



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Final Week to Enter the 2026 EPIC Awards

Marine businesses have until August 21 to be recognized among the industry's most EPIC companies

Chattanooga, TN – August 16, 2026 — There is just one week left to enter the **2026 EPIC Awards**, with submissions closing at **11:59 p.m. ET on August 21, 2026**. The awards, presented by the Soundings Trade Only Group, recognize the achievements of entire marine companies—not individual products or people—and celebrate organizations moving the recreational marine industry forward through **Exceptional, Purposeful, Innovative and Compassionate** leadership and action.

Formerly known as the Most Innovative Marine Company Awards, the EPIC Awards recognize the many initiatives, decisions and investments that collectively create meaningful impact for a company, its employees, customers and the marine industry.

“Real innovation isn’t one breakthrough product or one bold leader. It’s a million small decisions a company makes; risks taken, ideas tested, teamwork, and paths chosen that add up to growth for the business and the potential to reshape the industry,” said Michele Goldsmith, vice president and general manager of the Soundings Trade Only Group.

What the EPIC Awards Recognize

The awards are open to marine businesses of every size and segment. Entries are evaluated against four equally weighted criteria: **the strength of the company's initiatives, their impact on the company, their impact on the industry, and their longevity.**

Eligible achievements must have taken place between **August 16, 2025, and August 21, 2026.**

Companies can be recognized in seven categories:

- Development & Technology
- Manufacturing & Supply Chain
- Sustainability
- Workforce & Culture
- Altruism & Social Impact
- Start-Ups
- Training

Every entry is automatically considered for the **Top 10 Most EPIC Companies** list. Companies are encouraged to bring their stories to life through supporting materials such as short films, presentations, photo essays, customer letters or original artwork.

Experienced 2026 Judges

The 2026 judging panel brings together senior trade media and publishing leaders and experienced marine executives with decades of industry knowledge.

Larry Russo is a third-generation marine industry leader who spent more than four decades with Russo Marine, the family-owned dealership founded in 1940 in Medford, Massachusetts. He served as president and CEO before the company was acquired by MarineMax in 2016. He has held numerous industry leadership roles, including chairman of the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas and the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association, and is a recipient of several industry honors.

Steve Tilders brings more than five decades of marine industry experience, including senior leadership roles with BoatLIFE and Rule/Jabsco, which evolved to be Xylem, and 17 years on the NMMA Board of Directors and MACD Board, including as chairman. He is also

the recipient of ITT's Harold Geneen Award and the 2025 Alan J. Freedman Marine Industry Leadership Award.

Recognition That Extends Beyond the Award

The **2026 EPIC Award winners will be announced October 7, 2026, at the conclusion of the MIX (Marine Ideas Exchange) event during the IBEX Show**, in front of industry executives, peers and media.

Winning companies will receive:

- Recognition as a Top 10 Most EPIC Company and/or category winner
- A category award plaque, with a glass-top honor presented to the highest-scoring company
- The right to display the **EPIC winners' symbol** in marketing materials
- A winner profile in the **November 2026 issue of Soundings Trade Only**
- Online recognition at TradeOnlyToday.com
- Additional promotional and industry recognition opportunities

One Week Left to Enter

Companies have until **11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, August 21, 2026**, to submit their entries. The online platform allows applicants to update their submissions through the deadline.

Learn more, preview the entry form or submit an application at:

www.tradeonlytoday.com/epic-awards

About the Soundings Trade Only Group

The Soundings Trade Only Group is a marine business-to-business multimedia brand with a mission to provide information to grow your business. It includes a monthly print publication, digital entities including a daily e-newsletter, website and social media channels, and marine industry events. Soundings Trade Only delivers business news and insights on products, trends, statistics, management and marketing to inform, reflect and inspire the marine industry. It is part of Firecrown Media.

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