

It's Good To Be The King

Cisco crowns winners of its Customer Kings competition for SMEs

11 February 2009 – Eight Small-Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) from across the UK were crowned “Customer Kings” today, as Cisco announced the results of its search to find 2009’s best customer focused firms.

The contest to find the UK’s best businesses for customer engagement, run in association with SME magazine *Real Business*, saw Cisco awarding the title of “Customer Kings” to eight firms from across the UK and from a variety of sectors, ranging from waste management and travel to agriculture and fitness.

Bernadette Wightman, Director of Cisco’s UK SME division, said: “While each of the firms differed wildly in the products and services that they offered, one trait that all of our Customer Kings shared was a commitment to going above and beyond traditional measures to ensure customer satisfaction. All of the winners showed that they were very much in charge of one of the key things that can be controlled by businesses during a downturn – customer service. It was also particularly pleasing to see so many of these fantastic small firms embracing technology as a way of doing better business.”

From a Suffolk dairy which was willing to change its business model based on customer feedback, to an engineering firm that recognised the value of involving and motivating staff in order to ensure they provided the best customer service, the winning entries each demonstrated an understanding of their customers needs, and had taken specific actions to improve and maintain relationships with their patrons.

Judged by a panel of SME experts, including Real Business journalist Charles Orton-Jones, award-winning British entrepreneur Denys Shortt, and Bernadette Wightman, Head of SME at Cisco, Customer Kings saw eight SMEs emerge as Winners while an additional eight companies were celebrated as ‘Highly Commended’.

Winners included:

- Black Tomato – an online travel agency whose interactive website uses tools such as Destination Board and Panic Button as well as information about previous, favourite and worst holidays, accommodation and flight preferences to help consultants design unique holiday packages for each customer
- Firefly Tonics – producers of a natural energy drink who encourage customers to tell them what they should be doing next and even help to design future drinks
- AnyJunk.com – a waste management company that is reinventing rubbish removal through service customer excellence and environmentally responsible disposal

- Dairy Direct – an agricultural contractor and merchant that factored customer needs directly into decision-making about their business model
- Cougar Automation – an automation engineering firm that has embraced the philosophy of matching employees' strengths to their roles in order to improve customer service
- Ten UK – a concierge service that ensures member satisfaction by having fulltime staff whose only role is to look after customer interests
- Instyle Fitness – an equipment provider to gyms, that works with its customers to ensure end-user engagement
- Conosco – an outsourced-IT provider whose 'prevention is better than cure' philosophy is demonstrated through thorough monitoring of customer needs

Highly Commended entries included:

- Caxton FX – a foreign exchange provider whose Currency Card offering offers genuine savings to customers abroad
- Aspect Maintenance – a facilities management firm that offers customer support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- Rooms You Love – an online retailer that offers after-sales supports designed specifically to suit the needs of its working-parent customer base
- IRIS – an IT software and services provider that monitors its customers' product use and pro-actively reverts with suggestions on how to maximise efficiency
- ANS Group – a technology infrastructure specialist that has implemented an intensive question and answer feedback method to reach each customer individually
- Prosyn Ltd – an outsourced IT solutions provider that focuses on communication and customer satisfaction to ensure it performs as well as its customers' internal teams
- Star Technology – an internet service provider that engages both internal and external sources for customer feedback and improves its offering accordingly

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