

THE 2012 SMB 150 LIST REVEALED

SMB NATION AND SMB
TECHNOLOGY
NETWORK
PRESENT THE
2ND ANNUAL
SMB 150
AWARDS

By Harry Brelsford, Chairman
and Publisher, SMB Nation

Like good manners, leadership is always in good taste. Good times or not, there are always those achievers in any community who pay it forward, send the elevator back down and give more than they take. We believe such a list is presented here with the naming of the SMB 150 influencers for 2012. So raise your glass high, and toast these heroes for the SMB technology community.

HOW WE GOT THERE

In an industry full of awards such as the ASCII Cup, MSP Mentor 100+250, CRN 100+500+ et al, Channelnomics' Channel Influencers and many more, we purposefully sought to be distinctive and different.

In creating the 2012 contest, we borrowed some of the best tactics used by the amazing Ramon Ray at his Smallbiztechnology.com site and his "Small Business Influencers" contest. Ray's brilliant contest approach includes using both a popular vote and judges. In our case, we allowed the popular vote to account for 40 percent of the weighted total. The judges accounted for the remaining 60 percent of the award calculation. Judges included Jeff Connally (CEO, CMIT); Chip Reaves (former CEO, Computer Troubleshooters); Josh Peterson (COO, FusionTek); and Larry Schulze (CEO and founder, Taylor Business Group) who cast unbiased and independent votes for the "true" SMB 150 technology influencers (in their educated opinion). The judges submitted their votes free of outside influences, not consulting the popular vote totals to avoid the appearance and practical effects of bias.

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OF COURSE we also wanted to hear from this year's SMB 150 winners, so we reached out to a few of this year's honorees for their take on being nominated, and ultimately winning this coveted award. Long-time SMB community leader Karl Palachuk shared the following regarding his inclusion in this year's SMB 150: "I am very honored to be named to this list once again," he said. "And I'm delighted to share the honor with community and business leaders from all over the world."

Palachuk is known for his user group advocacy, content and community participation that includes hosting and speaking at events. For example, his SMB online conference will be presented in late June 2012.

We also heard from additional winners, as noted below:

"I commend SMB Nation and BlackBerry and thank the SMB community for their vision to recognize those who are taking early stakes in the rapidly growing SaaS and Cloud space. SaaS MAX is committed to helping the channel learn and profit from new SaaS opportunities while efficiently managing all of their SaaS deals, sales commissions and vendor relationships in a single place." – DINA MOSKOWITZ, FOUNDER AND CEO, SAASMAX, INC.

"I am grateful to both my industry peers and the SMB 150 judging panel for extending this honor to me as a member of our industry's best and brightest thought leaders. As a small business owner myself, it gives me a sense of pride to know that I am grouped with other individuals in my industry whom share my thoughts on why it is so important to promote the SMB community and the individuals who serve it." – CHRIS WISER, FOUNDER AND CEO, TECHSQUAD IT

REACTION

"We sincerely appreciate the nomination. My team and I look to do one thing: serve our clients by giving them the tools, confidence and capabilities they need to take their business, income, profits and personal success to the next level. Although my clients' success is reward enough, everyone here at



Technology Marketing Toolkit appreciates the nod from the industry. I also want to point out that everything we do is possible because of the brilliant professionals working with us, namely the entire 'Team Robin,' our Producers Club Captains, my Genius League members and the Sponsors who make a LOT of things possible. All of these folks go the extra mile to give back and strive for excellence." – ROBIN ROBINS, PRESIDENT, TECHNOLOGY MARKETING TOOLKIT

"It is all about service. Helping IT service organizations go from good to great to awesome is why I get up in the morning. Having this acknowledgement from my peers makes me realize that I am on the right track in helping our community as a whole." – STUART CRAWFORD, PRESIDENT AND CMO, ULISTIC INC.

