



EY Entrepreneur Of The Year[®]

2017 Award Winner

For Immediate Release

EOY AWARD WINNER

**EY announces BENJAMIN COWART of Vertex Energy, Inc.
named Entrepreneur Of The Year[®] 2017 Award winner in the Gulf Coast Area**

Ben joins three decades of groundbreaking entrepreneurs in Energy and Utilities

Houston, June 15, 2017 – EY today announced that Benjamin Cowart of Vertex Energy, Inc., received the Entrepreneur Of The Year[®] 2017 Award in the Energy and Utilities category in the Gulf Coast Area. The award recognizes entrepreneurs who are excelling in areas such as innovation, financial performance and personal commitment to their businesses and communities. Ben was selected by an independent panel of judges, and the award was presented at a special gala event at the Marriott Marquis on June 15.

Since 1986, EY has honored entrepreneurs whose ingenuity, spirit of innovation and discipline have driven their companies' success, transformed their industries and made a positive impact on their communities. Now in its 31st year, the program has honored the inspirational leadership of such entrepreneurs as:

- Howard Schultz of Starbucks Coffee Company
- Pierre Omidyar of eBay, Inc.
- Mindy Grossman of HSN
- Robert Unanue of Goya Foods
- Reid Hoffman and Jeff Weiner of LinkedIn
- Andreas Bechtolsheim and Jayshree Ullal of Arista Networks
- Hamdi Ulukaya of Chobani
- James Park of Fitbit

As a Gulf Coast Area award winner, Ben is now eligible for consideration for the Entrepreneur of the Year 2017 national program. Award winners in several national categories, as well as the Entrepreneur of the Year National Overall Award winner, will be announced at the Entrepreneur of the Year National Awards gala in Palm Springs, California, on November 18, 2017. The awards are the culminating event of the Strategic Growth Forum, the nation's most prestigious gathering of high-growth, market-leading companies.

Sponsors

Founded and produced by EY, the Entrepreneur of the Year Awards are nationally sponsored in the US by SAP America, Merrill Corporation and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

In the Gulf Coast Area, regional sponsors include Colliers International, DLA Piper, ADP, Solomon Edwards, Chatham Financial, Pierpont Communications and Houston Business Journal.

Company Boilerplate

About Entrepreneur of the Year®

Entrepreneur Of The Year®, founded by EY, is the world's most prestigious business awards program for entrepreneurs, chosen from an independent panel of judges including entrepreneurs and prominent leaders from business, finance, and the local community. The program makes a difference through the way it encourages entrepreneurial activity among those with potential and recognizes the contribution of people who inspire others with their vision, leadership and achievement. As the first and only truly global awards program of its kind, Entrepreneur of the Year celebrates those who are building and leading successful, growing and dynamic businesses, recognizing them through regional, national and global awards programs in more than 145 cities in more than 60 countries. ey.com/eoy

About EY's Growth Markets Network

EY's worldwide Growth Markets Network is dedicated to serving the changing needs of high-growth companies. For more than 30 years, we've helped many of the world's most dynamic and ambitious companies grow into market leaders. Whether working with international mid-cap companies or early stage, venture-backed businesses, our professionals draw upon their extensive experience, insight and global resources to help your business succeed. For more information, please visit us at ey.com/sgm or follow news on Twitter @EY_Growth.

About EY

EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. The insights and quality services we deliver help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over. We develop outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, for our clients and for our communities.

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