



THE BRITISH
CHAMBERS OF
COMMERCE



CHAMBER AWARDS 2006

National Winners Press Pack

AESSEAL plc wins £25,000 at British Chambers of Commerce Awards 2006

BCC announces the winner of the Microsoft Award for Outstanding Business Achievement at the 2006 Chamber Awards Ceremony

24th November 2006 – The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) and Microsoft today announced the winner of the Microsoft Award for Outstanding Business Achievement. The award and prize money of £25,000 cash, were presented to AESSEAL plc at a ceremony held at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

AESSEAL plc, a member of both the Rotherham and Derbyshire Chambers of Commerce, has won three regional awards including Business of the Year in the Yorkshire and Humber region. AESSEAL was established 27 years ago and is the second largest seal manufacturer in the UK and the fourth largest in the world. The company aims to be the world leader in the design, manufacture, marketing and supply of mechanical seals and sealing systems for rotating machinery.

Simon Hughes, Microsoft's Director of Medium Business said: "To be an example for Britain's businesses to follow means showing excellence in all fields. AESSEAL does just that. From its ambitious approach to business growth and entrepreneurship, to its quality standards and staff development. The judges were also particularly struck by the company's commitment to its local community and the environment. Britain's recent manufacturing history is not rich in success stories like AESSEAL and this makes their achievement all the more outstanding. We wish you continued success in the future. Congratulations."

The prize money from Microsoft is believed to be one of the most generous amounts given for a business award and should provide a welcome injection of cash into the business.

Gordon Bridge, Chief Executive AESSEAL plc explained that they will be using the £25,000 prize money to support a local environmental project: "In 2005, we opened a wetlands wildlife sanctuary at our Rotherham HQ. The 40,000 square feet development consists of a series of reed beds and swales which feed a balancing pond providing a sanctuary for local wildlife. The project is something we are very proud of and has received praise from WWF and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. The money from our prize will enable us to support an extension of the wetland project we are working on in consultation with Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council."

AESSEAL plc was not the only company to have cause to celebrate as there were seven other awards presented:

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	Rotherham	The Music Factory Entertainment Group Ltd	Provider of entertainment solutions
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	Rotherham and Derbyshire	AESSEAL plc	Seal Manufacturer
Most Promising New Business	BT	Herefordshire and Worcestershire	MilSys (UK) Ltd	Defence industry equipment supplier
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Hanley Economic Building Society	Building Society
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce	The Hearing Care Centre Ltd	Independent and holistic service for the hard of hearing
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	East Lancashire	Helen Colley Farmhouse Fare Ltd	Manufacturer of specialist hot and chilled desserts
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	East Lancashire	Whittle Eastern Europe Logistics Limited	Transportation services company

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC, said: "Congratulations to AESSEAL. For Britain's manufacturing sector, you are a much needed role model. Your product innovation, business ambition and ultimately your impressive financial performance, exemplify the best in business achievement."

ENDS

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About Microsoft

- Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realise their full potential.

MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and Microsoft announce the national winner of the Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology

The Music Factory Entertainment Group, a member of Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, has been announced as the national winner of the Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology for the Chamber Awards 2006. The business (initially a provider of entertainment solutions) won the Microsoft-sponsored award for its U-explore system – an innovative advice and guidance client software and portal server technology installed in schools and colleges. The system delivers relevant local careers advice and guidance to young people in the Rotherham area. The judges felt that it was an exciting organisation that has achieved business success through challenging times. It was clear that their innovative use of technology had been the crucial element that had enabled them to diversify into new markets.

Simon Hughes, Microsoft's Director of Medium Business said: "We were all impressed by The Music Factory Entertainment Group's business success and its use of technology to help it diversify into new markets. Its U-explore system is a fantastic product. There can never be a more important time in a young person's life than when they are exploring their future career. Getting your hands on the best advice and guidance can be very tough. This is a great use of technology to solve this problem. Congratulations. We hope that many other young people across the country may get to feel the benefit of the system in the years to come."

