

Visual Planet wins major award for broadband excellence



Creating new ways to use broadband, plus its virtual team structure, has scooped Cambridge firm Visual Planet two awards in a major DTI competition.

The company, based at St John's Innovation Centre, competed alongside 37 other organisations in the East of England final of the DTI's 2004 National E-commerce Awards, staged to highlight excellence in the use of communication technology.

Visual Planet has developed a technique that makes touch-screen technology available on a big scale, enabling high street stores to create exciting, interactive window displays and in-store promotions. Additionally, organisations, such as conference centres, public institutions, museums and libraries are using the technology for

dynamic information boards.

Visual Planet won best use of broadband for its development of 'digital messaging', which enables video, broadcast and web information to be delivered to the screens via the internet - content that can be updated remotely, at any time.

For example, Goldsmiths, the UK's largest quality jewellery retailer is using Visual Planet's digital messaging to tailor existing content supplied by watch brands such as Cartier, Tag Heuer, Gucci and Armani, for special promotions. Goldsmiths' marketing team in Leicester can decide which promotions and content to show at any given time to any branch nationwide.

'We are delighted with our awards,' said Visual Planet Technical Director Vernon Spencer. 'They endorse the way we operate as a business and the way we are using broadband technology to deliver content.'

'The judges said we had particularly caught their imagination with our project, which shows the new ways in which broadband can be used.'

Visual Planet won the category for the best use of broadband, winning a £2000 cash prize and a place in the national final at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London on October 6.

In addition, the firm was highly commended in the section for the best use of teleworking. The team use a Groove virtual workspace that allows them to access files and emails remotely, and to work collaboratively on documents. Voice over IP allows them to talk to each other over the Internet, this allows them to have informal chats even when not working in the same office, overcoming the communication issues often faced by teleworkers.

In London, Visual Planet will compete against 11 other regional finalists in the national broadband category, which carries an £8000 prize, and could pick up a further £30,000 if it goes on to be crowned overall winner of the competition.

Richard Kneller, ICT Champion for the East of England Development Agency, compered the regional final on September 21 at the Essex Records Office, Chelmsford.

He said: 'The eastern region has demonstrated its importance in the growth of e-business. The standard of all entries was extremely high and I wish all the regional winners the best of luck in the national final.'

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