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## Where Are They Now?

*An update on some past winners of the Journal's Innovation Awards*

By **RYAN KNUTSON**

For technology innovators, there's the "Eureka!" moment and then there's the business of putting discoveries to work. Here's a look at how some winners from last year—plus the top winner from 2007—have fared since we recognized their achievements.

### *VIDACARE CORP.*

**LOCATION:** San Antonio

**AWARD:** Overall Gold, 2008; Medical Devices category winner

**INNOVATION:** The company created a device called the EZ-IO, a high-speed drill equipped with a specially designed needle that can penetrate bones to deliver life-saving fluids when a patient's veins are collapsed.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** EZ-IO revenue grew about 30% in the first half of this year from the first six months of 2008. Vidacare has sold more than 500,000 of the devices. Most of those were sold in the U.S., but EZ-IO devices also have been shipped to Europe, Asia and South America.

The company this summer secured \$7.6 million in financing to introduce two new products, says Philip W. Faris Jr., president and chief executive of Vidacare One allows doctors extracting bone marrow from patients for cancer testing or other purposes to perform the procedure more quickly and with less pain for patients. The other new device will help doctors perform spinal surgery.

### *SPOT LLC*

**LOCATION:** Milpitas, Calif.

**AWARD:** Consumer Electronics category winner, 2008

**INNOVATION:** Spot, a unit of [Globalstar Inc.](#), won for its Satellite Messenger, a hand-held device that allows users to transmit their location and preprogrammed messages, such as "I'm OK," or "This is an emergency. Please send help," from anywhere in the world. The device is useful for hikers, skiers and others who travel outside of cellphone range.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** In July, Spot introduced a new version of the device that, among other improvements, is 30% smaller and lighter than the original and can be tracked more easily in foliage. The new device also has covers over the emergency-help buttons, to prevent inadvertent calls for help.

The company also began offering Spot Assist roadside service in July. The service allows users of Spot devices to summon roadside help even when they're outside cellphone range.

Since the Satellite Messenger's launch in 2007, it has helped initiate 250 rescue missions, says a company spokeswoman. More than 370,000 subscribers use the company's devices.

*NANOCOMP TECHNOLOGIES INC.*

**LOCATION:** Concord, N.H.

**AWARD:** Materials and Other Base Technologies category winner, 2008

**INNOVATION:** The company developed a process to create large sheets of fabric and lengths of yarn using a synthetic carbon material that is extremely strong, lightweight and highly conductive.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** Nanocomp expects its revenue to double this year to just under \$10 million, thanks in part to several contracts of about \$500,000 each with the U.S. Air Force and Navy that the company declines to detail. Nanocomp also is working with the Army to develop body armor that can stop high-velocity handgun rounds.

The company plans to start building a 100,000-square-foot production facility in New Hampshire next year, which would increase Nanocomp's production capacity more than tenfold. It also sees the potential for increasing its staff to 300 from 30, says Peter Antoinette, co-founder and CEO.

*VUMII INC.*

**LOCATION:** Atlanta

**AWARD:** Physical Security category winner, 2008

**INNOVATION:** The company created a night-vision camera that uses a near-infrared laser to illuminate an area and produce a high-resolution image.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** Vumii's sales quadrupled last year from their 2007 total, to \$2.5 million. Sales are expected to remain at that level this year, but the company is working on deals that could quadruple sales again in 2010, says CEO Randall Foster.

Its newest models, launched last month, cost less and are portable, so they can be used on vehicles and vessels. Vumii also is working on new software for its security system that will allow users to customize the layout of the viewing screen.

*SALESFORCE.COM INC.*

**LOCATION:** San Francisco

**AWARD:** Computing Systems category winner, 2008

**INNOVATION:** A suite of tools, called Force.com, that allows companies to create and use customized versions of common business applications online, like payroll, accounts-receivables and expense-reporting systems.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** The company had revenue of \$305 million in the fiscal year ended Jan. 31, 2009, up 23% from the previous year, and increased its customer base nearly 40% to about 60,000 from 43,600.

"Ten years ago [cloud computing] was a really radical idea, and now it is common practice," says Bruce Francis, vice president of corporate strategy, in reference to the use of online applications instead of software installed on a company's own hardware.

Indeed, cloud computing has become so mainstream that a new competitor for Salesforce.com will soon emerge with the release of Windows Azure by [Microsoft Corp.](#), scheduled for later this year.

*GLAXOSMITHKLINE PLC*

**LOCATION:** Brentford, England

**AWARD:** Health-Care IT category winner, 2008

**INNOVATION:** Software that allows researchers to screen potential drugs in the earliest stages of development for signs that indicate possible harmful medical reactions, by matching their chemical profiles against information about adverse reactions to drugs already on the market and from clinical trials.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** The software, developed for use in-house, is being used by roughly 70 to 100 GlaxoSmithKline researchers, says June Almenoff, a vice president at GlaxoSmithKline. She adds that the company has upgraded the software and continues to look for improvements. For instance, the software can now determine safety risks not only by examining the structure of potential drugs to spot red flags but also by analyzing how the drug will likely break down in the body.

### **NOVARTIS AG**

**LOCATION:** Basel, Switzerland

**AWARD:** Overall Gold, 2007; Medical/Biotech category winner

**INNOVATION:** The company worked with Speedel Holding Ltd. to create a drug, called Tekturna, that controls blood pressure by blocking an enzyme that can trigger hypertension, a new approach. The drug also works for 24 hours, compared with 12 hours for other drugs.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** Since 2007, Novartis purchased Speedel, and Tekturna sales have continued to grow. In the first half of 2009, global sales totaled \$119 million, roughly twice the total in the first six months of 2008.

Novartis also continues to develop variations of Tekturna to suit the needs of different patients. A new variation of Tekturna HCT, which is a combination of Tekturna and a diuretic, another form of blood-pressure medication, was approved in July by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in Japan. Another variation, combining Tekturna with yet another form of blood-pressure medication, a calcium channel blocker called amlodipine, is scheduled for submission to U.S. and European regulators this year.

*--Mr. Knutson is a staff reporter in The Wall Street Journal's San Francisco bureau. He can be reached at [ryan.knutson@wsj.com](mailto:ryan.knutson@wsj.com).*

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