The Music Factory Entertainment Group saw off competition from nine other finalists in this award category. More information on these finalists can be found in the regional winner press packs on www.chamberawards.co.uk.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC, said: "Congratulations to The Music Factory Entertainment Ltd. Technology now touches all businesses but only a select few look closely at how they can use this investment to transform their business. Their innovative use of technology to open up new markets for themselves and the impressive U-explore system itself, made them very worthy winners."

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MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and Composite Legal Expenses announce the national winner of the Business of the Year Award

AESSEAL plc, a member of both the Rotherham and Derbyshire Chambers of Commerce, has been announced as the national winner of the Business of the Year Award in the Chamber Awards 2006. The company (a seal manufacturer) won the Composite Legal Expenses-sponsored award because the judges were very impressed by the professionalism and thorough approach of their entry. The company is an inspiration to new businesses by demonstrating that sustained growth is possible even within the difficult manufacturing sector. The company employs 392 staff within the UK and is a sound business with strong ambitions.

John Mullin, Managing Director, Composite Legal Expenses, commented: "Winning the prestigious Business of the Year award clearly takes something very special indeed. The judges felt that despite strong competition across the country, AESSEAL stood out not just for its exceptional business growth and performance in a static world market for its products, but because it matched that with its commitment to continuous improvement. At a time when worldwide competition in industrial and engineering sectors is such a major challenge to UK plc, AESSEAL has excelled and beaten these threats with their niche product. AESSEAL is a business with a strong strategy for success right across its organisation – from its approach to product development, through quality and export markets, to its management practices. Congratulations and good luck for the future."

AESSEAL saw off competition from nine other finalists in this award category. More information on these finalists can be found in the regional winner press packs on www.chamberawards.co.uk.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC, said: "AESSEAL excels in all areas of its business. From financial performance to product development. From an entrepreneurial drive for new markets and export opportunities, to a progressive approach to quality and human resource management. Winning a regional award is tough enough, but to walk away with the national title is reserved for the very best that Britain has to offer. Congratulations."

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MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and BT announce the national winner of the Most Promising New Business Award

MilSys (UK) Ltd, a member of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, has been announced as the national winner of the Most Promising New Business Award in the Chamber Awards 2006.

The company (a defence industry equipment supplier) won the BT-sponsored award, for its innovative products, its growth record and also its impressive growth prospects. The systematic planning of the company's founders and their ability to spot a niche opportunity impressed the judges. They were able to leave the armed forces having completed all of the research and networking required to successfully begin trading. Their results are very strong, with a turnover of £1.4m predicted in the current year. In addition, their local procurement strategy - employing local people and using local services where possible - demonstrated a smart approach for dealing with their local authority and MOD customers.

Mick Hegarty, Marketing Director, BT Business said: "MilSys reminds us that there is no substitute for careful planning and an eye for an untapped opportunity when starting a business. More than this, they stand out for very strong financial performance and their commitment to supporting their local community. There is a fine line between success and failure in the early years of any business, but MilSys is off to a flying start. Congratulations."

MilSys (UK) Ltd saw off competition from eight other finalists in this award category. More information on these finalists can be found in the regional winner press packs on www.chamberawards.co.uk.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC, said: "Picking a winner in this category was very tough. The range and calibre of the companies on our shortlist meant that to win you needed to be something special. MilSys was just that. Their methodical preparation, smart approach to dealing with their customers and of course their early performance, set them apart from the competition. Congratulations."

