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**Three East of England businesses closer to £32,000 prize in the
Ixion Challenge**

*Finalists chosen based on plan to **survive and thrive** during economic downturn*

Abby Couriers, Basildon; Origin8 Deli-Cafes Ltd, Cambridge; and Primary Care UK Ltd, Clacton on Sea are closer to the £32,000 prize* after being chosen as finalists for the Ixion Challenge.

- Abby Couriers offer efficient courier services around the UK and Europe. They have recently expanded their fleet and consolidated operations with a new office in Basildon
- Origin8 Deli-Cafes is a fresh café in Cambridge that sources all of its produce from over 80 suppliers in the Anglia region. It is committed to bringing local farm-fresh produce to consumers, and has attracted many customers looking to recapture the taste of locally produced food and keen to support local businesses
- Primary Care is a personalised and needs led service which supports disabled people to achieve their aspirations. It currently supports over 100 people by offering companionship, domestic help and encouraging these people to be active in the community, working with a wide variety of local stakeholders

From 67 entrants to the Ixion Challenge these three businesses have been judged the best prepared to succeed during the recession, based on the quality of a **survive and thrive** plan submitted in stage two of the competition. The plan needed to demonstrate deliverable actions to streamline direct and indirect costs, demonstrate sustainable growth and detail a strategy to use the £32,000 prize package to expand in the current financial climate. These three businesses will now be visited by the judges and quizzed on their business plan to decide the winner.

Graham Baker, Chief Executive Officer of Ixion Holdings, said, "The finalists chosen for the Ixion Challenge have exhibited remarkable aptitude at changing their business plans to reflect the current challenging financial climate. Ixion is confident

that the winner, chosen from these three businesses, will have the tools and skills to *survive and thrive* in this marketplace.”

The Ixion Challenge is an opportunity for small businesses to access funding they may need to regain momentum in the current financial downturn. By investing in employees and thinking strategically about the future, these businesses will be able to remain competitive and expand their horizons during 2009.

The winner of the challenge will receive up to £25,000 cash to execute their business plan, £5,000 worth of academic vouchers donated by Anglia Ruskin University**, and a Graduate Student summer placement worth £2,000, creating an entire prize package of £32,000.

*£32,000 package may be split on the recommendation of the judging panel

** The £5,000 worth of academic vouchers donated by Anglia Ruskin University can be used for a variety of services including business consultancy, product testing, courses etc. The most appropriate service will be assessed with the successful business.

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Notes to editors:

1. Ixion Holdings Ltd is a limited by guarantee, not-for-profit organisation, passionate about giving back to the community. Founded in 2001, Ixion's headquarters are in Chelmsford, Essex with a presence in central London and Brussels. For more information please visit: www.ixionholdings.com
2. Ixion is part of the Anglia Ruskin University Group with a combined turnover and integrated education and skills offering in excess of £140 million.
3. There are two companies trading within the Ixion Group namely:
 - a. Essex Business Support Limited – the contract holder for the East of England Brokerage Consortium delivering Train to Gain to the East of England.
 - b. Ixion Business Ltd - outsourced business support services to corporate organisations including: Business Advice, Marketing, Events, Management, Information Technology (IT) support, Telemarketing and Contact Centre.
4. Ixion jointly owns the East of England IDB Limited (trading as Business Link East) - delivers the Business Link service in the East of England region on behalf of EEDA

5. Under collaborative arrangements Ixion is a member of the London Brokerage Consortium – which delivers Train to Gain to the whole of London, matching training needs with training providers, and makes sure that training and support is delivered to meet employer's objectives

For more information, please contact:

Melissa Tait
Fleishman Hillard
Phone: 020 7395 7170
Mobile 0753 306 1925
ixion@fleishmaneuropa.com