

9/2/2021 | 7 MINUTE READ

## Top Shops Benchmarking Program Announces 2021 Honorees

Products Finishing unveils this year's entire list of qualifying Top Shops, as well as the #1 ranking top shop in each category.

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Five-time Top Shop honoree Surface Technology Inc. rises to the top of the Electroplating & Anodizing Benchmarking Survey.

Each year, *Products Finishing* conducts its Top Shops Benchmarking Survey, a program designed to aid finishing shops in measuring their key operating metrics against others in the industry. Originally launched in 2015, Top Shops helps finishers identify optimal shop floor practices and improve operations and business procedures.

“The *PF* Top Shops Benchmarking Survey is celebrating its 7th year of providing industrial finishers with a deep dive on how their shop is performing along with comparing their data against their peers,” says *Products Finishing* publisher Todd Luciano.

You may have noticed a few changes in the program this year, including a change in the timing of the survey. Since the program's inception, Gardner Intelligence, the market research and data analysis division of Gardner Business Media, has sought to constantly improve Top Shops.

"Top Shops was designed primarily for the benefit of individual shops who are sent custom benchmarking reports. For benchmarking to remain relevant and useful, however, the Gardner Intelligence team regularly evolves Top Shops program elements," explains Jan Schafer, director of market research at Gardner Intelligence. "This year, for example, we enabled more and different shops to participate in *Products Finishing's* Top Shops by allowing them to complete the survey according to their schedule and data availability rather than limiting submissions to a certain few weeks."

According to Schafer, another important enhancement made this year is a restructuring of Top Shops datasets so several years of data can be combined. "Larger datasets make for more stable benchmarks, and they mean we can look at smaller segments of like shops (e.g. chrome finishers) for tighter comparisons that are reasonably robust," Schafer says. "Larger datasets also support analyses like drivers analysis which helps shops identify performance metrics that matter most to improvement plans."

Hundreds of shops participate in Top Shops annually, resulting in a wealth of data and statistics that prove invaluable for assessing areas of improvement, such as finishing technology, performance and practices, business strategy, and human resources. Below you'll find this year's entire list of qualifying Top Shops, as well as the #1 ranking top shop in each category.

### **Electroplating & Anodizing**

This year's #1 Top Shop in the Electroplating & Anodizing category is Surface Technology Inc. (STI) of Ewing, N.J., a company specializing in composite electroless nickel plating systems.

"Our company has a longstanding business model of investing in composite electroless nickel to cultivate this specialized technology within the broader plating world," says Michael Feldstein, president of STI. "We have done this through decades of research and development and scaling up our capabilities, so we have been able to coat both prototype and routine orders in a wide variety of such composite coatings (EN with Teflon, diamond from sub-micron to grit size particles, silicon carbide, boron nitride, phosphorescent particles, etc). We have been the pioneer in these technologies from patents to prototypes to production. And we have been the world leader by not only doing the processes here in our shop but by making and providing the chemical solutions and know-how to other plating shops around the world (both job and captive shops). Part of our model, especially as a specialized shop in an area like New Jersey, has been to build a network of shops around the U.S. and worldwide to which we can refer jobs for standard EN and coat their orders for composite EN until they have a sufficient volume to add the composite baths to their shop's portfolio."