

North East Business Awards: Winners speak of pride after grand final triumph

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North East companies have spoken of their pride after winning big at the North East Business Awards grand final – including one which won an unprecedented four trophies.

Middlesbrough gaming studio Double Eleven won the high growth and ambition, and the innovation and technology awards, before being named Teesside Company of the Year.

It then beat AkzoNobel Ashington and Premier Roof Systems – Companies of the Year in Tyneside and Northumberland, and in Durham, Sunderland and South Tyneside – to take the overall North East Company of the Year title.

Read more: [Gaming studio Double Eleven triumphs as company of the year](#)

A one-off format for this year's awards meant the previous heats were scrapped and Double Eleven was able to take the two Companies of the Year prizes in one night.

Lee Hutchinson, the firm's founder said: "It's humbling. We don't apply to these awards every year and only apply when we believe it's worthwhile. We've lost out in the final to other

people twice, so it's great to make the final a third time and actually win it. It really means a lot, the North East is a big place.

"I know it seems everything has happened this year but it's actually a culmination of the last 12 years, going through a lot of pain and some failures, and I wouldn't be without our management team and some of the loyal workforce team who have been with us for more than a decade.

"We couldn't have done what we have done this year without the previous 11 years of work.

"So now it's about striving forward to be the best – and not just the best at what we do but also being the best employer."

The first award winner of the night was [Haystack](#), a tech recruitment specialist based in Gosforth which is gaining traction in cities across the UK since going live last year.

The company, founded by Mike Davies, Chris Bone and Rob Simmons, was left stunned by its win.

Mr Bone said: "We really didn't expect this, it's great. Only the two of us are here tonight but we've now got a brilliant team, so this is for them and for them believing in what we are trying to do. Since expanding outside of the North East we are picking up customers all over the UK.

[Premier Roof Systems](#) took the company of the year trophy for Durham, Sunderland and South Tyneside and the company's three directors – Chris Mullen, Jamie Blackwood and Pouya Bostani – paid tribute to the team, which has grown from just two to almost 50.

Mr Bostani, who was made a director and shareholder by the two founding directors, said: "If anyone wants to succeed in business you have to build upon goodwill, respect, trust and whatever these two guys have. I'm not sure what it is they

have, but it will never ever fail.”

Frans Calje, CEO of PD Ports was delighted at the firm’s apprenticeships, training and skills award win, after judges heard of the company’s Project Hope and Tide Foundation initiative, which see young people often take the lead within the business.

He said: “All these people will ultimately be the leaders of our business in the future. 20% of our employees are under 30 and 55% came through apprenticeships.

“We delegate authority to these young people and when we do two things happen: things actually get done and secondly I can go home and be with my family, so everything is a win-win.”



Shirley Spors, left, collects the award, sponsored by

Newcastle city council
(Image: Newcastle Chronicle)

Shirley Spoons, production manager at Akzo Nobel in Ashington, collected the company of the year award for Tyneside and Northumberland.

She said: “We set out to be some different and a business that other companies would aspire to be, and wanted to integrate into the community and make a difference – and we worked so hard with local education organisations, small and medium sized businesses and other people in the community to deliver an outstanding facility in Ashington.

“Through Covid we never closed and doubled production, going 24/7, and we never gave up, so I am so pleased and proud to collect this.”

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