"I am honored to be included and representing Cisco, and women in IT, in this year's SMB150! I am in esteemed company of 149 fellow winners whom I admire, and respect, as well as all of the wonderful nominees. It is especially humbling to be in the company of 23 exceptional women represented on the list. It was wonderful to see such advancement and recognition of women in IT and inclusion and diversity of channel members from all over the world!" – MICHELLE RAGUSA, CISCO RELATIONSHIP MANAGER

SMB 150

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Aaron Booker | Dina Moskowitz | Lee Evans |
| Ahsun Saleem | Dona Keating | Len DiCostanzo |
| Alan Helbush | Doug Young | Lenin Srinivasan |
| Alex Rogers | Douglas Grabowski | Leonard Dimiceli |
| Alistair Forbes | Drew Phelps | Linda Brotherton |
| Allen Miller | Ed Correia | Mark Crall |
| Amy Babinchak | Elvis Gustin | Mark Hicks |
| Amy Luby | Eric Ligman | Matt Makowicz |
| Andy Goodman | Eric Townsend | Matt Nachtrab |
| Andy Trish | Eriq Neale | Meaghan Kelly |
| Anurag Agrawal | Gareth Brown | Michael Jenkin |
| Arlin Sorensen | Gary Pica | Michael Reuben |
| Arnie Bellini | George Sierchio | Michelle Ragusa |
| Austin McChord | Greg Starks | Mitch Garvis |
| Barbara Dove | Harry Brelsford | MJ Shoer |
| Ben M Johnson | Hilton Travis | Nancy Williams |
| Bill Hole | Ian Moyse | Ofer Shimrat |
| Bob Godgart | James Kernan | Oliver Sommer |
| Bob Penland | Jamison West | Paul Dippell |
| Bradley J. Dinerman | Jan Spring | Peter Sandiford |
| Brian Sherman | Jay McBain | Ramon L. Garcia |
| Carl Mazzanti | Jeannine Edwards | Rayanne Buchianico |
| Carlos Fernando Paleo da Rocha | Jeff Dryall | Richard Kenyon |
| Carlson Colomb | Jeff Middleton | Rick Bahl |
| Chris Amori | Jeff Shreeve | Rob Rae |
| Chris Bangs | Jeremiah Ilges | Robin Robins |
| Chris Chase | Jerry Koutavas | Robyn Davis |
| Chris Smith | Jim Muglia | Ryan Morris |
| Chris Sterbenc | Joe Hillis | Scott Barlow |
| Chris Timm | John Iasiuolo | Scott Cayouette |
| Chris Wiser | John Krikke | Scott Schreiman |
| Christy Sacco | Josh Freifield | Scott Scrogin |
| Cindy Bates | Josh Peterson | Sean Daniel |
| Corey Simpson | Joy Belinda Beland | Sean Sweeney |
| Curtis Hicks | Justin Moore | Shari Godgart |
| Damian Leibaschoff | Karen Christian | Steve Copeland |
| Dan Sturgill | Karen Guarino | Steve Harper |
| Dan Wensley | Karl Palachuk | Steve Noel |
| Dana M. Epp | Keith Nelson | Steven Banks |
| Dave Foxall | Kent McNall | Steven Teiger |
| Dave Seibert | Kevin Hoffman | Stuart Crawford |
| Dave Sobel | Kevin Royalty | Stuart Selbst |
| David Bellini | Kevin Weilbacher | Suresh Ramani |
| David Schafran | Larry Doyle | Susan Bradley |
| Debi Bush | Laurie McCabe | Susanne Dansey |
| | Lawrence Hsu | Ted Hulsey |
| | | Ted Roller |
| | | Tero Leskinen |
| | | Thomas Fox |
| | | Tim Barrett |
| | | Tim Beard |
| | | Todd Thibodeaux |
| | | Todd Nielsen |
| | | Travis Austin |
| | | Vlad Mazek |
| | | Wain Kellum |
| | | Walter Scott |
| | | Wayne Small |
| | | Zak Karsan |

SMB 150 CONTEST

- Nomination (Early 2012)
- Popular Voting (March/April 2012)
- Judges Voting (April 2012)
- Election Results (April 2012)
- Award Celebration (May 16th LA, CA)

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The popular vote went viral with candidates campaigning to aggressively solicit as many votes as possible. It was BIG FUN in a true election year with more than 68,710 votes cast. A voter was allowed to vote once per day (24 hours) for the candidates of his or her choice. Campaign techniques mirrored real-world campaigns; tweeting, Facebook entries, press releases, telephone calls, emails, direct mail, shaking hands and kissing babies! We even hosted a 60-minute online debate!

In 2012, we created categories to better define the candidates. Our belief is that an influencer can be an expert, leader, media professional, partner or vendor. The open-minded SMB technology community is inclusive, and we wanted our contest to reflect exactly that. Category definitions are:

EXPERTS – MVPs, technical gurus, subject matter experts, bloggers, and oth-

ers that provide information and guidance to the partner community.

LEADERS – User group or trade association leaders that better the partner community.

