

EMERGING | FINALIST

NICOLE LOFTUS | CEO
Zorch International Inc.

Promoting success

How Nicole Loftus brought new ideas to an old industry at Zorch International

Nicole Loftus was working as an executive in the promotional products industry when she realized the inefficiencies in the way the industry conducted business.

The standard business model was to view the customer through a territorial lens, discouraging any contact between the corporate and end customer and the manufacturers and importers closest to the products.

She knew that she could create a better business model and formed Zorch in 2002 to realize her vision. By emphasizing the branding and merchandising capabilities that Zorch could bring to its corporate customers and de-emphasizing the middle-man role that distributors have traditionally played, the company can be a better partner to its corporate customers. Zorch can deliver a more efficient, responsive order process as it facilitates communication between vendor and customers, it can bring higher levels of sophistication to the merchandising and design decisions and serve as a corporate "brand guardian" as well as deliver lower costs.

Loftus bootstrapped the company with loans from her parents and put up her house as collateral to guarantee bank loans to the business.

As her business model was most applicable to large customers with significant promotional product spending budgets, she faced scrutiny from large *Fortune* 500 purchasing departments. Nevertheless, through force of will and a compelling customer promotion, she was able to land a major insurance company as her first customer. Now, she has several of the largest companies in the nation as her clients, most of whom source their promotional products exclusively through Zorch. <<

HOW TO REACH: Zorch International Inc., www.zorch.com

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT | WINNER

PATRICK RYAN | executive chairman
Aon Corp.

Visionary goals

How Pat Ryan grew Aon from a local insurance company to an industry giant

Under Pat Ryan's vision, Aon Corp. has become the world's leading insurance and reinsurance brokerage and human capital consultant, all while maintaining the founder's commitment to service, integrity and values.

Ryan built Aon through a combination of organic growth and the integration of more than 425 acquisitions. Each organization he targeted to join Aon had its own story, but each one also shared a dedication to client service and a culture built on values. The acquisitions saw other companies as bureaucratic and centrist, while they viewed Aon under Ryan's leadership as entrepreneurial and client-focused. They saw it as a place they could continue pushing themselves to excel as professionals. Careful selection of new colleagues and partners ensured long-term, sustainable success for Aon, its shareholders and its clients.

The most challenging aspects were cross-border integration and understanding and managing the diverse cultures involved as a result of many of the acquisitions.

Ryan created Aon as he did his predecessor business with an eye toward specialization. He started Ryan Insurance in 1964 on the premise that his desire for an entrepreneurial opportunity best existed in the insurance business, but he focused his work on creating the business as a specialist company that focused on serving auto dealers. His subsequent acquisitions concentrated on the same focus on specialty lines. As a result of Ryan's vision, Aon today has grown to a multibillion-dollar global company. <<

HOW TO REACH: Aon Corp., www.aon.com

SUPPORTER OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP | WINNER

DR. DIPAK JAIN | dean
Kellogg School of Management,
Northwestern University

Teaching future leaders

Dipak Jain's commitment to business education has helped countless people realize their dreams.

Dipak Jain is being recognized for his effort in building the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University into one of the country's leading business education institutions.

Jain believes that helping students reach their potential is at the heart of the school's mission, and he revels in the constant challenge of meeting that lofty goal. He is no stranger to the challenges of continued learning, as he holds degrees in mathematics, statistics, marketing and business management.

He established three key directives on his first day: Build the Kellogg School brand and differentiate themselves as management leaders; enhance the school's alumni network and keep the alumni engaged; and build the global reputation by having a presence in key markets, such as Asia, Europe and Latin America.

In order to put the school in a position to succeed in achieving his vision, Jain knew it was essential to create an inclusive culture that focused on fostering ideas and decisions bordering on a speed of execution unknown in the school's storied past. This was accomplished by changing the structure of the management team from a dictatorship, largely driven by the decisions of the dean, to an institutionally driven spirit of entrepreneurship, focused on empowering a task force of himself, two senior associate deans and six management chairs. In order for this structure to produce results, any two of the three deans are empowered to make final decisions for the school. This new structure enables Kellogg to focus on its main purpose — helping students reach their potential. <<

HOW TO REACH: Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, www.kellogg.northwestern.edu

