

From the Denver Business Journal:

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2016 Entrepreneur of the Year

## Andrew Cousin's Great Big Canvas success on full display

**Cousin was a finalist in the Consumer Products & Distribution category for EY's 2016 Entrepreneur Of The Year awards.**

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Andrew Cousin's first career choice was being a fighter pilot for Britain's Royal Air Force, but he ultimately decided to go into engineering. After working for large companies, including a British vacuum engineering firm's U.S. operation, and getting an MBA from Harvard University, he decided to strike out on his own.

"I was a little frustrated by the bureaucracy you get in a large company, and the slowness of decision making. ... So, I decided after business school to try being an entrepreneur," said

Cousin, a London native who also has a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from the University of Bristol.

Being an entrepreneur in this country led him to operate businesses in Boston and Los Angeles as well as Colorado. He and his family ultimately decided Colorado was the best place to live. Before his 2012 acquisition of [Circle Graphics Inc.](#), a Longmont-based large-format digital printing company specializing in billboards, Cousin ran the Adfusion advertising company and manufacturing company owner



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Andrew Cousin is CEO of Circle Graphics in Boulder.

Amersham Corp.

“Los Angeles was not feeling like the place for the long haul for my family,” Cousin said. “We didn’t know much about Boulder at first, but thought it looked pretty nice. The more you research Boulder, the better it looks.”

Circle Graphics has evolved into one of the world’s top-flight makers of large-format digital graphics, including outdoor advertising, business signs, wall décor and art reproductions.

The company has operations in five states and employs 800 people.

Innovations include the company’s key “Great Big Canvas” product, or enlarged photos that can be displayed in canvas format at home or business. The environmentally friendly company uses recyclable materials, and recently was working on creating eco-friendly inks and substrates.

As CEO, Cousin uses a democratic rather than an autocratic management style at Circle Graphics, which has resulted in hiring the right people to put the company on the leading edge of its industry. The exec estimates he spends about 40 percent of his time on recruiting and developing people. The company’s team-focused culture is based on originality, sharing ideas and employees not being afraid to fail in service of innovation.

Cousin also has dealt with his own challenges as an entrepreneur, including learning to balance his work and personal lives. Over time, he learned he can be passionate about work, but still find time to attend his kids’ basketball games.

“Life is short, and many entrepreneurs out there are very successful in business, but have sacrificed,” he said.

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