MEDIA – Press, authors, editors, bloggers and others that provide news and other content of interest to the partner community.

PARTNERS – MSPs, owners, VARs/VAPs, resellers, channel partners and anyone else selling to the SMB end user space.

LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

SMB 150 Recipient Eriq Neale Continues to Fight On



BY ERIQ NEALE
 Owner, EON Consulting LLC, and Partner Third Tier

THIS PARTICULAR FRIDAY AFTERNOON was stacking up to be another late-February Friday. We had a drop off in support requests, we were getting some internal documentation update, and we were getting close to finding a new office space that would make more sense for us. In fact, my employee Quinton and I were at one of the office spaces we were considering when a call came through on my cell phone that turned my world upside down.

In the week leading up to that Friday afternoon, I had gone from seeing my doctor about a strange abdominal pain to having CT and MRI scans done, to heading back to the hospital by way of the ER later that night, getting a biopsy of the tumor and a PET scan, all leading to the same conclusion: I had cancer.

I had no idea where it had come from, and the biopsy showed conflicting information about the type of cancer it was, so I was scheduled to have a liver resection done so they could biopsy a much larger tissue sample.

My liver surgery took place at the end of March 2011, and I spent the next month recovering from that surgery. In addition to the liver tumor, they found a cancerous lymph node and other tumors growing on the underside of my abdomen. Surgery was not going to be able to remove all of the traces of cancer, so I was then referred over to chemotherapy.

I started the chemo around May 1, and thus the downhill battle began. The first chemo cocktail they tried nearly killed me. Another chemo concoction was tried 8 weeks later, and while it wasn't as bad as the first chemo, I certainly couldn't say I was enjoying going through the treatments. I took a short break from chemo in July, and started taking an oral chemo medication in August. I tolerated that medication much better, but after doing a couple of cycles of it, we found that it wasn't preventing the growth of the cancer in the way that we had hoped.

I then started another oral chemo drug in September, and by the time I finished the cycles in December, we did another scan and found the nodules that had made their way into my right lung along with other new growths found in my abdomen. After a visit to MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, I started another chemo round in January, and we did another scan roughly 6 weeks after starting it. Same result, nothing stopping the growth of the cancer.

You may note I've not said anything about my businesses that I work with, Third Tier or EON Consulting. That's because I took a medical leave of absence starting when I had the liver surgery. Both organizations managed to keep moving and growing without my input, although I did check in frequently to see what was up.

In March of 2012, I made the decision, with careful consideration of my wife, and the rest of my family, that I was not going to continue with chemotherapy. I wanted the time I have left here to be time that I enjoy and can physically move around. That wouldn't happen while on chemo. So at this point, I have stopped all cancer treatment and have gone under hospice care, and we wait to see how long I'll be around. This has been incredibly difficult, and part of my coping mechanism has been to write periodic updates to my spot at CaringBridge, an online journal for patients going through medical care. If you want to read more details, you can follow me at <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/eriqnealejournal>.

In many ways, I feel lucky that I have received the diagnosis early, even though going through the treatment has been anything but a joyride. I have been able to take time to get my affairs in order so my wife doesn't have to deal with those things on her own during a period where she will be in great grief. I have donated my body to a local medical school, so I can still continue to educate people even after I'm gone. I've been able to transfer essential knowledge to my business associated at Third Tier and EON Consulting. I've also been able to make time to spend with people I might not have done so otherwise.

I have no idea how much time I have left, but I have learned a very important lesson: Live every day to the fullest; and I don't mean that in a motivational slogan way. I have really worked on enjoying each day and finding at least one good thing about every day that I get to spend here. I hate that I won't be present to receive my SMB Top 150 award or at any of the other events that I would normally attend, but that's the straw that I've drawn for this life. I'm choosing to make the time I have left the best time I can have with what I have left. **N**

VENDORS – Sponsors, hardware and software manufacturers, service providers, and anyone else providing something for sale to the partner community.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION!

A shout out to BlackBerry as the primary sponsor for the SMB 150 contest, along with additional support from OKI Data Americas, CharTec, Quest Software/ PacketTrap and others for supporting our efforts to prosecute a progressive and world-class professional awards contest. Our sponsors will be supporting our May 16th awards ceremony in Los Angeles, Calif., which has committed attendees from the U.S., Brazil, Australia and Canada. At

“LOOKING AT THE LIST OF WINNERS, IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT THE QUALITY OF THESE UNSUNG SMB HEROES HAS BEEN WELL REPRESENTED.”

the event, each SMB 150 incumbent will be awarded an amazing award plaque and a BlackBerry PlayBook (64GB). “I encourage everyone in the SMB channel community to join me in celebrating the accomplishments of the men and women who made the SMB 150 list,” said Josh Freifield, President of the SMB Technology Network. “Each and every one of them has spent countless hours growing our community and deserves every accolade we can give them. I can’t wait to toast them in Los Angeles.”

