



NEWRY COMPANIES IN RUNNING FOR TOP BUSINESS AWARDS

Two Newry businesses will line up alongside some of the country's most successful companies as they compete for leading UK industry awards.

Autoline Insurance Group, which is based in Rathfriland Road, has picked up the award for Excellence in Customer Service, sponsored by AXA PPP healthcare and FPM Accountants LLP, on The Quays, collected the province's Award for Excellence in People Development.

The company is now a finalist in both categories for the UK title in the Chamber Awards hosted by the British Chambers of Commerce, which were created to celebrate the UK's most successful businesses.

John Longworth, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said: "The health of the UK's economy relies upon the confidence of our businesses to grow, invest and create jobs. That's why the British Chambers of Commerce has been working hard to ensure government makes good on its promises to encourage enterprise, and do everything in its power to help businesses grow.

"All the good things we want to see in society depend on business and wealth creation. These awards provide a snapshot of some of the most impressive companies from across the country. Many of these business owners are working day in day out to build upon the companies they have built from scratch, creating jobs in local communities, and contributing to the economic recovery we so desperately need. We're delighted to be able to celebrate the success of these companies through the Chamber Awards."

Since 2005, Autoline has put in place a development programme in line with company growth targets that involves coaching and mentoring. Performance-related pay helped the firm re-invent itself in terms of its customer-centric culture.

Now the Autoline 'mantra' is 'happy staff equals happy clients' and excellent customer service has already become an integral and award-winning part of the business. The changes have seen turnover increase by seven per cent in 2009 - 2010 with employee turnover down to 0.42 per cent.

Meanwhile FPM has introduced a systematic approach to applied learning and development among all employees which encourages confidence and optimism - and ultimately enhances the company's intellectual capital.

The firm now has an absentee rate of less than 0.9 per cent and the policy has contributed towards improved profitability and growth, especially in new export markets.

Having won regional awards, the companies are now in the running for the national title in its category, as well as the chance to collect the **Award for Outstanding Business Achievement** – with a top prize of **£25,000** and runner up prizes of **£15,000** and **£10,000**.

There are nine categories, backed by high profile sponsors including RBS and NatWest, BT Business, BT Directories, Dell, DHL Express, the British Standards Institution (BSI), AXA PPP healthcare and Westfield Health. The national winners will be announced at a ceremony at London's Grand Connaught Rooms on November 24th 2011.

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) is the national voice of local business.

The BCC sits at the heart of a powerful nationwide network of Accredited Chambers of Commerce, serving over **100,000 businesses** across the UK, which **employ over five million people**.

For more information visit: **www.britishchambers.org.uk**

There are nine categories in the annual Chamber Awards. Most Promising New Business, sponsored by BT Business, Entrepreneur of the Year, sponsored by BT Directories, Business of the Year, sponsored by Westfield Health, Innovation Through Technology, sponsored by Dell, Achievement in International Business, sponsored by DHL Express, The Sustainability Award, sponsored by the British Standards Institution (BSI), Excellence in Customer Service, sponsored by AXA PPP healthcare, Excellence in People Development, sponsored by Composite Legal Expenses and Finding New International Markets, sponsored by RBS and NatWest. The Award for Outstanding Business Achievement, sponsored by RBS and NatWest, is awarded to the overall winner, selected from any category.