



## STEPHEN TIMMS

**Stephen Timms is Minister of State for Energy, E-commerce and Postal Services. He recently launched the E-commerce Awards, now in their sixth year.**

### **What benefits do the awards bring to business?**

The E-commerce Awards were set up in 1999 to recognise and reward small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that have used information and communication technologies (ICT) to transform their business. Many companies still do not realise what potential these technologies offer. The challenge for Government is to help more businesses understand the benefits of exploiting ICT to deliver sustained business improvement.

### **The UK online for business initiative has recently changed – were you not satisfied with the service?**

This is a reflection of how our understanding of technologies has evolved. To begin with it was all about getting people online. By making UK online for business part of the DTI's Achieving Best Practice in your Business solution, we've switched our focus from counting the numbers of people online to how people are using such technologies.

### **Are businesses adopting technologies such as broadband?**

Broadband is becoming a credible platform from which to do business. It's now available to 90 per cent of the population – today there are just over 3.5 million connections and this figure is still rising.

### **How are ICT technologies being used?**

For UK businesses to be among the most sophisticated users of ICT in the world they will need to use technologies to optimise, for example, the way they communicate with customers and suppliers, manage internal processes, collaborate with partners and trade online.

*The awards are a joint initiative between the Department of Trade & Industry and not-for-profit campaign group Interforum. To apply, go to [www.ecommece-awards.co.uk](http://www.ecommece-awards.co.uk).*