

Ascendient Named to the Inc. 5000 List of America's Fastest-Growing Private Companies

National healthcare and public health strategy consultancy recognized for 30 years of mission-driven growth — and a vision for what comes next.

CHAPEL HILL, NC, UNITED STATES, August 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Inc. Magazine today announced that [Ascendient](#), a national strategy consulting firm serving health systems and public health departments, has been named to its annual Inc. 5000 ranking of the nation's fastest-growing private companies.

"Making the Inc. 5000 after 30-plus years in business is not the typical path, and I think that says something important about who we are," said Brian Ackerman, CEO of Ascendient.

"Our growth has always been driven by doing the work well and letting our reputation speak for itself. Every client who ever renewed an engagement with us is part of this story, and I'm grateful to each one of them."

Founded by Dawn Carter in 1994 to serve the planning needs of hospitals in the Carolinas, Ascendient has grown to a nationally recognized strategy consultancy with clients from coast to coast and several overseas territories. "I've spent 30 years thinking about what good strategy looks like in healthcare," Carter says. "This recognition is nice, but the real reward is watching that thinking outlive any one project or any one client."

The firm's geographic expansion reflects a strategic evolution as well as an operational one. As U.S. healthcare moved toward population health models, Ascendient significantly deepened its public health practice, bringing decades of strategy and planning expertise to state and local health departments navigating rising community need and shrinking resources.

Today, Ascendient has built full-strength practices in both health system strategy and public



Brian Ackerman, Ascendient CEO



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health planning. That rare combination positions the firm to work at a point of increasing intersectionality, as health systems face mounting revenue challenges and demands to demonstrate clearer community benefit, while health departments confront the erosion of public funding and an urgent imperative to find new partners and new revenue streams.

"The organizations we serve – health systems and health departments alike – are being asked to do more with less," Ackerman said. "We believe that collaboration between the

two sectors is the most viable path forward. That's a big part of our focus, and it's where we see a great opportunity to drive lasting impact."

Ascendient has already put that conviction into practice. The firm has brought health systems and health departments together across 34 counties for one of the nation's [largest regional Community Health Needs Assessments](#), and is currently conducting primary research on cross-sector integration needs and best practices.

The Inc. 5000 recognition also coincides with the forthcoming publication of "Strategic Planning for Healthcare: How to Create a LIVING Strategy" by Dawn Carter (Routledge, 2026).

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