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MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and Westfield Health announce the national winner of the Business Commitment to the Community Award

Hanley Economic Building Society, a member of the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has been announced as the national winner of the Business Commitment to the Community Award in the Chamber Awards 2006. The company (a building society) won the Westfield Health-sponsored award for both the huge scale and depth of their commitment to local people, the environment and the disabled. They work in partnership with the Stoke-on-Trent 'Greensteps' project which funds local environment activities such as river cleansing and tree planting. The company provides mentors to the Prince's Youth Trust's start-up businesses, as well as sponsoring education rooms at the new Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

Jill Davies, Executive Director, Sales and Marketing, Westfield Health said: "For many businesses, the contribution they make to their community all too often stops at simply paying the salaries of their employees. Not so for our winner. Apart from its outstanding commitment, the judges were rightly impressed by both the scale and genuine impact its projects had locally. The community is a better place with Hanley Economic Building Society there – what more could we have asked for in a winner of this category. Congratulations."

Hanley Economic Building Society saw off competition from seven other finalists in this award category. More information on these finalists can be found in the regional winner press packs on www.chamberawards.co.uk.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC said: "Hanley Economic Building Society stands as a testament to the positive impact business can have within a community. While the range of its activities may have made it stand out in this competitive category, it is heart and genuine commitment to help its local community that made it a winner. Congratulations."

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MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and the Telegraph Business Club announce the national winner of the Award for Skills and Workforce Development

The Hearing Care Centre Ltd, a member of the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, has been announced as the national winner of the Award for Skills and Workforce Development in the Chamber Awards 2006. The organisation (an independent and holistic service for the hard of hearing) won the Telegraph Business Club-sponsored award because the judges recognised the Hearing Care Centre's exceptional dedication to staff training and development and this commitment became the benchmark for judging in this category. The company's continued investment was shown to be paying off at the bottom-line, indicating a perfect example of "workforce development in action". In the past few years £200,000 has been invested in the training and development needs of the 11 staff the company employs.

David Sumner Smith, Programme Director of the Telegraph Business Club commented: "This was a hotly contested category. The Hearing Care Centre's wholehearted commitment to staff training and development, set a benchmark that even the other high calibre entrants simply couldn't match. If there is one thing the Business Club page in the Daily Telegraph has consistently shown us it is that a commitment to staff training has a profound effect on business performance. The Hearing Care Centre proves this once again."

The Hearing Care Centre saw off competition from nine other finalists in this award category. More information on these finalists can be found in the regional winner press packs on www.chamberawards.co.uk.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC said: "A strategic skills and workforce development programme can often be the difference between business success and failure. With people at the heart of business there can be no more important investment. The Hearing Care Centre has shown us all once again, what a positive effect a real commitment to your staff can have, not simply on the morale and wellbeing of your team, but also on your businesses competitiveness and success."

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MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and Yorkshire Bank announce the national winner of the Entrepreneur of the Year Award

Helen Colley from Farmhouse Fare Ltd, a member of the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, has been announced as the national winner of the Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the Chamber Awards 2006. Helen's company is a manufacturer of specialist hot and chilled desserts. She won the Yorkshire Bank sponsored award, for the remarkable success of the company she founded when she was just 18 years old and based from her parents' kitchen.

Farmhouse Fare is now a leading independent company of its type in the North West, supplying foods to Tesco, Asda, Sainsburys, Morrisons, Waitrose, Costco and Makro. The judges felt that Helen's strong passion for the business is the key ingredient to its remarkable achievements and therefore she is a true entrepreneur.

Brian Colquhoun, Head of Integrated Financial Solutions, Yorkshire Bank said: "Congratulations to Helen. Entrepreneurs with her level of talent are all too rare. In common with other great entrepreneurs, it is her drive and skill that clearly sit at the heart of Farmhouse Fare's success. Everybody seems to think they can create a successful company. The reality is only the best do. Helen sets a standard that should inspire every budding entrepreneur."

Helen saw off competition from eight other finalists in this award category. More information on these finalists can be found in the regional winner press packs on www.chamberawards.co.uk.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC said: "Winning this award, like successful entrepreneurship itself, is very tough. It takes guts, skill and of course impressive results. Helen impressed the judges on all counts. Entrepreneurs are the pioneers of the modern age. They spot, and then exploit, opportunities when most of us can only see barriers. Helen joins an all too small and elite club in this country. Congratulations."

