

Our annual celebration of talented businesswomen in the south ...

Oakley Hall was the elegant setting for the second year of Women in Business – and an awards evening that sparkled with winning smiles from leading businesswomen from throughout the Thames Valley and Solent regions

David Murray, founder and publisher of *The Business Magazine* welcomed more than 170 diners to the gala event – a natural highpoint of the year to recognise the talent and achievements of women involved in successful local businesses.

But, as Murray pointed out, the evening was much more than an awards event.

“When Barclays first approached us with the idea for Women in Business, we all saw it as a campaign that would encourage women to develop their skills, mentor other women, and overcome barriers and entrenched perceptions that might stand in their way,” he explained.

To that end, a series of other Women in Business initiatives are being staged, including discussions and networking events that help create a platform for shared experience, and best practice.

These include a Roundtable discussion taking place on October 24 at Oakley Hall, which will be reported in *The Business Magazine*.

The gala awards evening itself carried forward those constructive aims with a pre-awards insight by Dame Stephanie Shirley into her ‘rags to riches’ journey as a woman in the competitive working world of information technology (IT). Her highly interesting and illuminating 20-minute talk was too short for many, but fortunately, with the compliments of the sponsors, all those attending went away with a signed copy of Dame Stephanie’s memoirs *Let IT Go*.

Those generous event sponsors – Barclays, Deloitte, Blake Morgan, and GCS – were roundly applauded and thanked. “Without their support, tonight would not be happening,”



said Murray on behalf of guests, award judges and the organising team from *The Business Magazine*.

The quality of nominations this year was “absolutely outstanding,” said Murray, with extraordinary stories of women running businesses in sectors traditionally dominated by men; women creating enterprises after life-changing personal challenges; women using their own experiences to help and mentor others.

The judging panel’s difficult task of deciding upon finalists in most cases involved telephone interviews to back up the written nominations, but eventually 22 finalists in four awards categories were selected.

“It’s a cliché, I know, but nonetheless true, that all of the finalists are winners – all of you here tonight deserve to be called outstanding women in your own right.”

Fittingly, the host presenter for the evening was also a highly successful businesswoman – Nadine Dereza. Not only has she presented on Sky and BBC, but she became Financial Journalist of the Year while working for the FT, and now she chairs, moderates and runs events globally across many sectors.



As everyone settled to enjoy a sumptuous starter, Dereza announced one certain winner of the evening – Prior’s Court Foundation – and urged guest to make table donations for the Awards’ chosen charity (representatives of one company, Utilita Energy from Winchester, subsequently donated £1,000).

Priors Court specialises in supporting children with autism and complex learning difficulties and provides an independent, specialist school and young adult provision at Hermitage, near Newbury, for pupils aged five to 25. On the night, it ‘won’ a welcome financial boost of £2,685.99 plus two euros.

Thanks to the 2014 Women in Business Awards judges

Sara Appleton, Barclays; **Ian Workman**, Barclays; **Susan Anderton**, Blake Morgan; **Kath Shimmin**, Blake Morgan; **Cath Ingham**, Deloitte; **Fiona Symington**, Deloitte; **David Bloxham**, GCS Recruitment; **Daniel Evans**, GCS Recruitment.

Judges were excluded from voting or discussion on any categories in which they had an interest.

The first presentation of the 2014 Women in Business Awards evening was a first for everyone

This was a brand-new 'Rising Star' award category open to women, aged 30 and under, who have made their mark as "women in business to watch" – potential leaders, those just starting in business, or quickly rising through the corporate ranks.

Judging was led by Barclays, and Ian Workman, Barclays Corporate head of south region, presented the award to:

WINNER: Annette March of White Garden Florists.

March started floristry as an eager teenager, helping a teacher who arranged flowers for Windsor Castle. She gained a level five national City & Guilds certificate along with UK Skills vocational training and business advice for floristry, working while she studied to gather practical experience at the same time.

Having opened her first shop at the age of 23 in Henley in January 2013, March now has a studio in Ascot and is due to open a second shop in Ascot High Street. She is innovative, hardworking and passionate about flowers and her shops provide a diverse range of flowers and homewares.

Alongside her retail offering, March has built a fantastic client-base of private clients, hotels, and wedding contacts. She has also tapped into the tourist market in Henley, providing flowers for boat services and exhibitors at Henley Regatta. All this, combined with extremely hard and conscientious work, with very early mornings at the Covent Garden flower market and deliveries to customers into the evenings.



Annette March receiving her award from Ian Workman, of awards sponsor Barclays, and Dame Stephanie Shirley

Interviewed after receiving her award, Annette March spoke about the value of her teacher and father as mentors within her career: "Without mentors I wouldn't be here. I would like to really thank all those people who made this possible within the two years. Owning a business has been a reality check to be honest, hard work, but completely worth it and exciting every step of the way.

