

Summer 2010

## Excellence!

A quarterly newsletter for the  
Upper Midwest Area EOY community  
Minnesota, Wisconsin, Dakotas



Ernst & Young  
Entrepreneur Of The Year®

### Entrepreneurs: what makes them different?

For the last 24 years, we have proudly recognized outstanding business leaders, and we salute the simple truth: entrepreneurs want to change the world. We trust they're going to do it in a positive, innovative, beneficial and long-lasting way. In fact, we're counting on it.

Why should this be so? High-growth companies have as much to lose as established companies, if not more, with far less cushion to fall back on in the event of failure. And yet they persevere, they continue to move forward, eyes wide open for the innovative, the new, the unique. They're hungry, they're driven, they're sharply focused.

We know this to be true, and we celebrate it by recognizing the incredibly talented companies honored as finalists and winners in the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2010 Upper Midwest Awards.

Along with our sponsors, we continue to be inspired and encouraged by their entrepreneurial business achievements. The following pages highlight those individuals who were awarded this coveted distinction of Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year.

# announcing

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## Lifetime Achievement Award Winner

### M. A. "Mort" Mortenson

Chairman, M. A. Mortenson Company

Golden Valley, Minnesota

To define your company's mission as "Building structures and facilities for the advancement of modern society" is a bold move. M. A. "Mort" Mortenson Jr. has made a career out of bold moves, turning the company his father founded, Mortenson Construction, into an industry leader, respected by peers and responsible for building architectural marvels around the globe.

After serving in the US Navy, Mort joined Mortenson Construction in 1960, succeeding his father as president and CEO just 9 years later. After 50 years at the company, Mort still adheres to a set of old-fashioned values: belief, hard work and personal responsibility.

Holding these ideals close to his heart, Mort employs a business philosophy centered on building lasting value and laying the

foundation for community growth. Renewable energy, water and wastewater treatment, cultural attractions, education these facilities are key to the future of civilization, and Mortenson Construction builds them all. As Mort himself has been fond of saying, "When good things happen, it is the result of the efforts of good people working together, united in a common purpose."

Continuing that purposeful growth, Mortenson has led the way in pioneering the renewable energy market. As one of the leading builders of wind power projects in North America, the company has captured more than 25% of the market. Mortenson is currently ranked as the country's 13th largest power contractor and is expanding into the biofuels, solar and transmission markets.

Whether building facilities for the federal government, medical research centers or wind farms around the country, Mortenson is making a real impact in the lives of everyday people. Working with world-renowned architects such as Cesar Pelli, Mortenson has created globally recognized structures such as the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Shanghai World Expo Performing Arts Center in China.

With a project portfolio spanning four continents, Mort has led his company to not only meet, but exceed its mission. Through his tireless efforts and those of the company's leadership team, Mortenson is bringing to life many gems that make our communities better places to live.

# the winners

## Congratulations to the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2010 regional winners.

We found their stories. Honored all the hard work. And celebrated. Now nine new entrepreneurs join the ranks of inspirational Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year 2010 winners. Their dedication, tenacity and drive stood out among tough competitors. Congratulations and good luck at the national awards. We can't wait to see more. See all the finalists and winners at [ey.com/us/eoy](http://ey.com/us/eoy).



**Technology Award Winner**

**John Romans**  
President and CEO  
BioMedix Vascular Solutions  
St. Paul, Minnesota

John Romans thrived as a telecommunications entrepreneur, and he aimed to succeed again in the energy industry. But the market was slow to commercialize, and his start-up ran out of capital. Even though Romans lost most of his net worth, he decided to get right back into the game with BioMedix Vascular Solutions.

A lack of experience in health care and a move to Minnesota were no obstacles; Romans believed in the company's mission to help people

with peripheral artery disease (PAD) through technology-based collaborative medical care. BioMedix provides primary care doctors with an integrated system for diagnosing and treating patients with life-threatening PAD, including medical devices, hardware, software and online services. The ultimate goal is to enable vascular specialists to maintain a virtual presence in primary care offices and provide guidance, while BioMedix's products reduce mistakes, streamline billing and provide data for analysis.

