

Top 25: Entrepreneurs - Virginia is home to innovative startups and national Brands

February 28, 2011

2000-2010

Bahman Atefi

Alion Science and Technology, McLean

In 2002, Atefi led the effort in purchasing the assets of another company, IIT Research Institute, to create Alion, an employee-owned corporation. Today, it is among the largest private companies in the greater Washington area. Alion, where Atefi is chairman and CEO, has grown from a company of 1,600 workers to nearly 3,000. It provides technical and operational services to military and commercial customers.

Magid Abraham

comScore Inc., Reston

If you want information on the digital world, this is your go-to company. Abraham founded an industry-leading company in 1999 that measures and analyzes website traffic for clients. He's considered a visionary in various forms of consumer modeling and market research. The company's financial results from the fourth quarter of 2010 showed a 52 percent increase in revenue, up to \$51.2 million, compared with the same time last year.

Shawn Boyer

SnagAJob, Henrico County

In 2000, the founder of SnagAJob.com launched what would become a household name for hourly wage job seekers. Honored in 2008 as the nation's Small Business Person of the Year by the SBA, the company now claims a client base of more than 20 million registered users.

Ashley Chen

ActioNet, Inc., Vienna

A fixture on the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's yearly Fantastic 50 list of the state's fastest-growing companies, IT services vendor ActioNet Inc. was launched in 1998 by Taiwanese immigrant Ashley Chen with a \$35 credit card payment to reserve her Internet domain. A client list that began with a \$50,000 contract from the U.S. Dept. of Transportation now includes many prominent government agencies.

Tony Jimenez

Microtechnologies LLC, Vienna

Starting a service-disabled, military veteran-owned Small Business Administration 8(a) company in 2004, U.S. Army vet Jimenez says Microtech has posted a 4,000 percent increase in revenue through 2010, the result of numerous computer contracts with all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. In December, the Mid-Atlantic Hispanic Chamber of Commerce named Jimenez its Entrepreneur of the Year.

Sheila Crump Johnson

CEO, Salamander Hospitality, Middleburg

Using the estimated \$1.5 billion she collected from the sale of Black Entertainment Television (BET), Johnson got into the luxury hotel business. Salamander Hospitality has developed properties outside Charleston, S.C., and near Tampa, Fla., and expects to open a 168-room hotel, spa and convention retreat on a portion of Johnson's Loudoun County estate in 2012. She's also a partner in Monumental Sports & Entertainment, which owns Washington, D.C.'s three major professional sports teams.

Dr. Edward G. Murphy

Carilion Clinic, Roanoke

Murphy decided in 2006 to convert the eight-hospital Carilion Health System network into a physician-led clinic. By 2007 work began on a medical school in partnership with Virginia Tech. Last August, the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine opened with a charter class of 42 students. In 2009, Murphy was among 30 U.S. health-care executives that Healthcare Magazine said "excel on the leadership side of health care in an extraordinary manner."

Connie G. Nyholm

Virginia International Speedway, Danville

The Martinsville native and former New York real estate developer returned to her native Southern Virginia in 1998. Her mission? Rebuild the Virginia International Raceway. Today, the 1,200-acre motorcycle and sports car racing resort attracts racers and vacationers from around the world, providing a boost to the area's economy.

Debra Ruh

TecAccess, Rockville

The founder and president of TecAccess has received many awards for her company's efforts to hire employees with disabilities and to equip them for employment through technology. In 2009, the company was ranked as one of the top businesses in the country by Diversity.com. Ruh has been heralded as an agent of change for recognizing that telecommuting and adaptive technologies can be used to tap into what has been a largely unused labor pool.