VISUALIZE FRESH IDEAS. CAPITALIZE ON OPPORTUNITIES. EXERCISE INGENUITY. UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY. REALIZE SUCCESS.

Smart Company Magazine's

Entrepreneurs to Watch

By Krista Brick * Photos by Jamie Turner

f you have ever nurtured the seed of a concept into fruition as a viable business, you know that endeavor requires visionary leadership, creativity tempered with practicality, a healthy dose of personal integrity and enough influence to convince others that they need your product or service. Successful entrepreneurs must persist in engineering their vision into reality despite the myriad challenges they likely will face. Those who leverage technology often fare better in our 21st-century marketplace. And entrepreneurs who measure success beyond the bottom line — who make a difference in the social fabric of their community - truly deserve recognition. Those are the criteria against which the editors of Smart Company chose the 2009 Entrepreneurs to Watch.

David Vershel and John Bekier,

Marketing and Research Resources, Inc.

avid Vershel and John Bekier have a pretty good idea who is going to be on the cover of Time, People and Sports Illustrated before the magazines hit the newsstand — their company, Frederick-based Marketing and Research Resources Inc., helped choose them.

M&RR — which provides research strategy, data collection, analysis and reporting to clients who use the information to launch new products, alter their marketing plans, and even determine subject matter for magazine covers — ranks among the nation's top 100 marketing research firms by revenue.

CEO Vershel launched the business as a one-man, home-based advertising firm in 1989 but, seeing more opportunity in market research, soon switched the company's focus. Bekier came aboard in 1998 to oversee the research group and manage daily operations. He new serves as COO and senior vice president for a business that employs 35 full-time and 50 part-time workers engaged in projects for Fortune 500 companies including Disney, Turner Broadcasting and Sony. Human Resources Manager Carol Dickson credits the partnership between Bekier and Vershel for propelling M&RR forward. "They bring different backgrounds and perspectives to the business and the decisions that are made," she says. "They are very driven, and for a fairly small business, have remarkable infrastructure in place in terms of finance, information technology and human resources to run the business effectively."

Contributing to M&RR's explosive growth is the value its owners place in their employees. "We have a sophisticated infrastructure and that is a valuable resource — but our greatest resource is our employees. They make us successful," says Vershel. He and Bekier strive to help their staffers balance their own interests with client demands. That HR philosophy has diminished employee turnover from 30 percent in the early years to nearly nil today. Employee perks include profit sharing bonuses, comp time, monthly massages and car washes - helping M&RR to earn recognition as one of the Top 10 Family Friendly Businesses in Frederick County. "The best advice I was ever given," Vershel says, "was to always hire people smarter than you, customer service is key, and treat employees right."

