

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Travel Counsellors PLC wins prestigious business award**

Independent travel agency Travel Counsellors PLC, one of the fastest growing travel companies in the UK, was delighted to receive the 'The Dell Technology in Business Award' at the high profile 2005 Growing Business Awards produced by Real Business and the CBI last night (November 30).

The Growing Business Awards recognise the UK's most entrepreneurial companies and are among the country's highest-profile business awards.

Travel Counsellors beat tough competition from Hotelscene, Tribeka and VC-Net to win the award, which was collected by the company's IT director Paul Speakman from William Hague at a gala dinner at the London Hilton on Park Lane.

During the past year the Queen's Award winning company has developed a number of innovative technology solutions to help link its home-based consultants with its head office in Bolton. These include Travel Counsellors Television (TCTV), a ground-breaking 40 minute webcast which links the company's head office to its agents working from home. In the past 12 months the company has also expanded into its first overseas markets (Southern Ireland and the Netherlands) and with further expansion overseas planned for 2006, this technology will become even more important.

Commenting on the achievement Travel Counsellors PLC managing director Steve Byrne said: "We are delighted to have received this prestigious business award and for the hard work of our IT team to be recognised in this way. TCTV is a fantastic communications and training medium and fundamental to our strategy to look after our people and keep them informed".

Travel Counsellor's IT director Paul Speakman added "We believe in harnessing technology to help our consultants in their aim to be the very best travel advisors in the business. They each have on average 20 years experience. By combining that experience with not just advanced, but genuinely useful technology solutions, we can help them to give not just good - but exceptional customer service to their clients."

Organised annually by the CBI and *Real Business* magazine, the Growing Business Awards ceremony took place in front of 700 entrepreneurs at a black-tie gala dinner at the London Hilton on Park Lane. CBI Director General, Sir Digby Jones, delivered a keynote speech and the evening was compered by William Hague MP. Also present were Stelios Haji-Ioannou, Lloyd Dorfman (Travelex), Henry Engelhardt (Admiral Insurance), David Willetts MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry), John Caudwell (Phones4U) and Lord Kirkham (DFS).

### **ENDS**

**EDITOR'S NOTES:** Travel Counsellors PLC is one of the UK's largest independent travel agencies with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 31 2005) of £150 million, a 17% increase year on year. Founded by chairman David Speakman in 1994, travel consultants are based nationwide and benefit from the support of over 110 staff at the company's head office in Bolton, Greater Manchester. During 2005 it also expanded into Southern Ireland, where it now has 12 consultants and the Netherlands, where it has five consultants to date. Travel Counsellors prides itself on the exceptional levels of personal service it offers its clients, a fact that was recognised in 2003 when it received the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise. Travel Counsellors places all customer money in a Trust account, administered by the Barclays Bank Trust Company, which guarantees a 100% refund in the event that a supplier collapses.

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