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Nominees stand out from the business crowd



Charity game at Tynecastle, Edinburgh (2004). Photo: Matt Nuttall

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By MARNEY CARMICHAEL

IMAGINE, through the click of a mouse, you can order food for a company luncheon or arrange to play alongside one of your football heroes.

Nominated in the E-Business category are **Beetroot Blue** and **Football Aid**. Launched in April 2001, Football Aid gives fans the opportunity to play at a club stadium and be managed or captained by club legends, all the while raising charitable funds.

According to David Jenkins, General Manager of Football Aid, 96 per cent of its sponsorship is conducted online, making it the most web-enabled football charity in the UK. This year Football Aid will put on 40 matches, involving 33 football clubs, and has introduced Five-a-Side competitions and a Legends Master Class, where you can experience a professional training day at a top club.

Football Aid has also been nominated in the Business in the Community category.

Mark Miller is a busy man. Two of his companies were nominated for Business Awards this year: **Heritage Portfolio**, a catering, theme and event design company (Most Entrepreneurial Young Company) and Beetroot Blue.

Based in Leith, the two companies have a combined permanent staff of 90. Heritage Portfolio focuses on events in Scotland's heritage properties, while Beetroot Blue delivers edibles to offices across the city. Miller, the company's executive director, adapted Beetroot Blue's product to market it online and has learned to run both businesses with efficiency.

"We have identified our markets and focused on what we're trying to do, who to please and how to satisfy the clients – and not to be a jack-of-all-trades," says Miller.

Nominated in the Best Performing Business category (26-250 employees) is **DNS**, an IT information and

security services organisation. DNS won a Business Award for Start-up of the Year in 2001. DNS was also nominated for the Innovation and Technology category.

Some of the attributes of Best Performing Business were: a clearly defined company objective, employee empowerment and proactive relationships with customers.

Rory Innes, the company's marketing coordinator, listed a number of reasons for staff solidarity at DNS, such as positive communication and on-going training. Additionally, all 28 staff members are specialists in their field and take pride in this.

Of the nomination Innes says, "It's nice for us to see a return on our hard efforts. It feels good that a small company has done so well. We are a team that works."

Also nominated in the same category is **MITIE Engineering Services**. The management and staff of MITIE, a PLC, own a percentage of the company's share capital.

Formed in 2003, MITIE put forth an award application to tell the local business community what they are all about. And, says company Managing Director Billy Mitchell, the qualities of Best Performing Business seemed to fit MITIE as a company.

Mitchell says his company has three criteria they stand by: "get good people, let them do their job and reward them well for doing it". He adds that many of his employees have come from big companies and are thriving in a more personal working environment – and the clients are seeing the difference.

Investing in employees is something that Excellence in Skill and Learning nominee **Sharkey** takes to heart.

Sharkey is a high-quality fit-out contractor. It was started in 1969 by George Sharkey, a joiner, who later handed the business to his two sons. This privately owned family company now employs more than 200.

Paul Mott, the company's marketing director, says Sharkey is trying to counteract the shortage of skilled joiners in the UK by developing their own and that they have a strong story to tell about what they offer.

Indeed, as Sharkey can proudly state, they are the largest private employer of apprentice trainee joiners in Scotland. Currently the company has 53 apprentices under its wings and has a commitment to take on an additional 10 per year. As well, the company offers a management-training scheme.

The goal, says Mott, is to get the trainees to embrace the business and to encourage them to understand the company as a whole. With a high staff retention rate it is obvious that Sharkey's commitment has been time and money well spent.

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