"This award means a huge amount because it shows my potential. This is the start of my business career and hopefully I will be able to give something back through mentoring to younger people than me; those at

16 starting to choose their options and thinking about their futures, so they can be in a position to run their own business too in a few years time."

And where will the winner's trophy take pride of place – in her Ascot or Henley florist premises? "It's not ever going to leave my hands," said an excited March.

The other category finalists were:

Safia Bhutta, Andante Travels

Jasmine Brook, Wellers

Katie Dallimore-Fox, EY

Charlotte Pickering, KiddyUP



Finalists from second left, Jasmine Brook, Safia Bhutta, Charlotte Pickering, Katie Dallimore-Fox with Nadine Dereza and Dame Stephanie Shirley

Finalists received commemorative Women in Business Award certificates from Dame Stephanie Shirley. Their career profiles can be viewed by downloading the Women in Business 2014 event programme pdf at:
www.businessmag.co.uk

Women 2014
in
BUSINESS

Woman of the Year (SME)



Claire Edmunds collecting her award from **Kath Shimmin**, of awards sponsor **Blake Morgan**, and **Dame Stephanie Shirley**

An award open to women in senior positions of small and medium-sized enterprises with under £10 million turnover – women who have achieved significant results and excellence in their field

Judging was led by Blake Morgan, so Blake Morgan partner Kath Shimmin presented the award to:

WINNER: Claire Edmunds of Clarify.

When Claire Edmunds took time off to have a baby, she also conceived a whole new company.

She identified a gap in the market and in 2003 founded Clarify, a business development specialist in the enterprise technology sector.

The company now employs over 50 full-time, permanent staff and sales for 2014 are forecast to exceed £4 million.

Clarify operates as a strategic part of its client's sales process, reducing the cost of winning business by 30%. Industry analyst's Sirius Decisions, states a close rate of 1:20 is excellent; Clarify exceeds this figure, closing 1:5 sales opportunities. In the past financial year, Clarify delivered €76m of closed business for one global client, and for a high-growth start-up sourced its top three largest EMEA deals.

As well as establishing and growing Clarify, Edmunds has managed to raise a family of three sons and a daughter. She also found time to establish the Clarify Foundation, raising funds for building and education projects in Uganda. In modern life "Challenge is the norm", says Edmunds.

Interviewed after accepting her award, Claire Edmunds spoke about work-life balance and flexible working: "I have a great team, not just at work but home as well, and that makes a huge difference to me. We juggle a lot, balance things out and try not to forget too many things.

"We employ flexible working practices. Today it's so different to even a few years ago in the way you can introduce flexible working for women – and men. It is just as important for men to support their children at their sports day, or go on a rugby tour, or work from home one afternoon so they can look after the children that evening.

"People don't need to be in the office to work any more. They can keep in touch, communicate and take on work in various ways. We are very fortunate to be in the time we are in."

Edmunds has created a vibrant enthusiastic team within Clarify, but is recruitment difficult?

"Actually, what helps bring people into our organisation is our culture – the focus we put on treating people as individuals, looking to bring the best out of them. That's what people want in work: to feel fulfilled, to make a contribution towards a goal that gives them a purpose."

Edmunds said the secret of Clarify's success was adaptability, taking the rough with the smooth, "staying true to our values and mission, powering through, and holding our nerve.

"This award means a great deal. It's lovely for all the hard work to be recognised, particularly in an environment like this tonight with so many amazing people. So, to be called up here and be told you have done well is great for me, my team, all the women in our business, and the men too."

The other category finalists were:

Lauren Atkins, The Malins Group

Lisa Hammond, Centrix Software

Karen Jacques, Dryad Marine

Susan Robertson, Velocys

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Finalists from second left, **Lisa Hammond**, **Susan Robertson**, **Lauren Atkins**, **Karen Murray** (for **Karen Jacques**) with **Nadine Dereza** and **Dame Stephanie Shirley**

This category is for women in organisations with over £10 million turnover – entry nominations were received for board directors and senior managers in the private, public and third sectors

Judging was led by Deloitte and director Cath Ingham revealed that each of the finalists had stressed the importance of diversity, the need to be yourself as a leader, and the value of developing peer networks and encouraging others. She presented the award to:

WINNER: Claire Vyvyan of Dell.

Claire Vyvyan proves without a doubt that women can change an industry. Recently, she was ranked 10th in Computer Weekly's 25 Most Influential Women in IT.

She is director and general manager of Dell Public Sector but is currently transitioning into her new role as vice president Enterprise Solutions Group, where she will be responsible for over 1,000 employees. In this role, she will be only the second female to achieve such seniority within her organisation.

As a role model within her organisation and also her profession, she believes that she has a "huge responsibility to develop women and to foster diversity".

A frequent commentator on the issues women face in the technology sector, Vyvyan has actively supported the 'IT is not just for Geeks' industry initiative, and participated in Little Miss Geek workshops encouraging schoolgirls to select technology as a career. She is also heavily involved in Dell's IT transformation programme that uses technology as a way to engage children in underprivileged schools.

