

**2011  
CRAIN'S  
LEADING**

# EDGE AWARDS

MAY 2011

## A MODEL MID-MARKET COMPANY

**Collaboration Spurs  
Fairmount Minerals'  
Successful Growth**



**PLUS**

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Bounce Back • p. 4

Tips for Success • p. 6

82 Honored Companies Create  
Value for Northeast Ohio • p. 8

Left: William Conway,  
Founder and Chairman Emeritus  
Middle: Jenniffer Deckard, President  
Right: Charles Fowler, CEO

**CONNECT → DEVELOP → GROW**

# From the President

## CONNECT → DEVELOP → GROW

The Entrepreneurs EDGE and *Crain's Cleveland Business* are proud to recognize 82 of Northeast Ohio's middle-market companies with the 2011 Crain's Leading EDGE Awards, now in its 5th year. These companies continue to create great economic value for the Northeast Ohio region.

This year's theme...CONNECT→DEVELOP→GROW...reflects the primary mission that EDGE serves for middle-market companies in the region. EDGE drives growth for these companies by bringing together leaders within their organizations to share best practices and inspire one another to pursue the most beneficial opportunities. EDGE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is the only NEO economic development group that is focused on helping middle-market companies strengthen their leadership teams in order to take their companies to the next level.

The need to help these middle-market companies is even greater today than it was five years ago. Although the economy is starting to improve, the pressure has never been greater on CEOs and their top-level management to ensure that every decision is a smart decision. In a study released in January by IBM, it was found that the world's private and public sector leaders believe that a rapid escalation of "complexity" is the biggest challenge confronting them. This complexity is at the heart of the challenges faced across our own region by middle-market companies.

EDGE encourages any middle-market company to attend one of our *Test Drive* events, the details of which can be found on the back cover of this program. Middle-market companies that join are making an investment in themselves, their management team, and their company. EDGE offers a unique opportunity to interact with an exclusive group of Northeast Ohio's foremost middle-market company leaders, each committed to helping one another achieve ongoing growth and success.

The companies we are honoring have found solutions and grown in the face of a very tough environment. EDGE is proud to showcase and congratulate this year's Leading EDGE companies.

Sincerely,



D. Kirk Neiswander  
President  
The Entrepreneurs EDGE

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# How Fairmount Minerals Connects and Develops to Grow



Jennifer Deckard,  
President,  
Fairmount Minerals



What are the dynamics that have jettisoned Chardon-based Fairmount Minerals from its humble beginnings as a \$5 million silica sand company in 1978 to a more than \$700 million industrial sand company, one of the largest in the U.S., today?

The company's strong leadership team has embraced what they refer to as "the three pillars of sustainability: People, Planet and Prosperity." The leadership extends from William Conway, founder and Chairman Emeritus; Charles Fowler, CEO; and Jennifer Deckard, President, out to its more than 600 employees at 21 locations.

Deckard engages the company's constituents, especially employees, in collaboration but says it's something that she has had to learn and is still working on. "It's about listening to other people's ideas," she explains. "Ours is a collaborative culture that really does engage our constituents. We make it a point to look to others when we are assessing a new opportunity to move our business forward. The ultimate goal is creating a stronger and better business, and that's better for all of our constituents."

"Empowerment," is an important word that Fairmount Minerals lives by on a daily basis. The empowering environment starts with the organization dreaming and designing the vision for the company by engaging fellow Fairmount family members (employees), customers, suppliers, neighbors and other interest groups through a process called "Appreciative Inquiry." In larger-scale applications of AI, employees and other stakeholders are invited to participate in

the process, a three-day summit in which the process is employed. At the summit conclusion, teams are created to carry out the ideas. Employees are encouraged to join a team about which they feel passionate to implement the commitments. Teams undertake projects that build upon company strengths in areas that include health and wellness, safety, social responsibility, clean water, and many others.

Read more about how FM's bold sustainable development initiatives have augmented the company's growth at [www.edgef.org/FairmountMinerals](http://www.edgef.org/FairmountMinerals).



## EDGE announces 2011 Shatten Civic Distinction Award

Richard Shatten had a strong love for the Northeast Ohio community and gave his time tirelessly in an effort to make it better for all of us. Sadly, Richard's life was cut short in 2002 by an incurable brain tumor.

