



Ernst & Young awards tech entrepreneurs

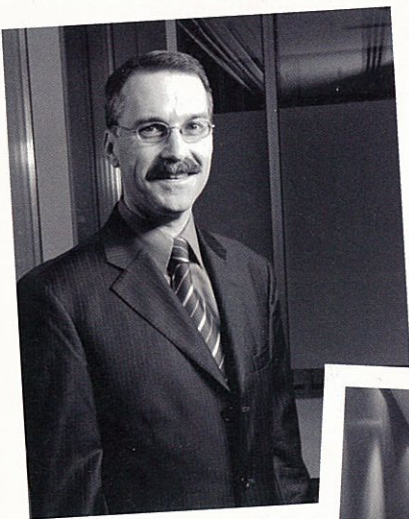
The Australian Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year program is run annually across five regions. Regional winners were announced last month. National category winners and one overall Australian Entrepreneur Of The Year will be announced on 12 November in Sydney. The overall winner goes on to represent Australia at the World Entrepreneur Of The Year Awards in Monte Carlo.



Eastern Region

SCOTT FREW

Distribution Central – Entrepreneur Of The Year – Products
Scott Frew (left) bought Firewall Systems in 2004, a small, Sydney-based IT security company with impressive revenues. Two years later revenue had increased seven-fold, with the company opening offices in Brisbane and New Zealand. In 2007, in an industry first, he disengaged all the generic distribution pieces from his business units, calling the remainder Distribution Central. In addition, Distribution Central differentiated itself by building its manufacturers a configurator that allowed them to develop a quote for a complex IT system in a matter of seconds where previously this had taken days. Scott also built an asset management system that allowed partners and end users to see where their assets were physically located.



Central Region

WINNER: RAHMON COUPE

YourAmigo – Entrepreneur Of The Year – Technology and Emerging Industries

In 2002, YourAmigo launched its first product, Enterprise Search. Coupe (left) saw a larger opportunity in the internet search engine optimisation market, and realised the limitation of a fixed-fee licence model. He launched Spider Linker, which made invisible content in e-commerce sites visible to internet search engines, and opened US and British offices in 2003.



Eastern Region

WINNER: ROBERT CASTANEDA

CustomWare – Entrepreneur Of The Year – Services

In the aftermath of the dot.com crash, Robert Castaneda (above) left Silicon Valley and returned to Australia with a plan to establish an IT services company based on five core values: delight the customer, share the knowledge, think team, focus on the outcome and talk straight. In 2001 he established CustomWare and in 2004, a \$1 million contract with Sony took CustomWare into another growth phase, in which Robert opened a Malaysian development centre. Similarly, in 2007, the company opened a New Zealand office on the back of a Telecom NZ contract.

Southern Region

RUSLAN KOGAN

Kogan Technologies – Entrepreneur Of The Year – Young

In three years, with no start-up capital, Ruslan Kogan (right) has reinvented the supply chain for consumer electronic goods, in the process building a thriving business. In 2005, shocked at the cost of buying an LCD TV, Kogan began researching a cheaper way to access the same product. He believed the answer was to assemble the highest-quality components from other manufacturers and sell direct to the consumer through minimalistic online retailing. He continues to harness the power of the internet and public relations. Kogan's short-term plans include replicating his business model in different product markets and launching in the US and Britain by the end of the year.



Eastern Region

JOHN-PAUL SYRIATOWICZ

Squiz – Entrepreneur Of The Year – Technology and Emerging Industries

In 1998, John-Paul Syriatowicz (left) founded Squiz as a website company focusing on technical solutions. He followed two controversial business philosophies: to develop open source software; and to operate with little or no debt. Under its open source business model, Squiz gives its clients free software. Instead of licensing fees, the company's revenue comes from professional services. Today, Squiz is one the world's largest web content management vendors, with 170 staff in five countries.