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## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Alternative Technologies Goes Co-op**

*Technology firm joins growing movement for employee ownership*

**BERKELEY, CA (June 9, 2022)** – [Alternative Technologies](http://www.alternativetechs.com), a Berkeley-based business serving hundreds of nonprofits and local businesses around the greater Bay Area, announces its conversion to a worker-owned cooperative. Founded in 1989 to provide a variety of technology infrastructure services, Alternative Technologies has grown to become a team of 35 who have earned the trust of both nonprofits and progressive small businesses throughout the region. In addition to traditional and cloud-based phone systems, Alternative provides fully-managed IT services, cloud-based backup, and cloud platform support, as well as professional installation of WiFi and low voltage wiring infrastructure. Alternative Technologies has become the IT department to Bay Area progressives, handling everything from building out the server room, to choosing an internet provider, to handling helpdesk requests, to advising on information security, budgeting, and planning.

The workplace culture at Alternative has always been unique. Staff are encouraged to understand the mission of the customers, and to align with that mission as they work alongside and implement solutions for customers. By converting to a worker-owned cooperative, employees will have a direct financial stake and more responsibility in running the venture. With this culture well established, the transition to a cooperative model has been seamless.

**it's all connected**

"We've always had good input and participation from staff on handling the challenges our customers face," said Jerry Skomer, the founder of Alternative Technologies. "The team that helped me build this business, my coworkers, have been here for 15, 20 and over 25 years. They have been at the table helping to make the decisions that earned trust from our customers and contributed to the growth and stability of our growing company. As I made plans for my retirement, it was obvious that the employees were the most qualified to manage the company. That's why I chose to pursue a worker-owned co-op structure."

In 2016, California passed a law establishing a "cooperative corporation" as a new corporate status, requiring participatory governance and profit-sharing amongst employee-owners. For local communities, worker-owned cooperatives have benefits that go beyond continuation of service to customers. Keeping local business strong and independent prevents job dislocation and provides resiliency.

"I was thrilled to hear they were becoming employee-owned," commented Kelly Doyle, Administrative Director of Women's Cancer Resource Center in Berkeley, an Alternative Technologies client since 2012. "They never felt like a top-down managed company to me. They've always felt like a family."

For Alternative Technologies, the conversion to a cooperative was the right decision, but it was not undertaken alone. Expert assistance was provided over a two-year period by Project Equity, a leader in the growing movement for employee ownership. Financing was provided by Shared Capital Cooperative.

"We've always been a values-based business with strong ties to our local community," said Deborah Farrell, Director of Community and Technology at Alternative Technologies. "Becoming a co-op is a great way to show to the local nonprofit and progressive business community what we are about... It's how I've always thought people should work."

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### [Alternative Technologies](#)

Alternative Technologies aims to build power with progressive organizations by offering the technology infrastructure they need to change the world. For some customers, this means providing cabling, telephones or IT support. For many customers, Alternative Technologies acts as the IT department, providing

comprehensive, worry-free IT management. A trusting relationship with Alternative allows AT's clients to be completely mission focused, unconstrained by the distractions and complications of daily IT support.

### [Project Equity](#)

Project Equity is a national leader in the movement to harness the power of employee ownership to maintain thriving local business communities, honor selling owners' legacies, and address income and wealth inequality. Project Equity works with partners around the country to raise awareness about employee ownership as an exit strategy for business owners, and provides hands-on consulting and support to companies that want to transition to employee ownership.

### [Shared Capital Cooperative](#)

Shared Capital Cooperative is a national loan fund and federally certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that provides financing to cooperative businesses and housing throughout the United States. Shared Capital's mission is to build a just, equitable and democratic economy by investing in cooperative enterprise with a focus on providing financing to co-ops to create wealth in low-income and economically disadvantaged communities.