

EDITOR'S PICK

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ATEC among nation's best small businesses

By Jake Thompson The Lebanon Reporter

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By Jake Thompson | The Lebanon Reporter **SUCCESS STORY:** ATEC CEO Shane Conner's success story is even more impressive than the four NFL Super Bowls, helmets above, his company has worked in the past four years.

By Jake Thompson



While talking with Advanced Technologies in Electrical and Communications Inc. owner/president Christopher 'Shane' Conner, it's easy to see why he's prospered.

And make no mistake, ATEC and Conner are on track to becoming very successful.



The Indiana District Office of U.S. Small Business Administration named Conner the 2015 Indiana Small Business Person of the Year. Conner was then considered for the National Small Business Person of the Year in May.

“The honor of being named Small Business Person of the Year means that you and your business are smart, bold and accessible,” said Stacey Poynter, SBA Indiana District Director. “Shane Conner represents these three important characteristics.”

The Indiana District Office of U.S. Small Business Administration also named ATEC among the best emerging 2015 small businesses.

“I absolutely love this ... it’s a drug,” Conner said. “I don’t have many vices in my life, except for family. I enjoy the work. I love to work. I truly believe in the American dream.”

According to its website, “ATEC consists of a team of highly educated and skilled professionals that provide complete electrical and communications contracting services.” Those services include electrical and telecommunications sales, service and support, engineering, project management and sustainable energy consulting and installation.

Conner has built ATEC, 417 Lafayette Ave., Lebanon, from the ground up, beginning in 2005. ATEC currently employees 15 full-time technicians, and four other full-time employees, including Conner.

Not only has ATEC gained national recognition through the SBA, one of Conner’s biggest clients over the past four years has been the National Football League.

Beginning in 2012, ATEC was selected through the NFL’s Emerging Business Program to work on its “NFL Experience.” Conner said the least he worked in that five-week period was 104 hours in one week, with the most being 127.

“That’s where my relationship was built with them,” Conner said. “In the end, the NFL doesn’t fail. You are not going to learn on their project.”



ATEC's dedication and effectiveness during Indianapolis' Super Bowl led to the company being invited back for each one ever since. Conner will work on Super Bowl 50 in Santa Clara, Calif., this year, and his scope of work has increased each year.

ATEC has continued to support the NFL in various other ways. Conner installed wireless communication systems for NFL officials in Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, Tennessee and Indianapolis. ATEC's been to London for six international games, and even contributed to the NFL Draft in Chicago, the first time in 51 years it had returned to the Windy City, this past April and May.

Other large accounts include Ezkenazi Health, the U.S. Military, Purdue University, and local entities Skodjt-Barrett and Case New Holland.

The national attention from the awards and accomplishments has not slowed ATEC down, but instead, has forced Conner to switch gears and become more efficient.

Conner graduated from Ivy Tech, attended Purdue's Electrical Project Management Institute and went through a five-year electrician apprenticeship. Nowhere in there were courses on business.

In 2014, Conner took a step back and reevaluated the way ATEC was conducting business. The company produced 2 million in sales during 2011. In 2012 and '13 ATEC topped out at a little over 7.6 million for each of those years. That's when Conner decided to further examine the business operation.

In 2014, sales went down to 4.6 million, but Conner said the business doubled its profits. He successfully scaled back the operation and went from being an electrician to becoming a business owner, an inherently different job.

"Running a business was totally new to me," Conner said. "I know electrical work like the back of my hands, but eventually realized I was a business owner and not an electrician."



Conner has come a long way from spending nights at his desk with only a five-gallon bucket to use as a restroom. The 43-year-old has spent ample time away from the thing he holds closest — his family.

Growing up without a father, Conner's mother raised him and instilled in him an unparalleled work ethic. He still has the change dispenser displayed on his desk from his first job as a paper boy, next to all of the other awards he's earned.

“My momma always said to put my best foot forward and 'see where it takes ya,' and that's all I've done,” he said.

To state he's grounded would be a vast understatement. Conner said he's always believed in doing the job right for a fair price, and that's what carried the business through amid a recession in the early years.

Conner, a Thorntown resident, has coached over 31 teams at the Lebanon Boys and Girls Club. It's his way of giving back, he said, for the years he spent in the program as a youth.

“It's being a good person, giving back to the community, watching what surrounds you,” Conner said. “I'm not out to create a legacy, I go out to do the right thing. I just want to know that I did it right and help others come up.”



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