THE FINAL WORD

Perhaps Freifield said it best when asked for his summation of this year’s SMB 150 Channel Influencers. “Looking at the list of winners, it becomes clear that the quality of these unsung SMB heroes has been well represented,” he added. “By utilizing a voting system in conjunction with an esteemed panel of judges consisting of Jeff Connally, Josh Peterson, Chip Reaves, and Larry Schulze, we’ve been able to honor people based on their contribution and participation in this closely knit community.” **SN**

By Joseph Walker, Contributing Writer, SMB Nation

RON FRERE’S LESSONS FOR EFFICIENCY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

IT’S TRUE that many of this year’s SMB 150 winners most definitely have the work-life balance situation to a tee. However, there is one member of our community that while not included in this year’s SMB 150, still deserves a mention on how to make the most of the all-important “work-life-balance, and that’s Ron Frere.

Ron Frere is many an IT professional’s dream come true. He started his own IT consultancy in 1992. By 2004, he had earned enough money for him and his wife to buy the Snow Goose Inn. Eight years later, he’s living in Vermont, away from the hustle and bustle of Boston. While he still maintains a number of longtime clients, he spends much of his time relishing in the natural beauty of rural Vermont while keeping inn with his wife.

Ron’s story is a lesson in efficiency and work-life balance. After his kids were off to college, he and his wife decided to buy the Snow Goose Inn. When I asked him why, he said: “Peace in the family!” popped out before anything else. Ron had had his career, and it was time for his wife to have hers.

Only, Ron wasn’t quite finished with his. His clients—mostly small law firms—had no intention of letting him leave. Ron’s need to serve clients from several hours away propelled him to heights of efficiency that left me slack-jawed and jealous. About three times a month, he made the drive of 150 miles down rural state highways to spend three days meeting with clients in eastern Massachusetts, Boston and the Connecticut shore.

When he’s not on the road, Ron does all of his work from the comfort of his country manor. When I asked him how, he explained to me the magic of remote monitoring. All of his clients’ servers have remote management installed, and most of them have remote power management. All of his production servers run on Hyper-V and are backed up throughout the day for easy recovery. (He mentioned that he especially likes ShadowProtect for quick and painless backup and recovery.)

When I asked Ron how he had grown such a successful business, he paused for a moment. “I never did much marketing,” he said eventually. “When I started my business, I knew I wanted to go vertical. It was going to be either doctors or lawyers, and I chose lawyers.”

I could hear the smile in Ron’s voice when he added, “From the beginning, I lived by an important principle: I don’t work for a business unless the owner makes more money than me.” Ron assured me that what he meant was he wanted to work for established businesses that were on their way up, not fly-by-night operations always looking for the cheapest shortcuts.

I sat back and thought: Here was a man who had barely spent a dime on marketing, who was spending most of his time working in the comfort of his own home, whose wife was living her dream, whose motto was, “Peace in the family!” I was hesitant to pump Ron for more information, but I had to know more. This guy had what I wanted.

Happily, he obliged. “Network, network, network,” he offered. Ron couldn’t stress enough the importance of talking with both his peers and people in the business community. He still receives calls on a regular basis from new potential clients, and they’re all referrals. He said that what small firms most appreciate is how he functions as their Director of IT. He’s decidedly not an MSP; he’s not trying to sell a package.

What Ron does is sit down with each client and figure out what they need. He takes responsibility for their servers, email, phone, and whatever other IT services they need. Ron makes sure all of his clients have exactly what they need to accomplish their goals at exactly the right price. And if something goes wrong, he knows how (or where to turn) to fix it.

“Do you worry about competition?” I asked him.

“My clients receive sales calls on a regular basis. The MSPs are quite aggressive actually, and they usually have some sort of attractive package. But my clients don’t want a package. They want a Director of IT. They want a relationship.”

Ron hasn’t lost a client yet. **SN**



Ron Frere (left) recently hosted Harrybbb (right) in Vermont at the Snow Goose Inn, which he co-owns with his wife.

Photo by Tracy Anna Bader