

Michelin Stars don't exist for the event catering sector, so how do you communicate to people your company is first class?

It's a question that the owners of Heritage Portfolio asked and their answer was to win awards. They reasoned that regular awards would prove that they're not just a one-hit wonder but must be doing something right.

And Heritage Portfolio are certainly doing things right. Already this year the business can boast five awards, including the UK Event Catering Award at the Cost Sector Catering Awards in April. This



Catering for success

complemented a Green Business Tourism Scheme Gold Award for their cafes hosted at several of Edinburgh's prestigious museums and galleries.

The company was formed in 2002 through a merger between Heritage Hospitality and Portfolio Catering. "We were competitors," says Mark Miller, Executive Director of the company, which oversees 150 permanent staff from their Edinburgh office. "But we realised bringing the two companies together would give us a lot of extra strengths. And we've been proved right. We are much more robust and must have trebled in size in the last eight years."

Operating at the top end of the market, Heritage Portfolio comprises three divisions – events catering, retail cafes in heritage properties and Beetroot Blue, a service providing boardroom-focused food available to order online and delivered to offices and homes.

"One aspect of the merger was that we were able to invest in high standard premises with quality kitchens and storage in Edinburgh, enabling us to target our market

effectively. We work with discerning clients and we know our marketplace – at the top end. We can define and stick to it."

Trust is a key component of our business, our clients have trust in us and equally we need to be able to trust our suppliers and advisors. Having good business advice has helped the company move forwards wisely. Haines Watts were Heritage Hospitality's accountants before the merger and afterwards the new company decided to retain them. "It's been a very good partnership," says Mark. "You need to be confident that you have good advice behind you. With some of the bigger contracts we've asked Haines Watts for opinions, feedback and rationale.

"We're very proud of what we do – everything has to fit with that sense of pride. We probably turn down more opportunities than we pursue because they don't fit logically, economically or financially."

Business, post-recession, is good although lead times are much shorter. "Events have a four-week lead time now, rather than the six months they had previously," says Mark. "Companies are more cautious about spending money but our retail side has done well because of the growth in the staycation market as people look to holiday at home, while Beetroot Blue has played

an even more important part in our offer portfolio as corporate clients look to entertain 'in-house'."

Haines Watts' Edinburgh office works closely with Heritage Portfolio, reviewing

management accounts and auditing the statutory accounts and advising on matters such as corporate finance when required.

Fraser Kerr, Haines Watts Partner, comments: "The structure and efficiency throughout the whole set up is a shining example to other businesses, and that is down to the quality of its executive directors. They appreciate the importance of management information systems and strict financial reporting."

With offices operating as individual businesses within the Haines Watts network, Fraser can relate to the experiences of Heritage. "By sharing the same concerns, we can empathise with them and therefore understand their business needs going forward."

“ We know our marketplace – at the top end.”

Mark Miller, Heritage Portfolio