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MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and UK Trade & Investment announce the national winner of the Exporter of the Year Award

Whittle Eastern Europe Logistics Ltd, a member of the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has been announced as the national winner of the Exporter of the Year Award in the Chamber Awards 2006. The organisation (a transportation services company) won the UK Trade & Investment sponsored award because of its remarkable use of language skills (their workforce collectively speak 24 different languages) which has also helped them to overcome cultural, as well as language barriers.

The company also employs many Eastern European native speakers. This helps them to compete as they can deal confidently with both delivery drivers and customs. The company has a clear vision for growth and has proven its adaptability, which has helped it win blue chip clients. In addition, they are regularly involved in delivering seminars to help other export businesses. The judges were also impressed by the company's vision of growth with projected turnover reaching £8m by the end of December 2008.

Presenting the award, Ian Fletcher, Managing Director, International Group, UK Trade & Investment commented: "I congratulate Whittle Eastern European Logistics on winning this award, and of course all regional winners who made it to the final. Exporters like them make a crucial contribution to our economy. Their hard work helps demonstrate why Britain is the world's sixth largest exporter of products and services. They have also proved that in today's globalised economy you don't have to be big to go searching for global opportunities."

He continued: "Award schemes such as these, are important to smaller companies as they recognise the significant work and contribution these businesses make to the British economy. The Government, through UK Trade & Investment, is the global business partner for British exporters. Through our network we can help companies to export by providing detailed information about markets and opportunities all the way through to specialised expert advice."

Whittle Eastern Europe Logistics Ltd saw off competition from eight other finalists in this award category. More information on these finalists can be found in the regional winner press packs on www.chamberawards.co.uk.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC said: "It feels that all too often we ignore the merits and opportunities of export in Britain. The team at Whittle Eastern European Logistics should inspire many businesses to think again. They impressed the judges not just with their business success but with their passion for what they do. With so many people looking nervously at Eastern Europe as the EU expands, this company sees nothing but opportunity not just for itself but others. This award could not be more deserved, congratulations."

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- UK Trade & Investment is the lead government organisation that provides support for UK companies looking to develop international business. It also provides support for overseas companies wishing to invest in the UK. UK Trade & Investment has a wide range of services, backed-up by a network of trade advisors around the UK and worldwide who can provide market intelligence, advice on regulations, sales leads, and financial and practical support.

Summary of the Regional Finalists

East Midlands

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	Northamptonshire	Hambleside Danelaw Ltd	Manufacture of roofing and ventilation products for the construction industry
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	Derbyshire	Zibrant	Corporate events management
Most Promising New Business	BT	Leicestershire	ENTO Limited	Training and development
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	Northamptonshire	Viridian Nutrition	Supplier of nutritional supplements to independent health food stores
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Lincolnshire	Wright Vigar Ltd	Chartered accountants
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	Leicestershire	Hilary Devey - Pall-Ex Limited	Distribution of palletised freight
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	Derbyshire	Amber Composites Limited	Composites material manufacturer and supplier to the automotive, aerospace and leisure industries

East of England

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	Ipswich and Suffolk Chamber of Commerce	Blyth Valley	Insurance broker
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce	Denny Bros Ltd	Provider of specialist printed products
Most Promising New Business	BT	Essex Chamber of Commerce	One to One Personnel Ltd	Recruitment consultancy
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	Essex Chamber of Commerce	Southend United Football Club	Football club
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Suffolk Chamber of commerce	The Hearing Care Centre Ltd	Independent and holistic service for the hard of hearing
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce	Genevet Ltd	Trader of veterinary pharmaceuticals and vet and farm equipment

North East

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	North East	OpSec Security Limited	Anti-counterfeiting technology
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	North East	Mitchell Trucking Company Ltd	Logistics
Most Promising New Business	BT	North East	Comesys Europe Ltd	Designs and manufacture of "drive by wire" control systems for automotive industry
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	North East	Powder & Liquid Products Limited	The market, manufacture and distribution of household cleaning products
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	North East	Glen Hall - The Write Research Company Limited	Executive research consultancy
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	North East	Gate 7	Manufacture specialist components for the off road industrial vehicle industry