**Overcoming early technological roadblocks and numerous rejections for venture capital, Romans persevered and went without pay for a time. Motivating his employees through training, mentoring and recognition initiatives, Romans guided BioMedix to earn marketing clearance from the FDA in 2004. The American Podiatric Medical Association also gave BioMedix's PADnet system its seal of approval.**



**Emerging Award Winner**

**Joe Keeley**  
Founder, President and CEO  
College Nannies & Tutors  
Wayzata, Minnesota

**Joseph Keeley isn't even 30, and the business he started from his college dorm already serves 26,000 families in 23 states. College Nannies & Tutors has captured numerous honors, including the coveted Global Student Entrepreneur Award and a listing as an Entrepreneur magazine Franchise 500. Not bad for a hockey-playing college student whose business shook up the child care and specialty education industries.**

Working as a summer nanny, Keeley realized he was more than just a babysitter. He saw the need for safe and reliable nannies and tutors who also were role models. Keeley turned down a corporate job to pursue College Nannies after graduation, earning investment from Wayzata, Minnesota-based Business Development Group to develop the franchise concept. Keeley overcame insurance snags and devised a new model, setting up the business like a staffing agency to maintain even revenue streams. He solved

technology problems by creating CNeT, a front- and back-end online virtual office that helps franchisees with scheduling, training and application processes.

Keeley enjoys helping other young entrepreneurs, and he advises them as president of the Minnesota Entrepreneurs Organization and through his nonprofit, Dorm Room Entrepreneurship. *Business Week* named Keeley one of its Top 25 under 25 to Watch.



**Master Award Winner**

**Jack Link**  
CEO  
Jack Link's Beef Jerky  
Minong, Wisconsin

While heading out to hunt, John "Jack" Link stopped at a local store and bought some beef jerky out of a canister; it was as tough as shoe leather. Inspired to make it better, Link began making his own meat snacks using his great-grandfather's recipes. It was good, very good. Investing with his personal savings, Link started Jack Link's Beef Jerky in the very north woods in which his family settled nearly 100 years before.

Beginning in 1987 with a kippered beef steak line, Link showed consumers that they didn't have to

sacrifice quality for convenience. Initially, Jack Link's distributed its products to local convenience stores, and by the 1990s, it was producing beef jerky and distributing it to mass merchants nationwide. Soon Jack Link's carved out its place in the snack food industry, becoming the nation's number-one brand of beef jerky and the fastest growing meat snack producer worldwide. In five short years, Link has grown the company's market share from 27% to 50%, and Jack Link's Beef Jerky now employs over 1,500 people in four rural domestic

communities, throughout North America and around the world.

**Link believes his employees are "ordinary people accomplishing extraordinary things," and has instilled in them the tenets of hard work, commitment, loyalty and passion for their communities. His support of the communities in which his employees live and play can be illustrated by the annual golf tournament Link began in 2003; to date, the tournament has raised more than \$500,000 for local schools.**

# Entrepreneurs have desire to excel



## Retail Award Winner

**Rollie Benjamin**  
Chairman and CEO  
ABRA Auto Body & Glass  
Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

While running his own car dealership, Rollie Benjamin saw an opportunity for repair centers that were independent from auto dealers and manufacturers. He envisioned "stand-alone" centers, able to service all makes and models of vehicles. In 1984, Rollie co-founded ABRA Auto Body & Glass, determined to provide quality repairs and superior customer service.

Now operating 99 repair centers in 11 states, ABRA continues to innovate, recently launching a company-wide "Lean" program, which emphasizes teamwork aimed at decreasing repair time by improving employee problem-solving skills and reducing non-value added work. The program slashed ABRA's average repair by four days over the past two years, resulting in a 35% throughput improvement. In addition, this program had a positive impact on all other customer satisfaction measurements.

Currently, Rollie is focused on developing a "Preferred Partner Program," designed to achieve improved efficiencies between ABRA and the insurance industry. He believes this will fuel increased revenue opportunities to support ABRA's current direction of more aggressive location growth.



## Distribution Award Winner

**Jimmy Vosika**  
CEO and Director of Partology  
ShopJimmy.com  
Bloomington, Minnesota

When Jimmy Vosika started ShopJimmy.com in 2007, he heeded Firestone Tire founder Harvey Firestone's sentiment that successful entrepreneurship emerges from good ideas, not capital or experience. Vosika identified the need for a television parts e-commerce company after successfully starting an electronics recycling program at his father-in-law's company.