By shedding light on the companies that give back like Richard did, The Entrepreneurs EDGE honors his memory and continues to build on the ideas that he so passionately supported. Each year, the Shatten Distinction Award recognizes a Leading EDGE company that exemplifies Richard's spirit. Previous recipients include Fairmount Minerals, LTD, Shearer's Foods, Inc., Main Street Gourmet and PartsSource.

EDGE is pleased to announce the 2011 Shatten Civic Distinction Award recipients:



BrandMuscle  
Philip Alexander,  
President & CEO



Marous Brothers  
CONSTRUCTION

Marous Brothers Construction  
Chip Marous, President

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# AT A GLANCE: Leading EDGE Companies Bounce Back Stronger Than Before

By D. Kirk Neiswander, President, The Entrepreneurs EDGE



**A**t this time last year, the topic of discussion was how well middle-market companies were weathering the economic downturn. What a difference a year makes. These firms have not only proven their resilience but have shown they can bounce back just as quickly as their larger counterparts.

## The Study

Each year, The Entrepreneurs EDGE, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, in partnership with *Crain's Cleveland Business*, solicits nominations for the Crain's Leading EDGE Awards Program. Qualified nominees are companies from the 17-county Northeast Ohio region with annual sales between \$1 and \$750 million. The data gathered during the nomination process is analyzed to reveal companies generating the highest "value" for themselves and the Northeast Ohio community.

## The Sample

This year, our sample includes 82 leading companies that shared key financial statistics such as EBIT (earnings before interest and taxation), compensation, and gross annual sales. The companies represented include 46 manufacturing firms and 36 service firms. Of those, 66 report under \$100 million in annual sales, comprising approximately 35% of the aggregate sales volume of \$5.1 billion.

Geographically speaking, 72% are located in the more densely-populated northern counties<sup>1</sup>. The remaining 23 companies are located in six of the region's southern-most counties<sup>2</sup>. Seventy-eight companies are headquartered locally. The remaining four companies, with regional divisions in Northeast Ohio, were assessed based only upon the volume that the region benefited from, namely compensation, local spending, and civic involvement.

<sup>1</sup>Includes Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain.

<sup>2</sup>Includes Medina, Portage, Richland, Stark, Summit, and Wayne.

## Define Value

Value, as defined by EDGE, is the combined sum of company earnings and total taxable compensation for all employees residing in the Northeast Ohio region. Year-after-year our research shows that firms with the highest aggregate value successfully manage innovation, spend more regionally with our local vendors and are in a position to generously give back to our community philanthropically.

Further, these middle-market firms have strong roots and are less likely to pick up and move away, which can wreak havoc on a local economy. It is these factors and their agility in the marketplace that make them ideal companies to work for, invest in, and otherwise support.

**Key Findings:**

**1. Numbers illustrate quick recovery:**

The combined "value" of EBIT and compensation for all 82 respondents showed 12% growth over a three year period (2008 to 2010).

**2. Compensation still down overall:**

Though compensation increased between 2009 and 2010, it was still down 4% overall (2008 to 2010).

**3. Manufacturing firms endured more, but recovered faster:**

Manufacturing firms endured a much bigger dip in "value" than service firms, driven mostly by a drop in earnings.

**4. Companies under \$100 million managed "value" better:**

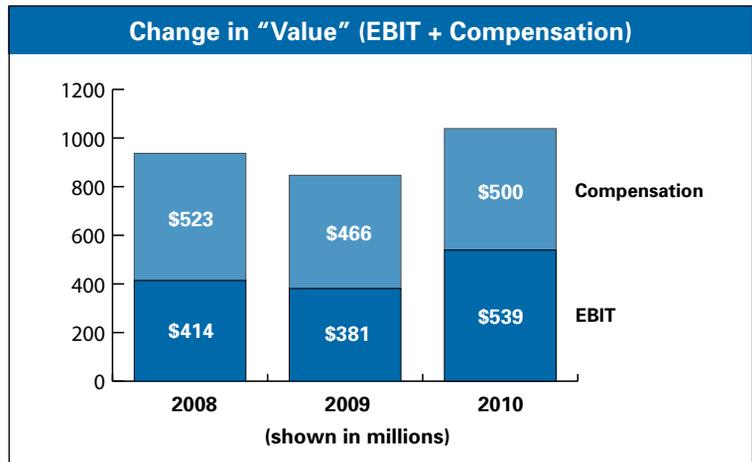
Firms under \$100 million experienced a drop in "value" of less than 1% (2009) followed by 16% growth (2010).

