



technology means business

The government-backed Technology Means Business (TMB) scheme is set for major expansion following its take-over by the IT Forum Foundation (ITFF). As CRN reported last month (CRN, 7 June), ITFF is a non-profit organisation that works with the government, standards bodies and IT companies to help UK businesses fulfil their IT requirements. This makes the ITFF an ideal fit with TMB, which gives resellers a kitemark-style

Approved Centre accreditation, certifying them as suitable to help SMEs with IT. The Chartered Management Institute, which once ran TMB, passed the scheme on so it would benefit from the ITFF's connections in the IT sector.

CRN and the TMB team will work together to help resellers gain the skills to deliver sound IT advice to SMEs and will encourage more vendors to align their reseller programmes with the standard.

Vendors such as BT, Intel and Microsoft have backed TMB from its inception. The latest big supporter of the initiative is security giant Network Associates, which said it hoped TMB would help it to provide customers with "the highest levels of service". The scheme also has received government backing under the auspices of UK Online.

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E-Commerce Awards take the stage

INTERFORUM, SISTER organisation to Technology Means Business (TMB), is hosting this year's National E-Commerce Awards - the ultimate prize for best practice in SME systems implementation.

Over the next few years a closer link will develop between the TMB and this event, which recognises and rewards user organisations that demonstrate excellence in ICT use.

Now in its sixth year, the Awards are sponsored by the Royal Bank of Scotland and supported by the Department of Trade and Industry, together with all of the UK's regional development agencies. New categories have been introduced at both regional and national levels, and there is a prize fund of £214,000.

The Awards are open to UK businesses, public bodies, registered charities and not-for-profit organisations with fewer than 250 employees based in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. This year's show, the biggest so far, will celebrate the best examples of internet and ICT use in SMEs across the UK, many of which could be your customers, so make sure you nominate them.

There will be winners in 60 regional and eight national categories, and the overall national prize winner could walk away from the gala dinner at the Grosvenor House Hotel with a cheque for £40,000. Winners could also get valuable publicity and press coverage - and so could you!

Regional and national categories

The National E-Commerce Awards start on a regional basis with the regional winner of each category progressing to a national category final. The categories are:

- E-business Start-up.



Awards winners could find themselves walking away with a tidy sum and exposure too

- E-business.
- E-trading.
- Best Use of Broadband.
- Best Use of Teleworking.

Winners of each category in each region will win £2,000, and gain free publicity and a place in the national finals. Winners and runners-up both receive certificates of commendation. Winners are announced at a regional presentation event.

The 12 regional winners in each category will then be judged at a national level. Winners in each category are awarded £8,000 and a trophy on the night of the gala dinner in October.

National Innovation Awards

The National Innovation Awards recognise organisations that demonstrate innovative and sustained use of technology to improve their business. The awards are for:

- Mobile and Wireless Technology.
- Advanced Supply Chain Integration.
- Best Rural E-business and Community.

National Innovation Awards winners will receive a cash prize of £8,000, publicity and a trophy.

And if you happen to be their supplier, you'll get the glory, too.

The National Overall Winner, selected by the national judging panel from the winners of the National Awards and National Innovation Awards, will receive an additional £30,000.

Time is running out

The entry deadline is 30 July at 5pm. Your customers can get their applications online now at www.ecommerce-awards.co.uk.

If you are TMB-registered and find yourself short of time, we can help. If you're not TMB-registered, then start that process by emailing tmb@itff.org.uk.

But if you don't have enough time, why not focus on next year's awards by getting your nominations ready for 2005? Next year there will be a special CRN and TMB Awards fast track for identifying potential winning entries and building case study material from them. We hope to see solutions supplied by TMB practitioners get their due exposure.

You can get real business benefits from the TMB, so join the quality adviser and reseller movement now. Email tmb@itff.org.uk or visit www.tmb.org.uk.

TMB gets into action with recruitment drive

THE TECHNOLOGY MEANS BUSINESS (TMB) accreditation is going through a phase of radical development. Last month the initiative was adopted by the IT Forum Foundation (ITFF), and now is the time for a new phase of positive action.

Would you join the TMB initiative as an accredited advisor? Have a good think about this. Take into account that we aim to make this question a no-brainer for you.



Mike Briercliffe

Leave the matter of whether you would qualify for TMB accreditation aside for now. If you really know how to give impartial advice on a broad basis in the computing and communications fields, the chances are you will qualify without massive extra effort. If you already have some serious vendor-based qualifications, these will almost certainly be a help.

TMB is a great way to differentiate your company and there are some clear reasons why you would want the certification. For example, it can bring more sales opportunities, sales that close quicker, with less price pressure, and recognition of your excellence.

Throughout the rest of this year some important new features will appear in the TMB. Not only are we considering a new entry-level qualification, we're introducing market awareness initiatives to generate sales opportunities, setting up a new opportunity-monitoring service and offering applicants the chance to register with the safeguard that if you put the effort in and it does not work out for you, you'll get your money back.

The ITFF is not going to lower the standard, it will enhance it. We're taking a modular approach to a set of qualifications and looking at extensions for advisors in technologies such as advanced communications, grid/utility computing and mobile/wireless technology. We're interested in developing TMB in vertical markets, too.

There are several hundred accredited advisors already, but we want to treble that number by December. The ITFF is going to make TMB accreditation a must, and soon we'll spell out the details.

This is the time for you to get involved with TMB. You can make a real difference. Drop us a line at tmb@itff.org.uk if you want more information. If you are already TMB-qualified and want to share some of your experiences with us, feel free to get in touch.

Meanwhile, happy selling and good implementing. Great technology advisors mean good business for us all.

Mike Briercliffe is chairman of the IT Forum Foundation.

Find out more

Technology Means Business (TMB) is the industry standard for those providing business-related IT advice to SMEs. The organisation accredits Advisers and Approved Centres (organisations) achieving the TMB Standard. More information about TMB is available at www.tmb.org.uk. Alternatively, you can telephone (01784) 473 005 for advice, or you can email tmb@itff.org.uk.