



Business

Jamaican companies among top winners in POP C'bean Awards

Sunday, September 20, 2009

Totally Male Limited, a niche market Jamaican spa that caters exclusively to professional males, earned a position in the top three of the prestigious Pioneers of Prosperity Caribbean Awards.

A ceremony announcing the winners was held at the Half Moon Conference in Montego Bay on September 11, where Jamaica's Spatial Innovision was also recognised among the top ten finalists.



Jamaican Sandra Samuels (right), managing director of Totally Male Limited, and Haitian Olivier Barrau (left), president of Alternative Insurance Company, flank the winner of the Pioneer of Prosperity Caribbean Awards, Guyanese Howard Bulkin (centre), owner of Bulkan Timber Works, at the September 11 ceremony at the Half Moon Conference Centre in St James. Samuels and Barrau, as joint regional runners-up, each received US\$75,000, while Bulkin collected US\$100,000.

The field of ten country-level winners from across the Caribbean was topped by Guyana-based Bulkan Timber Works, while Totally Male shared the regional runner-up honours with Haitian firm Alternative Insurance Company (AIC). BTW's owner, Howard Bulkin, received

US\$100,000, while Sandra Samuels of Totally Male and Olivier Barrau of AIC each pocketed US\$75,000.

The grants awarded to the top three will go towards strategic investment in technical infrastructure and training for their companies. They also stand to benefit from access to a network of potential investors and other cutting-edge entrepreneurs on the local, regional and global level.

"I am extremely delighted to have been chosen among the top three in the region, especially as the only female. I hope that this sets a precedent for future female participants in this programme. It was wonderful to be a country winner for Jamaica, but being a regional winner really makes the 15 years of being in business worth it," said Samuels.

"With this award of US\$75,000, I now have the opportunity to provide greater training for my staff. In addition to local training, my team can now benefit from international exposure and training that will enhance the quality of our service," she added.

Totally Male retails clothing and accessories and offers fashion consultancy, grooming and spa services exclusively for men. This service is provided by a professional all-female staff of 12. Through the Government of Jamaica and the European Union-funded Private Sector Development Programme (PSDP), which is being implemented by Jamaica Trade and Invest, funding in the sum of \$1 million was provided to Totally Male last December to enhance the competitiveness of the business. The grant was disbursed under the Enterprise Rating and Upgrading (ERU) activity of PSDP.

"We were able to use the funding to implement customer service training, formalise our documentation, expand the facilities and upgrade equipment. This definitely put us in superb condition to enter the Pioneers of Prosperity programme," stated Samuels. According to Wynette Anderson, programme manager for PSDP, firms like Totally Male have been able to obtain a business diagnostic plan for upgrade and financial support through the programme's ERU component.

"Totally Male exemplifies the impact of the ERU, having improved their competitiveness by participating in the assessment and implementing the upgrading strategies recommended with grant support. They have improved their productivity and efficiency... thus positioning themselves for success."

Pioneers of Prosperity is a global awards programme that seeks to inspire a new generation of entrepreneurs in emerging economies by identifying, rewarding and promoting truly outstanding small and medium-sized enterprises which can serve as role models to their peers. Jamaica Trade and Invest has been playing a seminal role in the implementation and promotion of the programme in Jamaica.

Out of the 580 participating companies from the region, Jamaica fielded the most candidates with 150 entries. Silburn Clarke of Spatial Innovision was another Jamaican finalist in the top

ten. Prime Minister Bruce Golding, in his keynote address at the awards function, commended the winners for demonstrating that "the risk of adventure can lead to the harvest of success".

The Pioneers of Prosperity programme is being staged in the Caribbean for the first time by the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank, the John Templeton Foundation and the Social Equity Venture Fund.