

## IN DEPTH FEATURE

# Race to the finish line

Voting has officially closed and the Channel Awards 2009 are now in sight. **Fleur Doidge** takes a closer look at what to expect on the night



Time is running out for those who wish to attend this year's glitzy Channel Awards at Battersea Arena. Voting for the Awards has officially closed and the organisers are now checking entries to ensure all entrants have adhered to the rules.

Our illustrious team of judges has been very busy, and you can be sure they are each individually looking forward to the ceremony and meeting you all again this year on 19 November.

Sara Yirrell, editor of CRN and head of the judging panel, says votes have been pouring in thick and fast.

She says every category will have a very worthy winner, and the whole team is especially looking forward to finding out the name of the channel company that takes away the inaugural Services Provider of the Year prize. Eight nominees made that shortlist: Apptix; 7Global; Capital Support; Comms-care; Intact Integrated Services; Mirus IT Solutions; Networks First; and Synaxon UK.

### Worthy contenders

We understand there is considerable real-world rivalry between some of these leading players, adding intrigue to the final showdown. Healthy competition can bring out the best – and sometimes even the worst – in people and organisations, and we think it can only be a good thing for the channel business in the long term.

"We were delighted with the response to our new category. While many people have been disappointed they did not make

### Experience the Awards

Tables are selling well for the Channel Awards 2009, but it is not sold out as yet, so there is still time to reserve your place.

The most cost-effective way to enjoy the ceremony and after-party is to reserve a table for 10 people. The guests are welcomed in a champagne reception on the night, which will be followed by a fully catered three-course meal. Silver, Gold and Platinum tables are available, with Gold and Platinum packages including seating closer to the stage, and additional refreshments, such as after-dinner liqueurs.

A word of warning: Gold and Platinum tables sell out more quickly. Single seats are available for £255 per person.

■ [www.channelawards.net](http://www.channelawards.net)



Bright lights: The Battersea Evolution Arena will once again host the glittering Channel Awards

the shortlists this year, we must reiterate that nearly every single entry was a worthy contender," says Yirrell.

"But, of course, the Awards are a genuine competition. Unfortunately, this means we are seeking only one winner in each category that manage to get an edge over their competitors when it comes to the vote count.

"On balance, although no system is perfect we believe ours is fair. Sadly, we cannot give everyone a prize," says Yirrell. Yirrell and the rest of the judges

maintain there are still a few players who manage to disqualify themselves from the race by paying not quite enough attention to their original entry, and the guidelines laid out for the same. Unfortunately, even where a company is really deserving of a prize, if they do not commit to the entry process itself as intensively as their rivals, they are bound to miss out.

### Making the grade

"We get comments and queries every year from VARs, distributors and vendors' representatives, who did not make the shortlists. So we cannot stress these facts enough," says Yirrell.

This year there are 18 categories, with 18 awards given out and a handful of Judges Commended prizes, where warranted. The Judges Commended award will be made in situations where, in the opinion of the judges, a company has put forward an entry of a high standard and received a significant number of votes from the channel.

Back in 2007, the year before we introduced the Judges Commended prizes, there were a number of companies that came close to winning and were clearly

ahead of other contenders. These awards offer *CRN* an opportunity to recognise those players that are closer to the winners in their performance than to the rest of the shortlisted field.

#### **A night to remember**

The black-tie event will once again be held at the Battersea Evolution Arena, in Battersea Park, southwest London. After-party details have not yet been made available to *CRN*.

This year's sponsors include Computerlinks, D-Link, Hammer, HP, Symantec, Acronis, Intel, Trend Micro, Cohort, Avnet Technology Solutions and Brocade. Headline sponsor for this year's awards is Oki Printing Solutions, and it is Oki's generosity, above all, that has made such a glamorous, luxurious event possible.

We only hope attendees will not be overcome with excitement, in the way that one or two worthy (or should that be unworthy?) distributors were rumoured to have been a few years ago. We cannot name them, of course, and it is only hearsay – or so they would like us to believe.



**Top tables:** Platinum and Gold packages include seating closer to the stage during the ceremony

Similarly, we do not plan for a repeat of last year's accidental Award 'borrowing' – although, thankfully, everyone involved took the incident in good humour.

After all, what a year it has already been, with a rash of mergers, acquisitions and divestitures in the channel – even at *CRN*.

For example – for those of you who did not already know – our news editor and perennial dark horse, Doug Woodburn, got married to Caroline in September, after many years together.

Rather too many channel players, we must also add, are no longer with us. Our thoughts must go out to those who have not had such a good year. These have been some really tough times for the IT channel and for businesses everywhere, not just in the UK.

And when it comes to the Awards, by the time you read this the votes will have all been counted and our judges will already know who the winners are. However, they have effectively signed their souls away in blood, promising not to reveal the lucky companies' identities any earlier than 19 November. Editor Sara Yirrell and the rest of the editorial team look forward to discussing the year with you all on the channel's 'night of nights'. See you then.

To book a table for the event, or for more information, please contact [lucy.tarbard@incisivemedia.com](mailto:lucy.tarbard@incisivemedia.com) or telephone 020 7316 9158.