He worked tirelessly at developing ShopJimmy.com while working full-time, financing the start-up with his credit cards and loans. Targeting a

demographic that is not particularly internet-savvy, Vosika developed an extremely usable website where electronics repair specialists can quickly browse or search for needed parts. He eliminated the middleman through direct partnerships with suppliers and electronics freight shippers, allowing ShopJimmy.com to offer high-quality parts at low prices. In three years, Vosika amassed thousands of customers and expanded his business to 50 employees, including the implementation of an in-house web-development division and electronics teardown staff.

In addition to keeping electronics out of landfills people trashed 1.84 million tons instead of recycling in 2007 alone, according to the EPA, Vosika encourages technicians to sell their own parts on ShopJimmy Stores. This innovative platform further reduces electronic waste and expands the business of repair shops, helping the same individuals who've supported ShopJimmy.com. Vosika plans to export ShopJimmy.com to Europe this year.



## Consumer Services Award Winner

**Peter Taunton**  
Founder and CEO  
Snap Fitness  
Chanhassen, Minnesota

After managing big-box fitness clubs for 20 years, Peter Taunton wanted to test his idea that consumers really didn't want amenities like rock climbing walls and child care. They just wanted a club close to where they live and state-of-the-art equipment. He started Snap Fitness in 2003 to offer the bare essentials in low-rent, well-situated shopping centers. The idea caught on quickly, making Snap Fitness one of the top five fastest growing franchises in North America and earning it "Best in Fitness" honors from *Entrepreneur* magazine.

Opening his first location in rural Minnesota, Taunton signed up over 180 members in 30 days and quickly reached breakeven. Larger market pilots showed similar results, giving Taunton confidence that his business model would work in those markets as well. He made good on Snap Fitness' mission to offer customers a great value at a low price by creating 24/7 centers all across America. Snap's high security key cards let members come and go at their convenience, while allowing franchise owners to be semi-absent so that they can keep their day jobs.

Though many health clubs have seen memberships decreasing lately, Snap Fitness is continuing to grow domestically and internationally.

Taunton is making big strides in the fitness industry with online products and services, offering members advice on fitness and wellness. He recently instituted a profit-sharing program for employees and financially supports physical fitness programs for kids.



**Health Sciences  
Award Winner**

**Jerome Ruzicka**  
President  
Starkey Laboratories,  
Inc.  
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

**Jerry Ruzicka focuses on service and innovation with the philosophy, "We win the opportunity for the next order with the one we have today." In 33 years at Starkey Laboratories, Ruzicka advanced from repair technician to president, establishing the company as an industry leader in the hearing aid market.**

Committing to creating timely, cost-effective and cutting-edge products, Ruzicka transformed Starkey into a global enterprise with more than 3,500 employees. He emphasizes research and development, building

an organization of scientists and engineers who develop innovative technology for advanced, small and comfortable hearing aids. Leading Starkey to early adoption of just-in-time manufacturing, Ruzicka is an informed risk taker who steered Starkey from the brink of bankruptcy in the late 1990s to the third-largest company in its industry. Throughout his career, Ruzicka has demonstrated his skill at developing and organizing people, improving processes and leading by setting high standards for himself and others.

Ruzicka's manual on management, *Managers Manage*, JR's Top 10, has become a learning curriculum for teaching core behaviors to all employees companywide. Ruzicka's history of strong results enabled the company to support the Starkey Hearing Foundation. Since 2000, the Foundation has provided more than 400,000 people with hearing help at no charge.



**Consumer  
Products  
Award Winner**

**Omar Ansari**  
President and Founder  
Surly Brewing Co.  
Brooklyn Center,  
Minnesota

**Omar Ansari went against the grain to make Surly Brewing Company a success story. He overcame doubts and hurdles to create an award-winning brew, breaking ground as one of the first craft beers sold only in aluminum cans.**

The son of immigrants, Ansari made his home-brewing hobby a business by converting a family-owned factory into a brewery. Ansari convinced the state to reinterpret a self-distribution law and got Brooklyn Center to change an ordinance banning

breweries. Starting canning in 2006, Ansari has worked to keep up with demand ever since; he refuses to compromise on quality to churn out more beer. Surly now produces four year-round beers and more than 10 specialty and seasonal brews. In 2007, *Beer Advocate* magazine named Surly the Best Brewery in America.

