

## Honoring success

### ***Seeking nominations for the 2004 Business Growth Awards***

*By Dustin S. Klein*

Michael Dell likes to tell a story about how, in his company's early days, he applied for every award that he and his young management team came across.

When pressed about why he would take the time to do so, Dell said that capturing honors, no matter how small, helped provide credibility for his fledgling computer company. He could point to an award for sales or employee growth and say, "We were able to outperform the competition over this X-year period," or an award for customer satisfaction and say, "Our customers love our products and services."

All of this helped Dell put his company's name on the map long before it reached billions in revenue or even went public.

Business success comes in many forms. You may reach a milestone set out as part of a strategic plan. A financially troubled company could pull itself back from the brink of bankruptcy or turn itself around and discover profitability. Young firms may add employees, double or triple revenue, or land significant new clients.

Growing any business is a difficult endeavor. Controlling costs, increasing revenue, attracting and retaining top-notch employees, maximizing or expanding your space and building stronger customer relationships take considerable time, effort and energy. But that doesn't mean it's an impossible task.

Dozens, if not hundreds, of companies across Northeast Ohio have savvy management teams that understand how to achieve success at various levels.

That's why Smart Business is proud to team with Cascade Capital Corp. once again to present the 2004 Business Growth Awards. It's an opportunity to honor companies in Summit, Portage, Medina, Ashland, Holmes and Wayne counties that have experienced significant sales or employment growth.

So if your business has achieved an increase of at least 100 percent in sales growth or of \$5 million in total sales, or increased total employment by at least 50 percent or 25 employees over the past five years, then we're looking for you. And if you're a service provider and your client roster includes companies that fit the criteria, consider nominating them for this prestigious honor.

Winners will be honored in October at a banquet in Akron.