



The magazine of the Federation of Small Businesses

FIRST VOICE

JUNE/JULY 2014 | £2.95 | WWW.FSB.ORG.UK

OF BUSINESS



UK's best small business

Landscaping firm is FSB Worldpay UK Business of the Year

In this issue:



YES OR NO?

Battle for business vote in Scottish Independence



ROYAL ACCOLADE

FSB members named as Queen's Award winners



FIRMS AT RISK FROM CV LIES

Small businesses warned of rise in false job references

Crowning moment for UK's best small businesses

Everything in the garden is rosy for Lanwarne Landscapes, which beat nearly 1,000 entrants to become FSB WorldPay UK Small Business of the Year, as well as Micro Business of the Year.

James Lanwarne described the win as a 'complete surprise and a crowning moment for Lanwarne Landscapes'.

"I'm thrilled, not just for me, but for everybody, because I've got a brilliant team."

Former musician, James turned from rock music to rockeries after he and fellow members of his band, Choker, parted company in 2003.

Having earlier completed an apprenticeship in landscaping, James pursued his second passion and set up Lanwarne Landscapes in St Albans. He focused initially on simple gardening projects,

but soon branched out into landscape and garden design, construction and consultancy.

The business grew during the years of recession as homeowners, unable to move up the property ladder, spent money instead on home and garden improvements. A turning point for the business came when Lanwarne Landscapes joined forces with a local garden centre to offer free weekly design consultancy clinics.

The company blossomed as the job book grew, with customers wanting more and more elaborate commissions

"We focus on the finish and aim to surpass our clients' expectations," said James. "We build everything to last.



"The backbone of our economy"

Almost 1,000 small businesses from up and down the UK entered the FSB WorldPay UK Business Awards this year - 60 per cent up on last year.

"Every entry had a great story to tell; every one is a testament to excellence," said FSB National Chairman, John Allan, at the glittering ceremony in London.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and the lynchpins of their local communities, showing fortitude, determination and passion through the

challenges of recent years to find new markets, grasp new opportunities, and seek new ways to sell services and products."

RESULTS

- Micro Business of the Year and overall FSB WorldPay Business of the Year: Lanwarne Landscapes
- Young Entrepreneur of the Year: Williams Automobiles
- Online Business of the Year: Home Leisure Direct
- Business Innovation of the Year: Calinnova t/as EquiFeast

We take enormous pride in creating beautiful gardens within reasonable budgets.

"More than 80 per cent of our work comes from recommendations and repeat business."

James has diversified to extend Lanwarne's range of services, and raised its profile by writing articles in local consumer lifestyle magazines and hosting talks to amateur gardeners. The business has taken on an additional seven staff to keep up with the influx of commissions.

The award judges singled Lanwarne Landscapes out

"You are the sources of jobs and creators of wealth, not just for a better present, but a better future."

Richard Reed

for its approach in adapting to changing market and customer requirements, and for its success in growing net profit by nearly 50 per cent in the last financial year.



Richard Reed, who co-founded innocent drinks and built it into a £250 million business, was the keynote speaker at the FSB WorldPay Awards.

He said that as well as being the champion of small firms, the organisation should be known as the Federation of Future Big Businesses.

"The benefits of small businesses are inestimable," he said. "You are the worker bees. You are the sources of jobs and creators of wealth, not just for a better present, but a better future."



Driving ambition: James Lanwarne and his Lanwarne Landscapes staff.

**YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR
WILLIAMS AUTOMOBILES, BRISTOL**



Ellie Williams, received the award for Williams Automobiles from Richard Reed, as Henry was on his honeymoon.

Twenty-nine year-old Henry Williams was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year for leading the century-old family business through a major strategic transformation to create a specialised British performance car dealership.

Williams Automobiles, has been run by four generations of the family, but was hit hard by the recession. Henry took over the reins of the business from his father, Richard, with a vision to create a modern, low-cost dealership in a new rural location using redundant farm buildings.

“Having to sell cars from a field,

while building the showroom, and without internet or landlines tested my entrepreneurial spirit,” he said. “My goal was to build on the heritage of the business, but bring every part of it into the 21st century.

“To receive national recognition for my efforts means so much, but I could not have done it without my family and team of colleagues.”

Three years on and Williams Automobiles now has three award-winning showrooms and is turning over £5 million selling prestigious British marques like Morgan and Lotus around the world.

**BUSINESS INNOVATION OF THE YEAR
CALINNOVA T/A EQUIFEAST, GLOUCESTER**



Malcolm and Sally Green (centre) and the team at EquiFeast.

An unruly horse called Paddy provided the spur for the creation of animal feed supplement company, EquiFeast, in 2005.

The firms’ founding director, Malcolm Green, admits he is not the best rider, but concluded that there was more to his stallion’s persistent misbehaviour than just his poor skills.

Already running another similar company making products for birds, Malcolm and his wife, Sally, applied the same logic to develop a nutritional supplement for Paddy.

“The results were so overwhelmingly positive it would have been a crime not to bring it

to mass market,” said Malcolm.

EquiFeast’s patented technology has enabled the firm to quickly become one of the fastest-growing businesses in a crowded sector, tripling UK sales over the past three years and becoming a market leader.

Malcolm and Sally have also established a distribution network for EquiFeast in Australia, and see the future of the business in other export markets through licensing their technology.

“Our journey is still in its infancy, but this award has come at an ideal time,” said Malcolm. “We’re always exploring new opportunities.”

**ONLINE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
HOME LEISURE DIRECT, BRISTOL**



Michelle and Andy Beresford (left), and Home Leisure Direct team members.

The frustrating experience of trying to buy a pool table led husband and wife team, Michelle and Andy Beresford, to launch their own firm to do the job better.

Six years on and Home Leisure Direct is market leader selling table tennis and table football, and pool tables, pinball machines, jukeboxes, and count Ant and Dec and Jude Law among their customers.

Winning the award was recognition for the pride the firm takes in delivering customer service excellence, and a high quality online shopping experience. They now have two showrooms with customers

flying in from all over Europe.

Home Leisure Direct’s extensive testing and attention to detail to perfect the appearance and simplicity of its website was what caught the judges’ eye.

One neat touch is the 300 or so videos that they have created to offer advice on products or show customers how UK and World Champions play pool or table football.

“We’re thrilled for everyone in the team,” said Andy. “Our staff are fantastic. We wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for them. We’re incredibly proud of what we’ve built so far.”