analytics, community partnerships—these strategies are part of the HealthPartners effort to deliver high-quality care at lower cost.

Finalists: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota | Medica

Expert Honors: HealthPartners won Hospitals and Health Networks Most Wired award for use of Information Technology and was named the top private health plan in Minnesota according to the 2014-2015 NCQA Health Insurance rankings.

Hospital

Children’s Minnesota

Children’s Minnesota employs more than 5,300 and has established itself as a global leader in pediatric medicine, often pioneering research and procedures that benefit children and families everywhere. Children’s treated more than 133,000 last year in 60 different specialties and is working to make its facilities more accessible to residents throughout the state. The hospital is expanding its critical-care transport program for children who need to be moved from community hospitals. In January, the Children’s/Allina Midwest Fetal Care Center added open fetal surgery to its programs, becoming one of fewer than a dozen centers in the country with capabilities.

Finalists: Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital | Maple Grove Hospital

Expert Honors: Children's Minnesota was named a Best Children's Hospital in the nation 2016-2017 by *U.S. News & World Report*.

TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Audio/Visual Provider

Tierney Brothers

As audio-visual technology continues to expand in pervasiveness and complexity, Tierney Brothers keeps up by expanding its services proportionately. Wherever conference rooms, boardrooms, classrooms, and digital signage are found, Tierney technicians keep the screens sharp and the projectors running. Whether working in K-12, higher ed, government or a corporate environment, Tierney Brothers provides comprehensive installation, design and support services tailored to the specific needs of its clients.

Finalists: Marco | EPA Audio Visual

Expert Honors: Tierney Brothers was an InfoComm AV Provider of Excellence company and a Commercial Integrator Top 5 K-12 (education) Market Integrator for 2016.

Marco received numerous awards as a best place to work, was named to the CRN Tech Elite 250, received a 2016 CRN Triple Crown Award, an imageSource 2016 Perfect Image Award for Dealer of the Year and an imageSource 2016 Perfect Image Award for Outstanding Leadership in Customer Engagement, among others.

Document Management/Printers and Copiers

Marco

The value proposition Marco delivers to its customers is efficient, cost-effective management of business equipment—printers, copiers, A/V systems, IT infrastructure—all of which have become more complicated in the digital age, but no less essential. In addition to keeping business equipment running, Marco provides document-management systems that save time and money by streamlining work processes, automating routine tasks and making it easier to file, manage and share documents across an enterprise. Marco also has several specialty printers—e.g., wide-format and digital—that can handle virtually any job, from customized mailers to full-size posters and banners. Sophisticated software and cloud-based services integrate all of this smart technology, allowing customers to do what they do best: Get back to business.

Finalists: Loffler Companies | Metro Sales

Software Company

Avionté

In today's candidate-driven market, it's essential that staffing software is created by innovative developers and expert staffing specialists. That's exactly what founding partner and CEO John Long had in mind when he created Avionté. Long saw the need for user-friendly software that works on all levels: opportunity management, recruitment, on-boarding, payroll and billing solutions are supported by comprehensive functionality software that's intuitive and accessible on mobile devices. Avionté's cloud-based, fully integrated, end-to-end software ensures a fluid and responsive solution that lets users focus on people and partnerships.

Finalists: Luminfire | Code 42

Web Development Firm

Spyder Trap

Spyder Trap says it lives at the intersection of code and creativity, an exclusive address for the digitally inspired developers, designers, content strategists, SEO pros and marketers that make Spyder Trap such a remarkable web-development firm. CEO Mike Rynchek founded the company in 2008 as one of the Twin Cities' first digital-only marketing firms. Since then, the space has exploded to include mobile apps, social media, big data and, increasingly, fluid communication between devices of all kinds. Developing, deploying and managing these digital tools is half of Spyder Trap's success; the other is the creativity and strategy behind them—the part that makes the user experience enjoyable and the client experience rewarding.

Finalists: Rocket 55 | Brandography | Clockwork Active Media Systems

Twin Cities Business

<http://tcbmag.com/news/articles/2017/september/best-of-business-2017>

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