

Customer service key to Wilderness Explorers prize -GM

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Wilderness Explorers recently received the Honourable Mention Prize for its contribution to the local tourism industry in this year's Pioneers of Prosperity Programme and customer service has been seen as one of the keys.

At the award ceremony held at the Regency Suites, Teri O'Brien, General Manager of Wilderness, received the award on behalf of her company. For its achievements, Wilderness Explorers has received a grant of US\$10,000 to be invested in training and technical infrastructure for the company.

In a telephone interview with Stabroek News, O'Brien expressed her gratitude that her company had been recognized.

Wilderness Explorers is a tour operator and offers adventures in the wilderness of South American and Caribbean territories through comprehensive itineraries.

O'Brien also expressed gratitude to their partners and suppliers for the support given throughout the years and has said that their recognition is timely as they recently celebrated their 15th anniversary.

"Our success is the result of supportive partners, suppliers and customers," O'Brien said.

Although winning was her ultimate goal, she said that coming in second and being given an honourable mention was a great achievement for Wilderness.

When asked what may have given Wilderness Tours an edge over the other competitors, the manager said that while it would be difficult to ascertain this since they were unaware of their competitors owing to the large volume of businesses participating, both in Guyana and the Caribbean, the delivery of excellent customer service is the hallmark of Wilderness and may have been the impetus for its success.

The ability of the firm to compete with other major tourism industries in a global atmosphere with limited capital has also been highlighted by O'Brien as a factor for success, coupled with the dedication of a hard working team of employees.

According to the general manager, preparing for the competition entailed providing basic information about the company and that was followed by a visit by the coordinators of the award programme to examine every aspect of the business, ranging from its marketing strategies to customer delivery.

O'Brien has issued a call for businesses to participate and take advantage of the award programme since as she said, "it is good recognition for Guyana and aids in marketing one's business."

Bulkan Timber Works was adjudged the winner and awarded the Country Prize in the 2009 Pioneers of Prosperity Caribbean Awards Competition for its contribution to local business.

The Pioneers of Prosperity Programme is sponsored by the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank, the John Templeton Foundation, and the Social Equity Venture Fund (S.E. VEN Fund).

The programme seeks to inspire a new generation of entrepreneurs in emerging economies by identifying, rewarding and promoting outstanding businesses which will serve as role models.

According to the programme's website, the winners were chosen on their ability to create unique value for customers through innovative products and/or services; generate a sustainable profit for owners/shareholders commensurate with the risks taken by investing in them; invest in their employees through training, safe working conditions, and high and rising salaries and protect the future by strengthening local and global environments and communities.

The website stated that for persons to qualify for the award, they would have had to employ more than five full-time staff, earn between US\$100,000 and US\$5,000,000 in revenues per year, be a for-profit entity, have been profitable for more than four quarters in a row, receive some type of outside funding (e.g. from financial institutions), but not rely solely on donor financing.

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