

The 2008 ITP Annual Industry Dinner

The prestigious ITP Annual Industry Dinner 2008 took place at London's Grosvenor House hotel on October 8

The telecoms industry converged upon Grosvenor House in October for the industry event of the year, the ITP Annual Industry Dinner. The event, recognised for its unique networking opportunities, began with a drinks reception followed by a Gala Dinner which saw John Pluthero take the stage as keynote speaker. Pluthero is Cable & Wireless' MD and executive chairman.

With an economics and financial background, Pluthero expounded his thoughts on the recession and its effect on the ICT industry. "It's real ugly stuff out there," he said. "People are trading down to get a lower price."

As a result, he pointed out, there's a real dilemma facing the industry. Clients aren't prepared to pay – or able to pay – huge costs upfront, but want to spread costs

across their monthly bills. His advice? Act early and get used to saying no: "We're not bankers."

People now expect a recession so they're spending less, according to Pluthero, who questioned the government's late action in dealing with the signs of an economic slow down. "This has been going on for a year and politicians have failed to deal with it before we got to this point," he said. "We have to act early and decisively in our own businesses so we don't fall into the same position."

Against this financial backdrop, the good news is that the cost of delivering services is reducing, he said, advising companies to make the most of any down-time to consolidate. "If we're having a quiet couple of years, let's do that migration and get that cost base in order."



Brendan O'Mahony and John Pluthero discuss latest events



The ITP Annual Industry Dinner is a key networking event

Indian rope trick?
Not quite but
equally impres-
sive. C&W's John
Pluthero uses
rope to demon-
strate the
ups and downs
of market forces

APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR RESULT

The climax of the evening was the announcement of the ITP Apprentice of the Year. The standard of the entrants across England, Scotland and Wales was exceptionally high this year, whittling them down to three finalists was a huge challenge for the judges.

"Apprentices were judged on their exceptional contributions they made in the workplace and the difference they have made to their organisation by going beyond expectations and delivering measurable benefits," explained Lucy Woods, chairman, ITP. "The apprentice may have introduced a new idea or initiative that has impacted on the business or made an important contribution to the development of a product or special project."

The three final contenders for the prestigious title were Adam Brown, Openreach, Nilesch Bhudia, BT Retail and Adam Rowe, also from Openreach.

Adam Brown – Openreach

Adam was originally recruited as a Narrowband Network Design apprentice and within three years has already been promoted to become an Operational Manager for a team of 19 network designers. Adam is in the process of project managing a large programme to recover redundant cables from the network. The project itself has generated revenue of £728,750 with a projected year-end revenue in excess of £3,000,000. He has also been responsible for implementing a programme to drive down the unit costs for planned work across London, Thamesway and the Northern Home Counties, which has the potential to save over £375,000 per year.

During his time as an apprentice, Adam has been the Chair of BT's highly successful Apprentice Network, which is acclaimed at executive level and throughout the organisation. Adam was also involved in a British Council exchange programme with Deutsche Telekom, and was featured in a Sunday Times article on apprenticeships earlier in the year.

Despite his studies, travelling to Germany, becoming a Diversity Ambassador, presenting at conferences and meeting senior figures, he has also managed to raise over £3,000 for BT's affiliate charity Childline.

Nilesch Bhudia – BT Retail

Nilesch is a Customer Service Advisor within BT Retail where he is responsible for taking inbound calls for BT consumer repair.

On an ad hoc basis, Nilesch is an LET (Leading Excellent Teams) coach which involves providing support, motivation, encouragement and sharing best practice to advisors. This plays an important role in helping BT achieve its 2009 goal of getting all contact details from a customer right first time at least 95% of the time.

Another ad hoc role that Nilesch undertakes is to cover the first line leader's role. For this role he needs to ensure that the criteria for measurement are on target or above, and coach the individuals who need to improve their performance to the required targets.

He has taken part in the My Customer Mini Cup Challenge 07, climbing the Himalayas during the India Trek and raising



£2,600 for charity, and had a key role in the BT Retail Apprentice Recruitment Campaign in 2008. He has also won Advisor of the Week twice, due to the high quality of his calls and always putting the customer first.

Adam Rowe – Openreach

Adam is a Customer Service Engineer, based in Crawley. During his apprenticeship he has taken on additional development opportunities such as supervisory roles, coaching other apprentices within Openreach and being a temporary manager for a number of months.

Adam is working towards his NVQ Assessor award which will enable him to fully cover the coach's roles as well as offering valid support and assessment for the other apprentices in his team.

Adam's proudest achievement was being asked to build and manage the trial of the Young Apprentice Scheme within Openreach in West Sussex. This meant liaising with different parts of Openreach and BT, school training officers and a representative from West Sussex Council. During the scheme, eight students joined Openreach for 50 days over a one year period and it was Adam's responsibility to find people for them to work with and ensure that they were working safely.

Adam has taken part in Challenge Africa and raised over £1,000 towards a project in Tanzania. He has also taken part in the Build Leadership and Communication Skills weekend with the Territorial Army as part of the Career Defence Partner Initiative.

From left to right:
Lucy Woods,
Nilesch Bhudia,
Adam Brown,
Mel Wilcock,
Adam Rowe and
John Pluthero

The ITP Apprentice of the Year Award judges were:

- Professor Ian Dufour, Queen Mary University of London
- Martin Ingram, Regional Manager, ITP
- Professor Andy Valdar, Professor of Telecommunications Strategy, UCL
- Mel Wilcock, Development Services Manager, ITP
- Dave Willett, Director, Partnership Development Solutions

