



And the winners are...

Today we announce the winners of our Venture Candy competition, as voted for by Metro readers. More than 17,000 votes were submitted online and by text for three shortlisted young businesses in five categories: Fashion & Interiors, Green, Design & Technology, Health & Beauty and Food & Drink.

Now we can reveal your favourites, each of whom will pick up an impressive prize package. This includes £50,000 worth of Metro advertising, hosted IT and communications from Outsourcery, marketing and branding help, a PA service and membership of The Hub business club.

Food & Drink

Graze.com

Deskbound snackers are the customers of our Food & Drink category winner Graze.com.

The business was founded two years ago by 28-year-old Ben Jones (pictured) and six schoolfriends, and the Graze.com kitchen now delivers 50,000 boxes of fresh and healthy snacks to homes and offices. The firm attracted a massive 78 per cent of the votes in this category.

Jones said: 'We are absolutely delighted to win the Food & Drink category of Venture Candy as we are very proud of what we do and we feel very honoured to have been chosen above such strong competition.'



Fashion & Interiors



A Suit That Fits.com

A Suit That Fits.com is just four years old but has already made a big impact, offering tailor-made suits both online and through shops in 22 locations.

Customers can create their own suit, shirt or overcoat to match their own tastes and fit. The business was co-founded by schoolfriends Warren Bennett and David Hathiramani (pictured), and won 69 per cent of the vote in this category.

Bennett, 28, said: 'I'm over the moon. We are particularly excited about winning some advertising support because we currently don't do very much.'

'We've been celebrating quietly so far but we'll be sending champagne to our branches. Now we need to build on this success and focus on being the best at what we do. The recession has made us a more efficient operation but we have to concentrate on marketing and on developing new products. It's a really exciting time.'

Green

Econogo

Econogo is the business behind the Yogo, the first electric scooter designed for urban commuters which features a fully detachable and portable lithium battery.

The company was started up less than two years ago by James South (pictured) but has already signed a lease for a shop in Kensington, west London.

One of the selling points of the Yogo is that its battery can be charged indoors. In a very closely fought category, Econogo won 40 per cent of the vote.

South, 28, said: 'We feel very lucky to have won because the competition was very tough. It's a real boost because setting up the business has been stressful at times. First we had bad weather and then we needed to concentrate on cashflow, sales and after-sales. There's been a lot to do.'

'We are currently looking for investment to take the business forward and try to keep ahead of our competitors. We are already in the process of developing a charger which will make it quicker to get the bike back to full power so there's lots to look forward to. Hopefully our prize will help us grow.'



Design & Technology

FreshMax Shirts by Lightex Limited

FreshMax Shirts will be launched next month by former Manchester University students Oliver Van Emden and Bradley Rose (pictured), who spent eight-and-a-half years developing a fabric that will prevent clothes showing ugly sweat patches.

The branded shirts will be sold through FreshMax.com and their company, Lightex Limited, is also hoping to sell the technology under licence to other shirtmakers. The company won 54 per cent of the vote in this category.

Van Emden, 31, said: 'We are thrilled to have won. Our fabric has been a long time in development and we are very excited about the launch. We have had a good response so far and all the patents are in place so now we hope that people are really going to like the product.'

'The Venture Candy prize will allow us to market and develop our business further.'



Health & Beauty



Smilepod Limited

Smilepod was set up two years ago to offer a walk-in dental service on the high street. The company concentrates on hygiene and cosmetic services such as tooth cleaning and whitening in a non-clinical and relaxing environment, although customers can make appointments for other treatments with Smilepod dentists if they need to.

The first centre was opened in Covent Garden, London, last year and already has 3,000 customers. Smilepod won 51 per cent of the Metro vote in its category.

Co-founder Mike Hutter said: 'We are overwhelmed by the win. We want to make visiting the dentist as unthreatening as a trip to the hairdresser and this award is wonderful for our clients and staff.'

'The prize will be a big help as we make decisions about the business in the months ahead.'