

*PrintNZ media release (July 6, 2025)*

## Brad Smith claims AotY

Transcontinental Packaging NZ print supervisor and flexographic printer Brad Smith was named the BJ Ball 2024 Apprentice of the Year\* on stage at the 2025 Pride In Print Awards hosted at the Cordis Auckland on Friday July 4.

Before a very receptive crowd of well over 500, Mr Smith delivered a brief but very heartfelt speech, in which he quipped “there are a few more people here than at my wedding”, before individually and sincerely thanking his wife and children, all involved in his training and his employers.

“This is incredible recognition, it is an unreal feeling,” he said from the stage.

Mr Smith also paid tribute to fellow Apprentice of the Year Finalists – Eligh Arthur (Gravure Packaging), Toese Fauatea (Opal Packaging NZ, Cartons), Tayla Jones (Logan Print), Jessie Moore (Imagine If Creative Studios) and Faamao (Paul) Müller (Wedderburn New Zealand).

“The future of print is in great hands with people like you and our industry is looking bright,” he said.

“I’m proud to be part of such a passionate, skilled and resilient community.”

Transcontinental Packaging NZ print manager Nick Ball stated it had “been a privilege” to watch Mr Smith “learn and grow through his time in the apprenticeship”.

“Brad has always showed high enthusiasm and excellent attitude towards learning new things,” said Mr Ball.

“He is never afraid to try something new and create a broader knowledge for himself.

“Brad is a very reliable team member, never takes anytime off and is always keen to jump in and do extra hours when required.

“He has already completed a certificate in business management level 1 and 2. He was a shift supervisor in the extrusion department for several years and is also now a shift supervisor in the printing department. Brad has also got an apprentice on his shift and has been tasked with working and leading the apprentice to become a qualified printer.

“He has come out the other end of the apprenticeship a great printer and I have high hopes for him furthering his career in the print industry.”

When introducing the Top 6 Apprentices of the Year and their trainers on stage PrintNZ chief executive Ruth Cobb described an “outstanding batch of graduates”.

“We had trouble narrowing it down to our usual five – so tonight we have six talented individuals who have all been named as Apprentice of the Year in their individual sectors,” said Ms Cobb.

“Each of these people have chosen a career in the printing industry and worked hard to complete their apprenticeships, and not just complete them – but to come out on top. This is a testament not just to them, but to their trainers (the people who have stood on their shoulder both figuratively and right now literally) and the businesses they work for and to their Competenz support team who ensured they got through.

“With the support of the businesses they work for, their training mentors and in particular their families, they have shown the great heights they can reach. Each of you should be so proud of yourselves.

“We interviewed each of these people today and they were all so passionate about their jobs and the work they produce. Every one of them spoke with such technical detail about the work they brought along, highlighting again that print is a craft.

“I know this is just the beginning of your journey – the learning does not stop here. You all have aspirations to go further and do more and we are so glad you are doing that in our industry. Congratulations – we are all so very proud of you.”

#### Prestigious PrintNZ Awards

Also bestowed at the 2025 Pride In Print Awards Evening were the following prestigious PrintNZ Awards:

- ☐ Business Awards Category (Sustainability) – Sealed Air Hamilton
- ☐ Trainer of the Year – Aaron Smith (Opal Kiwi Packaging Auckland)
- ☐ Training Company of the Year – Blue Star Wellington

Additionally, Business Awards Gold Medals were presented as follows:

- ☐ Innovation – 5 Digital
- ☐ Sustainability – Amcor Flexibles Christchurch
- ☐ Sustainability – Blue Star Group
- ☐ Sustainability – SCG
- ☐ Sustainability – The Print Room
- ☐ Sustainability and Wellness – Transcontinental Packaging NZ

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\* Editors please note: 2024 was the year of completion of the apprenticeship