Interviewed after accepting her award, Claire Vyvyan spoke about championing diversity in the



Claire Vyvyan receiving her award from Cath Ingham, of awards sponsor Deloitte, and Dame Stephanie Shirley

workplace: "I have just picked up a new EMEA role and it has already taught me that diversity from a gender perspective is very much cracked in the UK, but as I go into Saudi Arabia, UAE, northern Africa, I see all the challenges that you (Dame Stephanie) probably lived through, coming into play.

"I focus on trying to help everybody from all walks of life. I am all about bringing the whole person to work, and everybody contributing."

Has it always been possible to promote the diversity agenda when faced with Dell's corporate imperatives? Diversity is even more important now, said Vyvyan.

"Michael Dell bought the business back last year, so it is a private business again. He says it's now the largest entrepreneurial startup in the world.

To drive that agenda on a global basis you need people contributing from all levels of diversity: gender, multi-race, multi-culture, and disability. Actually, IT itself is all about enabling everybody in the world to contribute and succeed.

"Scan back 10 years in terms of what technology has delivered to life, and then imagine what's going to come in the next 10 years for the world that we and our children and grandchildren will live in. I think it will be a very exciting but different place."

And, what does the award mean to Vyvyan? "Having come here tonight and met so many inspirational women, it just inspires me to do more in the world. I haven't done enough yet, and this award will go front and foremost on my desk to remind me."

The other category finalists were:

Cheryl Adams, Santander

Fiona Dalton, University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

Jayne George, Guide Dogs

Julie Palmer, Begbies Traynor

Jagdeep Rai, Barclays

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Finalists from second left, Cheryl Adams, Jagdeep Rai, Julie Palmer, Jayne George with Nadine Dereza, Dame Stephanie Shirley and Cath Ingham

2014
Women in
BUSINESS

Outstanding Contribution



Rebecca Bright collecting her award from David Bloxham, of awards sponsor GCS, and Dame Stephanie Shirley

The audience was told that the outstanding contribution of the final Women in Business Awards evening winner would serve as a powerful legacy and benchmark for other women

The significant contributions of the finalists had beneficially helped change lives in the fields of corporate social responsibility; diversity; education and training; community involvement or acts of charity; or support and coaching.

Judging was led by GCS, and its managing director David Bloxham presented the award to:

WINNER: **Rebecca Bright** of Therapy Box.

Rebecca Bright has used her experience as a speech and language therapist to create groundbreaking apps for people with communication difficulties.

In 2010, after a number of years working with patients, she co-founded Therapy Box in order to utilise the latest innovations in app development to resolve the needs of those with communication difficulties due to a range of disabilities.

Her team of nine in the UK and 25 developers based in India now provides affordable solutions for people with such disabilities – helping to change their lives, and also those of their friends and families.

The innovative approach of Therapy Box, combining speech therapy with cutting edge

technology, has led to the release of 23 apps in eight different languages.

A 2001 graduate of La Trobe University in Australia, Bright has led Therapy Box with determination and drive from a kitchen-table start-up to a company whose apps are often the top-grossing education downloads in the AppStore.

Unsurprisingly, the huge success of Therapy Box has led to Bright receiving a number of prestigious awards, including the Mphasis Universal Design Award, the NatWest Everywoman award and this year a Queen's Award for Enterprise and Innovation.

Interviewed after receiving her award, Rebecca Bright spoke about her innovation: "I don't have anything that others don't have. It is about being able to recognise a gap or problem and how to solve that creatively. It's about identifying opportunities, ways of improving things and sharing that vision with others, taking the leap and having a go. That's what the others are not doing."

Ever think you would be so successful? "No. It all started as a very little idea. I went to see a young client with a communication disorder and she needed an aid like Stephen Hawking has. All we could provide was an old-fashioned device, which wasn't going to suit her. By using an app, we not only met her needs, but she was using what everyone was using and looked cool, not more disabled."

Originally from Australia, Bright previously worked for the North West London NHS Trust.

"Working in the UK, we feel very much like a British business now. London and the south is definitely the place for tech companies to grow and to develop. There are always things happening, plus we have the opportunity to network.

"We have been very successful this year which is great, but as a women in business this award is very nice. Really though, it's an acknowledgement for the hard work that my partner, my team, and I have done. So, it will take pride of place in our office."

The other category finalists were:

Kerry Adamson, Interserve

Heidi Drummond, Pear and Ginger

Prof Ruth Farwell, Buckinghamshire New University

Vicci Jarvis, Interserve

Jane Holmes, Building for the Future



Finalists from second left, Prof Ruth Farwell, Kerry Adamson, Jane Holmes, Vicci Jarvis, Heidi Drummond with Nadine Dereza, Dame Stephanie Shirley and David Bloxham

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