

**2020**

**Annual  
Awards for  
Communications  
Excellence**

**Judges'  
Comments**

The AACE competition was created to help ESOP companies learn from each other. The judges' comments are an important part of the learning process. Learn why winners were chosen and take notes on some of the bright ideas the judges appreciated.



## Video

### Companies with 250 and fewer employees

**Winner: Fisher Tank Company**

Fisher Tank's interview-style video gave an unscripted view into the history of the ESOP and how it positively impacts employees at all levels. The video's style creates a feeling of sincerity and allows viewers to hear from the people who matter most—employee owners—in their own words.

**Runner Up: Butler/Till**

With excellent graphics and professional production values, Butler/Till's marketing video succinctly and effectively communicated the value of being an employee owner at this ESOP company.

### Companies with more than 250 employees

**Winner: Newport Restaurant Group**

The judges were impressed with the production values and messaging of Newport Restaurant Group's video, which effectively conveyed a great deal of information in a short period of time. The video also did a fantastic job of showing how employee ownership translates to an excellent experience for customers.

**Runner Up: VGM Group**

VGM Group's video submission was selected as runner up for its positive tone and for effectively highlighting the important work the company's employee owners do for the community. Not only did employee owners engage in the community-oriented activities that appeared on camera, they also helped produce the video by providing narration.

## Intranet

### Companies with 250 and fewer employees

**Winner: R&K Solutions**

R&K's intranet shone above the competition because the company made a conscious effort to rebuild their intranet based on employee owner feedback. Their efforts clearly worked, and the fact that employee owners had a say in how this important tool was designed was important to the judges. The judges also appreciated that employee ownership was a primary menu tab in R&K's Intranet.

**Runner Up: DVL Group**

DVL Group had a solid entry for the Intranet category, with judges commenting on its excellent organization and thoughtful presentation. The ESOP is presented first and foremost on this intranet, appearing in some way on almost every tab.

### Companies with more than 250 employees

**Winner: Acadian Companies**

Acadian's entry gave the judges an in-depth tour of a very comprehensive intranet that is well suited to providing ESOP education and has become an important place for employee owners to meet and share information. One important factor was that Acadian provided judges with a video guided tour that quickly and effectively conveying how the intranet worked and demonstrated its value to employee owners.

**Runner Up: Burns & McDonnell**

The judges were impressed with the engagement levels Burns & McDonnell has achieved through its intranet. Posts about employee owners and the ESOP received hundreds of comments, which is quite an achievement and outstanding proof of the company's intranet concept.

## Printed Materials

### Companies with 250 and fewer employees

**Winner: Cisco Eagle**

Cisco Eagle's printed materials included a monthly newsletter that impressed the judges with its detailed, fresh content. The newsletters, coupled with posters and infographics found around the office, provide excellent education about employee ownership. Because appreciation is an important part of their culture, employee owners have an opportunity each month to recognize a colleague's contributions with a printed certificate.

**Runner Up: MidSouth Building Supply**

MidSouth Building Supply's entry included a variety of well-produced printed marketing documents, brochures, and business cards. The judges were impressed with the fact that on every document, MidSouth made it abundantly clear it is proud to be a 100% employee owned company.

### Companies with more than 250 employees

**Winner: Van Meter Inc.**

Van Meter's entry was lauded by the judges for their "Own Up" theme, which carried through an impressive array of printed materials—including a recruitment brochure, tradeshow booth, newspaper advertisements, ownership brochures, welcome packets, magnets, and more! The materials were well thought out and professionally executed.

**Runner Up: H2I**

H2I Group focused on making a few very professional and informative print infographics for their employee owners. The company effectively used these materials to educate employee owners on the complexities of ESOPs.

## Employee Ownership Marketing

### Companies with 250 and fewer employees

**Winner: MidSouth Building Supply**

MidSouth was extremely successful in integrating its 100% employee owned messaging into all its marketing materials. First and foremost, it's built into their logo, so it automatically appears everywhere. The judges further noted that MidSouth made the conscious effort to explain in their materials how employee ownership makes them a better option for their prospective customers and new hires.