Creativity in brewing and branding are Surly hallmarks, from its distinctive beers to its label and merchandise art. Other Surly beers might be more

profitable, but Ansari stands behind its specialty brews to foster creativity and build excitement. He supports artists through Surly's coaster project to promote 250,000 pieces of original art and gives back through Surly Gives a Damn, the company's philanthropic arm that sponsors service projects and donates beer and merchandise.

# and the courage to lead

## Congratulations to the finalists

In addition to our winners, the following companies were honored as finalists in this year's regional program:

**Jennifer Thalhuber**  
AbleNet, Inc.

**Timothy Johnson**  
Impact Proven Solutions

**Lee Ehmke**  
Minnesota Zoological Garden

**Joseph Bartolotta**  
The Bartolotta Restaurants

**John Hillen**  
Direct Source, Inc.

**LouAnne Reger-Berg**  
J&L Steel and Electrical Services

**William Jurewicz**  
space150, LLC

**Bill Boelter**  
The Boelter Companies

**Aaron Jagdfeld**  
Generac Power Systems, Inc.

**Duane Crandall**  
Knowledge Marketing

**Archie Black**  
SPS Commerce

**Frank Klisanich**  
The Village Company, LLC

**Craig Karmazin**  
Good Karma Broadcasting

**Guy Mingo**  
Marsden Holding, L.L.C.

**Jerry Mattys**  
Tactile Systems Technology, Inc.

**Dharani Ramamoorthy**  
Xylo Technologies, Inc.

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## How to make the shift to social medias

By Bob Brin, Padilla Speer Beardsley

Putting social media strategies into play for your organization can be like skipping stones on a pond. You can take your best shot – on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Flickr, YouTube – but you can't predict the ripple effects.

Still, there is one social-media certainty – the conversation about you will go on whether or not you participate. The upside is that you can use it to differentiate your organization by highlighting its human side and distinct personality. The challenge is capitalizing on the interactive potential without putting your business at risk.

At Padilla Speer Beardsley, we follow a four-phase approach to help organizations integrate social-media strategies into their existing communications efforts.

### 1. Assess – Tune in to the conversation

We combine conversation monitoring, search engines and other tools to take stock of the social-media landscape for our clients and their top competitors. We find the answers to fundamental questions: What are your primary competitors/peers doing/not doing in terms of social interaction? What social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, industry forums, etc.) host active discussions on topics related to your business? Who's leading the conversations (key bloggers, tweets, etc.)? What's being said about you and the industry? What is the overall tenor of those comments and posts?

Along with the answers to these crucial questions, we give clients recommendations about how to join or lead the conversation. This step also lays the groundwork for ongoing social-media monitoring and measurement.

### 2. Activate – Empower the organization for change

Next, organizations must take concerted steps to prepare for the cultural shift to social-media engagement. We recommend the creation of a "social-media council," with cross-departmental involvement from human resources to marketing to legal.

This team establishes the organization's social-media guidelines – such as procedures for dealing with negative posts – determines training initiatives, and becomes the hub for sharing best practices among departments and business units.

### 3. Act – Craft your content carefully

In this phase, departments and business units establish their social media strategies and programs, and integrate them with other communications efforts. First, however, they need to recognize that the main goal is joining or creating a community, and participating in the dialogue. In other words, social media isn't just another channel for low-cost distribution of your marketing content. Your messages will be much better received in the context of interpersonal engagement and sharing of your expertise. Chris Brogan, author of *Trust Agents: Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation, and Earn Trust*, offers this succinct social-media advice: "Be helpful."

### 4. Amplify – Lead with energy and quality content

Once you're immersed in the world of social media, how do you become a leading voice? How do you get reporters, bloggers and analysts to follow you? As in traditional communities (associations, conferences, etc.), you'll stand out if you provide information that's interesting, insightful or useful to others. By actively initiating dialogue and sharing best-in-class content and ideas, your organization can generate social ripples that have a positive, lasting effect on your brand.

