



UK SME'S DEMONSTRATE EXCELLENCE IN THE USE OF NEW AND DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGIES TO TRANSFORM THEIR BUSINESS

Fifth anniversary year of the InterForum / UK online for business E-Commerce Awards highlights maturing use of e-technologies

2 October 2003: In total, 6,373 companies have entered the InterForum/UK online for business E-Commerce Awards over the past five years. In their anniversary year, the E-Commerce Awards have set a new record, attracting 2,945 entrants, over 75 percent more than last year. The quality, size and outreach of entrants has also changed - with nine percent of companies entering employing over 50 people, and a further 22 percent employing between 10 and 50 individuals - highlighting the increasing maturity in the SME market when it comes to adopting new technologies.

Out of this year's 2,945 entrants, over 900 organisations have entered the four new National Innovation Categories. These were created in recognition of the Government's drive to make to UK the best environment in the world for e-business, highlighting the fact that UK SME's are often leading the way in the application of new and developing technologies. Category winners will be presented with a cheque for £8,000 by Stephen Timms MP, Minister of State for Energy, E-Commerce and Postal Services, at the national final and gala dinner on Wednesday 8th October at The Grosvenor House Hotel, London.

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 which allows individual stores to manage sales, stock control, purchase orders and customer accounts.

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-news release continued-

Sponsored nationally for the third year by Royal Bank of Scotland Group and Cisco Systems, the Awards are run on a regional and national level and recognise excellence in the areas of e-business start-ups, e-trading, e-business and achievements in the voluntary and community sector.

The new innovation categories, sponsored by BT, Hewlett Packard and Oracle, aim to recognise business excellence in the Use of Mobile & Wireless Technology, Use of Broadband Communications and Advanced Supply Chain Integration. There is also a category to reward for the best application of Technology Means Business (TMB) accredited advice.

The finalists are judged at the national level with 8 companies all vying for the prize of £8,000 in each of the four categories. The four National Innovation winners will then be judged alongside the National category winners for the chance to be crowned winner of this year's InterForum/UK online for business E-Commerce Awards and receive a cheque for £30,000, presented by Stephen Timms MP, Minister of State for Energy, E-Commerce and Postal Services, at the national final and gala dinner on Wednesday 8th October at The Grosvenor House Hotel, London.

Phil Flaxton, Chief Executive of InterForum comments, "The new National Innovation categories have attracted a record number of entrants of increasing size and scope, demonstrating the increased take-up of new and emerging technologies among medium sized UK businesses. We will look to extend the number of National Innovation categories in 2004 in recognition of the tremendous response by entrants this year."

Liz Grant, Director of ePolicy and Delivery, UK online for business adds, "The Innovation categories demonstrate how information and communication technologies enable companies to be more innovative in the way they work, do business and communicate with customers, employees and suppliers. It is through innovation that companies achieve real business success and competitive advantage."

For further information about the regional and national winners of this year's InterForum/UK online for business E-Commerce Awards, or to register your interest for next year's Awards, visit the dedicated website at www.ecommerce-awards.co.uk

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

2. 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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Further details of the Innovation Category Finalists and their web addresses

Advanced Supply Chain Integration Category

The Electronic Document Company Limited

www.electrodoc.co.uk

The Electronic Document Company (EDC) commenced trading in 1990 as a short run digital printing company, servicing mainly training companies. The challenges of this market are complex, with clients requiring multiple printed stock lines such as training manuals, brochures & stationery.

thomsons online benefits

www.thompsonsonlinebenefits.com

thomsons online benefits was formed in December 2000 as part of Thomson's Group Plc, the 3rd largest Independent Financial Adviser in the UK, with the objective of using web technology to revolutionise the way that employee benefits are administered and communicated.

IMS Ltd (ALSO E-BUSINESS REGIONAL WINNER – YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER)

www.ukims.co.uk

IMS (Intelligent Marketing Solutions) is a young, dynamic and innovative field marketing company who provides intelligent marketing solutions. IMS differs from other field marketing companies in that it is the first in its field to build its entire business model around e-business solutions.

SparesFinder Limited

www.sparesfinder.com

Early in 1999, David Stroud and Jan Hutchings converted their existing business into sparesFinder.com Ltd to set up a marketing presence in Europe and increase the funding of the group. SparesFinder develops and operates web-based inventory management solutions which enable companies to optimise their holdings and location of engineering spare parts.

@UK PLC

www.uk-plc.net

@UK PLC offers merchants and small businesses a fast route to trading online. The core businesses consists of e-Procurement and Supply Chain automation, working with Local Authorities, Police Forces, Further Education Sites and NHS Trusts to e-commerce their suppliers, the provision of web sites to new businesses through online company formations and domain name registrations, general partners in the small business space such as Barclays ePDQ, Small Business Support Organisations and other business organisations and Economic Development Partners.

Alphameric Hospitality

www.alphamerichospitality.com

Alphameric Hospitality provides IT solutions and services to the hospitality and foodservice industry that help improve customer service and maximise profitability offering the complete solution including a variety of front of house POS devices, through to back of house systems including cash, stock and labour control, to head office databases and reporting.