**5. Leading EDGE companies drive value from outside the region:**

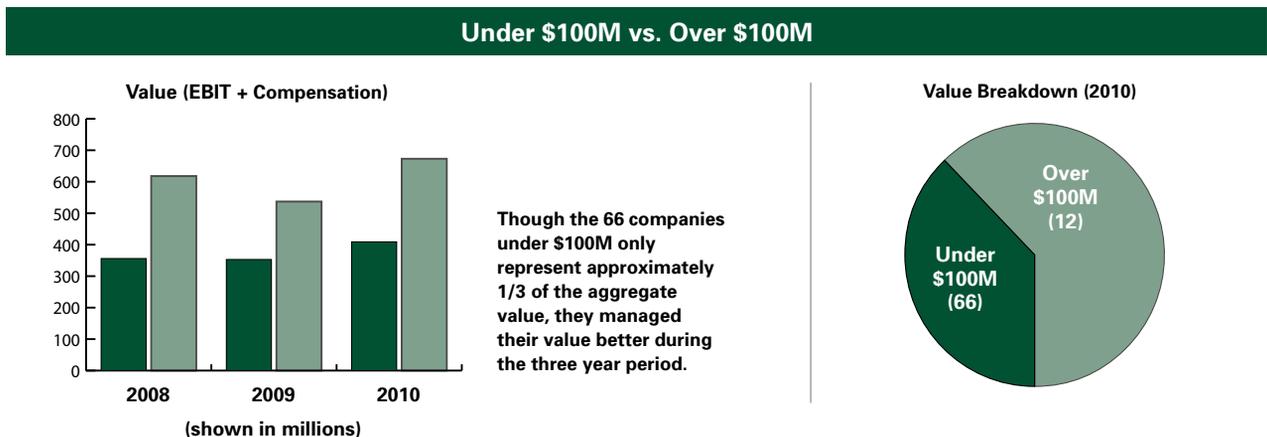
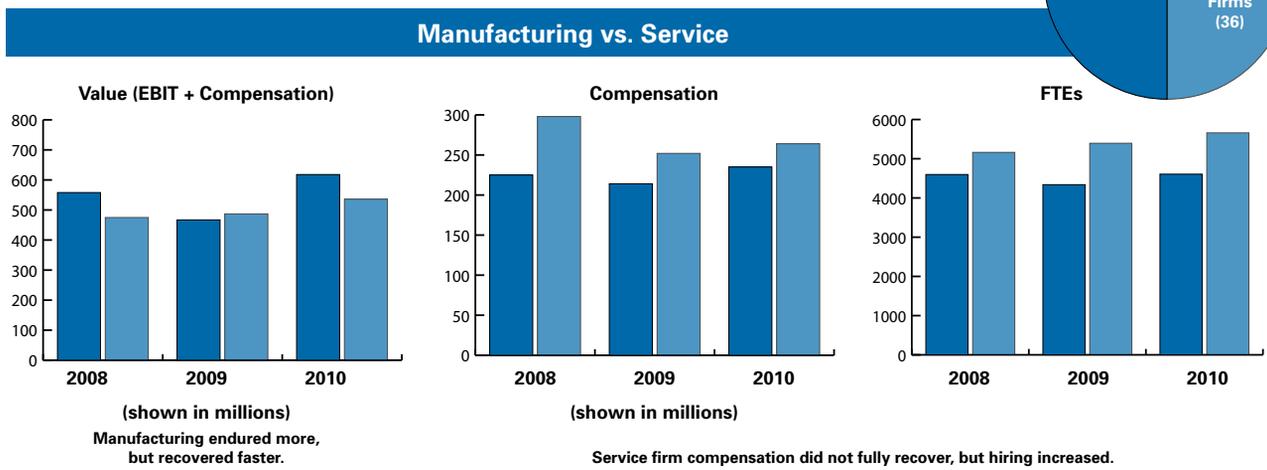
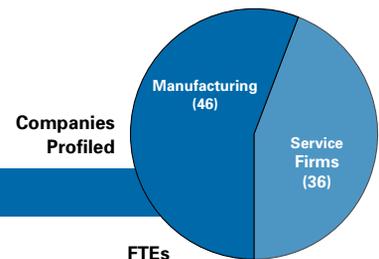
An estimated \$4 billion in sales were driven from outside the region in 2010.

