The ESOP Association’s

Annual Awards
for Communications Excellence

2015 AACE

List of Winners
&
Judges’ Comments

The ESOP Association sponsors the AACE Program in order to foster ever-improving employee owner communications by way of sharing among association members. One good innovation sparks many more. Be sure to see the AACE Display early during the 2015 Annual Conference, take notes and start collecting your own materials to enter in 2016.

Our honored judges this year are: Mr. Steve Earle, Mid South Building Supply, Inc., North Springfield, VA; Mr. Paul Horn, Chair, WorkPlace Consultants, LLC, Bethesda, MD; Ms. Karla Langhus, DCS, Alexandria, VA; Mr. Ryan Vatnsdal, Dakota Supply Group, Fargo, ND; and Mr. Raman Venkat, Le Fiell Manufacturing Company, Santa Fe Springs, CA.

Go to www.esopassociation.org > AACE Awards > Read More.

This paper prepared by Pat Barnes, AACE Program Director.
AACE 2015 – And the Winner is. . .

**Category 1-A, Total Communications Program, 250 or Fewer Employees**

Winner: **Mid South Building Supply, Inc.**  
Springfield, VA – Steve Earle  
*(Also Runner Up in Category 5-A, ESOP Advertising, Ownership Marketing)*

Mid South Building Supply leaves no doubt that they are 100% owned, 100% customer committed, as the same message is shown on all vehicles, ads and promotional materials, including their web site. Various trinkets and handouts also make this message clear. There is also a sponsorship of a little league team by this ESOP company. On the inside, this company participates in numerous ESOP events and games during the year, such as a chili cook-off, Labor Day Cookout, pumpkin carving, Owners’ Dinner, ESOP and Bagels, snow sculpture, a t-shirt contest, an Easter egg hunt, an ESOP Word Search and a Guess the Share Value Contest.

Runner Up: **BL Companies**  
Meridian, CT – Wayne Violette  
*(Also Top Winner, Category 3-A, Printed Materials)*  
*(Please see Category 3-A)*

**Category 1-B, Total Communications Program, Over 250 Employees**

Winner: **Recology**  
San Francisco, CA – Kristina Cox  
*(Also Runner Up, Category 5-B, ESOP Advertising/Ownership Marketing)*

Dealing with the communications challenge of 40 locations, all of which have ownership meetings. Recology includes them all in scavenger hunts, word searches, ESOP Trivia, and an ESOP Slogan Contest, among other things. They make good use of newsletters and excellent printed materials. Recology produces a good internet and intranet, and makes a strong use of social media to promote their ESOP. They also include fundraising for EOF. The ownership idea spreads further in community volunteerism and community involvement.

Runner Up: **Burns & McDonnell**  
Kansas City, MO – Angela Wilson  
*(Also Top Winner, Category 5-B, ESOP Advertising/Ownership Marketing)*  
*(Please see Category 5-B)*
**Category 2-A, Presentation Videos, 250 or Fewer Employees**

**Winner:** PERRY proTECH  
Lima, OH – Becky Taylor

PERRY proTECH makes use of original and very clever lyrics in a song created and sung by an employee owner, and enthusiastically lip-synched by many others in the company. Numerous employee owners are featured across a broad spectrum, providing an excellent promotion of the ESOP concept and lots of fun. (The introduction from the ESOP Committee was very helpful to set the stage for the song parody). Last but not least, there is a strong technical quality to this video.

**Runner Up:** Webb Landscape, Inc.  
Bellevue, ID – Julie Fiolo

Webb Landscape presents good information about this company, stressing concepts of teamwork and employee ownership. A beautiful video with technical excellence, this makes a great marketing piece and also promotes employee ownership.

**Category 2-B, Presentation Videos, Over 250 Employees**

**Winner:** Big G Express, Inc.  
Shelbyville, TN – Jodi Lamb

Big G Express stresses the point that the ESOP goes the extra mile for the drivers, creating a family atmosphere. Employee owners talk about what ESOP means to their future and how the ESOP helps create quality and safety. The trucks proudly show that this company is employee owned and the extra benefits make the truck drivers want to stay with the company. The excellent technical quality of this video allows the high quality of the content to shine.

