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Small businesses share success

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COVINGTON - J.R. Krzynowek is one of the owners of Select Specialties Corp. in Newport, but you won't find him sitting behind a desk much.

He thinks that's the formula that has driven the success of Select Specialties, which sells building materials and services to general contractors, since it was founded in 1995.

"The secret to our company is that no one knows who owns our company," Krzynowek said Tuesday while accepting the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce's top small-business award for construction trades. "Everyone does everything."

A similar theme echoed throughout the Radisson Hotel luncheon, with winners attributing their awards to constant efforts by

Northern Kentucky Chamber lauds best in its area in five categories

employees and customers.

Cindy Brouillette, owner of CindyB! Realtors, said the key is training people to provide client service.

"That's pretty much where it begins and ends," she said. "The pride and ownership that these people have is unbelievable."

About 80 percent of the chamber's membership comes from small companies, and those companies create most of the new jobs. Criteria included financial growth, innovation and community service.

The chamber received 223 nominations for the awards in five categories. The winners were:

■ Retail/hospitality: PETSuites of America.

Founded in 2000, the chain started in Erlanger and expanded to Louisville last fall. It plans a new location in Sharonville early in 2005, chief executive officer Joe Mason said.

He said seven of the company's first 10 employees still are working there and thanked "thousands of wonderful two-legged and four-legged customers."

■ Service: Service Industry Research Systems Inc.

The Highland Heights company provides market research to retailers all over the world. It started as a one-person operation but now is approaching 100 employees, CEO Chris Ohlinger said.

He described his secret to success in four stages: "Have fun, do

your best, never quit and don't be afraid to fail."

■ Manufacturing/distribution: Steinkamp Molding LP.

Established in 1999, the industrial moldings manufacturer has increased sales about 15 percent a year and now has 17 employees.

■ Professional services: CindyB! Realtors.

Brouillette said she takes best practices from other industries and applies them to real estate. She called it "a marketing company that sells real estate."

Last year the company's 10 agents closed 342 sales worth more than \$58 million, she said.

■ Construction trades: Select Specialties Corp.

The company has grown to five full-time and four part-time employees and added programs such as e-commerce, Krzynowek said.

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