

Technology exporter is business of the year

PHILIP HOPKINS – The Age
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QSR chief executive John Owen. "The world is not beating a rush to our door," he said. "But it should be." *Photo: Michael Clayton-Jones*

HIGH-TECHNOLOGY company QSR International, which exports to 150 countries, has won *The Age/D&B* Victorian Business of the Year Award.

QSR, whose achievement was announced at a luncheon in Melbourne yesterday, took out the main prize from a field of seven companies. The awards, which began in 1995, are given in seven categories - manufacturing, rural, building and allied trades, retail, IT, exports and "new company".

The awards seek to promote, acknowledge and reward outstanding business achievement. They are made on the basis of sales, profit and employment growth, with credit worthiness also a key criterion. Receiving the award, QSR chief executive John Owen said it was wrong that Australia was not better known internationally for its skills in information technology. "The world is not beating a rush to our door - but it should be," he said. Australia had outstanding skills in IT, but the country was better known for sport or mining.

Mr Owen said that when QSR started, it emphasised the need for innovation, both in product development and marketing. At the same time, QSR focused on the international market, as the Australian market was too small. "We realised there was a potential market for our products, so we had to get in first before the market became too crowded with competitors - hence we initially concentrated on the US and Europe," he said.

QSR's software, designed and developed at its main office at Doncaster, provides a platform that allows researchers to organise and structure the variety of information. Much of this data is messy, coming in the form of text, video, audio, pictures, databases, and from the web.

QSR's NVivo software supplies analysis tools to try to extract or identify the patterns or themes that emerge from the information, and make the links crucial for research. Police around the world use the technology to track fraudsters and manage intelligence on terrorists. Market researchers use it in programs that help Australian farmers manage climate variability.

More than 400,000 customers worldwide use QSR software and more than 500 organisations hold licences for its products, including the Country Fire Authority, hospitals, research centres and nearly every big university in the US, Europe and Australasia.