In June this year the 2012 Peer Awards finalists talked candidly at a conference in London about their innovative approaches to corporate responsibility and to people & performance.

Everyone at the conference, including the finalists themselves, identified the initiative they deemed most outstanding and the idea they found most inspirational. The winners of this peer vote were announced and celebrated at a ceremony in London last month.

This supplement acknowledges the breakthrough ideas of all the finalists.

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The Peer Awards
What makes the Peer Awards so different and how you can participate with us next year. A special offer for readers of this supplement entering for the 2013 Peer Awards.

Messages from the director of the Peer Awards and The Independents business editor.

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Corporate Responsibility
Twenty inspirational initiatives that make a real difference in community education, with philanthropy and for sustainability and the environment.

A special focus on De Vere Academy of Hospitality’s entry

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People & Performance
Nineteen high impact approaches to coaching & development, to nurturing talent and leadership and to using technology to enhance performance.

A special focus on Bupa International’s entry
The Peer Awards team can help you express your awards entry and fine-tune your conference presentation.

Enter for a Peer Award. If shortlisted your idea will be presented at conference, featured in the press and showcased online.
Ensuring the future of Great British hospitality

Focus on a finalist

De Vere Academy of Hospitality, part of De Vere Venues Group, is the overall_winner of the Peer Awards 2012 for Excellence in Education and Training.

The Academy is promoting the hospitality sector as a career to busy teams of all sizes. It aims to ensure that students entering the Academy are of a high standard. The academy provides free and expert careers advice to post-16 students who choose to study for qualifications in hospitality.

During training, apprentices’ learning and social needs are met in vibrant classrooms and kitchens which have been designed to inspire and challenge. The apprenticeship lasts between 12 and 18 months and De Vere’s occupationally trained staff are present at every stage to ensure a high completion rate among the apprenticeship. The De Vere Group employs of apprentices who graduate from the Academy for the first 12 weeks to give them a series of industries and the feeling of being part of the team. Their career opportunities are being opened up to them, allowing them to experience their career choices first-hand. Current apprentices are being offered training opportunities to support their career development, and are preparing to train and support colleagues to make it in the career ladder.

Empowering young people to make the right career choices

Going employment in your chosen field is becoming more and more difficult for young people. And it is a problem that is compounded by their lack of knowledge of what sector they actually value, skills, and access to sector opportunities. There are many career opportunities that are open for safety in their chosen field, but many young people are not aware of them. It is important to raise awareness of the opportunities in their chosen field, and then to provide training and support so young people can make it in the career ladder.

Initative to bring talented and deprived young people into the exciting world of hospitality was also featured in this year’s Peer Awards.

Chosen four times out of the big cities and to place our hands on the future, Robert Bond, Chairman, De Vere Venues.

Meanwhile, the Thomson Reuters’ initiative is proving young people in east London with an insight into journalism, promoting skills and supporting the London 2012 Legacy through training delivered by Reuters journalists.

The PFA have an innovative response to a recognised problem. Maybe we can do more too!

A Peer Awards judge

Sustainable approaches to inspiring environmental protection

Simply reducing its impact on the environment is not enough for a company to be sustainable. Many new education and training initiatives are engaged in environmental initiatives of their own.

Coca-Cola Enterprises is lowering its carbon footprint by engaging stakeholders to use recycling programs, and promoting the initiative at events such as summer festivals or through engaging partnerships with retailers.

Planet Champions is a McDonald’s employee engagement programme that develops an environmentally empowered workforce. Staff are engaged in the environment, and are trained in the environmental awareness and participation in the environmental awareness of McDonald’s restaurants.

A great way to engage young people – and most McDonald’s staff are young – in environmental issues, while building community networks.

Corporate responsibility

Sustainable development is a key component of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and companies are increasingly focusing on sustainability as a way to engage stakeholders and create value. Corporate responsibility is not just about financial performance, but also about social and environmental performance. This can be achieved through initiatives that educate people and communities about sustainability, and promote positive environmental practices.

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Harnessing technology to enhance performance

Without a doubt, technology has transformed the way businesses operate. From virtual classrooms to mobile applications, companies are leveraging technology to improve efficiency and better connect with customers. However, the key to harnessing technology lies in understanding how it can complement, not just replace, traditional approaches. Here’s how some organizations are doing just that.

