

E&y award for Parasol honours contractor pioneer

For [Parasol](#) chief Rob Crossland, contractors may expect a growing industry to face growing regulatory and administrative difficulties. Nonetheless, contracting is the only way forward for the UK economy since 20% of the workforce will soon be contractors, Crossland points out.

Crossland is Entrepreneur of the Year

Crossland is well-placed to make expert observations about UK contracting. When, on June 18, Parasol's Rob Crossland was named 'Entrepreneur of the Year' by [Ernst & Young](#), the entire UK contracting industry applauded.

Crossland, who is managing director of the Warrington-based [Parasol group](#) which provides professional services to contractors, won the award in the Business Services category for the North. The award is given to a business that has displayed unusual skill at strategy and extreme professionalism in implementing that strategy.

A Pioneer in Contracting

Crossland was a pioneer in offering such services to contractors, and over seven years he has built one of the most reputable and secure of the many such firms now in existence. Parasol now handles £220 million of gross payroll costs for nearly 15,000 contractors.

A former contractor himself, Crossland's exceptional strategy was honoured by the London-based consulting giant E&Y for its simplicity and effectiveness.

An Inspirational Story Says E&Y

Ernst & Young's Manchester Senior Partner, Jan Gregory said: "The judges described Robert's story as inspirational. Crossland has used a simple, but highly effective strategy to attract customers. The business has grown at an incredible rate, from 170 to over 20,000 employees, acted with integrity, and cash has been exceptionally well managed."

“ The judges described the Parasol story as inspirational ”
Jan Gregory-Ernst & Young

"We appreciate the Ernst & Young's recognition, especially as it is one that honours our entire team and the collective effort we've put in," Crossland told ContractorCalculator. "Particularly as it was awarded after a long and intense process of interviews and research; we presented the Parasol case, and it was singled out by people who have been there, and have got the t-shirt."

Business in an Ethical and Professional Way

For Crossland, the award is clear recognition of the Parasol culture which emphasises doing business in an ethical and professional way.

"What we've stood for isn't the easiest route to market. At times we've felt like we were ploughing a lonely furrow: not being excessively aggressive about tax, choosing the safe and secure alternative over offering sexy selling points. This is not the easiest thing to do, but that's been our mantra for 7 years," Crossland insists. It's been a challenge, and indeed is still a challenge, for Parasol to get that message out. The Ernst & Young award is a strong valorisation of that message.

More Competition

With the new legislation that penalises managed service companies, more and more providers will be moving into the so-called 'umbrella' area—that is, the provision of accounting and financial services for contractors. Crossland expects more competition, but points out that the Parasol message comes through just the same. "We are living in interesting times for contractors."

“ These are interesting times for contractors ”
Rob Crossland-Parasol

Although an increasing percentage of the workforce is becoming contractors, the Treasury and the Revenue still raise issues about employment status. This is in spite of the poor track record that HMRC has had with the IR35 legislation. What is needed instead is a new outlook on taxing contractors, but that does not seem to be forthcoming. This is unfortunate as 20% of the workforce will soon be contractors."

"The result," Crossland points out, "is that we have a lot of hard work educating agencies that ours is the best route for their clients. Others will try to compete, but they can't create what we have overnight. We remain at the far right using PAYE contracts and professional employment administration to minimise risk to contractors."

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