*Bob is on the forefront of helping B2B and B2C companies deliver their message online and adjust their communications to create more approachable brands. He leads Padilla Gorilla, the wildly creative interactive and social media practice, and the firm's Social Media Elite Response Force. He can be reached at bbrin@psbpr.com or +1 612 455 1060.*



## Optimizing the talent pool

Best practices for driving a successful talent acquisition strategy in any economic climate

by Mark Metzendorf, Manpower

With so many out-of-work people, finding qualified candidates should be easier than ever, right? There certainly is no shortage of individuals to choose from. According to a recent global trend report from the International Labor Office (ILO), the number of jobless people worldwide reached almost 212 million in 2009, and that number is expected to remain high in 2010<sup>1</sup>. In the US, the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the national unemployment rate remains above average.

While the number of people available to work has increased, the size of the talent pool has essentially remained the same. That is because regardless of the number of people applying for jobs, the distribution of average, good and great candidates in the talent pool remains unchanged. To illustrate, a Manpower Business Solutions client in the manufacturing sector had an open position for a senior level executive in the same location in April 2009 and again in March 2010. In 2009, 194 applicants applied within 23 days, of which 11.8% were qualified. In 2010, 73 applicants were received in 12 days, of which 12.3% were qualified. While the number of applicants varied, the availability of qualified candidates stayed relatively the same.

In a good economy it is challenging to find qualified candidates, but it can actually be even harder when economic conditions worsen and the number of people out of work increases. For recruiters and hiring managers, this translates to an increased volume of candidates and "mismatched" talent to review and screen in order to find those "right-fit" candidates.

Appreciating that the fundamentals of the talent pool do not change quickly, even in the face of a global recession, means you can then implement strategies to optimize the talent that is available. To harness the talent that's available around the world and develop a pool of right-fit candidates that meet your business requirements, consider the following:

**Know what you need, but be flexible.** Define what you need but be willing to broaden the scope of skills and talents you are looking for based on what is available.

**Identify individuals with transferable skills.** Think about candidates with comparable skills from other industries or expand your search by sourcing candidates in different geographies.

**Hire for innate talents and be willing to invest in training.** Once you have defined

the skills and talents required for a position, prioritize the characteristics most important to get the job done and areas that can be successfully achieved through training.

**Draw from the in-house talent pool.** Identify internal resources you can grow and nurture. Cross train your workforce so they are able to perform a broader variety of tasks.

**Make diversity a reality.** To bolster diversity, make sure the organization culture will enable diverse employees to thrive. Identify and create alliances with national minority organizations or trade associations and target recruitment advertising to minority publications.

**Build a candidate pipeline.** Build bench strength by cultivating relationships with candidates whose skills align with your organization's future needs. This way, when you have an open position you can tap into a readily accessible talent pool.

**Gain access to expertise.** Consider partnering with a recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) provider to manage the influx of resumes, improve processes and deliver a better candidate experience.

To learn more about driving a successful talent acquisition strategy, visit the Research and Insights section at [us.manpower.com](http://us.manpower.com) for Manpower's comprehensive White Paper.

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### About Manpower

Manpower is a leader in the employment services industry; creating and delivering services that enable its clients to win in the changing world of work. The company offers employers a range of services for the entire employment and business cycle, including permanent, temporary and contract recruitment; employee assessment and selection; training; outplacement; outsourcing and consulting. The focus of Manpower's work is on raising productivity through improved quality, efficiency and cost-reduction across their total workforce, enabling clients to concentrate on their core business activities. Manpower Inc. operates under a number of brands including: Manpower, Manpower Professional, Elan and Right Management. More information on Manpower is available at [www.us.manpower.com](http://www.us.manpower.com).



The 2010 winners from the Upper Midwest awards will move on to participate for national recognition. The announcement of the national finalists and winners will be made in conjunction with the annual Strategic Growth Forum® November 10-14.

