



ERNST & YOUNG LLP

Entrepreneur of the Year

Award-Winning Secrets: Passion, Paranoia and Hiring Great People

By Linda Taddeo

The Hilton La Jolla Torrey Pines became an art gallery for one night. On Thursday, June 10, the Art of Entrepreneurship was on display at Ernst & Young's annual Entrepreneur of the Year Awards.

The Hilton is a spectacular setting for any event, with its balustraded walkways overlooking the golf course sloping down to the ocean. And the attendance of over 700 of the cream of San Diego's hot business community made for an impressive assemblage.

Having presented these awards for 13 consecutive years, the San Diego office of Ernst & Young was one of the earliest participants in this prestigious program, founded by the parent company. Notable local business leaders are nominated at the beginning of the year, and narrowed down by a judges' panel to a narrow array of finalists, grouped by category. From the finalists, the winners are then selected. Competition, especially in an area as

entrepreneurially minded as San Diego, can be fierce.

This year, the tables filling the Grande Ballroom were crowded with 24 finalists in 8 categories: Consumer Products/Retail, Life Sciences, Real Estate/Construction, Telecommunications, Software/Internet, General Business, Young Entrepreneur and Master Entrepreneur.

In a society afflicted with a proliferation of awards programs, this program stands out as honoring individuals who have achieved something more substantial than popularity in pop culture. The San Diego Entrepreneur of the Year finalists employ an aggregate of more than 7,000 people. Over the past 3 years their growth rate has been an amazing 400%, and the publicly held companies have a market cap of \$10 billion. Although only eight winners were announced, it is certain there were no losers present.

Judges are selected from a spectrum of the business and educational com-

munities to provide an objective, informed and well-rounded assessment of nominees. This year's panel consisted of Bob Beyster, CEO and Chairman of the Board of SAIC, Allan Camaisa, President & CEO of High Technology Solutions, Sandy Ehrlich, Executive Director of the Entrepreneurial Management Center at San Diego State University, Anne Evans, Chairman of Evans Hotels, Bill Otterson, Director of UCSD/CONNECT, Bill Rastetter, President, Chairman & CEO of IDEC Pharmaceuticals, Ralph Rubio, President & CEO of Rubio's Restaurants, Inc., Gary Sabin, Chairman and CEO, Excel Legacy Corp., and the President of the Economic Development Corp., Julie Meier Wright, who also served as Judges' Spokesperson.

The theme of entrepreneurship as an art was carried by the evening's entertainment, painter Denny Dent. Painting for observation as a process more than an end result is fairly uncommon, and

Dent's performance was amazing. To the music of such artists as the Rolling Stones and Willie Nelson, Dent jabs brushes in seemingly random, two-fisted vigor at a black canvas. Blots and blurs of color expand as the music continues, and then suddenly you realize you're looking at an amazing representation of the musician you're listening to. It was an astonishing and energy-filled performance that was surprising and delightful to encounter in an awards show for businesspeople put on by an accountancy firm. At the end of the evening, a couple of Jimi Hendrix tunes definitely make the ride home a brighter prospect.

The awards began with one of the most unique entrepreneurs imaginable. Both of Taylor Crabtree's grandmothers had suffered from cancer, and she thought about how it would be even harder on kids. So she founded a company that organizes over 100 children to make and sell hair ornaments. The pro-

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