

## Winner – The Entertainer

# Why The Entertainer stands out in a hard-fought market



It wasn't just that The Entertainer could demonstrate strong sales and profits that impressed the panel – it was the fact that the specialist retailer has done so amid fierce competition.

The toy market has always been tough – especially with the advances into general merchandise categories by the supermarket groups. That is why, the judges agreed, it is all the more impressive how The Entertainer has maintained its position after being founded as a family business in 1981. Thirty-four years later, it's still 100% family owned.

But from humble beginnings, it has grown to 93 stores in the UK, adding nine in the 12-month period covered by the entry.

As The Entertainer showed in its entry, it is

now present throughout the UK. It has stores in small towns and high streets through to the largest shopping centres.

At the end of 2013, The Entertainer took its first step into the international retail arena, opening a store in Dubai. That has been followed by another six stores in the region.

Such bold steps, combined with demonstrable business successes, set The Entertainer apart.

One judge said: "It's amazing that it has delivered on its pledge to open more stores here and go abroad and make money. It is doing extremely well financially. It's a great concept. It's clearly a tightly-run, well-run business".

Last year The Entertainer won *Retail Week's* AlixPartners Growth Retailer of the Year award after showing a strong performance, and the

retailer's ability to stick to its mission pleased the judges again this time.

One noted: "It has done very well in a big discounting sector. It is in a very difficult market, up against some big boys such as the grocers.

"It has built its own style and become a very successful business".

The founders have continued to add new products to keep shoppers excited and invested in its online store, which achieved a surge in orders in the first half of 2014.

That was partly boosted by clicks from overseas through new marketplace services such as eBay France, eBay Germany and FNAC.

Another positive noted by the judges was the retailer's big ambitions for the future.

In the Gulf another 40 stores are due in the next five years. In the UK, the company was on course for its 100th store this month.

All this, along with plans to deploy more technology, including tablet devices, into its customer service offer, and an eShopper app to speed up the process, impressed the judges.

One remarked: "It's always been a great business and it has managed to stay consistently popular and specialist, despite the competition."

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