

Record entry vies for reseller recognition

The Channel Awards short lists have been announced, and the competition is fiercer than ever. **Simon Meredith** talks to some of the rivals and finds out that lobbying is rife – the odd VAR has even resorted to a ‘small amount of very unsubtle bribery’

» This year, resellers will get more recognition than ever before at the Channel Awards, and there is certain to be very strong competition in the main categories. We know this because we had a record number of entries from resellers this year and in the Corporate and SME categories in particular, the judges had a very difficult job in selecting the companies that would be short-listed.

Scalable Networks is one of those listed for the Corporate award, and Simon Brown, a director at the company, is delighted to be there.

“It’s always reassuring when someone other than your Mum thinks you’re great! It’s great to see CRN recognising our good work but we certainly share our category with some hot contenders and it will be a hard fight.

“It’s been a fantastic year for us and we are delighted at having given our best and got the most out of what we have to give.”

Eurodata Systems is in the running for this year’s Services Provider award and managing director Des Lekeran, believes his firm can win. “The competition is good but hopefully Eurodata will be the cream that rises to the top.

“I think that our customers value our service and the way that we help them to deliver great solutions that bring real business value. I do not think that we will have a problem asking them to click their mouse and tell the whole world how good we are.”

Ramsac is listed for the SME award, as it was in 2004, and while pleased to be there again, company director Dan May knows that winning is far from assured.

“Everyone at Ramsac is delighted

to be nominated for the second year running and the race will definitely be a close one.

“We are just excited about being among the top SME resellers in the UK and hope that our valued clients demonstrate why they are working with us by voting!”

Last year’s winner of the SME award, WStore, is also listed in the category again.

Commercial director Stewart Hayward, said that if it can win again in 2005, it will be even better than scooping last year’s award.

“As a first-time winner last year it is important to us to feel that we have maintained momentum - it is easy to slip from focus and rest on your laurels, but our inclusion in this year’s short list recognises the fact that we are still driving forward and continuing to grow.

“I think we are in good company with the short list. I think winning against these companies will be even more satisfying than beating the companies we were against last year. So, yes, I think it will be pretty competitive.”

WStore is going all out to win again and (with tongue firmly in cheek) there is no predicting how the team will react if they don’t, said Hayward. “We were short-listed for three years before winning last year, so if we don’t win there will be an element of *deja vu*, followed quickly by overwhelming anger and a need for vengeance, which depending on the quality of the wine, could happen sooner rather than later.

“We are doing a number of activities – email shots, telephone campaigns, web site advertising, and a small amount of very unsubtle bribery.”

We do hope that he really is joking as the judges – who will cast the final deciding votes – will certainly frown upon any skulduggery and falsification.

Richard White, public sector sales director at Centerprise International, which is listed in the IT Project category, said that they won’t be trying any such thing. “We don’t go in for cheap politicking and bribery!” he told CRN.

Even so, he still thinks the opposition needn’t bother turning up. “The competition are all highly professional and reputable - just a shame they will be coming second.”

But there will be competition and doubtless others will be encouraging customers and industry partners to vote for them – and there is nothing in the rules against this. It’s something that Claire Robinson, marketing director at Prior Analytics, which is listed in the Specialist category for the second year running, has no hesitation in doing.

“Knowing the sheer volume of entrants for our category and how difficult it was to make it through I’d say we’re in excellent company and it could well be a photo-finish.

“Having said that, Don’t vote for them, vote for Prior Analytics! You know you want to! Don’t vote for them, vote for Prior Analytics! You know you want to!”

They may need the votes to have a decent chance as the race for this award is likely to be a close one. Ji Consultancy is on the list for the first time and company managing director, Julian Box, believes this is a great achievement in itself.

“It’s important as I believe it will further raise our profile within the IT industry, both with customers and our peers alike. The other finalists I am sure are like us - extremely competent in their area of specialisation. Of course we want to win, but having been short-listed is recognition in itself.”

Another newcomer that is proud to have made the final list and is relishing the prospect of being at the awards is Secon. General manager of the reseller, Robert Gupta, said: “Secon are very proud to have made the short list for a CRN award.

“We’re looking forward to the evening and have already booked our table. The CRN awards are very prolific within the industry and to win one would help our standing immensely. Just being nominated has already raised our profile.”

Robinson meanwhile, as well as trying to raise votes, is turning her hand to raising her heels. The Channel Awards are nothing, she points out, if not an excuse to go shopping.

“It [being short-listed] means I can hit the Richmond high street looking for a posh frock and the web for shoes for the awards do.

“Our managing director said it’s great recognition of the hard work we’ve put in over the years... but he has no idea what’s really important.

“Seriously though, it’s a great motivator and the whole team were waiting with bated breath for the arrival of CRN when the awards were announced. Come to think of it, I haven’t seen so much excitement on a Monday morning in years.”

CRN www.channelawards.co.uk

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RESELLER SHORT LIST 2005

Corporate Reseller of the Year

- Azzurri Communications
- EACS
- Equanet
- Esteem Systems
- Scalable Networks

SME Reseller of the Year

- Blue Chip
- Insight
- PC World Business
- WStore
- Ramsac

Specialist Reseller of the Year

- Easy Computers

● Ji Consultancy

- Prior Analytics
- ProBrand
- Secon

Services Provider of the Year

- Eurodata Systems

● LinuxIT

- LuxTech
- PC World Business

IT Project of the Year

- Centerprise International
- G3 Telecommunications
- Prime Business Solutions
- Telindus

