

# BusinessWeek

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## Innovation—Chicago Style

From tiny startup PrepMe to giant Abbott Labs, the 10 winners of the annual Chicago Innovation Awards are hot

Six years ago, Thomas Kuczarski, founder and chief executive of consultants Kuczarski & Associates, teamed up with veteran Chicago business journalist Dan Miller to celebrate innovative entrepreneurs and companies by crowning 10 of them annually with a Chicago Innovation Award. Since then, the contest's judges have occasionally become worried that interest would slack off. Far from it. In 2008, organizers received a record 307 nominations. That's up from 254 last year and 90 in 2002.

This year's winners are as impressive as ever, ranging from Abbott Laboratories ([ABT](#))—metro Chicago's biggest company measured by stock value—to PrepMe, a 2005 startup with only 10 full-time employees. The winners' creations include Internet services, of course. Just as impressive, they've also discovered ways to improve gear or processes that go back centuries.

The cream of the 2008 crop will be honored on Oct. 28 in Chicago's Goodman Theatre, at a ceremony underwritten by major sponsors IBM ([IBM](#)), McGuireWoods, and Wm. Wrigley Jr. Co. ([WWJ](#)) Many of the other candidates won something this year as well: 75 got a chance to take part—for free—in an executive seminar on innovation at Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management, a full-day tutorial that otherwise would have cost \$2,200 a person.

Organizers will start accepting nominations for the eighth annual Chicago Innovation Awards late next spring.

For exclusive video profiles of all 10 winners of this year's Chicago Innovation Awards, go to our Web site, [businessweek.com/innovate](http://businessweek.com/innovate)

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