

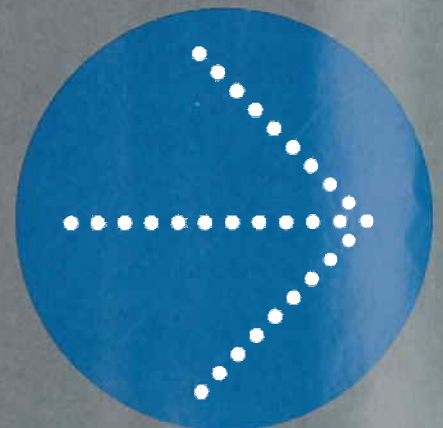
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SEVENTH
ANNUAL

MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE OF THE YEAR

Publishing a list of the region's most influential people is an exercise that obviously invites response. And we welcome it. Ultimately, we hope this list provides insight and context to what was happening all around us this year. We try to recognize people and organizations across as many disciplines as possible, thus ensuring a broad sampling of the visionary, the ambitious and the inspirational while seeking to be informative, provocative and maybe a little surprising. And while we do try to accentuate the positive, we recognize that "influence" has many facets—a reality that clearly affected our choice for the 2010 Person of the Year (page 120).

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CLOUD NINE

JOHN MCADAM

[CEO, F5 NETWORKS]

COMPUTING When John McAdam became CEO of F5 Networks 10 years ago, the company was in shambles. Demand for its product, which helped manage Web traffic, plummeted after the dotcom bust, and its share price, which had reached a high of \$160 the year before, had dropped to less than \$10. McAdam reinvented the company, focusing F5's efforts on developing software that improves the performance, efficiency and security with which Web information is stored in data centers. He also made a series of strategic acquisitions.

Good call. Data centers—clusters of computers where companies store information—have emerged as strategic components in the booming technology trend called cloud computing: the delivery of software services over the Internet. F5's software has found its way into the data centers of such major consumer-driven companies as Facebook, MSNBC, AT&T and Alaska Airlines. Microsoft's popular SharePoint software, a kind of Facebook for corporate intranets, operates eight times more efficiently when running F5 software. Just as significantly, the company's application delivery controllers, or ADCs, are hardware appliances that connect to corporate networks. The devices come with built-in software that analyzes network traffic to help applications delivered over networks run better and more securely.

F5 was 64th on *Fortune's* 2010 list of the world's 100 fastest-growing companies. *Forbes* has ranked F5 among its top 25 technology stocks, and this year cited its aggressive hiring—the company added more than 300 employees since last October, bringing worldwide employment to 1,900.

McAdam says F5's good fortune is born of a philosophy that takes advantage of challenging times. "I believe our ability to thrive in today's economic climate is due to the strategic value our solutions provide to customers—allowing them to respond quickly to change, scale their businesses online, reduce costs and, ultimately, to be more competitive." *Leslie D. Helm*



John McAdam at
F5 headquarters
in Seattle

HAYLEY YOUNG

LESSON PLAN

Thomas Ahearne

[LEAD ATTORNEY, *MCCLEARY V. STATE OF WASHINGTON*]

LAW As the lead plaintiffs' counsel in *McCleary v. the State of Washington*, Thomas Ahearne, an attorney with Seattle-based Foster Pepper PLLC, proved to be a force of nature. Undertaking the biggest education-finance lawsuit in three decades, Ahearne and his team shined a glaring spotlight on the state's failure to provide—in the words of King County Superior Court Judge John Erlick—"ample, stable and dependable funding" to the state's 1 million public school-children. The significance of the case is "enormous," says Ahearne. "[This ruling] eliminates the excuses state officials use to pretend they are not violating their oaths to comply with our state constitution," he says. "To be blunt," he adds, "[the] plaintiffs concluded that 30 years of lip service is enough: The state must put its money where its mouth is."

In 1978, the Washington Supreme Court ordered that the state comply with the Washington Constitution, unequivocally mandating that "it is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders." Every year since, says Ahearne, "The governors and the state legislatures have promised to comply 'tomorrow,' but 'tomorrow' never comes."

Though Washington is the only state in the country with a constitution making education the paramount duty of the state, its per-pupil expenditure has plummeted to 45th in the nation, says Ahearne. The state is expected to fight the ruling, but at press time it had yet to file an appeal. *Elizabeth M. Economou*