



PRESS RELEASE

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Gift card industry heroes recognised in GCVA Connect 2020 Special Awards

The winners of the first-ever GCVA Connect 2020 Special Awards, celebrating the best of the UK gift card and voucher industry, have been announced.

The awards, organised by the [Gift Card & Voucher Association \(GCVA\)](#) and with a special guest appearance from comedian and actor Maria McErlane, recognised the extraordinary efforts of the GCVA members, which span the retail, leisure, incentives and payments sectors, during lockdown, across six prestigious categories.

Rewards and benefits platform Edenred Ltd won “Best COVID Response Initiative”, in partnership with rewards and incentive management platform Tillo, for their tireless work in enabling free school meal vouchers throughout the first wave of the pandemic. In an exceedingly limited timeframe, the businesses brought together the largest collection and distribution of eGift cards on record, to ensure millions of schoolchildren in need across the country could continue to be fed during COVID-19 lockdown. For this project, Edenred also took home the prestigious “Best Lockdown Team” award.

One4All Gift Cards, which was also highly commended in the above categories, won the strongly-contended “Best New Product, Service or Innovation” award for its digital multi-store gift card, which can be sent, received and spent instantly. The product, which was commended for its convenience and sustainability credentials, is also reflected by a wider uptick in digital gifting, which soared in popularity during lockdown according to research from the GCVA and GlobalData.

M&S won the coveted “Best Marketing Campaign” award, with judges praising the effectiveness and ROI of the brand’s marketing efforts across multiple channels, including PPC, social media and direct mail.

The “GCVA Shine a Light” award was won by technology-led rewards solutions provider Giftcloud, for its outstanding work with Carrot Insurance. The business provided a cost-effective, environmentally-friendly solution that was proven to improve both customer engagement and renewal rates.



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Finally, Matt Howe, managing director, EMEA of BlackHawk Network, was recognised with the “Honoured Industry Contributor” award, as voted for by the GCVA executive team.

Speaking on Matt Howe’s award win, Eoin Whyte, chair of the GCVA,

commented: “Matt is one of the most widely respected individuals in the industry, having forged possibly the most impressive career of any of his peers in the last ten years. He has led the European charge and significant expansion for Blackhawk through a combination of organic and acquisition-based growth, each year bolder than the last.

“Matt has always been one who carries his authority effortlessly and never to excess. He deserves our recognition and appreciation for an outstanding career thus far, and long may it continue.”

The awards, which took place in an online ceremony, were judged by an expert panel, comprised of both GCVA members and its executive team. The event was sponsored by Appreciate Group PLC, a market leader in the recognition and reward industry, and one of the largest business reward providers in the UK.

Gail Cohen, director general of the GCVA, commented: “In a year that has been, to borrow a tired term, “unprecedented”, it’s been wonderful to see the brilliantly innovative work put forth by our members, which represents the best of the gift card industry. We were thrilled to be able to organise this event, and a special thank-you must go to Appreciate Group as our lead sponsor, for their support.

“Our annual award ceremonies have always been a fixture in the industry calendar, recognising the very finest gift cards have to offer. In a year where the industry has done so much to keep the country running during lockdown – from free school meals, to volunteer shopping vouchers, through to bespoke high-street-specific gift cards – we knew we had to celebrate the fantastic work being done, with worthy winners and commendations across the board.”

Commenting on his win, Matt Howe, managing director EMEA of Blackhawk Network, said: “This is a wonderful achievement to be credited with, especially as this was voted for by the members directly. I have to say that I’ve been able to grow with the ambition and drive



of Blackhawk Network as a business and been lucky enough to build an incredible team that have supported that vision over the past 12 years."

For more information about becoming a member of the GCVA, visit

<http://www.gcva.co.uk/becomeamember.html>

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Notes to Editor

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About GCVA

The Gift Card & Voucher Association (www.gcva.co.uk) was established as a trade body to represent the key players in what is today a c£6.9 billion gift card and stored value solutions market. With more than 90 members representing key retailers, issuers and suppliers the GCVA provides an information and reference point for the Gift Card & Voucher industry and is at the forefront of the issues affecting the industry.

Its main objective is to provide a platform and infrastructure for the industry and to raise the profile and use of gift cards and vouchers within the UK, promoting the industry to consumers, businesses, government and other interested parties.

The GCVA is the key industry organisation to share new ideas, innovate and promote best practice with the UK gift card and voucher industry. It runs a programme of events, meetings, research projects and updates throughout the year, including its flagship conference, a key date in the industry calendar. The conference, which runs over two days, brings together all stakeholders in the sector to learn, debate, network and focus on the industry.

Full list of winners:

1. *Best COVID Response Initiative*
 - Winner: Edenred & Tillo
 - Highly commended: One4All



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2. *Best Lockdown Team*

- Winner: Edenred
- Highly commended: One4All

3. *Best New Product, Service or Innovation*

- Winner: One4All
- Highly commended: WeGift

4. *Best Marketing Campaign*

- Winner: M&S
- Highly commended: Mitchells & Butlers

5. *GCVA Shine a Light Award*

- Winner: Giftcloud
- Highly commended: Incodia

6. *Honoured Industry Contributor*

- Winner: Matt Howe, managing director EMEA of BlackHawk Network