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# Direct Digital Holdings Executives Mark D. Walker and Keith Smith Named EY Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2023 Gulf South Award Winners

*AdTech company co-founders selected for prestigious regional award celebrating ambitious entrepreneurs who are building a better world*

HOUSTON, June 20, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- [Direct Digital Holdings, Inc.](#) (Nasdaq: DRCT) ("Direct Digital Holdings" or the "Company"), a leading advertising and marketing technology platform operating through its companies Colossus Media, LLC ("Colossus SSP"), Huddled Masses LLC ("Huddled Masses") and Orange142, LLC ("Orange142"), today announced that its co-founders, Mark D. Walker, Chairman and CEO, and Keith Smith, President, were selected by Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) as Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2023 Gulf South Award winners.

Direct Digital Holdings and its subsidiaries create a unique advertising ecosystem that offers services on both the ad-buy and ad-sell sides, strategically positioning the company to reach consumers, brands and publishers of all sizes. The Company has been particularly successful in focusing on opportunities in small-to-mid-sized media markets and multicultural communities, which are often overlooked and undervalued in the advertising industry.

"As someone who was raised in the Houston-area, winning a Gulf South Award for the company I co-founded with my good friend, Keith, is thrilling and a testament to what we have accomplished in disrupting the ad space," said Walker. "We are grateful to Ernst & Young, for the recognition, and recognize the incredible talent and dedication of those working at our portfolio companies, Colossus SSP, Huddled Masses and Orange142. Keith and I also thank the entire Direct Digital Holdings team including our partners and clients who made this all possible."

Direct Digital Holdings has continued to see robust financial performance, experiencing 131% and 87% year-over-year Revenue growth in fiscal year 2022 and the first quarter of fiscal 2023, respectively. The Company processed approximately 207 billion monthly impressions and received more than six billion bid responses in the first quarter of 2023, increases of more than 130% and 81% over the same period in 2022, respectively.

"Direct Digital Holdings' success is rooted in the hard work and commitment we have long seen in taking advantage of advertising opportunities targeting underserved communities and markets often overlook," added Smith. "Mark and I are enormously proud of this accomplishment and the contributions of our dedicated employees. We also want to thank

Ernst & Young and congratulate all of the other finalists and our fellow winners for their entrepreneurial accomplishments."

The Entrepreneur Of The Year Awards program is one of the preeminent competitive awards for entrepreneurs and leaders of high-growth companies. Walker and Smith were selected by an independent judging panel made up of previous award winners, leading CEOs, investors and other regional business leaders. The candidates were evaluated based on their demonstration of building long-term value through entrepreneurial spirit, purpose, growth and impact, among other core contributions and attributes.

Entrepreneur Of The Year Award winners become lifetime members of a global, multi-industry community of entrepreneurs, with exclusive, ongoing access to the experience, insight and wisdom of program alumni and other ecosystem members in over 60 countries. Since 1986, the Entrepreneur Of The Year program has recognized more than 11,000 US executives.

As a Gulf South award winner, Walker and Smith are now eligible for consideration for the Entrepreneur Of The Year 2023 National Awards. The National Award winners including the Entrepreneur Of The Year National Overall Award winner will be announced in November at the Strategic Growth Forum®, one of the nation's most prestigious gatherings of high-growth, market-leading companies. The Entrepreneur Of The Year National Overall Award winner will then move on to compete for the World Entrepreneur Of The Year® Award in June 2024.

### **About Direct Digital Holdings**

Direct Digital Holdings (Nasdaq: DRCT), owner of operating companies Colossus SSP, Huddled Masses, and Orange 142, brings state-of-the-art sell- and buy-side advertising platforms together under one umbrella company. Direct Digital Holdings' sell-side platform, Colossus SSP, offers advertisers of all sizes extensive reach within general market and multicultural media properties. The company's subsidiaries Huddled Masses and Orange142 deliver significant ROI for middle market advertisers by providing data-optimized programmatic solutions at scale for businesses in sectors that range from energy to healthcare to travel to financial services. Direct Digital Holdings' sell- and buy-side solutions manage approximately 153,000 clients monthly, generating over 100 billion impressions per month across display, CTV, in-app and other media channels. Direct Digital Holdings is the ninth black-owned company to go public in the U.S and was named a top minority-owned business by The Houston Business Journal.

### **About Entrepreneur Of The Year®**

Entrepreneur Of The Year® is the world's most prestigious business awards program for unstoppable entrepreneurs. These visionary leaders deliver innovation, growth and prosperity that transform our world. The program engages entrepreneurs with insights and experiences that foster growth. It connects them with their peers to strengthen entrepreneurship around the world. Entrepreneur Of The Year is the first and only truly global awards program of its kind. It celebrates entrepreneurs through regional and national awards programs in more than 145 cities in over 60 countries. National Overall Award winners go on to compete for the World Entrepreneur Of The Year® title.


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