**Runner Up: Mountain Hardware & Sports**

Mountain Hardware made great use of its social media channels, Facebook, and Instagram to market its ESOP. In addition, the company integrated information about the ESOP and employee ownership into its new website, showing that Mountain Hardware takes seriously its role in educating prospective hires and the public about the ESOP.

### Companies with more than 250 employees

**Winner: Gardener's Supply Company**

Gardener's has integrated employee ownership marketing seamlessly into its most important sales tool—its website. A page on their website is devoted exclusively to employee ownership and effectively explains what it is and the positive effect it has on employee owners, customers, and the community.

**Runner Up: Newport Restaurant Group**

Employee ownership is front and center on the Newport Group website. The home page prominently displays a section titled: Want to own the place? The content emphasizes how employee ownership benefits employees and customers. Videos on the site show employee owners taking pride in their work.



## One Special Event

Companies with 250 and fewer employees

**Winner: Melton Machine**

Melton did a fantastic job planning its “Pinewood Derby” events around a theme that focused on Employee Ownership Month. The theme, Racing to Retirement, allowed employee owners to understand ESOPs and encouraged them to participate.

**Runner Up: Murray**

Murray hit all the high points needed for a great event: The company offered great education to employee owners while connecting with the community and advocating for ESOPs with local government officials.

Companies with more than 250 employees

**Winner: Morton Buildings**

Mortingo, by Morton Buildings, was an excellent example of a well-planned and thoughtful ESOP event. The judges found it to be creative and original. The event effectively reflected Morton’s culture and generated high levels of engagement.

**Runner Up: Recology**

Recology used a clever puzzle theme that brought all employee owners together and truly showed how important employee ownership is to the organization’s culture.

**Runner Up: ITA Group**

The judges felt ITA’s vesting events were well executed and were impressed that retired employee owners came back to present vests to newly vested participants.

## Total Communications

Companies with 250 and fewer employees

**Winner: Geographic Information Services Inc.**

GIS Inc.’s integrated communications made use of the company’s core competency—GIS systems and technology—to track and celebrate employee ownership activities. Communications about employee ownership were targeted toward employee owners, customers, and the greater community.

**Runner Up: DVL Group**

The judges were impressed by the quality of DVL Group’s presentation materials, including colorful graphics and other materials that made the ESOP come to life and captured the spirit of employee ownership.

Companies with more than 250 employees

**Winner: Burns & McDonnell**

Excellent branding and marketing materials complement very strong printed materials and outstanding events offered throughout the year. Burns and McDonnell presented strong entries in every AACE category and was the clear choice as Total Communications winner.

**Runner Up: Travel and Transport**

Travel and Transport’s new Director of Communications position, weekly company newsletter, summer roadshow, printed materials, and video series came together to provide a wide variety of communications on many different channels.

## Series of Special Events

Companies with 250 and fewer employees

**Winner: Murray**

Murray’s series of events—which were chosen by the employee owners—was an original and exciting way to celebrate the company’s anniversary and employee ownership.

**Runner Up: Geographic Information Services Inc.**

GIS’s series of events were comprehensive and made use of games and rewards to provide education about employee ownership and build corporate culture. The effort put into this program paid off with high levels of participation. The entry stood out to the judges in a competitive category because of its originality and use of technology in event planning.

Companies with more than 250 employees

**Winner: Woodward Communications**

Woodward accomplished the task of uniting more than 500 employee owners at 20+ locations in shared learning and fun for Employee Ownership Month. The company’s planning, organization, and attention to detail impressed the judges.

**Runner Up: Proponent**

Judges agreed that what set proponent’s entry apart was the company’s use of friendly competition to benefit the American Cancer Society and The Employee Ownership Foundation.