The Strategic Growth Forum is the country's most prestigious gathering of high-growth, market-leading companies. The Forum provides participants with the best business advice on growth strategies, and will feature many outstanding speakers. Some of the lineup for this year includes:

- ▶ **Muhtar Kent**, Chairman and CEO, The Coca-Cola Company, interviewed by Charlie Rose, TV interviewer and journalist
- ▶ An interview with **Greg Norman**, professional golfer and entrepreneur
- ▶ **AG Lafley**, former Chairman, CEO and President of Procter & Gamble
- ▶ **Arthur Levitt, Jr.**, former Chairman of the United States Securities and Exchange Commission
- ▶ **Deepak Chopra**, Co-founder, The Chopra Center for Wellbeing

The Forum concludes with the 24th annual Entrepreneur Of The Year Program, the largest and most prestigious gathering of entrepreneurs in America. **Jay Leno** will once again serve as master of ceremonies at the black-tie awards gala on Saturday night.

For more information about the Ernst & Young Strategic Growth Forum, visit [www.ey.com/us/eoy](http://www.ey.com/us/eoy).

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Office, Global Employment Trends report, 2009



## Honoring Jay Novak 2010 Supporter of Entrepreneurship

Reporter, press secretary, marketer, editor, commissioner, investment banker, publisher – these are just a few of the many positions Jay Novak has held in the last 34 years. In his current role as editor and publisher of *Twin Cities Business*, a position he's held for the last nine years, Jay's been devoted to covering business, economic trends and business leaders across Minnesota.

As Jay prepares to retire this summer, he recalls what's made a lasting impression over the course of his career: "It's being able to have met and worked with some of Minnesota's most accomplished business people."

Looking back nearly four decades, he says some of the most notable changes he's experienced have been in technology. He saw typewriters disappear, happily welcomed fax machines, watched PCs revolutionize desktop publishing, and he remembers having someone help him open the foot-high stack of mail he received every day. Now, he's surprised if he opens more than a few pieces.

Jay says he's also seen significant changes in the C-suite. He recalls when feature stories focused primarily on "big CEOs." In the late 1980s a new trend emerged. He saw an uptick in the amount of coverage entrepreneurs received as small businesses started to (and continue to) drive economic growth and sustainability. He also finds it interesting that 30 years ago, no one really knew the CFO. Today it's a completely different story, Jay says.

Another dramatic evolution in the business landscape he's witnessed is globalization. "I remember when international markets were ancillary to what we were doing in Minnesota," said Jay. "We had an international business column and people viewed it as peculiar and told me it seemed irrelevant." Jay looks back on that and chuckles, now knowing how relevant globalization is in Minnesota and everywhere else.

**Looking ahead,** Jay expects globalization, greater transparency in the information the public receives and increased market efficiencies will have the biggest effect on business in the next five years. What won't change? Jay says it's the advice he'd give to anyone starting out in business today. "When there's no wind, row." Working hard when things aren't going your way is the best way to get to your destination, he says.

**What will Jay miss most?** Collaborating with colleagues, interacting with business leaders and partnering on strategic projects, specifically, the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year Program. A longtime supporter, sponsor, judge and entrepreneurial advocate, Jay says the program is emotionally rewarding. "Every year, I get to meet program finalists and learn about the phenomenal work they're doing in our community," he said. "The EOY program provides assurance that a lot of great work is being done in business."

**What's next for Jay?** He's eager to become more active in a limited partnership investment fund, something he's been passionate about for years but hasn't been able to pursue. He also plans to remain active with several nonprofits, including MEET Minneapolis, The Minneapolis Club, Hamline University School of Business, TIE (an Indian-American mentoring program) and Community Health Charities. He's also eager to "do some serious travel" with his wife. The two hope to visit Spain, Italy, Singapore and Malaysia, as well as cities across the US and Canada.

**Jay's mantra:** Be someone you can trust; believe your efforts matter; and, remember, optimism wins. These have no doubt served him well. Thanks, Jay, for your many years of service, integrity, passion and commitment to the local and regional business community. It's our great pleasure to recognize your commitment and passion for business with this award.

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About Ernst & Young

Ernst & Young is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. Worldwide, our 144,000 people are united by our shared values and an unwavering commitment to quality. We make a difference by helping our people, our clients and our wider communities achieve their potential.

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