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Search is on for ICT-savvy businesses



Dr Richard Hutchins

The search has begun to find the West Midlands business that has made the best use of the internet and ICT.

The winning entry to the seventh national e-commerce awards, aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises with up to 250 employees, will receive a £50,000 cash prize and valuable publicity.

There will also be a number of regional cash prizes up for grabs.

The winner of the 2003 awards was Wolverhampton company Response Maintenance and Building Services.

Operating within a sector with generally a poor market perception, the judges felt that its entry showed great

foresight in transforming many aspects of the business processes, delivering efficiencies in productivity, stock control as well as improving customer experience, to create a 21st century business.

The competition, which is being sponsored regionally by development agency Advantage West Midlands and nationally by BT, the DTI and Interforum, starts on a regional basis and is divided into six categories.

Entries must be submitted by July 29 and shortlisted applicants from each category will compete in front of a regional judging panel.

The winner of each regional category will be announced at a

prize-giving ceremony in September and will continue onto the national final in London on October 6.

Categories are:

- Best sales and marketing online
- Best customer care online
- Best end-to-end integrated business
- Broadband communications
- Best use of teleworking
- Best use of mobile and wireless applications

Dr Richard Hutchins, corporate director of sustainable and rural development at Advantage West Midlands, said: "We are delighted to be the regional sponsor of these prestigious awards.

"There are increasing

numbers of local companies investing in e-commerce and with broadband at over 99 per cent coverage across the region, I hope to see businesses from all corners of the West Midlands submitting entries this year."

Frank Mills, BT regional director, West Midlands, said: "Like the DTI, BT recognises the value of IT and communications technologies to Britain's small business sector. I'm really pleased to see how those businesses that are embracing these technologies in the West Midlands area are now thriving."

■ For more information or to make an entry online go to ecommerce-awards.co.uk