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The 2008 Fast Tech 50 symbolizes Houston's entrepreneurial spirit

It's been six weeks since the Houston region felt the impact of Hurricane Ike. While many areas are still recovering, the entrepreneurial leaders and emerging companies are still humming along.

The Houston community came together in ways that are reminiscent of times gone by. Neighbors came together, offered help and took an interest in the welfare of each other so that all could make it through those tough days after the storm passed.

That same spirit is found within the emerging market community. With entrepreneurial leaders from all backgrounds, service providers and investment communities offering their assistance, the emerging companies of Houston are finally getting the national respect long deserved.

Several national entrepreneurial magazines are now mentioning many Fast Tech 50 companies as organizations to invest in or watch. Thanks for the publicity, but the Fast Tech 50 program has been blowing the horn of these entrepreneurs for over eight years!

During this past year, over 360 companies expressed an interest in becoming a member of the exclusive Fast Tech 50 club. The Fast Tech 50 Class of 2008 continues Houston's tradition of technology excellence. And it also brings to the forefront new and different stories of entrepreneurial success.

The local economic impact made by this year's Fast Tech 50 is phenomenal. These organizations are responsible for creating almost 3,270 jobs and over \$629 million in revenue to the local economy.

This year's No. 1 ranked Fast Tech 50 honoree is Globalogix, which grew a remarkable 1,343 percent during the past year. The accomplishments of James Hamilton and his team provide a great story of entrepreneur collaboration. (Please see story on Page 9B.)

The single largest revenue contributor from the Fast Tech 50 to the local economy is The Planet at \$122 million. The Planet is also one of the two Enterprise Champions, chosen for

contributions to their industry as well as to the community at large. (Please see story on Page 7B).

CLASS OF 2008

The Class of 2008 is the youngest group of companies ever in the Fast Tech 50 program. In comparing this year's group of winners, it's clear that they represent a still developing group of early-stage companies. They will have an impact on both the local and national economies for years to come, and they will add to the legacy of what makes Houston the top city in the country in which to start a business.

One company on the list was started in the 1970s. Two were started in the 1980s. Fourteen companies honored were started in the 1990s. But a total of 33 of the 2008 Fast Tech 50 companies were started since 2000.

The youth of many of the Fast Tech 50's new emerging companies is evident with the threshold to make the list rising to the second highest ever at 37.4 percent year-over-year growth for 2008. The average growth rate for this year's group is a staggering 133 percent.

No one industry dominates the Houston business climate. The area's businesses are as diverse as Houston's people and cultures.

The Fast Tech 50, divided by industry segments, includes 24 companies involved in software development or services. There are multiple companies in other areas: Six companies with e-commerce/business portal businesses, five companies in each of three segments — hardware, technical/consulting services and energy technology products; three companies with businesses relating to medical devices; and two companies in communications.

This year's list of honorees includes 21 first-time honorees, 14 two-time honorees, four three-time honorees, five four-time honorees, five five-time honorees and one six-time honoree. Five-time honorees are BBS Technologies Inc., Bluegate Corp., I.T. Works, Paymetric Inc. and PreCash Inc. The only six-time honoree this year is Merrick Systems Inc.

NOMINATING PROCESS

To qualify for the Fast Tech 50, a company's headquarters, or a foreign company's U.S. headquarters must be located in the Houston standard metropolitan statistical area. A minimum of 51 percent of the company's consolidated net revenues must be involved in the original manufacture, design or development of technology products or delivery of services. A nominee must have a minimum net revenue of more than \$200,000 in both years. (Rankings for the 2008 Fast Tech 50 were determined on the revenue growth percentage from fiscal 2006 to fiscal 2007.)

Nominees for the 2008 awards were asked to submit:

- A nomination form.
- Audited, reviewed or compiled financial statements or tax returns for 2006 and 2007.
- An overview letter.
- Background information on the company, its products and/or services.

Representatives from PKF Texas validated the information on the nomination form from the information packet. The percentage of revenue growth was computed by comparing net revenues from 2006 to 2007.

Nominations will be accepted for next year's Fast Tech 50 listing by contacting the Houston Business Journal, PKF Texas (www.pkftexas.com) or any of the additional sponsors. Organizations that are nominated will receive application packets in spring of 2009. ■

GREGORY S. PRICE, CPA, is a shareholder and director of consulting solutions for PKF Texas, a regional CPA firm that provides assurance, tax and consulting services.



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TECH 50**
GREGORY S.
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