News release

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**Adam Walach, Mariusz Walach and Valdemar Walach are named Entrepreneurs of the Year 2010 in the Czech Republic**

*Prague, 16 February 2011 –* **The brothers Adam, Mariusz and Valdemar Walach from the company WALMARK have won the prestigious title of Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2010 in the Czech Republic. They were presented with the trophy this evening in Prague’s Žofín Palace by Karel Schwarzenberg, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the CR, and Magdalena Souček, Country Managing Partner at Ernst & Young in the Czech Republic, which has been organising the contest in the Czech Republic since 2000. The title of Technology Entrepreneur of the Year was awarded to Václav Muchna of Y Soft Corporation. For the seventh year running an award was presented for the Czech Republic’s Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2010, which this year went to Pavel Křížek of the civic association Ochrana fauny České republiky [Protection of the Fauna of the Czech Republic].**

*“Success in business is not to be taken for granted - as well as good ideas and hard work there has to be a willingness to take great risks and not be afraid of responsibilities. The Czech Republic is still not used to public declarations of success and so not enough is heard of decent, hard-working entrepreneurs. We hope that our competition will help change this situation in the future. It genuinely deserves support and recognition,”* says Magdalena Soucek, Country Managing Partner at Ernst & Young in the Czech Republic.

**Profile of the winners**

**Adam, Valdemar and Mariusz Walach, WALMARK**

For the Walach brothers it was inconceivable not to begin business activities after the revolution. *“We knew that we had the opportunity for the first time in this country to do something independently in the way we wanted. We were fired up and didn’t waste time worrying that things would end badly. We simply said to ourselves that in the worst-case scenario we would start again. We felt our strength lay in the fact that there were three of us.”*

The brothers created WALMARK with the aim of doing business with computers. However, with the opening up of markets they discovered that the sky was the limit as far as trading was concerned. Nevertheless, they had never wanted simply to shunt merchandise from place to place. Their aim had always been to supply added value, and so they built their own production plants in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Under the umbrella of WALMARK they created   
a drinks division (the Relax brand), a pharmaceuticals division (which produces and sells mainly food supplements and drugs) and an agricultural products division. However, the main driver was the vision of becoming the largest company in the sphere of food supplements in Central and Eastern Europe, which is why they decided to concentrate on the pharmaceuticals division. They sold the drinks division, downsized the agricultural division, and focused all their activities and resources on strengthening the pharmaceutical division and making further investments in the production of nutritional supplements and medicines. From Martians to Proenzi – the portfolio of their products now numbers 300 different items. These days WALMARK has subsidiaries in eight European countries and exports to more than thirty other countries. The entire group reports annual turnover of EUR 100 million.

The other finalists in the competition Entrepreneur of the Year were as follows:

**Martin Hrdlička**, Hrdlička

**Miroslav Jakubec**, SERVIS CLIMAX

**Karel Majzlík**, ELFE

**Petr Pejchal**, PKS HOLDING

**Vladimír Vyhlídal**, Pars Komponenty

The prize for **Technology Entrepreneur of the Year** was awarded to **Václav Muchna** of Y Soft Corporation, a.s., a company which focuses on research, development, production and sales of the YSoft SafeQ solution, which makes big cost savings and increases the comfort of print jobs.

This year was the seventh time a prize was awarded for **Social Entrepreneur of the Year**. The prize went to **Pavel Křížek** of the civic association **Ochrana fauny České republiky**, whose mission is to protect wild species along with their biotopes and to educate the general public in matters ecological.

The prize for “Best Entrepreneurial Story”, awarded by readers of MF DNES and iDNES.cz, who vote for the entrepreneur with the best and most interesting story to tell, was awarded to **Jindřich Fikar** of **Čokoládovny Fikar**. The company is involved mainly in the production of hollow figures and other special chocolate promotional products.

The competition Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2010 was open to any company owner or manager with at least a 25% ownership interest. Competitors must be responsible for the operations of their companies and be active members of the top management. The company must have been in existence for at least 2 years.

