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Kent fencing specialist claims South of England 'Business of the Year' prize at the Chamber Awards 2012

A fencing and access control specialist that celebrates its 65th birthday this year has secured a prestigious achievement for Kent after it was announced as the Chamber Awards 2012's Business of the Year for the South of England (sponsored by Westfield Health).

Jacksons Fencing, which employs nearly 200 people across its national operation, beat off competition from across the region to land the prestigious title, impressing judges with its ability to bounce back from recession through diversification, innovation and excellent customer service.

Originally a supplier of quality timber fencing for the farming community, the company has evolved dramatically from the early days and now provides a diverse product mix, which ranges from residential fencing and access control to security fencing, detection systems and specialist sports fencing.

Its client base is equally varied, with the Kent firm supplying the domestic marketplace, schools, prisons, high profile commercial premises, data centres and even embassies as far away as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The ability to target and service new sectors has definitely paid off for Jacksons, with the company expecting to turnover £22.4m in 2012 through its three fencing centres across England and international sales.

Out of nine winners for the South of England five were based in Kent, with Jacksons Fencing being joined by Minimise Ltd (Most Promising New Business), MPR IT Solutions (Commitment to People Development), Nova IT Solutions (Excellence in Customer Service) and Quorum Technologies (Achievement in International Business).

The four remaining Award winners included:

- Acumen Business Law's Penina Shepherd (Entrepreneur of the Year)
- Carswell Gould (Marketing Campaign of the Year)
- HCR Ltd (Sustainability Award)
- Thomsons Online Benefits (Excellence in Innovation)

President of the British Chambers of Commerce Martyn Pellew said: “There has never been a more important time for businesses to showcase the amazing work they are doing on a day-to-day basis.

“The Chamber Awards is a perfect platform for them to do just that and receive the recognition and profile they deserve for helping move the economy forward and create employment, often in local areas.”

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) Chamber Awards 2012 is committed to finding the best businesses in Britain through a series of regional heats followed by a National Final, due to be held at London’s Guildhall on November 29th.

Now in its 9th year, the competition is one of the showcase events for the ‘Business is Good for Britain’ campaign that highlights the role of business as a positive force for the UK recovery and the success of local communities and individuals.

Jacksons Fencing, who is a member of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, received specific praise for its involvement in the launch of the Gate Safe Campaign (www.gate-safe.co.uk) in the wake of the tragic deaths of two young children in separate accidents.

The focus of the campaign is to raise awareness of the need for an enhanced understanding of automated gate safety amongst the professionals associated with the installation.

Following the presentation of a petition to 10 Downing Street, the company has worked tirelessly to gain the support of the HSE, RoSPA, IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety & Health) and the Door Hardware Federation.

Key milestones to date include:

- A letter sent to all education authorities urging them to check that all automated gates are compliant
- Development of new physical guidelines for automated gates
- Launch of Gate Safe Steering Group
- Hosting Gate Safe Summit 2012 in London
- On-going development of an accredited training course for installers/safety practitioners

Jacksons Fencing, along with the eight other winners, will now represent the South of England in their respective categories in the Grand Final, with the chance to win £25,000 and the title of “Outstanding Business Achievement”, courtesy of the RBS Group.

Kent Winners

Minimise (Most Promising New Business) – Minimise was established to promote, sell and install energy saving technologies initially in the UK and then internationally through joint ventures in strategic markets.

The initial product has been the 'imop', which enables electric motors within buildings to operate more energy efficiently thereby reducing carbon emissions and reducing running costs. More recently, the Rochester company has successfully introduced LED based lights (both the light bulbs and tubes) and fittings for rugged outdoor environments.

Customers have typically been in retail and industrial sectors, but more recently it has seen growth in developing business with hospital trusts, local authorities and the education sector.

The management team is forecasting significant expansion in revenues during this year as the deployment of low energy saving technologies are deployed with Minimise also looking to invest in the launch of operations in North and South America, India and the Middle East.

MPR IT Solutions (Commitment to People Development) - MPR IT Solutions deliver first class IT services and support to businesses ranging from one employer to companies with a workforce of 200.

The Kent firm's 24/7 monitoring service gives clients peace of mind that their IT is always performing to its full capabilities and this has led to an influx of new customers that have been let down by previous suppliers.

Providing this level of service requires the highest skilled staff and all MPR team members are fully qualified, from engineers to sales staff.

With the IT market constantly changing, the company has encouraged employees to become champions in different areas so that they can cascade their knowledge down to other members of the 8 strong-workforce.

Nova IT Solutions (Excellence in Customer Service) - Employing 4 people at its Canterbury offices, the company offers tailored IT solutions to customers 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

In addition to consultancy and support, Nova IT also installs infrastructure and cabling and now provides nationwide next business day delivery of quality hardware, software, consumables and peripherals.

The firm, which recorded a 97% client satisfaction rating in its last survey, invests significant time and money into the latest software and equipment, securing the Investors in People accreditation and taking part in the Considerate Constructors scheme.

Nova IT's customer base is mainly focused around Kent and London, with clients ranging from businesses and public schools, to heart surgeons, pubs and Chilham Castle.

Quorum Technologies Ltd (Achievement in International Business) – Quorum Technologies is a market leader in the design and manufacturer of sample preparation equipment for electron microscopy.

Employing 31 people at its Kent facility, the company's customers are typically organisations involved in industry or academic research in either life or material sciences.

90% of its projected £7.8m turnover is sent overseas, utilising a global network of distributors to supply emerging markets including Singapore, South Korea and India.

One of the biggest success stories for Quorum Technologies is China, where sales have gone from zero to £600,000 in just five years.

Martyn concluded: "A record number of firms have taken part this year, all determined to prove that 'Business is Good for Britain!'"

The Chamber Awards 2012 is supported by the RBS Group, BT Business, Dell, DHL Express, Westfield Health and Acua Limited.

For further information or to book your place at the National Awards Final, visit **www.chamberawards.co.uk**

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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**