

National Business Awards

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Valueworks short listed for AXA business Oscars

AXA has announced that four North West businesses have been shortlisted as finalists and a further four highly commended in the AXA Small to Medium Sized Business of the Year Award category of this year's prestigious National Business Awards - dubbed by Gordon Brown as the 'Business Oscars'.

Amongst the nominees is Valueworks Ltd based in Wigan (www.valueworks.co.uk) this specialist software application services technology company has already revitalised a wide range of private and public sector organisations by identifying huge sourcing and procurement cost savings - using their unique "on demand" supply chain technology, developed in-house which provides a real competitive edge.

Group Chief Executive Jeff Dandridge was naturally delighted with the nomination and explained that the savings achieved for the company's many clients were right across the board. "We work with a broad base of companies across the UK and internationally, helping them to find, get and keep real cost savings". Valueworks range of clients are indeed impressive and they have used their expertise to identify and deliver savings for companies as diverse as a major housing consortium-delivering huge savings in building materials, a venture capitalist who are acquiring

many manufacturing businesses. These are revolutionised with cost savings. Valueworks are also working with a leading corporate recovery company, using cost reduction to turn around businesses.

Jeff is committed to Wigan he explains "As a technology driven company where we are based is relatively unimportant but we enjoy being in Wigan and find the area offers the right environment for expansion" for a company founded with just two people and of course a brilliant idea in 2000, the business has certainly grown now employing 25 people and it is still expanding. With Valueworks exemplary track record the judges will have a difficult choice when it comes to selecting the winners in July.

The other short listed businesses battling to win the title of the North West AXA Small to Medium Business of the Year are:

Farmhouse Fare Ltd, Clitheroe (www.farmhousefare.co.uk) - Specialist manufacturers of premium chilled desserts supplying to major UK supermarkets and biscuits and traybakes to Waitrose coffee shops.

Baa Bar Ltd, Liverpool (www.baabar.co.uk) - One of Liverpool's first style bars and helped regenerate a derelict area, the firm has now expanded to Manchester and

Wigan.

■ Version One Ltd, Poynton (www.versionone.co.uk) - Specialists in paperless office technology, offering document management and imaging software solutions to UK businesses.

Finalist and last year's North West AXA Small to Medium Business of the Year winner, Farmhouse Fare, is delighted to be nominated for the second time in two years. Helen Colley, Managing Director, said: "It was a dream come true to win the AXA Small to Medium Sized Business of the Year Award in 2005 and we're absolutely thrilled to be nominated in the same category for the regional awards this year. We're very supportive of the National Business Awards as they do so much to encourage new businesses to thrive and prosper."

The Highly Commended North West businesses in the AXA Small to Medium Businesses of the Year Awards are:

Hall Fire Protection Ltd, Manchester
Elitetele.com, St Helens
Avalon Solicitors, Warrington
Warren Partners Ltd, Northwich

The winner of the North West AXA Small to Medium Business of the Year Award category will be announced in July and will not only receive a day's support from an AXA Business Consultant but will also get the chance to go

forward to the National Business Awards final at the Grosvenor Hotel in London on 7 November.

The AXA Small to Medium Sized Business of the Year Award will recognise businesses for their entrepreneurship and innovation and will seek to highlight the importance of management excellence in maintaining a successful business today and continuing to grow it in the future.

In addition to winning a day with an AXA Business Consultant, if the regional winner is successful in the national grand final they will win a place on the AXA Small to Medium Sized Business Masterclass that takes place at a chateau in France. Over the three-day course the delegates will have their management and business skills finely tuned by some of AXA's leading business experts.

Mike Butler, the AXA North West Regional Judge, said: "I am delighted to have been asked to take part in judging the North West finalists in the second year of the AXA Small to Medium Sized Business of the Year Awards. It was a difficult decision selecting the finalists from the large number of excellent businesses in the region, which is why a further four companies, received Highly Commended awards. They are all outstanding examples of the North West's most dynamic companies and we wish them all the best of luck in the regional final."