The competition is organised by the newspapers MF Dnes and iDNES.cz. Raiffeisenbank and Glisco are competition partners. The competition is supported by the CzechInvest agency, the association TUESDAY Business Network, the Czech Venture Capital Association, and the US Business School Prague. EURO and Český rozhlas Radiožurnál are its media partners.

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**Press release attachments:**

1. Judging panel members

2. Winner and finalist profiles

3. Regional winners

**About the Entrepreneur Of The Year competition**

Entrepreneur Of The Year, which selects the most successful business pioneers and innovators, was started by the company Ernst & Young in the United States in 1986. The contest has continued to grow. Currently the only internationally recognized competition of its kind, it is regularly held in more than 50 countries on six continents. Its aim is to present outstanding individuals in the field of business to the public. These individuals may serve as examples for young entrepreneurs just starting out. The Entrepreneur Of The Year contest has been conceived as an international competition, so the judging criteria are comparable in every country in which it is held. In 2011, Ernst & Young is announcing the contest for the twelfth consecutive year in the Czech Republic. For more information, go to www.podnikatelroku.cz.

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**Attachment 1**

**Entrepreneur of the Year 2010 judging panel members**

* **Eduard Kučera**, judging panel chairman, AVAST Software, Entrepreneur of the Year 2009
* **Vladimír Kovář**, Unicorn, Entrepreneur of the Year 2008
* **Pavel Juříček,** BRANO GROUP, Entrepreneur of the Year 2006 in the CR and a finalist in the competition World Entrepreneur of the Year 2007
* **Zbyněk Frolík,** LINET, Entrepreneur of the Year 2003 in the CR and a finalist in the competition World Entrepreneur of the Year 2004
* **Jana Ryšlinková,** Provost of the US Business School Prague
* **Petr Šmída**, investor, LYCOPAN
* **Tomáš Ventura,** representative of the editor-in-chief of Ekonomika, iDNES.cz

**Advisory Board**

**Hana Hikelová** – director of Czech Radio news channels

**Radim Jančura** – STUDENT AGENCY, Entrepreneur of the Year 2005

**Petr Koblic** – Prague Stock Exchange

**Miroslav Řihák** – ANECT, Entrepreneur of the Year 2004

**Kvido Štěpánek** – Isolit-Bravo, Entrepreneur of the Year 2002

**Lubor Žalman** – CEO, Raiffeisenbank

**Technology Entrepreneur of the Year judging panel members**

**Ivan Pilný** – judging panel chairman, TUESDAY Business Network

**Ondřej Bartoš** – Credo Ventures

**Jiří Beneš** – 3TS Capital Partners

**Josef Suska** – HOKAMI CZ, Technology Entrepreneur of the Year 2007

**Radim Králík** – GRAPO, Technology Entrepreneur of the Year 2005

**Social Entrepreneur of the Year judging panel members**

**Petra Vitoušová** – judging panel chairwoman, Bílý kruh bezpečí [White Circle of Safety], Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2002

**Emilie Smrčková** – Pod křídly [Under the Wing], Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2009

**Drahoslava Kabátová** – Letohrádek Vendula, Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2008

**Jozef Baláž** – LIGA Bruntál, Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2007

**Monika Mudranincová** – Mladá fronta DNES

**Attachment 2**

**Profiles of the winners and finalists**

***Entrepreneurs of the Year 2010:***

**Adam, Mariusz and Valdemar Walach, WALMARK, a.s.**

For the Walach brothers it was inconceivable not to begin business activities after the revolution. *“We knew that we had the opportunity for the first time in this country to do something independently in the way we wanted. We were fired up and didn’t waste time worrying that things would end badly. We simply said to ourselves that in the worst-case scenario we would start again. We felt our strength lay in the fact that there were three of us.”*

