

## **GOVERNMENT-BACKED E-COMMERCE AWARDS INTRODUCE NEW INNOVATION CATEGORIES REWARDING UK BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND COMPETITIVENESS**

**Over 1000 UK SME's have already entered to win part of a total £182,000 cash prize fund**

**29 May 2003:** In recognition of the Government's drive to make the UK the best environment in the world for e-business and to encourage the uptake and use of developing technologies, including mobile & wireless telecommunications and broadband, the fifth annual Government-backed InterForum/UK online for business E-Commerce Awards have introduced four new innovation categories to reward and encourage best practice among UK businesses.

Since the launch of the Awards on 13 March 2003, over 1000 UK SME's have begun their applications for their chance to win part of the total cash prize fund of £182,000. Organisations entering come from almost every business sector imaginable, from accountancy to childcare, publishing to healthcare, leisure to oil & gas, tourism and sport.

The new categories, run on a national level, will recognise business excellence in the Use of Mobile & Wireless Technology, Use of Broadband Communications and Advanced Supply Chain Integration. In addition, the Innovation Awards will feature a prize for the best application of Technology Means Business (TMB) accredited advice. Each Innovation category winner will be presented with an £8,000 cash prize and will be judged alongside the National category winners for the coveted prize of overall E-Commerce Awards winner, receiving the £30,000 top cash prize at the National Awards Gala Dinner.

Since their inception in 1999 the Awards have been recognising and rewarding innovation in the application of Internet, Information and Communications technologies to transform small and medium sized businesses in the UK. The Awards are a joint initiative between UK online for business and InterForum and are being sponsored nationally for the third year by Royal Bank of Scotland Group (RBS) and Cisco Systems. They are free to enter and are open to any UK business with up to 250 employees that would like the opportunity to win a slice of the total £182,000 cash prize fund available.

The four new innovation categories, sponsored by BT, Hewlett Packard and Oracle, will run alongside the established categories of e-business start-up, e-trading, e-business and achievements in the voluntary and community sector which are run on a regional and national level. The innovation categories are run at a national level and winners will be selected from the regional category winners and runners-up. The overall National winner will receive a top cash prize of £30,000 and will be selected from National category winners, who will be awarded £8,000, with each regional winner receiving £2,000.

Phil Flaxton, Chief Executive of InterForum, commented, "Applying technology to gain business advantage and improve competitiveness is without a doubt the main focus for growing companies today. Particularly in a tough economic climate, understanding new technologies, where in the business they can be of greatest benefit, and their impact on tactical operations and strategic goals is critical to the overall success and growth of UK companies."

Since winning the Awards in 2000, DGC Distribution, a wholesaler of musical instruments and accessories, has continued to adopt new technologies to transform and improve the way it does business. DGC has developed MI Store, a complete retail management system with which individual stores can manage sales, stock control, purchase orders and customer accounts. The stores are also able to connect through an XML interface with suppliers. The system runs over a broadband connection and is currently being used by many music stores throughout the UK. So successful has the take up been that DGC has created a spin-off technology company to roll out the system through other similar vertical niche markets.

Richard Bradley, Director of Commercial and Small/Medium Business for Cisco, commented, "We have seen that technologies such as mobility solutions, have succeeded in dramatically improving productivity levels. It is important to support and reward innovation that will lead to the success and growth of today's SME businesses."

Andy Ross, Director of E-Commerce & Internet at RBS added, "The sheer variety and quality of businesses involved each year in the Awards is a clear demonstration of how e-technology can inject a new edge into an existing business model."

The E-Commerce Awards 2003 culminate on 8<sup>th</sup> October at the national Gala Dinner to be held at Grosvenor House Hotel in London. Applications for entry will be through an online form at the web site [www.ecommerce-awards.co.uk](http://www.ecommerce-awards.co.uk). In addition companies can be nominated online.

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **1. UK online for business**

UK online for business is a partnership between Government and industry and promotes the use of e-commerce amongst small and medium sized businesses. There is a network of UK online for business advisers situated in the Business Links in England and their equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These advisers provide down to earth, practical and impartial advice to individual businesses on how technology can cut time and cost from the way they do business. For further information call 0845 715 2000 or visit [www.ukonlineforbusiness.gov.uk](http://www.ukonlineforbusiness.gov.uk)

2. [www.interforum.org](http://www.interforum.org) is a not-for-profit organisation that helps British companies to conduct their business electronically. All of InterForum's activities are governed by the need to raise awareness of the many business opportunities and challenges presented by new Internet, information and communications technologies. InterForum works to ensure that education, legislation and technology are in place to help British businesses to profit from the digital economy. For further information on InterForum please visit its website <http://www.interforum.org>

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