

# SOURCE



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## 1998 Small Business Association Young Entrepreneur of the Year

It's been said the Hawaiian islands have a magical pull on people. Charles Fortner felt that pull four years ago, when he arrived on Oahu, Hawaii, with little more than the clothes on his back and the support of his two business partners, who were helping Fortner create Island Page, Inc.

Island Page is a telecommunications business that specializes in selling, servicing, and maintaining portable paging equipment. The business is the result of relatively recent improvements in communications equipment and the miniaturization of electronic receivers.

Selling a full line of retail paging equipment, Island Page also sells the paging service that allows individuals to use a telephone to activate a small receiver to alert the owner of a message. Some of the paging devices are capable of receiving full-text messages, and some of them can receive paging notification anywhere in the United States.

Island Page was a success almost immediately after it opened its doors in 1994. In recognition of that success, Fortner won this year's National Small Business Administration Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, one of the most prestigious awards given to small businesses.

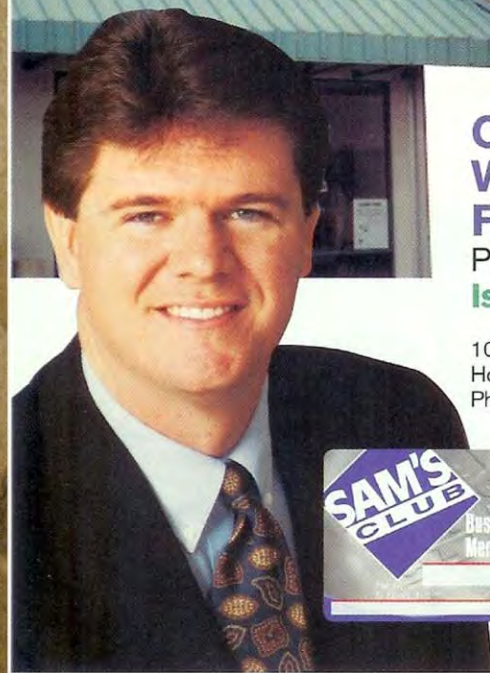
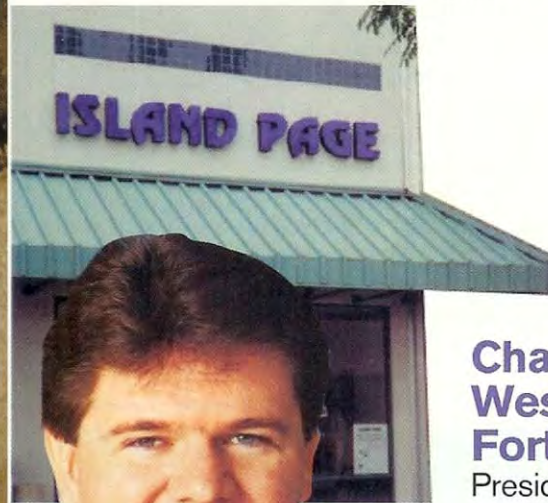
"I didn't know what to say," Fortner says of his response to the news he had won. "I'm a pretty quiet person, so I didn't really know how to react."

What Fortner did know, and has known for quite some time, is how to effectively run his business. His leadership took Island Page from a small startup company to one of the top three paging companies in the state. The company has consistently passed all sales expectations set for itself. In addition, two more Island Page locations have opened in the state since 1994.

Bringing the company from conception to reality was no easy task ("I had to learn quickly about things I'd never done before, like negotiating the lease for the store and hiring contractors," notes Fortner), but he knew one place he could turn to for help. A SAM'S Club® member for over a decade, Fortner utilizes his SAM'S Club membership for everything from office supplies to batteries for his pagers.

"SAM'S Club has great prices on lots of things I need," says Fortner. "I buy supplies for the office there, and of course food items and things for my house. I love it."

The Ohio native appears to have found his niche in the sunny state of Hawaii. He recently bought a house there and plans on staying for a while. "I absolutely love Hawaii," he says with a laugh. Fortner has a lot to be smiling about these days. ♦



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