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# Heat is on for finalists

**T**HE final countdown is under way for the UK's top-performing franchisees to see who will be named Franchisee of the Year.

Twelve national finalists are vying for the top accolade in the 2007 British Franchise Association Franchisee of the Year Awards, sponsored by HSBC and Express Newspapers.

They will attend a glittering black-tie awards dinner at Birmingham's International Convention Centre on Thursday, October 4, to compete for the top title bfa Franchisee of the Year 2007 and HSBC's £5,000 Gold winner's cheque. The

**COUNTDOWN:** Birmingham's International Convention Centre

**ALISON COLEMAN** casts an eye over this year's runners and riders

winners of Silver and Bronze will also receive cheques from HSBC, for £3,000 and £2,000 respectively.

The franchising industry now employs more than 370,000 people and is worth an annual £10billion to the UK economy.

The 12 contenders are Stewart Collins and Tina O'Connor, (Barking Mad franchisees based in Frome, Somerset); Terry Lucking (Belvoir Lettings franchisee from Peterborough); Stephen and Margaret Crinks, (who operate a Chemex franchise in Berkshire); Atul Pathak (Uxbridge-based McDonald's franchisee); John and Paula Briscoe (franchisees with Mitchells & Butlers in Betchworth); Feroz Callachand,

from Acton (Mr Clutch franchisee); Ian and Sarah Bird, (owners of National Schoolwear franchise in Norwich); Tracy and Cliff Marsh from Lewes, Sussex (Oscar Pet Foods franchisees); David Amos (franchisee with Pitman Training in Bishop's Stortford, Essex); Chris Webster (Warrington-based Revive franchisee); Kath Costello (whose Thresher franchise is based in Sheffield); and Scott Anscomb from York (franchisee with Your Move).

In selecting the finalists, the judging panel, chaired by bfa president Sir Bernard Ingham, sought franchisees who could prove customer focus – the theme for this year's awards –

by responding to customers' needs with appropriate systems, products and services.

Director general of the bfa, Brian Smart said: "These awards recognise how focus and drive, when supplemented by the support of a franchisor, result in the growth of a sustainable and profitable business."

HSBC head of franchising Cathryn Hayes said: "All 12 finalists are inspiring examples of the franchise model working at its very best."

Express Newspapers' business advertising manager Yvette Taylor said: "We look forward to sharing the finalists' success stories with our family of more than four million readers."