Jali Ltd (ALSO E-BUSINESS WINNER – SE)

www.jali.co.uk

Jali was founded in 1990 to design, manufacture and market decorative wood products for the home and for DIY, architectural and display industries. Jali has undertaken projects for Harrods, Paramount Pictures, John Lewis and Shepperton Studios to name just a few.

Savastore.com (a division of Watford Electronics) (ALSO E-BUSINESS WINNER – EAST)

www.savastore.com

Watford Electronics is a long-established retailer of computer equipment. In 2001 Watford Electronics re-branded its Internet division 'Savastore'. By analysing customer feedback and changing in line with the market the site went through four updates, taking more than 1,000 orders a day, holding over 6,000 products, and receiving over 6 million hits a month. T

Use of Broadband Technology Category

Dabs.com (ALSO E-TRADING WINNER – NW)

www.dabs.com

dabs.com is the UK's leading internet retailer of IT and technology products, offering a huge range of products from the world's leading manufacturers to almost a million online customers across the country, having grown significantly over the last three years to become the number 1 online retailer in their sector.

Core Consultancy Limited

www.core-consultancy.com

The Core Consultancy is an IT company specialising in providing network design, support and consultancy, to SME's. The organisation focuses primarily on Microsoft Technology based solutions and has recently started to offer remote data storage solutions, as part of its disaster recovery planning and has been working with data backup market leaders Veritas, and Microsoft to build a solution that not only offers remote data storage, but provides an annual disaster recovery test.

Cybertill Limited

www.cybertill.co.uk

Cybertill Limited started trading in December 2001 providing an integrated Application Service Provider (ASP) based EPoS and E-Commerce solution to a number of retail markets. The company has a very experienced management team that has extensive knowledge of the retail market place.

Bulldog Communications

www.bulldogdsl.com

Founded in 2000 and based in London, Bulldog builds and operates DSL networks and has a leading-edge DSL network specifically designed to deliver the highest quality broadband experience to government, business and residential customers. Deploying the latest and most advanced DSL technology, Bulldog offers the broadest selection of DSL products and services commercially available in the market today and is continually expanding its state-of-the-art network.

Double R Controls Ltd

www.drc.co.uk

Double R Controls Ltd. is a manufacturing company, producing equipment for the packaging and converting industry. The company has expertise in a range of disciplines including mechanical, electrical and software design, and electrical and mechanical manufacturing.

SignPost at Tyne Tees Television

www.signpostbsl.com

SignPost is Britain's biggest supplier of British Sign Language (BSL) services for television, video and the Internet. The organisation is part of Tyne Tees Television, in Newcastle upon Tyne and works closely with Granada Learning. SignPost uses its website to build a Deaf and hearing community of interest; and to demonstrate how content streamed by broadband technology can create social and economic inclusion for Deaf people in their own native language - British Sign Language.

Instant Search

www.instant-search.com

Instant Search was founded by ex-Financial Times journalist Anthony Capstick, after he realised that there were many people in business who wanted access to commercial databases, but did not want to pay a subscription for occasional usage, or wanted a broader range of data-sets to draw from. Instant Search has links with commercial credit reference agencies and marketing databases, plus in-house access to a large number of libraries in both electronic and hard copy format.

Microcourt Ltd T/A Jacquie Lawson.com

www.jacquelawson.com

Jacquie Lawson.com provides high quality animated greeting cards to its subscriber base of over 70,000 members. The cards differ from other major e-card providers in the quality of the art, the size and complexity of the animations, and the original music composed for each card. Members join for a year at a time and the low membership fee enables them to send an unlimited number of personalised e-cards for that period.

Use of Technology Means Business (TMB) accredited advice Category

Them Ltd

www.themltd.co.uk

Them Ltd specialises in event management and marketing support, providing quality communications tools & services to both national and international organisations. By combining the teams various skill sets, Them Ltd provides a full service agency and has over 50 years of industry experience. Located in South Wales, the agency assigns a group of highly experienced individuals who understand your services and are responsible for building & planning company event recognition.

Oak Tree Management & Training

www.oaktree-training.com

Oak Tree Management and Training Ltd has grown into one of the UK's leading management training and consultancy agencies since its conception in 1994, primarily due to its strong focus on delivering a quality service. With nine delivery venues across the UK, the organisation offers over 185 public courses to a wide-range of clients including blue chip companies such as Airbus, Aventis, BskyB, Freightliner, Greene King and Virgin.

Hideaway Country Holidays Limited

www.culcreuch.com

Hideaway Country Holidays Limited is an Operator of Culcreuch Castle Hotel, Country Park and Conference Centre in Stirlingshire, Scotland. Culcreuch Castle, central Scotland's oldest inhabited castle, is now open to guests as an elegant country house hotel. Set in 1,600 acres of wooded parkland, it is the perfect base for touring the Trossachs and Highlands, where the legends of Braveheart and Rob Roy took root.

Quintessa Art Collection Ltd

www.quintessa-art.com

Quintessa's mission is to create exclusive art reproductions for interior decoration by searching the world's leading museums and major private collections for examples of rare and decorative fine art. These institutions grant Quintessa privileged access and license to reproduce their unique treasures. Quintessa's range of prints are available in a choice of deluxe hand-made frames, or alternatively in standard factory made frames.