North West

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	East Lancashire	MDA Ltd	A marketing procurement and fulfilment organisation
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	Greater Manchester	Zen Internet	Internet Service Provider (ISP)
Most Promising New Business	BT	Greater Manchester	'Wigs up North'	A theatrical wig and make-up company
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	East Lancashire	Enjoy Travel, part of Enjoy Ireland Ltd	A tour operator and event organiser
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Manchester	Gilds Associates Ltd	A recruitment agency for the hotel and catering market
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	East Lancashire	Helen Colley Farmhouse Fare Ltd	Manufacturer of specialist hot and chilled desserts
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	East Lancashire	Whittle Eastern Europe Logistics Limited	Transportation Services company

Scotland

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	Glasgow Commerce	Clyde Valley Drilling Ltd	Drilling company
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	Glasgow Chamber	The Comedy Unit Ltd	Production Company
Most Promising New Business	BT	Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce	EDpaX Ltd	Education Software company
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce	Macphie of Glenbervie	Food ingredients manufacturer
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce	Macphie of Glenbervie	Food ingredients manufacturer
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce	Alison Smith Activpayroll	Payroll management and workforce accounting
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce	The Craig Group	A global shipping and energy firm

South East

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	London Chamber of Commerce	Turbo 10 Ltd	Online search technology
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	London Chamber of Commerce	Futures Supplies & Support Services	Trade supplier of cleaning products
Most Promising New Business	BT	Channel Chamber of Commerce	Red Eagle	Recruitment Agency
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	Channel Chamber of Commerce	Christchurch Nursery School (Folkestone)Ltd	Children's nursery school
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Channel Chamber of Commerce	Euromotive (Kent)Ltd	Van converters and Coachbuilders
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	Sussex Chamber of Commerce	Violaine Roberts The Flying Fortress	A family entertainment centre
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Wyeth Pharmaceuticals	Pharmaceutical company

Wales

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce	IT3.com	Search engine optimisation and content management
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce	Dudleys	Building and interiors construction
Most Promising New Business	BT	Cardiff Chamber of Commerce	Communications Direct Ltd	Independent mobile phone retailer
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce	Budget Vets	Veterinary surgery
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce	Simone's Health Clubs	Small chain of health clubs
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	Cardiff Chamber of Commerce	James Norvill GD Environmental Services	Waste management and disposal organisation
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce	Industrial Automation and Control Ltd	Electrical systems integrator

West Midlands

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	Herefordshire and Worcestershire	Bioganix Ltd	Waste processing business
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	North Staffordshire	GSH Group Plc	Facilities and energy management company
Most Promising New Business	BT	Herefordshire and Worcestershire	MilSys (UK) Ltd	Equipment supplier
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Hanley Economic Building Society	Building Society
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Shropshire	Lyreco UK Ltd	Office supplies company
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	Coventry and Warwickshire	Lee Cash and Hammish Stoddard The Peach Pub Company	Chain of public houses
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	Birmingham, Herefordshire and Worcestershire	Surgicraft Ltd	Implant and medical device manufacturing company

Yorkshire and Humber

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	Rotherham	The Music Factory Entertainment Group Ltd	Provider of entertainment solutions
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	Rotherham and Derbyshire	AESSEAL plc	Seal manufacturer
Most Promising New Business	BT	Mid Yorkshire	Applied Language Solutions Ltd	Provider of translation services
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	Rotherham and Derbyshire	AESSEAL plc	Seal manufacturer
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Doncaster and Sheffield	H.I. Weldrick Ltd	Chain of Independent pharmacies
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	Mid Yorkshire	Applied Language Solutions Ltd	Provider of translation services
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	Rotherham and Derbyshire	AESSEAL plc	Seal Manufacturer