

Mainebiz honors its 2009 Business Leaders of the Year

Our picks for Maine's best executives and entrepreneurs

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Nothing tests leadership like adversity.

When credit comes easy, the economy bustles and all the business indicators point up, running a company can be pretty straightforward.

But when the economy tanks, money is tight and temporary furloughs are heralded as good news, keeping a business afloat is a whole different game.

In that context, the achievements of our 2009 Business Leaders of the Year go beyond simply remarkable and into the territory of inspirational. Not only did our three recipients keep their organizations afloat, they made them bigger and deeper, providing more services, jobs and returns on investment in a business environment that's the worst Maine's seen in 30 years.

How'd they do it? Mike Dow, founder of Tilson Technology Management in Portland decided to diversify and find new markets for his construction consulting business, a tack that nearly doubled revenues from 2007 to 2008, created jobs and spun off three affiliates. He's our small company Business Leader of the Year.

[Read Mike Dow's profile >>](#)

His counterpart in the large company category, Ken Priest, president of Kenway Corp. in Augusta, followed a similar path. Once a wooden boatbuilder, Kenway has expanded in size and scope. The manufacturer developed cutting-edge composite technology for new markets such as alternative energy and completed a 20,000-square-foot expansion to accommodate its 72-person work force.

[Read Ken Priest's profile >>](#)

And finally John Fitzsimmons, president of the Maine Community College System, oversaw a spike in enrollments across his seven campuses, due in part to his 2008 Rural Initiatives project. His work boosts access to post-secondary education, fostering a knowledgeable work force that enhances everyone's livelihood in Maine. He's our nonprofit Business Leader of the Year.

[Read John Fitzsimmons' profile >>](#)