


FINALISTS: 2007 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year®

RETAIL DISTRIBUTION SERVICES: **JOHN AURIEMMA** *American Wear, Inc.*

 John Auriemma started in the uniform business when he was just a child. His father, Nick, was a 33-year veteran of the uniform supply business working as a route driver. John learned the business working with his dad on the route truck during summer vacations. When the company was sold, John and Nick decided to use their knowledge of the business and launched American Wear in 1984.

Undercapitalized and with no infrastructure, American Wear began in the garage of the Auriemma home. John and Nick purchased two trucks and opened shop. Their goal was to create a uniform supply company with a reputation for excellence—and the potential to rival Nick's former employer. Today, the company that let Nick go is no longer in business and American Wear has become one of the largest independent uniform suppliers nationwide.

American Wear provides customized uniforms, either for purchase or for rent, with laundering service. It services about 2,400 clients a week. John uses a business plan centered on personalized service. He believes that solid business ethics and a hands-on approach attract and keep customers. Many clients have been with the company since its inception, others have been customers of John's father for over 50 years.

John believes that loyalty will breed loyalty. He is now responsible for 100 employees, whom he regards as family. John's mother still works in the front office, his cousin is a company vice president and he has been friends with his operations manager since they were kids.

John has filled his father's shoes—and then some.

