

Academy wins prestigious Catey Award

The Academy of Food and Wine Service (AFWS) was this week delighted to be awarded one of the prestigious Catey awards, the industry's Oscars, in Caterer and Hotelkeeper's annual awards ceremony.

The Catey was for the best independent marketing campaign and was awarded to AFWS for the PR and social media campaign surrounding the successful BBC programme Michel Roux's Service.

The judges said: 'Our winners in this category demonstrated the importance of thorough planning and good timing in effective marketing. Unable to engage in advance publicity because of broadcasting restrictions, they unleashed a well-targeted promotion across traditional and social media as soon as their programme hit our screens, teaching young people about the benefits of a career in hospitality in the process.'

'I was delighted that we won - it was a fantastic surprise as we were up against some very strong contenders,' said Academy director Sophie Roberts-Brown, who collected the award on stage from actor James Nesbitt. 'The campaign was a real team effort, involved lots of planning, lots of elements and considerable timing. The results were astonishing - hits on our website reached over 10,000, membership enquiries to the Academy rose and we really feel that front-of-house service has been put on the map. We were particularly delighted to gain this recognition as the first association to have won the marketing award Catey - previous winners have all been hotel and restaurant operators,' she added.

The Academy of Food and Wine Service campaign started initially with the idea for the TV programme, which came out of a brainstorming organised by David Read of Prestige Purchasing, the Academy and William Murray PR. The idea for the service programme took nearly two years to come to fruition and involved convincing a TV production company of the idea and then, of course, selling the programme into a TV station. The fact the BBC picked up on the idea really gave the project impetus, but also meant that the Academy was limited in the promotion it was able to do surrounding the eight-week series and the claims it was able to make regarding the original idea.

'BBC restrictions meant that we weren't able to closely associate ourselves with the programme in any overt way, but we devised a campaign that worked around that by promoting the Academy and front-of-house at the same time as the programme was being aired. This meant we were able to be included in much of the press coverage surrounding the programme and the general discussions surrounding the issue of service that were taking place.

'We were able to offer people relevant and practical advice by loading relevant material onto our website at the end of each episode - these included advice sheets, video blogs, service advice videos and interviews with people in the series as well as best practice demonstrations. These went live on the website after each episode was screened. We drove traffic to the website and to these postings via social media, using Twitter and Facebook to create links to the site, having built a considerable following beforehand. We also used social media to create and prompt discussion throughout each episode, which again drove traffic to the site,' said Sophie.

'At the beginning of the year we also relaunched our website in readiness for the Service campaign. The new site was given a fresh look, with much clearer signposting, easier navigation and various pages for each aspect of the Academy's work. Website traffic increased massively during the programme and we are pleased to say that this has been maintained after the series finished too.

'I'd like to thank everyone who played a part in this campaign for the hard work that made this successful particularly the [Savoy Educational Trust](#) for their unwavering support from the outset, our own PR consultant [Linda Pettit](#) (who planned and oversaw the development of the website and kept the media informed about what we were doing), the team at [William Murray](#) (special mention here for Karen, Bernie and Roy who were involved in the massive social media splurge), Ben of [6970 Designs](#) (who developed the website) and of course the team here at AFWS HQ.

'We've had a hectic year so far at the Academy, and I really feel we have been successful in raising the profile of front-of-house and

changing people's perceptions by demonstrating a fantastic career can be had in the sector. Our campaign will continue ? and we've lots planned in the months ahead. So watch this space!?

You can view pictures from the Catey's by clicking [here](#). The Independent Marketing Award was sponsored by Molson Coors.