

Irish SMEs Celebrate Hard Work and Ingenuity at the First Blacknight SME Awards

28 APRIL 2015, CARLOW, IRELAND

SUMMARY

Over 100 representatives from Irish SMEs came together Saturday night in Cork to celebrate the inaugural Blacknight SME Awards.

Learning technology company LearnUpon received the Grand Prix at the weekend, at the inaugural Blacknight SME Awards, held at the Radisson Hotel in Cork, and attended by representatives of over 100 Irish SMEs which made the final in 14 different categories.

LearnUpon also took the prizes in two of those categories: 'Customer Focus' and 'B2B Export', highlighting an important focus of the company which is developing markets in the US and Europe and which has just opened an office in Sydney, Australia.

The Dublin-based company has developed a Learning Management System, a 'Software as a Service' platform which is suitable for use by organisations to provide training for their own employees or customers - or by training companies to develop and deliver their own training courses online. It was founded in 2011 by Brendan Noud and Des Anderson, and has grown to 16 employees.

Relatively young and innovative startups were side by side with long established firms at Saturday's event. The Startup category was won by Themis Food Advisory, a food regulations consultancy service founded by food scientist Dr. Karen Roche in 2014. The 'New Product' award went to Olytico, whose system monitors social media on behalf of brands, and analyses what people are saying about them. The 'Online Retailer (Export)' award was won by Send My Bag, which promises to do better than the airlines and deliver your travel luggage to your door. Sex Siopa, Ireland's first online bodysafe sex shop, won the 'Online Retailer (Irish Market)' award.

Fintan Conlan started One Man and His Van, a furniture removals business, after redundancy in 2005. Now he employs his wife, and his sons are involved part-time. On Saturday night they celebrated their award in the 'Family Run Business' category. It's a similar redundancy-to-enterprise story at Rocket Rainbow Studios, a game development company which won the 'Under 30' category.

Family businesses featured in other categories as well. Cliona Standun collected the award for 'Company Transformation' on behalf of Standun Spiddal, the business which she and her sister Laragh have transformed from a tourist gift shop to a full-service department store serving locals and visitors alike. And Fernhill House Hotel in Clonakilty collected the 'Community Minded' award in recognition of the efforts of its owners, the O'Neill family, in a range of voluntary and community activities.

Dublin's Cake Cafe took the 'Environmentally Minded' award, and food businesses were strongly represented in general. Kush Seafarms won the 'Food & Drink' category and Mr Crumb from Co Westmeath was the winner in the 'B2B Growth' category. Finally, L Mulligan's Grocer from Stoneybatter in Dublin was the 'Best Retail (Offline)' business.

Presenting the award on behalf of the event sponsors, Blacknight CEO Michele Neylon paid tribute to the work of the unsung heroes in SMEs who drive the economy and support local employment. "As a successful indigenous SME, Blacknight is proud to support the business community and celebrate its achievements", he said.

Event organiser Damien Mulley of Mulley Communications expressed his delight with the "stunning success" of The SME Awards. "We're especially pleased that 200 people found out you can have a fun, unstuffy, night celebrating small businesses in Ireland - The real core of our economy".

The SME Awards was hosted by RTÉ's Rick O'Shea, and took its medieval theme from its sponsor, with the slogan "Game of Domains". The launch in recent months of a range of new Top-Level Domain options such as .IRISH, .SCIENCE, .SPACE and .CLUB has created new opportunities for creative domain names for online business, and Blacknight is pioneering their introduction in Ireland.



RELEVANT LINKS

 **Blacknight SME Awards**
<http://smeawards.ie/>

 **Blacknight Hosting & Domains**
<https://www.blacknight.com/>

 **Mulley Communications**

QUOTES

"As a successful indigenous SME, Blacknight is proud to support the business community and celebrate its achievements"

— Michele Neylon, CEO, Blacknight

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— Damien Mulley, Mulley Communications

IMAGES



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ABOUT BLACKNIGHT

Blacknight (<http://www.blacknight.com/>) are an Irish based, ICANN accredited domain registrar and hosting company. Recipients of several awards for their revolutionary use of social media, Blacknight are one of Europe's most cutting edge Internet companies. Blacknight constantly seek to lead the way by introducing innovative solutions for its client base and provide dedicated servers and co-location as well as a comprehensive range of Microsoft Windows and Linux based hosting plans and domain name registration services to business globally. IP transit services and other solutions for more demanding business and academic customers are offered a la carte.



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