**6. Local companies support the local community:**

On average Leading EDGE companies allot around 1.5% of their earnings to civic activities. Further, these companies aggregate spend more than \$400 million per year on products/services with local vendors.



Download the full article online at [www.edgef.org/research](http://www.edgef.org/research).



# Honorees Share Their Tips for Success

## AESCO Electronics: Customer-centric approach triggers business opportunities



In the past fifty-five years, AESCO Electronics (pronounced A-YES-CO) has grown its business substantially as an active part of the Northeast Ohio community. AESCO is a contract manufacturer of printed circuit boards, cables, harnesses, box-builds, and assemblies, and a distributor of electronic components. The company enjoys having its headquarters in Akron because "of its smaller size and community feel," says Roger Engle, President. "Even an acquisition in a market outside the region strengthens our presence here."

AESCO strives to meet or exceed the needs of customers by providing a high level of quality and customer service. The company's roots are

in distribution, but the business evolved as its customers did. AESCO takes a "customer-centric" approach, in which customers have helped them develop new capabilities that allow AESCO to assist customers in developing their businesses.

As a contract manufacturer of electronics, AESCO's niche is to manufacture a high mix of products and low to medium volume. "In many cases, we have taken a customer concept from an idea on a napkin through the design and production of a new product," says Engle. In the future, the company plans to continue to grow the business, both internally and through acquisitions, and to provide a quality work environment for its employees.

## Bowden Manufacturing: Internship program focuses on sustainability of manufacturing



Bowden Manufacturing is a contract manufacturer that specializes in CNC machining, assembly and laser marking services. The company, located in Willoughby, emphasizes the development of long-term relationships with customers, employees and their families, suppliers and the community. Andy McCartney, President, believes it is his responsibility to give back to the community. "It's a part of my faith and a part of who I am," he says.

It is important for Bowden to get their employees connected to the company. The company believes in fostering employees growth so that they can become better individuals and teammates. Bowden was named a Top Northeast Ohio Workplace in 2010 for its efforts to develop its employees internally by focusing on key qualities of each individual.

Bowden works with local universities including John Carroll University, Kent State University and Ohio State University to develop a strong internship program for business and engineering students. The program focuses on the promotion of manufacturing career opportunities with an interest in long-term growth and sustainability for the Northeast Ohio region. Bowden also integrates a leadership development track into the internship curriculum to engage interns in strategic business decisions and discussions with the executive team. A new business segment, DVD/video kiosk management, emerged from the internship program and was developed and brought to market by the interns.

## Bravo Wellness: Focus on healthy lifestyles creates new business opportunity



Prior to 2007, non-discrimination laws prevented employers from financially rewarding employees who made healthier lifestyle choices. In 2007, the Department of Labor made it possible to financially differentiate employee health plan contributions between those who exhibited healthy lifestyles and those who did not. In 2008, Bravo Wellness was launched to help employers understand and implement these new regulations by making results-based wellness programs simple. Typically 97% of employees participate and the return-on-investment averages \$400 per employee per year. "We look at it not as selling something but instead, we're being compensated to solve problems," says James Pshock, President and CEO.

Located in Avon, Bravo Wellness offers hope to the Northeast Ohio region in several ways. First, the company inspires healthy lifestyles, which helps to fuel the perception of Northeast Ohio as a dominant healthcare region. With over fifty employees and a dozen job openings, Bravo Wellness also offers promising jobs in technology, customer service and account management.

