



Winning awards can bring big benefits

With the boost they can give a company's profile, it's no wonder the competition for technology gongs is fierce, writes **Karlin Lillington**

FOR TECHNOLOGY companies large and small, young and old, each year brings a plethora of competitions and awards – so many in fact that the more cynical take the view that many are not worth applying for and that they all merge in a blur.

But talk to companies and it is clear that the smart ones recognise that winning awards – especially those with some industry and international recognition – can bring enormous benefits. After all, an award indicates that at least someone thinks your work stands out from that of competitors and, for many of these awards, the competition is quite fierce and the judging vigorous. Just getting the thumbs-up from experienced industry figures on judging panels can be a real achievement and bring renewed confidence that a young company is on the right track.

With some of the better-known awards a win can mean national and often international interest in the company, and help in finding venture funding. Winning an award indicates a company has already passed a major hurdle after being carefully scrutinised, and often indicates the company is worth a second look, or even a first. Most events for start-ups also include a pitch to venture investors.

The coming year will bring a raft of new awards and competitions. Below we highlight some that may be of special interest in 2010. Deadlines for many of these awards fall in the next month or two, with the actual awards ceremony occurring in the spring, so if you want to apply now is the time to get your skates on. For those falling later in the year, keep an eye on websites for further application information.

Innovate 2010: Analysts and advisers Guidewire, along with major corporate sponsors, back these awards which see start-ups make five- to 10-minute “pitch slams” in the US and Europe. A hundred international finalists make it to the Innovate100 list, and those then get access to investors, corporations and potential customers.

Event: March 1st, Dublin
www.innovate100.com

UK & Ireland Tech Tour: Aims to identify the top 30 privately owned, high-growth start-ups and gives an opportunity to pitch to leading investors. One of the higher profile European events. Registration provides possible entry for 70 invited companies, and 30 are chosen as finalists to formally present. Deadline: February 15th.

Event: April 27th-29th, Dublin
www.techtour.com

Startup 2.0: A competition of European web 2.0 sites to recognise “European startups

(either created or willing to do so in the future) that work in the field of 2.0 technologies”. Young competition with good partners; finalists pitch to leading VCs. Deadline: April 15th.

Event: April 24th, Bilbao
www.startup2.eu

EuroTech Showcase: Takes place in San Francisco and enables 50 invited European startups to exhibit to potential partners and investors. A valued way to get a company noticed by Silicon Valley investors.

Last year the event took place in October. Information on this year's conference is not yet available so keep an eye on the website for details.

www.eurotechshowcase.com

TechCrunch50: This closely watched event from Techcrunch.com was supposed to be off in 2010, but is back on again. Fifty top global startups will be chosen to present in San Francisco. Intense competition and often controversial choices give this event a high profile for VCs.

Event: September 13th-15th, San Francisco
www.techcrunch50.com

Demo: The main rival to TechCrunch50, even down to sharing the same date in September, except that it will cost companies \$20,000 to present.

Again, an audience of high-profile potential partners and investors is promised, and aggressive competitors make this a competition to watch.

September 13th-15th, Santa Clara, California
demo.com

LeWeb: Considered the highest profile event for web-based companies in Europe, selected applicants go head-to-head, presenting before a panel of judges.

LeWeb is one of the European awards with visibility in Silicon Valley. Information for 2010 entries is not yet available.

Event: December, Paris
www.leweb.net

Deloitte Technology Fast 50: This 10-year-old Irish competition honours companies with “technological innovation and entrepreneurial spirit”, ranking them on the basis of their percentage revenue growth over a five-year period. Finalists gain automatic entry to the EMEA Fast 500 list.

short.ic/8rn8ww

Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award: This long-standing Irish awards programme recognises entrepreneurs and companies in three categories: international, industry and emerging. Details of the 2010 competition are not yet available but applications generally

must be made by March, with the event held in Dublin in October.

www.ey.com/IE/en-/About-us/Entrepreneur-Of-The-Year

Irish Times Innovation Awards: A new awards event sponsored by this newspaper's monthly *Innovation* magazine, with awards ranging across a number of categories. Deadline: January 14th.

Event: March

www.irishtimes.com/events/innovation-awards

SFA Small Business Awards: The Small Firms Association sponsors these annual awards which recognise companies and individuals in seven categories.

Entries are limited to companies with fewer than 50 employees. This year's finalists have already been chosen for the March event.

Event: March 4th, Dublin

www.sfa.ie

All-island Seedcorn Business Competition: Sponsored by InterTradeIreland, this annual event targets early stage, high-growth companies and provides €100,000 for the

overall winner and for the best emerging company. Details are not yet available for 2010, but the event usually happens at the end of the year. Deadline: usually September.

Event: November
seedcorn.intertradeireland.com

Others of note: Several industry organisations and groups sponsor other well-known awards. These include:

- Irish Software Association, Irish Internet Association and Engineers Ireland awards. The recognition that comes from winning is considered valuable within these industries.

- Blog Awards, Irish Web Awards, Golden Spider web awards: these annual events recognising bloggers and websites always ignite much chatter across the web in Ireland and raise the profile of the winners, who tend to value the event and a winning badge that they can post on their website.

- Eircom Web innovation fund: significant funding goes to winners in this competition; www.eircom.net/labs/innovationfund.

- IT@cork Tech Leaders awards: gives valued regional recognition; www.itcork.ie.