The brothers created WALMARK with the aim of doing business with computers. However, with the opening up of markets they discovered that the sky was the limit as far as trading was concerned. Nevertheless, they had never wanted simply to shunt merchandise from place to place. Their aim had always been to supply added value, and so they built their own production plants in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Under the umbrella of WALMARK they created a drinks division (the Relax brand), a pharmaceuticals division (which produces and sells mainly food supplements and drugs), and an agricultural products division. However, the main driver was the vision of becoming the largest company in the sphere of food supplements in Central and Eastern Europe, which is why they decided to concentrate on the pharmaceuticals division. They sold the drinks division, downsized the agricultural division, and focused all their activities and resources on strengthening the pharmaceutical division and making further investments in the production of nutritional supplements and medicines. From Little Martians to Proenzi – the portfolio of their products now numbers 300 different items. These days WALMARK has subsidiaries in eight European countries and exports to more than thirty other countries. The entire group reports annual turnover of EUR 100 million.

***Technology Entrepreneur of the Year 2010:***

**Václav Muchna – Y Soft Corporation, a.s.**

Václav Muchna was a typical computer whizz-kid, who created his first programme while still at basic school. Because he could never imagine working for a boss, from the very start he worked for himself, first at school and then in 2000 when he and a partner established the IT company Y Soft. A breakthrough came after three years. While solving an unusual problem for the company Kyocera Václav Muchna realised that real strength actually lay in original technical solutions. On this basis he created a new corporate strategy and since that time has concentrated on developing an original solution, which allows for the individual identification of a print shop user, the organisation of their print jobs and cost monitoring independent of the print shop in question, and the creation of new and innovative applications. He was the first in the world to come up with a new way of organising and billing print jobs on a Cloud platform, thanks to which he managed to penetrate such security conscious spheres as banks and the army. His vision is to create a strong Czech firm with global reach and its headquarters in the Czech Republic. At present the company has branches on four continents, and it is planning to expand into Russia, India, and Latin America. It cooperates with all the best known print and scanning equipment manufacturers in the world. It owns several original solutions, which allow it to operate on the global market.

Václav Muchna believes that success in business is not a question of luck. Or rather, that luck is necessary, but is there for anyone willing to look for it for long enough and intensively enough. He enjoys managing and motivating people, and because he travels a lot for his work he tries to spend as much as possible of his free time at home. He enjoys skiing and scuba diving.

***Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2010:***

**Pavel Křížek, Ochrana fauny České republiky o.s.**

As the child of a hunting family, from his earliest years Pavel Křížek was interested in the natural world and formed a practical, everyday relationship with it. At school he notched up regular successes in competitions and quizzes on the topic of biology and the natural sciences. As a result of a serious illness which prevented him from studying he was awarded full invalid benefit. From that time on he began to devote himself to his lifetime hobby. Since 1990 he has co-organised a vigil over the nests of large saker falcons in West Slovakia to protect them from being illegally collected. Since 1992 he has participated in the Czech Union for Nature Conservation (ČSOP). In 1996 the project entitled Protection of Birds against Electrical Cables won the Ecological Project of the Year, and the year after he was awarded a prize in Budapest by the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe. In1998, along with ornithologists, hunters and conservationists, Pavel Křížek established a new organisation entitled Ochrana fauny ČR [Protection of the Fauna of the CR], independent of the ČSOP. With the help of friends he turned a devastated area in Votice into a rescue station for wild species. He received the Minister of the Environment 2001 prize for systematic practical work on the protection of birds of prey and owls. He was the initiator and co-author of a controversial, naturalistically conceived exhibition entitled “Light for Prague”, which was one of the most successful exhibitions in the history of the National Museum. It warned of the negative impact of exterior electrical cables on the bird population. The exhibition was presented at various attractive sites around the CR and abroad and was visited by around 250,000 people. It led to changes in legislation and the technology used in the power industry, encouraged cooperation between the energy sphere and ornithologists, and forced politicians to act. For this activity Pavel Křížek was awarded a prize from the Japanese Sasakawa Foundation and an Oskar for humanity and courage from the readership of the Vltava-Labe-Press publishing house.

