

# pressrelease

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## APCOA WINS PARKING INDUSTRY "OSCAR" FOR THEATRICAL DRAMA-BASED TRAINING INITIATIVE

Car parking specialist APCOA Parking has won the top prize in this year's British Parking Awards, which took place at the Dorchester Hotel, London in March, for its innovative use of "Forum Theatre" training techniques for its staff.

In 2005, APCOA commissioned specialist diversity training provider, the Garnett Foundation to research and script a play which would contain the full range of scenarios experienced by the firm's Parking Attendants (PAs). The objective was to improve the understanding, and consequently the required skills to deal with, the many challenging situations in which PAs often find themselves. Such is the emotive nature of parking, that PAs who work both on- and -street are required to deal with confrontation, aggression, abuse in all of its forms, and so on. It was felt that no amount of classroom training could illustrate sufficiently well, the difference between good and indifferent handling of such situations. Only by observing professionally acted realistic scenarios, and then participating in open forum discussions, was it felt that PAs could gain sufficient understanding, and therefore acquire the appropriate skills.

The play "Fair Weather" was written and produced by the Garnett Foundation, and performed in front of several hundred of APCOA's Parking Attendants in London last autumn. The performances were also observed by representatives from APCOA's client base in the capital, and were judged to be a great success from every perspective.

APCOA entered its Forum Theatre initiative in the innovation category for this year's British parking Awards. Not only did it win the individual category, but it also resulted in the Overall Winners Award, presented to "the individual category winner who, in the opinion of the judges, represents the single most outstanding example of excellence in the UK parking industry during the past year".

Commenting on his firm's success, APCOA's managing director Paul Bird said: "It's one thing to have faith in your own company, but to have that faith endorsed by acknowledged and respected leaders within your own industry is very good."

APCOA is known within the parking industry for its many innovations over the years. These include the first use of licence plate recognition systems linked to online booking for car parking at airports; the introduction of chip coin car park payment systems which can be linked directly with local retailers for promotional purposes; and the parking industry's only in-house training programmes which have achieved Institute of Learning Management (ILM) accredited certification.

In the UK, APCOA employs just over 1200 people, and its customer base includes local authorities, town and city councils, airport authorities, rail companies, shopping centres, department stores, ferry companies, port authorities, NHS trusts, in other words almost all types of organisation which need to supply parking or to enforce parking regulations.