4x4 Parts Master Ltd

www.4x4partsmaster.com

4x4 Parts Master Ltd is an independent garage specialising in Land Rover vehicles based in Essex. The company is the amalgamation of Terrain Master Ltd and Duncan Mansfield, formerly Managing Director of Mansfield Motors, bringing together the experience of both the parts and off-road side of Land Rover ownership. The website was launched in July 2003 to reach potential customers at home and overseas, with an on-line newsletter and e-mail campaign generating increased usage of the web site.

Brinton Wade Ltd

www.brintonwade.com

Brinton Wade Ltd is an interior consultants started by Julian Brinton & Tabitha Wade in March 2001. Until November last year it had mainly focused on the business to business market within the interior industry, with Exhibition feature stand design, PR, Marketing, Brochure Styling, Trend Forecasting & Product development. In September 2001 Brinton Wade set up a business to consumer side of the business.

Eloise Lingerie

www.eloise.co.uk

Eloise was established in 1994 by Gillian Brown to help women overcome the practical problems encountered following breast surgery. As a qualified nurse and trained surgical fitter, Gillian wanted to provide both a personal supportive service, and to sell a wide range of lingerie, previously unavailable in the UK. Customers have a choice of mail order or a personal fitting service.

Coast and Country Holidays (ALSO E-BUSINESS WINNER – WALES)

www.welsh-cottages.co.uk

Based in Pembrokeshire in Wales, Coast and Country Holidays offer a portfolio of high standard cottages across Wales. Coast and Country Holidays excel in taking the time to identify exactly what type of cottages and in which locations, what standards and equipment and most importantly what prices make their customers want to holiday with them year after year.

Use of Mobile & Wireless Technology Category

PS Office Supplies Limited

www.psonline.co.uk

PS Office Supplies provides a vast range of products for next day delivery including office supplies, educational supplies, print and business gifts. A privately owned company with more than 15 years experience PS Office Supplies provides value for money for customers by providing service of the highest standard, proactively helping customers to reduce their overall purchasing costs and having a number of divisions to ensure the best possible service and support.

Smart Moves Ltd

www.smartmoves.co.uk

Established in 1998, Smart Moves is the largest car club operator in the UK. The company currently operates car clubs in Edinburgh, Bristol and London. Smart Moves also provides technical support for smaller independent clubs, including internet and phone booking, help desk facilities, telematics and smart card access. It offers advice to housing developers and associations on integrating car clubs into developments, and large businesses on corporate membership and how a work place car pool can be established.

Response Maintenance and Building Services Ltd

www.response-maintenance.co.uk

Response Maintenance and Building Services Ltd is a fast reactive and programmed repair service to local authorities, housing associations, retail outlets and insurance groups. The organisation offers a 24hr, 365days a year building and repair service and provides quality tradesmen covering all associated trades over a fifty mile radius of Wolverhampton.

Nicholl Fuel Oils Ltd

www.nicholloils.com

Nicholl Fuel Oils Ltd is Northern Ireland's largest independent oil distributor and one of Texaco's largest in Europe. The company has been delivering high quality oil products to its customers in Northern Ireland for over 40 years. Nicholl Fuel Oils is a family owned and managed business which has seen two generations develop an expertise in a range of petroleum products and services covering the domestic heating oil, agricultural, commercial fuels, petrol, lubricants and fuel charge card markets.

EMPICS

www.empics.com

EMPICS is a sports photography marketing company, providing complete photographic solutions for sports rights holders, media and brands in the UK and abroad. It offers a digitised sports photo library of over half a million images and is used by newspapers, magazines, books, web-sites, sporting bodies and marketing agencies, around the world. Established in 1985, EMPICS has a team of 50 staff, all focussed on giving customers the best possible service.

Alston Cybermoor Ltd

www.cybermoor.org

An Industrial and Provident Society, registered with the FSA. Cybermoor Ltd is a co-operative, with members drawn from the local community who subscribe to broadband. Based in Alston, Cumbria, Cybermoor is a one stop shop for the community of Alston Moor. It combines communication tools like e-mail and discussion forums with news and a local directory. The content management system allows members of the community to upload stories and content from home, provided they have the right permissions.

Brook Young Peoples Clinic (ALSO VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY WINNER – SW)

www.brook.org.uk

Brook Advisory Centres - commonly known just as Brook - is the only national voluntary sector provider of free and confidential sexual health advice and services specifically for young people under 25. Brook is a registered charity, and has nearly 40 years' experience of providing professional advice through specially trained doctors, nurses, counsellors, and outreach and information workers to over 100,000 young people each year.

Dial-a-Cab (Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service Ltd)

www.dialacab.co.uk

Dial-a-Cab is a Licensed Radio Taxi Service supplying the corporate and private sector with a taxi service 24 hours a day 365 days a year. Dial-a-Cab is a member's co-operative formed 50 years ago by a small group of taxi drivers, which today has a fleet comprising of approx 2,200 drivers and an annual turnover in excess of £42 million pounds.