

# Success Includes Partnerships, Sharing

By Rebecca Patrick

Vision and innovation are among the core strengths of the 41 organizations tapped this year as Indiana Companies to Watch. Universal strategies like putting customers first and hiring great talent naturally play key roles, too. Beyond such a casual glance, you'll find each member of the 2010 class has its own unique story to tell.

As a representation of this year's group, *BizVoice*® spoke with three honorees about their companies and also gauged their views on the state's business and economic landscape:

- Kevin Bailey, president, Slingshot SEO, Indianapolis
- Paul Perkins, president, Amatrol, Jeffersonville
- Paul "Zeke" Turner, CEO, Mainstreet Property Group LLC, Cicero

## Pivotal philosophies

Targeted partnerships helped pave the way at Amatrol, which provides interactive educational services to prepare students for jobs.

"We have put a tremendous amount of investment into product development and partnering with our customers – having key clients that we develop cutting-edge products with, and then being able to take those out to the market at-large. I think that investment has been critical," Perkins surmises.

Turner cites both an organization motto of playing to one's strengths and, in particular, putting a high value on managing relationships – both client-based and otherwise – as foundations for Mainstreet Property Group's forward movement. The real estate developer specializes in senior care housing.

"Just this last year, we've had three projects added to our pipeline that came by virtue of a relationship where someone else felt we did a good job for them and was able to refer us," he offers.

Focusing on client success has also led to an "incredible amount of growth" for Slingshot SEO. The search engine optimization firm has a 100% track record of "achieving a first-page ranking on Google within a six- or 12-month period – regardless of how competitive the keyword or phrase is," Bailey reports.

He notes that an integral factor in Slingshot's client service is its ability to scale offerings and "provide the same level of service to every single client that we have."

## Information exchange

Not surprisingly, all three companies say they benefit – at least to a certain extent – by interacting with both growing and established organizations, irrespective of whether they are within or outside their industries.

"It's absolutely crucial. You don't want a business environment where people are walking around in their own little bubbles and not communicating with each other," Bailey declares.

"It's the sharing of ideas and the synergies that are created from partners talking that allow a lot of companies to get to that (next) level. I'm a big advocate of companies sharing information and helping each other out."

Turner adds, "We feel like we can learn every single day from almost any organization. We try to pull in different aspects of what companies do well and see if they apply to our business."

He cites learning from manufacturing companies as a specific example.

"The construction industry has typically run one shift during the daylight hours. What we have done is push on some of our relationships there to say there are a lot of manufacturing companies that work around the clock. We can take some of those aspects of manufacturing production line work and apply them to an industry that hasn't seen them before – and in a sense be very innovative in that," Turner explains.

The result, he reports, has been significant in at least one

### What Recognition Means

"One of the things that's important in our business – and I would certainly think in many others – is credibility. Both existing clients and new clients want to know they are dealing with companies that are staying in tune with the times and are well thought of by the community, and I think this (award) is just a very visible indicator of that credibility."

– Paul Perkins

"It confirms the values that we've had as a business since our inception and also means that we must continue to be a good role model to fellow Indiana companies looking to take their businesses to the next level."

– Kevin Bailey

"For us it's a nice kudo or indication of the work we're doing ... that you're doing a good job, you're worth paying attention to. Especially at a time when we're creating jobs and creating economic development and not a lot of people are."

– Zeke Turner



Diverse industries make up the 2010 Companies to Watch list; Amatrol (pictured) specializes in workforce training.

case, “cutting 30% to 40% off of a construction timeline, taking it from 12 months to eight months because we ran multiple job shifts on the site. That’s somewhat unheard of in the construction industry, but we are doing it. And it’s incredibly valuable to us and to our clients.”

## Wish list

While the three company leaders all praised Indiana for its business-friendly environment that attracts new ventures and encourages growth and expansion of existing companies, that doesn’t mean there isn’t room to make the state even stronger.

Bailey hones in on something that he believes would foster more overall business: an increased number of direct flights to and from Indianapolis.

Turner, meanwhile, has his sights set on improving access to capital. “The more capital we have, the faster we grow; the less we have, the slower we grow.

“If banks would get back to the business of lending to good companies and expanding those relationships then we would be in a great position, but unfortunately there are just a lot of banks right now that just have simply stopped lending,” he contends.

“Our growth could have been much stronger if the credit environment had been better. We do an awful lot of slugging it out with different financial companies.” Turner explains what once took 90 days to accomplish may now take six to nine months.

“We’re growing fast, but not nearly as fast as we would like given the opportunity that is in front of us,” he claims.

For Perkins, it’s about restarting some workforce training programs that were repealed the past few years. One example is TAG (Training Acceleration Grant), “which currently exists in other

*Continued on page 47*

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## Partnerships, Sharing

*Continued from page 25*

states, and they have continued to use it in tough economic times.

“When Indiana got rid of it was right around the time we were hiring a lot of people and really could have used some help in training some of them on the latest technologies we’re working with. So we’ve pretty much had to slug through on our own,” Perkins asserts.

“Because we are in training, one of the things we want to be able to point to and say is, ‘Look at all the cutting-edge things Indiana is doing in worker training.’

“Fortunately there have been some other things that have offset that and been good for training like Ivy Tech’s tremendous expansion, but overall it’s hard for training

organizations to do any kind of incumbent worker training. And if you’re trying to attract companies or retain companies, incumbent worker training is a critical piece of it. It would be good if Indiana made some more steps forward in that area,” he concludes.

### INFORMATION LINK

**Resources: Amatrol at [www.amatrol.com](http://www.amatrol.com)**

**Mainstreet Property Group LLC at [www.mainstreetcap.net/home.asp](http://www.mainstreetcap.net/home.asp)**

**Slingshot SEO at [www.slingshotseo.com](http://www.slingshotseo.com)**