Recognizing great leadership
By Dr. Chuck Kelley

This week several of us attended the Sales and Marketing Executives International (SMEI) Honolulu luncheon honoring Dennis Francis, president and publisher of the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, who was named 2014 Salesperson of the Year. In receiving the award, Dennis joins a long line of notable Hawai'i leaders recognized for their contributions to our state including such legendary figures as Henry J. Kaiser, Duke Kahanamoku, Chinn Ho, Lowell S. Dillingham, and Rev. Abraham Akaka – to name just a few. (See the complete list at right)

At first glance it is a highly disparate list, but upon reflection one sees that each honoree has not only been a visionary, but has convinced others to strive for that vision, thus making our state a better place.

Dennis Francis certainly deserves his place at the award table. His leadership resulted in the rescue of several of Hawai’i’s struggling local newspapers, turning them around financially, maintaining their award-winning quality, and moving them into the forefront of the world of electronic communications that has been the downfall of many less adroit mainland publications. As Mayor Kirk Caldwell passionately explained at the banquet, the local paper is an essential part of our community, and at the start of each day most of us open the morning edition with anticipation.

Also on the list of previous SMEI honorees is Dr. Richard Kelley, who we at Outrigger are all proud to recall was named Salesperson of the Year in 1994 thanks to his having spearheaded the drive to fund and build a convention center in Waikiki. When first envisioned, a convention center was little more than a pipe dream, but after years of hard work and hundreds of presentations and meetings, Dr. Kelley’s never-give-up attitude made it a reality, bringing enormous benefit to our state.

Sales and Marketing Executives International Honolulu does the community a service by providing this recognition of leadership. In doing so, it reminds us that great ideas only become reality with the help of great leaders. At Outrigger, we are fortunate to have benefitted from this kind of leadership.

SALESPERSON OF THE YEAR

1957 Daniel S. C. Liu  
1958 William F. Quinn  
1959 Henry J. Kaiser  
1960 Duke P. Kahanamoku  
1961 Webley Edwards  
1962 Rev. Abraham Akaka  
1963 Robert Krauss  
1964 Neal S. Blaisdell  
1965 Dr. Thomas H. Hamilton  
1966 Chinn Ho  
1967 Lowell S. Dillingham  
1968 Jack de Mello  
1969 Jack Lord  
1970 Tap Pryor  
1971 Hilo Hattie  
1972 Henry A. Walker Jr.  
1973 John D. Bellinger  
1974 Danny Kaleikini  
1976 Herbert C. Cornuelle  
1977 George Chaplin  
1978 R. W. “Bob” Holden  
1979 George Mason  
1980 James F. Gary  
1981 John Henry Felix Ph.D.  
1982 Al Harrington  
1983 Mackay Yanagisawa  
1984 Frank J. Manaut  
1985 Christopher B. Hemmeter  
1986 John W.A. “Doc” Buyers  
1987 Kenneth F. Froelich  
1988 C. Dudley Pratt Jr.  
1989 Robert J. Pfeiffer  
1990 Ruth M. Ono Ph.D.  
1991 Patricia F. Saiki  
1993 Frank De Lima  
1994 Dr. Richard R. Kelley  
1995 George R. Ellis  
1996 Rick Ralston  
1997 Ed Hogan  
1998 Chatt G. Wright  
1999 Don Ho  
2000 Michael W. Perry & Larry Price  
2001 Peter H. Schall  
2002 Dr. Evan Dobelle  
2003 Keith Vieira  
2005 Rex Johnson  
2006 Eddie Flores  
2007 Governor Linda Lingle  
2008 Mark Dunkerley  
2009 Steven Ai & Carol Ai May  
2010 Rick Blangiardi  
2011 Vicky Cayetano  
2012 John C. Dean  
2013 Stanford Carr