



**FAMILY FIRM IS 'CUED' UP FOR NATIONAL BUSINESS AWARD**  
**BRISTOL BASED POOL ENTHUSIAST TURNS ONLINE ORDERING DISASTER INTO**  
**THE UK'S BEST ONLINE BUSINESS**

**London – 22 May 2014** – Home Leisure Direct has beaten hundreds of entrants to win the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Worldpay UK Best Online Business of the Year Award.

When trying to order a pool table for their home left them frustrated and underwhelmed, husband and wife team Michelle and Andrew Beresford set about launching a business that could get it right. Six years later they're a market leader, securing exclusive agreements with leading brands and count Ant and Dec, Jude Law and Theo Walcott as customers.

In 2008 Home Leisure Direct was founded from their back bedroom with Michelle at the helm. By 2009 they were so busy Andy left his job as a Director at Phones 4 U to focus his full attention on running the company.

Initially [Home Leisure Direct](http://www.homeleisuredirect.com/) (<http://www.homeleisuredirect.com/>) traded solely online selling pool, table tennis, foosball tables and pinball machines, so the website had to work incredibly hard. As the entire business performance was driven through the website, effective SEO, functionality, sound product descriptions and imagery were all crucial.

The husband and wife team were acutely aware that the high price and complexity of the products they sell makes it challenging to achieve high levels of online purchases. Perfecting the appearance, simplicity and ease of use of the website and checkout process was essential. They invested in extensive video testing and gathered real customer feedback to ensure they got it right. Subsequently they placed a huge amount of attention to detail on the overall online shopping experience. From the moment the customer browses the website, the out of hours live webchats to help shoppers make the right choice. Right through to the social media platforms and delivery of goods; every part of the customer journey is finely tuned to offer peace of mind and satisfaction.

Innovatively, they also set about creating a series of online videos, and now have more than 300 videos, covering product reviews; buying advice; and a collection of videos explaining how to play pool, table tennis, foosball or pinball, developed in collaboration UK and World Champions.

As a result of the success of the online platform the company has expanded rapidly. It now has two showrooms, a team of eight and achieved a 20 per cent growth in sales on the previous year. Andrew and Michelle have continually re-invested in the business marrying the success of the website with its showroom offering to ensure it led not only the market sector but aspired to deliver a web and retail experience on-par with the very best in the country.

Now the two showrooms, situated just north of Bristol, showcase the largest display of games room products in Europe, many of which are exclusively available from Home Leisure Direct. The business now has customers flying in from Europe, as well as travelling from around the UK, to visit the store.

Andrew Beresford, managing director of Home Leisure Direct, said: "The idea for the business was born from a terrible experience we had when trying to buy a pool table. We were appalled by the experience so we set about proving it could be done so much better.

"We take great pride in delivering excellence in everything we do – from the quality and range of products, to developing the richest web experience, to providing the best customer service

available. With a lot of hard work and lessons learnt along the way we think we've cracked it and our national Online Business of the Year Award would seem to prove it too.

"There was a huge pool of talent in the room so to come home with the gong means a great deal to us and we know the team at Home Leisure Direct will be thrilled."

Carol Undy, Chairman FSB (Member Services) Ltd, said: "Small businesses are what make Britain great. It takes one idea and the passion to see it through to create a successful business and that's exactly what Andrew and Michelle did – from their back bedroom. The success of their online business platform is a result of always putting the customer experience first and they have never lost sight of this, probably as a result of their terrible customer service experience, which sparked the idea for their business in the first place."

Ron Kalifa, Deputy Chairman of Worldpay, said: "Home Leisure Direct has raised the bar for ecommerce, impressively perfecting their online customer experience for a niche product in an industry that has seen UK sales grow by 17.03% in the last 12 months. They, and all our other finalists this year, have been just outstanding, which is why we're proud to sponsor the FSB Worldpay UK Business Awards."

Richard Reed, who is no stranger to the small business world, having founded and grown innocent drinks into a £200m+ business and the UK's largest smoothie brand, delivered a motivational keynote speech and presented the awards to the winners. Richard comments: "I know all too well about the daily trials and tribulations that small businesses face but also understand they are the back bone to our economy. They must be championed for their contribution – which is exactly what these awards do and I would like to applaud every one of the amazing businesses and entrepreneurs in the room."

This year almost 1,000 entries were received by the award organisers, an impressive 60 per cent increase on last year. The increase indicates that small businesses, the backbone of our economy, are having a surge in feel-good factor and are celebratory about their achievements.

Category winners received a prize fund of £4,500, plus a half-day Marketing workshop. The FSB Worldpay UK Business of the Year, Lanwarne Landscapes also took home an extra £5,000 in prize money. The awards ceremony took place at the London Hilton Waldorf Hotel on 21 May 2014.

**ENDS**

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### **Notes to Editors**

- Online Business of the Year winner, Home Leisure Direct, is the UK's leading retailer of luxury games-room products, specialising in pool tables, jukeboxes and pinball machines. Established in 2007, the company began trading online from a spare bedroom. It has now grown to fill two showrooms and boasts Europe's largest display of luxury pool tables. The company also sells online through its website, which features videos offering buying advice, product reviews and professional coaching.
- Across the UK, leisure shoppers are spending more frequently, but on lower value sales:
  - o In the last 12 months, Worldpay has seen an increase in sales in the leisure industry of 17.03%. (According to Worldpay transactional data from February 2013-February 2014).

- o Last year the majority of leisure shoppers preferred to pay online, as online payments accounted for 53.86% of all leisure purchases across the UK. (According to Worldpay transactional data from January-December 2013).

### **About Worldpay**

The UK leader in payments, Worldpay helps businesses of all sizes sell more to their customers – by accepting credit and debit card payments in-store, online, via mail or telephone, and on the move. We handle nearly half of all card payments made on the UK High Street.

Globally, Worldpay processes over 8.4 billion transactions every year. Our online payment options cater for over 200 payment types in 115 currencies. [www.worldpay.com](http://www.worldpay.com)

### **About the FSB**

The FSB is the UK's leading business organisation with around 200,000 members. It exists to protect and promote the interests of the UK's Real-Life Entrepreneurs who run their own business. More information is available at [www.fsb.org.uk](http://www.fsb.org.uk).