In the 13 years of its existence the organisation Ochrana fauny has increased several times over the number of its trips to rescue and treat injured animals and has extended its cooperation with cities, municipalities and schools. The ever larger numbers of visitors to the organisation meant a larger lecture hall and exhibition premises had to be built. New branches in Tábor and Příbram in 2010 represented the logical outcome of the interest displayed by large cities in establishing centres of ecological education. However, the largest step still awaits Pavel Křížek and his colleagues this year with the opening of two new branches. Investment of almost CZK 60 million will see the completion at the end of the year of the Ochrana fauny ČR Hrachov Centre at the Slapy reservoir, which will be one of the most modern faculties for the protection of animals in the Czech Republic. The second branch will be created in the White Stork’s Nest Congress Centre. After this project is completed Pavel Křížek wants to concentrate on the protection of individual species.

***Finalists:***

**Martin Hrdlička – Hrdlička spol.s r.o.**

Martin Hrdlička had dreamt of founding a family firm since his student days. In 1953 his father, Miroslav Hrdlička, completed his studies in geodetics, a topic to which he devoted himself for the whole of his life. After the Velvet Revolution father and son decided to establish one of the first private geodetic offices in the Czech Republic. They won their first contracts from Germany and then from Czech customers. As the company developed they managed to get their hands on top-class technical equipment and subsequently became one of the first in the Czech Republic to move over to the comprehensive digital processing of geodetic works. It is the comprehensiveness of the services they offer, which these days involves not only geodetics but also the MAWIS map server and design work, which Martin Hrdlička regards as the company’s greatest competitive advantage. The Hrdlička Group, which now comprises five companies, penetrated the Czech and European market and plans further expansion in the future. Martin Hrdlička is well aware that top quality employees are crucial to the company’s success. He tries to inspire his colleagues and infect them with his enthusiasm. He believes that important qualities which entrepreneurs have to possess are diligence, a fighting spirit, and fairness. He recharges his batteries by relaxing with his wife and five children. His hobbies include travel, nature and ornithology.

**Miroslav Jakubec – SERVIS CLIMAX a.s.**

For Miroslav Jakubec the impulse to start business was the need to provide for his family and dissatisfaction with his superiors at the place where he worked. He and a colleague began working on a self-employed basis fitting the seals of windows and doors. They were skilful in their work, contracts came rolling in, and they were forced to take on their first employees. In order to cater for seasonal demand they began fitting window blinds, and when they realised that their supplier was inflexible as far as deadlines were concerned and could not guarantee quality, they began production activities themselves.

These days its turnover of half a billion makes SERVIS CLIMAX the most important Czech producer and exporter of screening technology. It still has its headquarters in Vsetín, where it provides work to around 300 people. It lays great emphasis on a good corporate culture and the right motivation of people who, Miroslav Jakubec believes, are the key to success in business. The company’s priority is maintaining quality and a good reputation. MiroslavJakubec believes that it achieves these objectives by always doing more than it has to and placing the customer in first place.

Miroslav Jakubec says that he has always admired companies which have persisted through generations. His vision is to develop the company to the point that it earns the respect of the European market. There is still huge potential for improving market share in neighbouring countries. Miroslav Jakubec relaxes by playing sport and spending time with his son in the countryside.

**Karel Majzlík – ELFE, s.r.o.**

When Karel Majzlík began doing business in the nineties he already had many years of experience as an engineering production manager. In hindsight he says that this experience, along with his team of experts, was crucial in finding a foothold and developing his company ELFE, which since 1993 has focused on engineering production, above all for foreign markets. At present the company concentrates on manufacturing large, top quality products of around 40 tons involving high technological demands. Although the engineering sphere has been hit hard by the global economic crisis and companies have had to face reduced numbers and volumes of contracts and lower profitability of production, Karel Majzlík has concentrated his energies on the ongoing development of the company. Over the last three years the company has invested in new operating halls and technologies, and this has resulted in an increase in turnover accompanied by improved productivity. Karel Majzlík, whose role model is Henry Ford, rates reliability and a fair approach most highly when managing a company and doing business. In his free time he is happiest with his family, and enjoys tourism, hunting and skiing.

