

# The Gift Voucher Shop is the National Winner of the SFA Best Services Award for 2007

The Gift Voucher Shop is Best Services category winner



The Gift Voucher Shop (GVS) is the national winner of the Best Services category in the SFA National Small Business Awards 2007. Established in 2002 the company is now Ireland's leading provider of gift vouchers for over 600 retailers through the Post Office network, online and over the phone. Its most successful product to date is the well-known multi-store Gift Voucher the **One4all**® which is now also available in electronic Gift Card form.

This category awards outstanding achievement by the services sector in Ireland focusing attention on the company's employees and customers.

The SFA recognized that The Gift Voucher Shop demonstrated clear goals to support their service marketing strategy, paying attention to their customers, service value, employees, service quality, differentiation, productivity and overseas marketing of the service. Michael Dawson, CEO of The Gift Voucher Shop accepted the Award and said "We are delighted to have won the Best Services Award as it clearly places The Gift Voucher Shop at the top of its class. The company takes great pride in the service it affords its corporate customers and those who purchase gift vouchers through the Post Office network and website and welcomes this esteemed acknowledgement by the SFA".

The presentation took place at a gala banquet in the Mansion House on Wednesday evening, 21st March. In making his address, An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, TD, the Patron of the Awards, acknowledged "the extraordinary contribution that the small business sector is making to our economy", noting that there are some 250,000 small businesses currently operating in the Irish economy, which together employ about 800,000 people. The Taoiseach stated that "the diversity and quality of the nominees exemplify the creativity and commitment of our small business sector and its capacity to embrace innovation". Concluding, he emphasised that, in the context of the ever more competitive international economic climate, "it is vital that we continue to nurture and grow our indigenous enterprises. Given that over 97% of businesses operating in Ireland are small businesses, the work of the SFA, and events such as tonight's, have a key role to play in that process."

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This is the third year of the SFA National Small Business Awards, which are organised by the Small Firms Association, in partnership with O2 Ireland and Bank of Ireland Business Banking. Awards were also presented to six category winners, who each received a €5,000 cash prize and one year's free SFA membership.

According to Pat Crotty, SFA Chairman and Chair of the Judging Panel “the aim of the awards is to celebrate the achievement, innovation and excellence of small business in Ireland and to pay tribute to their outstanding contribution to Irish industry. As over 97% of businesses in Ireland are small businesses and account for 250,000 companies this is a true barometer of our pro-innovation culture. The SFA see this Awards Programme as a major platform to both recognise and foster this new entrepreneurial talent and culture throughout the country, spurring on creativity and employment which ultimately drives our economic development. The judges were very impressed by both the quality and standard of the many applications received and this made their task even more difficult”, stated Crotty.

Commenting, Billy D’Arcy, Head of Business Sales and Services, O2 Ireland said: “I would like to congratulate all the winners here tonight. Small firms are the backbone of the Irish economy and O2 Ireland is delighted to be associated with such prestigious awards that acknowledge these outstanding businesses. We realise it’s not easy out there and we recognise that small businesses are a very hard working group that make many sacrifices to make a success of their company. In general, they work longer hours than their employees and have taken risks to leave the relative security of a larger firm to create their own business. We pride ourselves on the high quality of the services and support that we offer to small businesses through our people, our O2 Ireland stores and our extensive dealer network. Innovation and entrepreneurship are worth their weight in gold - long may Ireland continue producing such entrepreneurs.”

Cathal Muckian, Director Bank of Ireland Business Banking commented: “Bank of Ireland Business Banking is proud to be associated with the SFA National Small Business Awards. The quality of this year’s entries has been particularly high, confirming the professionalism that’s central to the successful management of small business today. Bank of Ireland has a long history of supporting the small business sector and is committed to understanding its needs and enabling its growth agenda for the year ahead.”

**The Category Award Winners are as follows:**

MANUFACTURING AWARD (up to 50 employees); prize sponsored by Enterprise Ireland

FOOD & DRINK AWARD (up to 50 employees), prize sponsored by Bord Bia.

SERVICES AWARD (up to 50 employees), prize sponsored by Bank of Ireland Business Banking

OUTSTANDING SMALL BUSINESS (up to five employees); prize sponsored by O2 Ireland

BEST IN HR DEVELOPMENT AWARD (up to 50 employees); prize sponsored by FÁS

INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR (up to 50 employees); prize sponsored by Enterprise Ireland

Ends

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**Note to Editors:**

The Gift Voucher Shop Ltd.

The Gift Voucher Shop is a unique and unrivalled service that eliminates any hassles normally associated with

gift giving and offers consumers and recipients ultimate choice and flexibility. Through each country's Post Office network, web and telesales channels, GVS offers the most comprehensive range of gift vouchers for an extensive and attractive array of top brands as well as smaller independent retail partners.

In early 2002 The Gift Voucher Shop formed a strategic partnership with An Post and launched in Ireland that September selling its gift vouchers through 1,000 Post Offices nationwide in addition to its online shop, [www.giftvouchershop.ie](http://www.giftvouchershop.ie), and its call centre service. The Post Office channel gives the company a unique national distribution capability unmatched in the gift voucher market. GVS has over 600 of Ireland's shops and services with 4,000 outlets across the 32 counties in the Irish portfolio. Leading stores such as Argos, Arnotts, Brown Thomas, Champion Sports, Debenhams, Easons, Great Southern Hotels, HMV and Smyths Toys benefit from the service's unique distribution system.

In September 2004 The Gift Voucher Shop launched the **One4all**<sup>®</sup> Gift Voucher which is now their leading Gift Voucher product. The **One4all**<sup>®</sup> is a multi-store Gift Voucher that can be spent in any of the retail partners signed up to the scheme, giving the recipient of a **One4all**<sup>®</sup> the choice of 4,000 outlets to spend their voucher.

Over 50% of the Gift Voucher Shop's business is now generated by its highly effective Corporate sales division that provide a whole range of facilities and services to the corporate sector including staff incentives, HR support services, trade promotions and specialized software solutions for the management of the employee BIK allowances.

Following The Gift Voucher Shop's success in Ireland, they have begun to develop internationally and the first of its markets was with Maltapost in November 2004. In Malta The Gift Voucher Shop's **One4all**<sup>®</sup> is available in all 31 Maltapost branches throughout Malta and Gozo and for nearly 200 retail outlets on the two islands.

In October 2005 The Gift Voucher Shop and the Post Office Ltd launched in all of the 14,600 Post Office branches across the UK giving the 28 million customers who visit the Post Office every week access to an extensive range of high street retailers including B&Q, Comet, Debenhams, Habitat, Halfords, Goldsmiths, Mothercare, River Island, Woolworths and the Arcadia Group. GVS UK also offers Enjoyment and Experience Gift Vouchers and now the **One4all**<sup>®</sup> Gift Voucher all of which may also be purchased from [www.giftvouchershop.co.uk](http://www.giftvouchershop.co.uk)