**Runner Up:** Van Meter Inc.  
Urbandale, IA – Kalese Sheldahl

Van Meter presents a simple and powerful format, “You Own Your Success”. There is pride in being employed at an ESOP company, to be given a chance to dream. The teamwork culture drives growth and profit, and they are in it for the long term. The employee owners talk about the importance of the ESOP and how they have grown to appreciate it, discussing the ESOP benefits, deemed even better than the 401(k). They mention “It’s your money! How to improve and do everything better.” There is an effective use of graphics and testimony, with good transitions and technical quality.
Category 3-A, Printed Materials, 250 or Fewer Employees

**BL Companies**
Meriden, CT – Wayne Violette
(Also Runner Up, Category 1-A, Total Communications)

BL Companies presents a well-defined, clear entry, with comprehensive “Year in Review” materials and an exciting ESOP calendar of events. Along with a thorough and colorful handbook, there is a good employee orientation program and ESOP 101. Also of particular note, BL Companies has produced an excellent tri-fold on the ESOP including information on BL Companies, for the employee owners and the public.

Runner Up: **Sentry Equipment Corp.**
Oconomowoc, WI – Sherri McDermott
(Also Top Winner, Category 4-A. Intranet, please see Category 4-A)

Sentry Equipment has produced eye-catching, colorful pages on ESOP and ESOP 101, as well as a very good ESOP Timeline.

Category 3-B, Printed Materials, Over 250 Employees

Winner: **Van Meter Inc.**
Urbandale, IA – Kalese Sheldahl
(Also Runner Up, Category 2-B, Presentation Video)

Van Meter uses PowerPoint, with excellent pictures to promote their culture. They have produced a “Taste of ESOP” for recruitment. Van Meter reminds the employee owners of the ESOP with vesting stickers and magnets. A fine CEO Program provides opportunities for further education.

Runner Up: **Eagle Communications, Inc.**
Hays, KS – Andrea Clinkscales
(Also Runner Up, Category 7-B, Special Events and Promotions, Series)

Eagle Communications carries a theme of “100% Responsibility, 0% Excuses” on signs, table tents, etc. Their ESOP newsletter is colorful and comprehensive. Customer mailings and news releases mention the ESOP as well. There is even a coin challenge to carry as a reminder of the connection between ESOP and work, with the possibility to flip and win a prize from the CEO with the right answers to questions about ownership.
Category 4-A, Intranet, 250 or Fewer Employees

Winner: Sentry Equipment Corp.
Oconomowoc, WI – Sherri McDermott
(Also Runner Up, Category 3-A, Printed Materials)

Via their intranet, Sentry gives good information to the employee owners about open book financials, stock prices, the mission statement, company policies, the strategic plan, and wellness. In addition to all of this, there is a detailed ESOP Q&A.

Category 4-B, Intranet, Over 250 Employees

Winner: Acadian Companies
Lafayette, LA – Harry Murphy

Acadian presents a great display using video describing the site, going through various pages and links from the user’s point of view. The stock price history is given, and plan documents and by-laws are all available. There is easy accessibility to committee notes and access is given to members via email, with pictures and a profile of each one. There is enrollment information (since the KSOP), and an extensive video library of seventeen pages.

Runner Up: Chemonics International Inc.
Washington, DC – Maggie Skelton

Chemonics’ intranet has good information on financials, as well as information on the culture and values of the company. Links to advisors are given, and also important information on governance and responsible parties.
Category 5-A, ESOP Advertising – Ownership Marketing – Including Web Sites
250 or Fewer Employees

Winner: Carl Warren & Company
Las Vegas, NV – Mike Clayson

Employee ownership is prominently displayed in all marketing and client materials, including the logo, magnets on the side of a van, on clothes, luggage tags, business cards and even their own label of wine. The CEO’s license plate reads “CWCESOP”. Employee ownership is featured in advertisements and trade show displays. Carl Warren’s web site has the “Employee Owned” logo, and states past ESOP awards.

