

Celebrating the rise of the 'M-factor'

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'Beenthere' wins Yell and horsemouth.co.uk small business mentor of the year

The key role played by business mentoring – the 'M-factor' - is highlighted today as Yell and horsemouth.co.uk announce the results of the 2008 Yell Small Business Mentor of the Year Award.

The winner is Peter Watson, a successful, semi-retired 70-year-old businessman from North Yorkshire, who uses the horsemouth.co.uk alias 'Beenthere' and describes himself as understanding, practical and creative. He has been active on the mentoring website since its inception in January 2008, and was nominated by a number of users including 'Avalon', an author and entrepreneur whom Peter has helped on a range of business issues.

Peter has 40 years' business experience, which has focused on marketing. He has provided people with informal business advice throughout his working life and welcomes the opportunity of online mentoring via horsemouth.co.uk because it enables him to continue engaging with challenges, ideas and solutions. He also believes that as the number of small businesses increases, the need for mentoring will become ever more critical.

"Winning this award is obviously a nice personal achievement at this point in life, but it also highlights the role that mentoring can play in today's small business environment, where people do not necessarily have all the skills which are required to develop their businesses to their full potential," he explains. "horsemouth provides access to a mentor with the experience to fill this knowledge gap. At the same time, it enables people like me to 'put something back'."

'Avalon' outlines her reasons for putting Peter forward for the award: "I think 'Beenthere' is a huge asset to the horsemouth site. He is extremely knowledgeable and even if he is not able to offer you advice himself, he will be able to point you in the direction of someone who can... He has helped me on a range of different business related topics, everything from issues with personnel and motivation, to putting together a substantial business plan."

The Small Business Mentor of the Year Award is one element of The Mentoring Works Awards, which are designed to celebrate the important role that mentors play in helping small businesses to flourish. The awards encourage company owners and directors to reward and recognise the contribution mentors have made, often informally and in the background, towards making their business a success.

MT Rainey, horsemouth.co.uk founder and CEO, said: "Now we've had the X-Factor, we need to bring on the M-Factor! Mentors allow talent to thrive as we've seen. As our award nominations highlight, often a light touch can have a big impact, and the value of mentoring will only increase as we enter a difficult economic period. Increasing numbers of small businesses can benefit from the advice and support of experienced and inspirational individuals such as Peter Watson – and now horsemouth.co.uk can bring them together online in a safe hosted environment. So by harnessing the potential of online social networking, we are able to facilitate business mentoring on an unprecedented scale."

Helen Stevenson, chief marketing officer at Yell, added: "These awards set out to find the individuals helping to make a difference, and to champion mentoring in the UK. Small business is the lifeblood of the UK economy and, with mentoring becoming an increasingly valuable business tool, reports indicate we will see a boom in 2009."

As winner of the 2008 Yell Small Business Mentor of the Year Award, Peter Watson will receive £1000 and will also be able to choose an exclusive breakfast meeting with a business hero of his choice from a list including: Lastminute.com co-founder and mydeco founder, Brent Hoberman; Specsavers founder Dame Mary Perkins; Coffee Republic founder Sahar Hashemi, and internet entrepreneur Ben Way.

The awards also included two further categories:

Editors Prize for Content – won by 'OutSec Ltd', the horsesmouth alias of Vanessa Phillips, for her piece of content which best exemplified the spirit and power of mentoring in the context of business and enterprise.

The M-Factor – won by 'Antoinetta', also known as Fiona Meyer, for having the highest M-Factor score of any business mentor on horsesmouth.co.uk (automated rating system).

Judging the awards were: Baroness Shriti Vadera, Helen Stevenson (Chief Marketing Officer at Yell), David Clutterbuck (co-founder of the European Mentoring Centre), and MT Rainey (founder and CEO of horsesmouth.co.uk).

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Notes to editors:

About horsesmouth

horsesmouth.co.uk, the world's first 'pro-social' networking site is purpose-built for online mentoring on a wide range of topics including education, careers, health, families and relationships and is free and available to anyone over the age of 16. Content is professionally moderated and managed by horsesmouth staff and all profiles are approved before posting, as are web links.

horsesmouth is the brainchild of advertising entrepreneur and prominent media industry figure MT (Mary Teresa) Rainey, who co-founded the top five advertising agency Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe/Y&R. The horsesmouth community is growing swiftly and the site was named as one of the top 25 'Web 2.0' start-ups in the UK last year by The Register. The site is run as a social enterprise, with all profits generated being driven back into the business. It is funded by Edge, the foundation which campaigns to raise the status of practical and vocational learning, and v, the charity launched to champion youth volunteering in England.

About Yell

Yell is a leading international directories business operating in classified advertising markets in the UK, US, Spain and Latin America through printed, online and telephone-based media. Yell's principal brands include: in the UK, Yellow Pages, Yell.com and Yellow Pages 118 24 7; in the US, Yellow Book and

Yellowbook.com; and in Spain, Paginas Amarillas and PaginasAmarillas.es. All these brands are trademarks.

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