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BKD INDIANA **EXCELLENCE** AWARDS

One of **20 WINNERS**
honored for improving their
business, Albert (standing)
and Stanley Chen's Telamon
Corp., a telecom supplier,
diversified into assembling
automotive components

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Honoring Excellence

Improving Businesses Improve Indiana. Winners of the 2007 BKD Indiana Excellence Awards.

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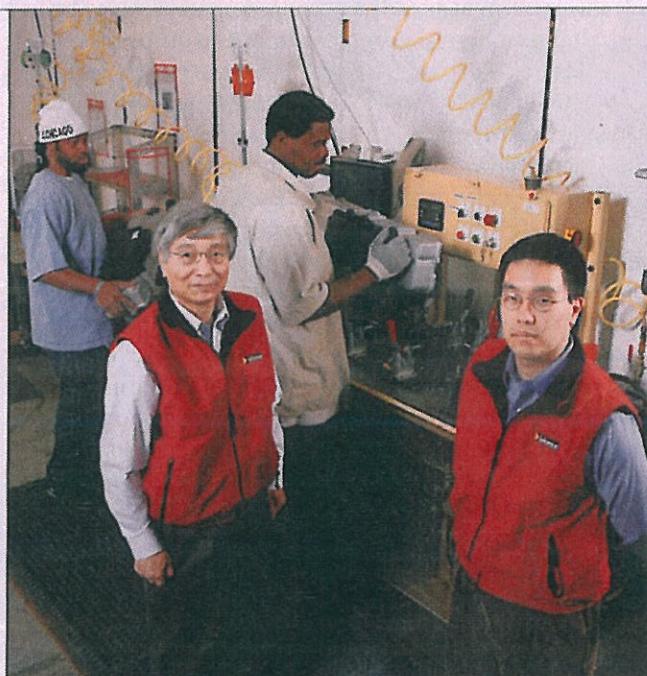
Telamon Corp.—Telamon was the overall BKD Indiana Excellence Award winner, as well as the winner in the manufacturing and distribution category.

The Carmel-based company has long served the telecommunications industry with a variety of engineering, installation and materials-management services. But did you know it also makes automotive parts?

"We're always looking to diversify," says Stan Chen, vice president and general manager. "We had a rough patch in 2001 to 2003 when the telecom industry was struggling and we struggled as well."

Beyond hoping to diversify, there was a corporate desire to do more business with Indiana companies, and "the company is very entrepreneurial in nature," Chen says. Thus began a project that won Telamon the 2007 BKD Indiana Excellence Award.

In 2005, Columbus-based Cummins Inc. hired Telamon



Overall award winner

When the telecommunications industry struggled, Albert and Stanley Chen's Telamon Corp. in Carmel diversified into automotive subassembly work.

for a kitting and fulfillment project, assembling kits of gasket parts for aftermarket sales. "We were straightforward with them and said that

we have no experience in this industry, so there might be a learning curve," Chen says, "and they were very gracious with us."

Telamon found that the skill sets matched its telecom work, and achieved 100 percent on-time delivery with zero defects. "From there we moved into light subassembly of tubes and hoses and clamps," he continues. After that Telamon sought and

won a host of other Cummins business, then began pursuing other auto-related contracts. Telamon has grown auto-related revenues from \$7 million in 2006 to \$84 million in 2007, with 2008 auto revenues forecast to hit about \$150 million. Some 40 Telamon jobs can be linked to its decision to venture into automotive work.

The other finalists in the category included:

Cook Pharmica—In Bloomington, massive buildings where RCA color televisions were made sat empty for six years before Cook Pharmica stepped in. The new company, part of the Cook Group, was seeking space for a biopharmaceutical contract manufacturing plant. The TV plant offered a place for the company to get started, with plenty of room to grow. Cook Pharmica called the effort Project Phoenix, and it quickly created office and lab space and a manufacturing line, with shelled-in space for a second line. Cook Pharmica's privately held status allowed for quick decisions, and that

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COVER STORY

be followed, and how client services directors should be involved. The Cripe Way has had significant impact, increasing revenue, reducing expenses, generating more repeat business and improving employee satisfaction levels.

Design-Aire Engineering—The way energy prices are headed, one would think that every business in the state would be clamoring to find ways to save. The people at Design-Aire Engineering in Indianapolis were surprised to learn about a year ago that no Indiana companies had looked into the federal tax deductions that the Energy Policy Act of 2005 offered to encourage projects designed to save energy—and the benefits were scheduled to expire after 2007. So the engineering firm launched a marketing initiative to generate interest in energy efficiency and explain the benefits and tax breaks. It hosted seminars and partnered with utilities and others to get the word out. In six months, the firm helped 23 Indiana companies collect tax deductions worth \$9 million.

Shiel Sexton Co.—Shiel Sexton, an Indianapolis construction company, had created strategic plans before, but the plans had never looked ahead more than two or three years. The company decided its long-term growth required a longer-term, five-year plan. To develop it, Shiel Sexton spent six months in intensive planning and research, arriving at fundamental pillars of success. Principals of the firm encouraged all employees to rally around the plan, and upon those pillars built operational business plans and created



scorecards for measurement of success. After four years, the company achieved nearly 30 successful outcomes, including a new project-management system, better alignment of expert teams, and an ROI benchmark for overhead expenses.

US Signcrafters Inc.—Based in Osceola, US Signcrafters has learned through the years to plan ahead and be more proactive, and that has led to stability and greater success. The company's management notes that US Signcrafters used to operate at a crazy, reactive pace that seemed to never end. Today, the business approach is more stable and proactive, and managers report feeling a lot more in control of where they're heading. They pay more attention to the kind of work they want in the future and plan sales efforts around that, and as

Run like a business

Ellen Rosenthal is CEO of Conner Prairie Museum in Fishers that's become customer focused with new activities for families and increased attendance.

a result no longer need to rush through backlogged orders. US Signcrafters has earned numerous awards that validate its business approach, including a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Blue Chip Enterprise Award.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT AND GOVERNMENT

Conner Prairie Museum—It's not a great time for outdoor history museums—some institutions have seen attendance drop by 20 percent or more. Conner Prairie Museum in Fishers,

on the other hand, sought to increase its attendance in 2006 by 5 percent. Its efforts made it the winner in the not-for-profit and government category.

One key, says president and CEO Ellen Rosenthal, was to think in business terms. "The business we're in is not always considered a business, but we see it as one and that's part of the reason we're successful," she says. And as a business-minded organization, "our strategy is very customer-focused. We've completely revamped our product and become much more attuned to the interests and needs of families with children."

Among many other efforts, Conner Prairie added new features including baby farm animals, new theatrical vignettes, hands-on activities and revitalized programming. It also expanded its marketing efforts to spotlight the improvements and raise awareness of special Conner Prairie events.

The result: General admission attendance grew by 30 percent in 2006, and added another 24 percent in 2007. Membership grew by 15 percent in 2006 and another 12 percent in 2007 to its highest level ever. And the industry has taken notice, awarding Conner Prairie the prestigious Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History and sending benchmarking groups to see the positive changes Conner Prairie has made.

Other finalists in the not-for-profit and government category were:

Girl Scouts of Limberlost Council—The Limberlost Council, based in