

BITKOM announces winners of the German Internet Award 2008

Three winners from Munich and Berlin

Award for best high tech strategies in the SME sector

Two of three ITC SME firms expect increase of business volume in 2008

Three high-tech SMEs from Bavaria and Berlin won the German Internet Award 2008: ubitexx GmbH and 1stplan GmbH, both from Munich, and MYHAMMER AG, from Berlin. An independent jury chose the winners from more than 300 candidates.

At the award ceremony in Stuttgart on Thursday night, BITKOM vice president Heinz Paul Bonn said, "These companies show what real innovation looks like. The jury chose these three winners from many excellent candidates as the most creative and successful IT providers." Federal Minister of Economics and Technology Michael Glos oversees the contest. Hartmut Schauerte, Federal Ministry of Economics' parliamentary state secretary said, "The great interest we have seen in the German Internet Award demonstrates technological innovation among smaller providers and the importance of leading edge IT strategies that can result in economic success."

The first prize (EUR 25k) was awarded to ubitexx GmbH, Munich. Their internet-based software allows PDAs and a variety of mobile phones to be configured automatically, integrating these devices into existing computer and mobile networks. The software also facilitates the use of mobile services such as email, schedule and contact management, maintenance and administration of customer data. The contest requires each candidate to provide the name of a reference user, and ubitexx applied with one of its customers, Deutsche Apotheker- und Ärztebank eG, Düsseldorf.

1stplan GmbH, Munich, is the first runner up (EUR 20k). The company applied together with its customer Apexnova from Regensburg. The company provides an internet-based business planning simulation program which enables SMEs to evaluate business ideas and strategies, derive prognoses and make improved management decisions. The second runner up (EUR 15k) was awarded to MY-HAMMER AG, Berlin. The company runs an online market place for trade services providers. Private customers use the service to find the best tradesperson for renovations for example, and tradespeople and service providers can identify new job opportunities. Both tradespeople and customers are rated on the website to share feedback on quality and reliability. MY-HAMMER is used by more than 150,000 craftsmen and service providers and more than 600,000 private and commercial customers. The company applied together with one of its users, Licht- & Elektrotechnik Tietz from Recklinghausen.

This is the ninth annual German Internet Award event. It is sponsored by Datev, Fujitsu Siemens Computers, Microsoft, Oracle and PricewaterhouseCoopers. The contest received a mention from the "Germany – Land of Ideas" initiative at the award ceremony in Stuttgart. The initiative praised the German Internet Award for its "role model function for SMEs". The contest is one of the prizewinners of the nationwide "365 Landmarks in the Land of Ideas" innovation contest.

The announcement of the winners of the German Internet Award was one of the highlights of the 4th German ITC SME event where top representatives of the high tech sector and their customers met. The theme of the event was the issue of how SMEs can ideally utilize the Internet. 62 % of small and medium-sized IT and telecommunication businesses expect increased sales in 2008. This is based on a survey conducted by the high tech association BITKOM. Another 14 % expect consistent sales while 24 % expect a decrease in volume as compared to the prior year.

"In spite of the financial crisis, the majority of the SMEs is still confident about their business opportunity," BITKOM vice president Heinz Paul Bonn said at the 4th German ITC SME event in Stuttgart. "The flexibility and dynamics of smaller enterprises sustain the health of the economy and create new jobs," said Bonn. The SMEs' IT and telecommunication sector (ITC) is responsible for 35,000 additional jobs in 2007 and 2008. 85% of the ITC companies have yet to feel the impact of the financial crisis when it comes to HR planning. "Until now, only a small number of companies from the SME high tech sector experience have been impacted directly from the crisis," explained Heinz Paul Bonn. In spite of that, entrepreneurs await 2009 with mixed feelings. 20% expect further growth and another 20% interviewed expect a decrease in sales. 57% of all SMEs expect consistent business volume but a third of high tech sector SMEs fears that the terms of financing will change for the worse.

The German Association for Information Technology, Telecommunications and New Media, BITKOM, is the voice of the information technology, telecommunications, and new media industry in Germany. BITKOM represents more than 1,200 companies, with 900 direct members, including practically all German global players as well as 600 key midsize companies. BITKOM's membership generates a sales volume of 135 billion euros annually, exporting 50 billion euros worth of high technology each year and represents 90 percent of the German ICT market. BITKOM aims to optimize the political and economical framework for the IT industry. There is a specific focus on strengthening mid-sized ICT firms and promoting innovation. Economic growth and employment in Germany are key aspects of BITKOM's activities.