In the future, Bravo Wellness plans to continue to add value to organizations and reward individuals who are taking personal accountability for their health. "It's a tough love message but it's still the right message," says Pshock. "We want to solve even bigger problems for employers as the company continues to grow."

## Fathom Online Marketing: Performance-based campaigns lead to fast growth



While many Internet marketing companies may not offer a full turnkey solution for their customers, Fathom Online Marketing covers the gambit. As a leading online marketing firm, the company specializes in organic search engine optimization, online public relations, Internet video production and marketing, pay-per-click advertising, and opt-in email marketing services to drive performance-based campaigns for their customers. "Not a lot of companies have embraced this model because they want to get their monthly fee regardless of whether they produce leads for their clients or not," says Kevin Herendeen, Controller. "Our clients will retain us not just when we drive

traffic to their website, but when we drive traffic that generates purchases of their products and services. We are their best sales person."

At Fathom, everybody is a leader. The company gives their employees plenty of autonomy so as to develop a talented team in an environment where they can grow as people and as leaders. Fathom, located in Valley View, grew their employee base by 60% in 2010. The company currently employs more than 90 people, the majority of whom are located in Northeast Ohio. "We love Northeast Ohio and want to continue to grow and prosper here," says Herendeen.

## Lexicomp: Focusing on employees drives high performance



LexiComp adds value and notoriety to our healthcare-focused region through the creation of products that improve patient care at point of care. The Hudson-based company is a leading provider of medical information and clinical content solutions for the healthcare industry. "Lexicomp has looked at ways to tighten its budget and keep things running profitably while still maintaining continued growth, and we have been successful," says Eric Crescimano, Manager of Human Resources and Legal Affairs. The growth of the company over the past decade has transitioned it away from offering a boutique product to a hospital-wide, data-driven solution that meets Lexicomp's goals of improving point of care and reducing errors.

Lexicomp focuses a great deal of attention on, and attributes much of its success to, its employees.

The company's founder, Bob Kerscher, once worked for a company that had been employee-focused but shifted away from that focus as time went on. He vowed to always take care of his employees when he started his own company and he believes that, by taking care of the employees, the business naturally becomes a high-performing entity.

Lexicomp does just that. They look for the best and the brightest employees they can find and the company works hard to make the employees comfortable, happy, and successful. "If you ask anyone in management here, the people that work at Lexicomp are talented and dedicated people. It shows in their work that they are here for more than just the pay," says Crescimano. Lexicomp has hired thirty-five new employees in the past 1.5 years.

## Radix Wire Company: Economic downturn brings positive changes



In order to survive the recent economic downturn, Radix Wire Company implemented some momentous changes. A leading manufacturer of high-temperature and high-performance wire and cable products serving diverse industries and applications, Radix Wire Company made the difficult decision to significantly downsize its workforce. "In a normal year, we probably would have avoided such tough decisions," says Brian Bukovec, President, "but 2011 is a new year and with it comes a shift in customer focus and product mix." Bukovec further says, "We understand our business even more than before and how to make it even stronger. We're smarter and we want to move forward. We are managing the business very proactively."

Radix Wire now holds monthly management meetings to look at its performance compared to goals and to understand areas where they are underperforming and succeeding. They focus on training, mentoring employees, setting goals and performance and compensation reviews.

The company's new product mix is more profitable. "We're not the cheapest guy in town, but if you focus on lead time, quality and service, customers will have a hard time not buying from you," says Bukovec. The future is bright for Radix Wire Company as it continues to grow and focus on key areas that are strategically important.

Read more about other Leading EDGE companies at [www.edgef.org](http://www.edgef.org).



EDGE

# 2011 Crain's Leading EDGE Honorees

Leading EDGE Honored Companies were recognized at a reception and dinner on May 18 at Cleveland State University's new Student Center. Keynote speaker Jenniffer Deckard (pictured on cover) of Fairmount Minerals shared her organization's success story. For more event details go to [www.edgef.org](http://www.edgef.org).

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**Bowden Manufacturing Corp.**  
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# EDGE announces Year-Long Celebration of Events



Congratulations to our Leading EDGE Honored Companies!

As a company recognized by the Leading EDGE Award Program, honorees are cordially invited to participate in a complimentary year-long series of events designed to bring like-minded CEOs and presidents together and enhance a company's ability to grow in value. This series provides a taste of the benefits of EDGE engagement.