**Petr Pejchal – PKS HOLDING a.s.**

In 1994 Petr Pejchal took over a construction company, from which he and his partner created a group of three companies in 1996. These days PKS HOLDING comprises nine firms, six of which are oriented on the construction market, with three operating in other spheres. The group is at once a general construction supplier, manufacturer of windows and doors, architectural and design studio, manufacturer of concrete mixes, development and investment company, shopping centre, regional manufacturer of electricity from natural renewable resources, and congress hotel. Each of the group’s subsidiaries specialises in their sphere of business and enjoys a significant degree of independence. The managers of subsidiaries shoulder high levels of responsibility but enjoy the authority to reach decisions on their own. Petr Pejchal is convinced that customers favour his company because of its ability to provide both specialised and comprehensive solutions, either by delivering services from one subsidiary or by combining the capacities and expertise of all of the group’s firms. He believes that the choice of management is very important for the holding. Above all the managers of subsidiaries have to be strong personalities. In this way they increase the potential of a company to its maximum and thus the entire group. Petr Pejchal prioritises long-term vision over short-term gain and lays emphasis on the economic and financial stability of his companies and their planned investments. Thanks to this his companies enjoy high levels of customer satisfaction. When doing business he rates most highly fairness, keeping promises, diligence, and a personal approach. He likes people with ambitions. Even though work is also his hobby, he does not consider himself a workaholic and reserves weekends for his family. In his free time he enjoys travel, cycling, skiing and photography.

**Vladimír Vyhlídal – Pars komponenty s.r.o.**

In 1997, the year in which ČKD Vagónka was split up, Vladimír Vyhlídal and his partners were determined not to let more than one hundred years of tradition come to an end. They purchased knowhow for the production of wagon components and established the company Pars Komponenty. At the start Vladimír Vyhlídal was helped by his knowledge of the sector and the company in which he had trained and begun work as a lathe operator. His company developed and produced components for means of transport. Vladimír Vyhlídal sees the company’s future mainly in the production of automatic and semi-automatic door systems and a range of platforms for handicapped people. In the future he would like the company to be ranked amongst the leading manufacturer of public transport components and to export to various markets around the world. He would like to expand beyond the borders of the EU to Canada, Russia, etc. He is proud of the fact that his company has made no unnecessary investment, but that everything has had its benefits. Flexibility, comprehensiveness and above-standard services give his company a head start over others. He is pleased that both his children are participating in the company’s operations. He relaxes by playing golf, skiing and cycling, and recharges his batteries in the company of his grandchildren.

**Attachment No. 3**

**Regional winners**

**Entrepreneur Of The Year 2010 Prague and Central Bohemia**

Martin Hrdlička, Hrdlička

**Entrepreneur Of The Year 2010 Olomouc Region**

Pavel Holubář, SHM

**Entrepreneur Of The Year 2010 South Moravia Region**

Václav Muchna, Y Soft Corporation

**Entrepreneur Of The Year 2010 Moravia-Silesia Region**

Adam Walach, WALMARK

Valdemar Walach, WALMARK

Mariusz Walach, WALMARK

**Pavel Holubář – SHM, s.r.o.**  
When Pavel Holubář and his partner Mojmír Jílek founded the company SHM in 1993, they decided to focus on the development and preparation of PVD coatings. They had met at the R&D division of their former employer and based the success of their own business on these activities. They deliberately opted to prepare PVD coatings which nobody else was capable of. Most of their most important knowhow is protected by patents and registered trademarks. The outputs of the R&D carried out by SHM motivated Swiss partners, with whom they created the subsidiary Pivot in 2002. This company transfers their technology into coating equipment, which is these days sold around the world and which has made their Swiss partner firm into the second largest seller of this equipment in the world. SHM’s flagship products are nanocomposite coatings on a TiAISiN and CrAISiN base. In the future Pavel Holubář does not want to concentrate on mass production, but on new applications which the competition cannot handle or is not looking for. For Pavel Holubář and his company the main motivation is not maximum profit, but profit which allows them to invest in progress, in regional development and meeting the quality requirements of employees.