

NI top in tech awards

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Christchurch's status as New Zealand's high-tech innovation hub has come into question following the region's miserable performance in this year's Westpac HiTech Awards.

The city's companies featured low on the winners' grid on Saturday, taking home only one award and five commendations out of a field of 19 honours.

In a competition that featured companies from Auckland and Christchurch only, the Garden City lost the two-way race to the City of Sails, which took top honours in eight categories, including the Supreme Award for Excellence.

"Not just the best in New Zealand, but the best in the world," is how the judges described Rakon, which specialises in the development of high performance frequency-control technology based on quartz crystals.

Rakon won the Supreme Award for Excellence and was named the Avnet Electronic Company of the Year.

The company supplies high performance frequency control technology to more than half of the world's GPS market and was "a standout winner", according to the judges.

"Rakon epitomises what these awards are about," said Westpac's Phil Doak. "New Zealand technology is world leading, yet few New Zealanders realise just how good our high-tech companies are. If you have a GPs in your mobile phone, chances are it uses Rakon technology — something most of us may have never known until Rakon won tonight."

Christchurch's PayGlobal, formerly TimeMaster Systems won the Microsoft Software Company of the Year Award for its people management solution.

PayGlobal is the fastest-growing company in its category in Australasia, with staff numbers up 500 per cent in two years.

A strong representation in the Adilam Young Achiever of the Year Award, which saw Tait Electronics' Stephen Mann and EDAC Electronics' Henry Bettle taking two of the three prizes, helped restore some pride to the city.

Mr Mann, identified by Tait as a future technology leader in the company and "the wider high-tech sector as a whole" was named joint winner while 23-year-old Mr Bettle — described by his company as an inspirational leader — was awarded the commendation in the category.

In a special award presentation the industry acknowledged the significant contribution made by Christchurch's electronics industry doyen, Sir Angus Tait.

Describing him as an inspirational leader and technology pioneer, they announced him as the first-ever Flying Kiwi Award recipient.

Navman, a world leader in high reliability GPS solutions, was celebrated by the HiGrowth Project as the first company from within its 100100 Power Up Programme to reach the milestone of \$100 million turnover.

With so few local companies featuring on the winners' table, the accuracy of last year's report by Investment New Zealand in which Christchurch was named New Zealand's "leading location for electronics, telecommunications, and software development" will inevitably be brought into question.

Winner details can be found at www.hitech.org.nz