

Good evening ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to be standing here representing Nigel Wright Recruitment. We feel privileged to once again be part of this prestigious event.

I think many would agree that last year's Awards were particularly special, so we really wanted to take part again this year to make sure that everyone involved has a great night – from what I've seen so far, I think that's definitely going to be the case!

Now in its 7th year, the awards continue to improve, not only in terms of the event itself, but most importantly, in the standard of those entering; and this is certainly the biggest year to date, in terms of the numbers of entrées as well as dinner attendees.

A big part of our role as sponsors is to raise awareness of the Awards, which ensures it's a competitive and well recognised event. The sheer number of entries means the judging process is extremely thorough and challenging for all of us taking part in the process.

It's a huge achievement to be short-listed at all, given the number and quality of entries this year. The number and quality of entries also reflects the busy year we've had in the region, indicating that North East businesses are performing well, despite enduring tough market conditions.

This year is particularly special for our business. 25 years ago in 1988, Nigel set up his company here in Newcastle. Back then, the economy wasn't in a great place, and we could never have dreamed of the variety of sectors that are now well established in the area.

His decision to launch a specialist recruitment practice here was based on his belief that there was a viable market for professional services in the North East – a belief that wasn't shared by some of the large national recruitment firms at the time.

Over the next two and half decades our company went from being a small regional finance recruiter, to become a recognised specialist recruitment brand in Europe and beyond. Without a doubt, however, the foundation that was established and we continue to nurture here in the North East, will always be central to our success.

Tonight we're all looking forward to hearing about some of the latest best practise initiatives in Finance. I want to thank everyone who entered this year's awards and hope that you all have a great evening!