**The Academy: Building a stronger business**

The Academy is a leading professional development provider that has a single mission: to empower people to achieve their goals. They use technology as a tool to help individuals and teams grow, both personally and professionally.

1. **Flexible Learning**: The Academy offers a range of courses that can be completed at the learner’s own pace and time, making it accessible to everyone, regardless of their circumstances.
2. **Personalized Learning Experiences**: The Academy uses technology to create personalized learning experiences that are tailored to the individual learner. This ensures that each person feels engaged and motivated.
3. **Real-Time Feedback**: Learners receive immediate feedback on their progress, which helps them stay on track and makes learning more effective.
4. **Collaborative Learning**: Technology allows learners to connect with others, share ideas, and collaborate on projects, enhancing their learning experience.

**People & Performance**

Nurturing the talent of tomorrow’s leaders

In today’s world, every company is looking for tomorrow’s talent – but attracting gifted individuals is just part of the story. On board, leaders and managers must to be forward-thinking and develop the skills they need for the challenges ahead. Critical in building satisfying and successful careers is the development of one’s attitude, the ability to take pleasure in work and in work-life balance. A certain decision making that considers customer and stakeholder needs but that is not and impact on the ground on all.

The ability to transcend incoming technologies to engage business can be complex, requiring an understanding of how these technologies can be leveraged to enhance performance. Companies that can effectively harness virtual environments and provide superior support to their customers can achieve a competitive advantage.

Similarly, March, the insurance broker and risk adviser, has created an innovative learning platform that brings business leaders and distributors together. It includes a variety of resources such as videos, webinars, and online courses that cater to different learning needs.

The Academy includes its own learning platform that provides access to virtual classrooms and online courses. The platform is designed to be intuitive and user-friendly, allowing learners to access the material from anywhere at any time.

**Technology for people – rather than for its own sake**

Harnessing technology to improve performance is about leveraging it to support employees in their work, enhancing productivity, and fostering innovation. At The Academy, we believe that technology should be a tool that empowers individuals to achieve their goals, rather than an end in itself.

In an increasingly digital world, it’s crucial for companies to adapt and embrace technology to remain competitive. At The Academy, we’re dedicated to helping organizations and their employees thrive in this digital age.

**Coaching to empowerment approach**

The best way to help disengaged and underperforming members of your team is not simply to give them what they need in physical terms. Instead, coaches can work for their engagement and provide them with more opportunities. For example, Royal Caribbean and Backpacking are taking distinctive approaches to engage their workforce in meaningful ways.

**Royal Caribbean’s virtual delivery model is very clever and an excellent example of a simple and useful technology**

BP created realistic characters, telling employees a challenging story for virtual reality. The story was set in a futuristic world, where employees had to work together to solve complex problems. This approach not only engaged employees, but also provided them with a unique learning experience.

Similarly, March, the insurance broker and risk adviser, has created a story-driven learning platform that engages business leaders and distributors. The program is designed to be interactive and immersive, allowing learners to experience different scenarios and make decisions based on those experiences.

**Royal Caribbean’s virtual delivery model is very clever and an excellent example of a simple and useful technology**

For example, Royal Caribbean and Backpacking are taking distinctive approaches to engage their workforce in meaningful ways.

For Royal Caribbean, the virtual delivery model is very clever and an excellent example of a simple and useful technology. The platform allows employees to experience different scenarios, learn from their mistakes, and make decisions in real-time. This approach not only engages employees, but also provides them with a unique learning experience.

**In conclusion**

Harnessing technology to enhance performance is about leveraging it to support employees in their work, enhancing productivity, and fostering innovation. At The Academy, we believe that technology should be a tool that empowers individuals to achieve their goals, rather than an end in itself.

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**People & Performance**
We wanted to learn directly from the hard-earned experiences of practitioners that have been there, done that. If we could benefit from what others have learned while implementing similar initiatives, perhaps we as a network could avoid the same pitfalls.

What was needed was a platform that would attract these unsung heroes of British industry to share their inspirational ideas with other professionals, warts and all.

And so we created the Peer Awards.

Stephen Citron, director,
The Peer Awards for Excellence