



SCOTS COACH FIRM MAKES 'OSCAR' HISTORY

A Scots coach company has made awards history by scooping an industry 'Oscar' for the second year in a row.

Prentice Coaches of Haddington is the only coach firm to achieve a coveted RouteONE award – widely regarded as the 'Oscars' of the industry - in two years succession.

The company's innovative approach to technology was credited with giving it the edge needed against impressive competition to win 'Small Fleet - Coach Operator of the Year.'

The accolade comes after the firm won 'Medium Fleet - Coach Operator of the Year' in 2012 before the definition was amended, and represents the third year in a row it has been nominated.

The winner was unveiled at a lavish ceremony by TV star Angela Rippon, who echoed the judges' comments by praising the firm's innovation in technology.

Rippon said: "Standing still is not considered an option by our winner. It has innovated and invested with the best of them, adding live tracking enhanced by a mobile phone App, while adding a colourful QR code to its vehicles.

"It has seen truly impressive organic growth as a consequence. However, what singles out this operator is the way in which the personal pride expressed by its owner is translated into excellence in all aspects of the business."

Prentice Coaches was founded in 1991 by Haddington father and son Don and Ross Prentice.

Managing Director Ross Prentice has been at the forefront of embracing technology to improve communication and service for passengers and the wider public.

Speaking of his pride and surprise at the result, Prentice said they had not expected to win because a double scoop was 'unheard of'.

After winning, he tweeted that he was 'flabbergasted' at the results but announced the win 'with immense pride.'

Prentice said: "We are absolutely thrilled with the award win. We were in excellent company with our fellow nominees and the competition was impressive.

"At Prentice Coaches we are always looking for ways to embrace the latest technology for the benefit of customers. It is not just about jumping on the bandwagon and having a trendy app – it has to really improve customer's experiences.

"This achievement is a fantastic boost for all our hard working drivers who go out and deliver outstanding service on the roads every day."

The firm also congratulated Berwick based Perryman's Buses, which scooped the 'Small Bus Operator of the Year' Award.

Local politicians, business owners and customers were quick to congratulate Prentice Coaches.

Fiona O'Donnell MSP tweeted: "So proud to have such a great success story in East Lothian."

Iain Gray MSP tweeted: "Well done! Well deserved!"

Councillor Michael Veitch, Council spokesman for Transport, said: "Prentice are a first rate East Lothian based firm."

Prentice Coaches launched its App this year with the aim of providing real time tracking for every passenger with a smartphone.

The so-called App-Prentice made the firm's new mobile website and live tracking device easily available on smartphones, with a dedicated QR code for instant downloading.

The app has since been downloaded by hundreds of customers, and attracted a wave of praise via email and social media sites.

Prentice Coaches has proven prolific in its use of social media to communicate with customers about everything from the app to vital information about routes affected by severe weather.

The company has also achieved major recognition in recent years for boosting green transport initiatives.

Prentice Coaches runs fourteen coaches, and a growing fleet of buses after it expanded to provide local public transport services in 2012.

Clients include East Lothian Council, John Lewis Partnership, Price Waterhouse Coopers and Loretto School.

For further information visit www.prentice.info