

Collective 54 Congratulates Ten Member Firms Named to the 2026 Inc. 5000

Ten boutique professional services firms earned places on Inc.'s annual ranking, the result of years of deliberate work by their founders.

DALLAS, TX, UNITED STATES, August 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Collective 54](#) congratulates

“

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Brad Dower, Founder, Dower & Associates

ten member firms named to the 2026 Inc. 5000, Inc.'s annual ranking of the fastest-growing private companies in America. Each is a boutique professional services firm. Every one of them earned the spot the hard way, over years, and Collective 54 wants to recognize the work that went into it.

What the ten have in common is not a growth tactic. Each one solves a specific problem that clients are willing to pay real money to solve. Each built the firm around that narrow expertise rather than drifting into generalist work to chase every available dollar. That is the discipline the boutique

framework calls for, and the growth on this year's list is what it pays out.

How they grew differs. Some grew organically, by narrowing who they serve and changing how they charge for the work. One grew almost entirely inorganically, through acquisition. Both are growth.

Brad Dower grew inorganically, and on purpose. He started Dower & Associates in 2019 as a side practice serving friends and neighbors while still working in corporate accounting. He made his first acquisition in 2022, went full-time, and now runs six locations. Dower & Associates is the highest-ranked Collective 54 firm on this year's list.

"Most of our growth has been inorganic, and that is a deliberate strategy rather than a shortcut. Accounting is a fragmented market full of owners who are ready to retire, and the firms we target are small enough that private equity is not bidding against us. We keep sellers invested in the handoff, and that is why we hold on to about 90% of the clients. What makes it repeatable is not instinct. It is a 600-item integration checklist." Brad Dower, Founder, Dower & Associates.

Jimmy Leppert and Justin Wasserman grew Empactful Advisors organically, by building for the enterprise from day one. They founded the firm to serve the Fortune 500 rather than working their way up to it, and they have never billed for time. Instead they put a share of their own fees at risk against what the client actually gets out of the work. It is their first appearance on the Inc. 5000.

"Enterprise buyers do not pick a boutique firm because of a clever pitch. Trust trumps tactics. We were willing to put a share of our fees at risk against our clients' outcomes, and this ranking is what that decision compounded into. Our average return on consulting spend is 23x which has engendered incredible trust and repeat work." Jimmy Leppert and Justin Wasserman, Co-Founders and Co-Managing Partners, Empactful Advisors.



Stephen Straus grew KUNGFU.AI organically, by rebuilding how the work gets delivered. He began working seriously on AI in 2016 and launched the firm in 2017, choosing to help organizations adopt AI rather than build one tool in a field that was changing every quarter. KUNGFU.AI has never raised outside capital, and this is its second consecutive year on the list.

"Every major technology shift creates new services firms, and the more complex the technology, the more organizations need help. We chose services over a product, and we have never taken outside capital. We keep automating the parts of our own business that free our people up for the most valuable work we do for clients. That is what an AI-enabled delivery model produces." Stephen Straus, Co-Founder and CEO, KUNGFU.AI.

The full list of 2026 Collective 54 honorees

No. 326: Dower & Associates, accounting and tax, Boerne, Texas. Founder Brad Dower.

No. 1,150: Empactful Advisors, management consulting, Denver, Colorado. Co-founders Jimmy Leppert and Justin Wasserman.

No. 1,451: Executive Presence, marketing and communications, Denver, Colorado. Founder

Justin Nassiri.

No. 1,513: Tru Consulting, consulting, Broomfield, Colorado. Led by Mela Fezzey.

No. 1,922: The Maker Group, consulting, Boulder, Colorado. Co-founders Matt Geddie and Paul Voisard.

No. 2,360: Magna Technology Group, technology services, Brooklyn, New York. Led by Adam Blake and Peyton Smith.

No. 3,177: KUNGFU.AI, AI consulting and engineering, Austin, Texas. Co-founder and CEO Stephen Straus.

No. 3,858: Indigo Trigger, consulting, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Founder Christopher Prinos.

No. 4,177: Invene, healthcare software, McKinney, Texas. Founder James Griffin.

No. 4,248: ACE Consulting Company, engineering and construction consulting, Nicholasville, Kentucky. Led by Matt Ellis.

Seven of the ten are repeat honorees, having also been recognized by Collective 54 on the 2025 Inc. 5000: KUNGFU.AI, ACE Consulting Company, Indigo Trigger, Magna Technology Group, Invene, The Maker Group, and Tru Consulting. Three are first-time honorees: Dower & Associates, Empactful Advisors, and Executive Presence. Every one of the ten grew faster than the median company on the 2026 list.

How the Inc. 5000 is built

Inc. has published the Inc. 5000 annually since 1982, and released the 2026 list on August 11, 2026. Companies are ranked by percentage revenue growth over three years, measured from 2022 through 2025. To qualify, a company had to be founded and generating revenue by March 31, 2022, and be U.S.-based, privately held, for-profit, and independent. Minimum revenue was \$100,000 in 2022 and \$2 million in 2025. Inc. verifies the financials of every applicant, so a place on the list reflects audited growth rather than a nomination or a vote.

Why this is hard for a professional services firm

The Inc. 5000 is dominated by companies that scale by adding headcount. Professional services firms have historically had no other option, because in a firm that bills for time, revenue growth and people growth move together. Every founder on this list found a way past that ceiling instead of climbing it. Collective 54 exists to make those paths repeatable rather than exceptional. The firm that clears that ceiling for good is what Collective 54 calls an AI-Native Boutique Firm: a firm where AI delivers the work and people supervise the judgment.

"Congratulations to all ten of these founders. We are honored to have played a part in their journey, and the credit belongs to them. What makes this meaningful for the rest of our community is that these ten are not outliers to admire from a distance. They are members who sat in the same rooms and asked the same hard questions, and they can tell you exactly what they changed and when. That is what makes them role models. Every founder in Collective 54 can look at this list and see a version of their own firm a few years from now. The next version of this list will look different again. The firms that grow fastest from here will be AI-Native Boutique Firms, where AI delivers the work and people supervise the judgment, and helping our members become one is the work we are focused on now." Jeff Klaumann, President, Collective 54.

About Collective 54

Collective 54 is the mastermind community for founders and executives of [boutique professional services firms](#). Collective 54 is the authority on helping those firms become AI-Native, and named the category: the AI-Native Boutique Firm. An AI-Native Boutique Firm is a firm where AI delivers the work and people supervise the judgment, so growth no longer depends on billable hours and headcount.

Collective 54 membership provides three things. Methodology: the proven ways to run an AI-Native boutique firm, from client acquisition to pricing to delivery to exit. Technology: Co-Founder, Collective 54's AI, which puts that methodology to work inside the member's firm. Capacity: Collective 54 staff who operate Co-Founder on a member's behalf and hand back finished work.

Members are founders, owners, and equity-holding executives of firms with 10 to 250 employees and \$5 million to \$50 million in revenue. Every member firm is in NAICS 54, the professional services code Collective 54 is named for. NAICS 54 spans nine sub-verticals, and Collective 54 serves all nine: legal services, accounting and tax, architecture and engineering, specialized design, IT and software development, management consulting, scientific research and development, advertising and public relations, and other professional and technical services. Collective 54 has a few hundred members across North America.

Founders join Collective 54 to make more money, make scaling easier, and make an exit achievable. Sixty-one Collective 54 members have sold their firms since early 2020, for just over \$3.5 billion in total value.

Learn more about how Collective 54 works: <https://www.collective54.com/what-is-collective-54/>

Listen to the [Pro Serv Podcast](#): <https://www.collective54.com/podcast/>

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