

## Resellers to get their share of the glory

There have been some changes to the categories at this year's Channel Awards, so now more than ever before, some of the channel's less-celebrated players are in with a chance. **Simon Meredith** explains

This year's Channel Awards will see more accolades than ever before presented to resellers in recognition of their contributions to the industry.

For the first time there are almost as many awards for resellers as there are for distributors and vendors. While the Channel Awards have tended to focus mostly on the companies providing services to resellers over its 10-year history, the changes that we have seen in the market of late have made it more important than ever to recognise the skill and dedication of the people who are working on the front line.

So this year, as well as seeing outstanding corporate and SME resellers recognised, there are awards for businesses focused on delivering services, for those operating in the retail (including on-line) space and for specialist solutions providers. There is also an award for companies that deliver services to their customers.

Tony Price, managing director of WStore, last year's winner of the SME Award, said: "The categories are in line with some of the moves we are seeing a number of resellers making, namely away from the pure-play product fulfilment. I hope the changes to the categories will allow smaller specialist resellers to compete for awards without having to go head-to-head with larger resellers that cover a much broader spectrum of SMEs or corporate customers."

This is certainly what they are, at least in part, designed to do and while the Innovator awards last year gave all companies an opportunity to be recognised, the simple fact that this year there are six separate awards must give smaller resellers a better chance.

Claire Robinson, professional services director at Prior Analytics, one of last year's runners-up, said: "The category definitions look much improved. In the previous two years they have been a little too general for us. We intend to enter the Specialist



**Graham Norton:** Last year's host gets to grips with an issue of CRN. Like the magazine, the award categories have gone through a few changes since then.

Reseller of the Year category, which seems perfect as it gives us the opportunity to show our specific focus."

She also pointed out that entering is a very useful incentive to get your marketing machinery moving. "It provides an ideal impetus to talk to our customers about how much we have achieved in the past year and write new case studies about the most interesting projects to support our entry," she said.

Getting an entry in is fundamental, of course, as no company can be short-listed or win an award without putting their names forward. In the reseller categories, the entry is particularly important, as the judges' knowledge of the specific companies is likely to be limited.

Robinson has learned from the company's experience last year what works. She said: "We are going to try to keep our entry relevant by writing about fact and avoiding marketing hype. We intend to show that we have achieved consistency coupled with innovation in the last year and substantiate it with a real story about how

our solutions have genuinely benefited one of our key customers."

Resellers that can demonstrate all this to the judges will certainly be in with a chance of making the short list.

There is no doubt that winning an award, or even coming close, helps resellers to build business and gives everyone a boost. The companies that have experienced winning, or being short-listed, always want to come back and win again. Paul Barlow, managing director of Equanet, last year's Reseller of the Year, said: "It is still the highest and most

sought after accolade within the channel, and we use it as a benchmark as to how our performance is perceived outside the company. We have had a good experience with the awards over recent years, but it will still mean the world to us to win this November. What are we going to do to try to win it? Everything we possibly can."

Last year's Corporate award winner, Elcom IT, is just as eager to repeat its success. Managing director Tony Davis said: "It has been a great thing

### LAST YEAR'S WINNERS

- **Corporate Reseller:**  
Winner: Elcom Information Technology.  
Runners-up: Azzurri Communications, Bytes Technology Group, Equanet, IT Partnerships.
- **SME Reseller:**  
Winner: WStore UK.  
Runners-up: Parity Computers ICT, Prior Analytics, RAMSAC.
- **Innovator of the Year Public Sector:**  
Assurix.
- **Innovator of the Year Private Sector:**  
IT Partnerships.
- **Reseller of the Year:** Equanet.

to talk about at customer meetings and presentations. It helps to demonstrate that we are a quality organisation. We would be thrilled to win again as it validates so much about the company and its staff. We will be preparing a really good written entry and encourage all of our customers to vote for us."

Customers also notice the achievement, claimed Robinson. She said: "We were amazed at the number of customers who asked us about how we fared at the awards. It does seem that customers consider accolades such as this as a 'currency' to measure the performance of their solution provider. To a certain extent, I think they view our successes as a validation of their own choice of partner in a competitive market space."

Ramsac was also a runner-up last year, and the company's managing director, Robert May, believed simply being short-listed had a positive effect. "As soon as our name appeared on the list we let our clients know, and that generated a lot of compliments and good feeling. People like to know that they are working with someone who is doing well," May said.

Being at the awards event gave May and his colleagues a chance to catch up with contacts in the industry who they had not seen for a while. That was extremely useful as many firms re-established contact after the event. Being on the short list is of course also a good excuse to have a good time and celebrate your achievements as a business.

Robinson said: "Our team loved the awards party. The immediate effect was lots of sore heads, but the recovery was speedy."

**CRN Channel links 2011836, 2011804**

### RESELLER AWARDS 2005

- Corporate Reseller of the Year.
- SME Reseller of the Year.
- Services Provider of the Year.
- ICT Project of the Year.
- Consumer Reseller of the Year.
- Specialist Reseller of the Year.