Runner Up: Mid South Building Supply, Inc.
Springfield, VA – Steve Earle
(Also Top Winner in Category 1-A, Total Communications)
(Please see Category 1-A)

Category 5B, ESOP Advertising – Ownership Marketing – Including Web Sites
Over 250 Employees

Winner: Burns & McDonnell
Kansas City, MO – Angela Wilson
(Also Runner Up, Category 1-B, Total Communications)

Burns and McDonnell has a comprehensive social media presence with a web site which highlights employee ownership. There is a great deal of local and national media attention on Burns & Mac being a great place to work and being employee owned. Ownership is always mentioned in advertisements, recruitment and marketing materials. Extensive employee ownership apparel is also available.

Runner Up: Recology
San Francisco, CA – Kristina Cox
(Also Top Winner, Category 1-B, Total Communications)

Recology’s web site, a Wikipedia page and numerous posts on Linkedin all talk about employee ownership. Many community events and significant media coverage also emphasize ownership, augmented by business cards, pens, and other specialty items.
Category 6-A, Special Events & Promotions, One Outstanding Event, 250 or Fewer Empl.

Winner: **ComSonics, Inc.**  
Harrisonburg, VA – Markita Madden-Puckett

ComSonics celebrated their 39th Annual Participants Meeting last May with a dinner, at which they honored their founder and Warren Braun who had passed away in April. The share price was announced, and Michael Keeling, President of The ESOP Association gave an address. ComSonics procured a proclamation from the City of Harrisonburg declaring May 15th as ComSonics Founder’s Day, a day to celebrate and remember.

Runner Up: **Fabric Services**  
Bristol, IN – John Wuori

Employee owners of Fabric Services made very generous charitable contributions over a period of time to buy a $50,000 van to assist transport of a local disabled person. This transportation was so needed and very much appreciated.

Category 6-B, Special Events & Promotions, One Outstanding Event, Over 250 Empl.

Winner: **Hisco Inc.**  
Houston, TX – Katie Guerra

Hisco provided forty days of extensive communications, culminating in a big 40 Year Celebration Meeting. A commemorative coin was given to the employee owners along with a piggy bank, symbolizing employee ownership over a long period of time.

Runner Up: **Gladfelter Insurance Group**  
York, PA – Sara Spangler  
(Also, Top Winner, Category 7-B, Special Events & Promotions, Series)  
(Please see Category 7-B)

Glatfelter’s baseball themed fund raising event for the United Way garnered an amazing and very generous contribution of about $208,000.
Category 7-A, Special Events, Promotions, Series, 250 or Fewer Employees

Winner: Technomics, Inc.
Arlington, VA – Tom Oettinger

Technomics planned numerous events (sixteen) during ESOP Month, which included 5 educational and 7 team building occasions. There was an Employee Ownership Award, as well as 100% Vesting Recognition with a vest, plus laser tag teams based on vesting. Door decorating, ESOP Jeopardy, Lunch and Learn, and an explanation of the ESOP statement were a few of the activities. Community events included delivery of backpacks and school supplies and food to the Arlington Food Assistance Center.

Runner Up: Wiley|Wilson
Lynchburg, VA – Connie Burnette

Wiley|Wilson did a good job of involving multiple offices in a full, year-long calendar of events, including an Ownership Retreat and employee ownership picnics. Ownership communication was on a monthly basis. To serve the community, Wiley|Wilson worked together on a canned food drive to provide food for the needy.

Category 7-B, Special Events, Promotions, Series, Over 250 Employees

Winner: Glatfelter Insurance Group
York, PA – Sara Spangler
(Also Runner Up, Category 6-B, Special Events & Promotions One Event)

Glatfelter Insurance uses the theme of “Let’s Play Ball” to emphasize their ESOP. There were “Welcome Rookies” luncheons and orientations and “Opening Day” for Employee Ownership Month. MVP games and MVP employee owners were among the ESOP Superheros. A summer cookout was held at a ball game, and a luncheon was held to salute employee owners or family members who were veterans. An important contribution was a fund raiser for the United Way which raised $208,000. A bus ride was provided to The ESOP Association’s National Conference. The Glatfelter newsletter documented ESOP activities throughout the whole year.

Runner Up: Eagle Communications, Inc.
Hays, KS – Andrea Clinkscales
(Also Runner Up, Category 3-B, Printed Materials)

June events coincided with the distribution of certificates, which included a bus tour by management to all ten offices to present the “State of the Company”. There were games, including an ESOP Word Search, and a showing of the “ESOP Employee Selfie” video.