Please note that dates, times and locations of events will be forwarded by email.

#### June 29, 2011



#### Coach, Educator & Author: Marshall Goldsmith Doubletree Hotel, Rockside Rd., Independence, OH 44131

Author of *MOJO* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, Marshall Goldsmith is recognized by *Forbes* and *The Times* (London) as one of the 15 most influential business thinkers in the world and by The American Management Association as one of the 50 great thinkers and leaders who have influenced the field of management over the past 80 years.

Mr. Goldsmith will engage and challenge your leadership team to consider new ways of inspiring your organization to greater success. Experience his thought-provoking, high-energy, relevant presentation and come away with practical tools that you will be able to put to use immediately.

#### August 25, 2011

#### Leading EDGE Golf Outing Mayfield Country Club, South Euclid, Ohio

Connect with CEOs and presidents of like-minded middle market companies during a round of golf and lunch on EDGE.

Attendance is limited to the first 32 who register.



#### December 7, 2011



#### Economic Forecast - Jim Meil, Chief Economist, Eaton Corp. Doubletree Hotel, Rockside Rd., Independence, OH 44131

Join in for a glimpse into the future from Jim Meil, Eaton's chief economist. Mr. Meil is consistently among the top 50 economists in the world on *The Wall Street Journal's* annual ranking. Mr. Meil's perspective tracks global markets, supply chains and commodities, as well as the natural indicators common to traditional economic forecasts. Practicality is at the heart of his approach, as his research feeds directly into Eaton's day-to-day operations.

# TEST DRIVE THE EDGE



## TEST DRIVE THE POWER OF 15 CEOS GETTING TOGETHER FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF HELPING EACH OTHER SUCCEED

Even though the economy has started to improve, the pressure has never been greater on CEOs and their management teams to be sure every decision is a smart decision.

Now, imagine the power of 15 trusted CEOs sitting together for the sole purpose of helping each other succeed...a think tank for your business.

Each month, EDGE hosts a complimentary breakfast to introduce Presidents and CEOs of middle-market companies to the power of our approach. You will get first-hand experience of the proven techniques we use at EDGE to help CEOs make better decisions and build stronger leadership teams.

### Why you should attend:

- Meet and network with other like-minded CEOs who run non-competing, middle-market companies here in Northeast Ohio.
- Exchange ideas and enjoy a rigorous and rejuvenating discussion.
- Return to work with 2-3 ideas you can start implementing for your company that day.
- All this in a tight two hours to respect your time.

At EDGE, we know that new ideas, fresh thinking and a unique perspective are the ingredients that fuel innovation and growth.

That's why a key benefit of membership is separate peer group meetings for each key member of a company's management team to help them solve problems and implement innovation with confidence.

So, if you are committed to growing your company, please sign-up for an EDGE Test Drive today. We have limited space each month, so we encourage you to act quickly to reserve your seat at the table.

**SIGN-UP TODAY AT  
[WWW.EDGEF.ORG/TESTDRIVE.](http://WWW.EDGEF.ORG/TESTDRIVE)**



"I have yet to attend an EDGE event where I don't come away with at least two solid takeaways for

either me in my role as CEO or from a key strategic standpoint for our business. If ever in doubt on whether to attend an EDGE event – 'Just Do It'—you won't regret it."

— Fred Hunger, CEO,  
World Shipping, Inc.



"I have been approached by other executive groups about membership. But when push comes

to shove, EDGE provides me with everything the other groups offer and more – like facilitated discussions for my key functional managers where they can interact with their contemporaries at other like-kind companies and discuss relevant issues, problems and opportunities."

— Chris Tjotjos,  
VP, Cleveland Operations,  
Black Box Network Services

TURNING GROWTH PLANS INTO GREAT RESULTS FOR MIDDLE-MARKET COMPANIES



EDGE drives growth for middle-market companies by bringing together their management teams to share best practices and inspire each other to pursue the most beneficial opportunities. EDGE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is the only Northeast Ohio economic development group that is specifically focused on helping middle-market companies strengthen their leadership teams in order to take their companies to the next level.