

How to use business awards to Supercharge Your Profits

This Insider Report contains 22 tips for improving your chances of winning business awards and giving your business a powerful competitive edge.

- 1 **Take the plunge** - At the risk of stating the obvious, you won't win anything unless you enter. The plain truth is the more award schemes you enter, the better are your chances of winning.
- 2 **Take them seriously** - It is vital to approach business awards in the same way you would any other major marketing opportunity - ie by using a skilled team who meticulously plan and prepare every detail and who are given enough time to do a first class job.
- 3 **Blow your own trumpet** - Modesty is a non-starter. To win you must unashamedly, consistently and blatantly blow your own trumpet at every possible point in the entry form.
- 4 **Speak to previous winners** - Find out who the previous winners are and speak to them. Ask them for their advice and tips. Ask if you can see their winning entry. The best time to do this is shortly after they win since it will be fresh in their mind and their pleasure at winning will make them very keen to share their experiences with you.
- 5 **Read the entry packs very carefully** - One of the keys to winning is giving the judges what they want. It is therefore vital to fully understand what the judges are looking for - and that means reading and re-reading the entry packs and instructions very carefully.
- 6 **Use every word** - Most awards place an upper word limit on your entry. Find out what it is and use every available word wisely. If you cannot fill at least 80% of the word limit (without padding) then you are probably very unlikely to win.
- 7 **Allocate words according to the marks** - If the entry pack indicates the proportion of the marks available for each aspect of the entry, make sure that your total number of words is allocated broadly the same proportions.
- 8 **Use separate sheets** - Try to avoid cramming the body of your entry onto the formal entry form. Instead lay out your entry neatly on separate A4 sheets (most award schemes allow you to do this - however check with the organisers first if you are in any doubt).
- 9 **Structure your entry** - Make sure that your entry has a clear logical structure. Make good use of headings and sub-headings to group related information together. If the entry form suggests a structure follow it - otherwise create your own.
- 10 **Write strong openings and endings** - Your entry must have a very strong opening section and a very upbeat closing section. One option that has worked for many winners is to start with an executive summary to grab the readers' attention.
- 11 **Type it** - Some very good businesses spoil their chances of winning by submitting a hand-written entry. Not only does this look unprofessional, but it also makes it harder for the judges to read. Make sure that the body of your entry is typed.
- 12 **Use enclosures** - Find out whether you can send any enclosures - and, if you can, make the most of the opportunity to add weight to your entry.

- 13 **Tailor each entry** - Some entrants submit the same entry to several different awards and/or award categories. Don't fall into the same trap. Spend time tailoring your entry so that it exactly fits the judging criteria for the particular award. A "standard" entry is unlikely to win anything.
- 14 **Keep a log of achievements** - Keep a running list of the key achievements of your business. Add them to the list as they happen and spend an extra ten minutes every month asking yourself "what else have we done this month that might impress the judges?"
- 15 **Brainstorm for ideas** - Another good way of generating material to include in your entry is to hold team brainstorming sessions.
- 16 **Use an independent proof reader** - Once you have written your entry make sure that it is independently proof read - preferably by at least two people who were not involved in writing it.
- 17 **Revisit after a week** - Once you are happy with your entry put it to one side for a week. After the week is up you will see it with a fresh perspective that will help you to improve it even further.
- 18 **Do your own PR** - Most award schemes publicise the winners. However many of them are really only interested in promoting themselves and their sponsors. So if you are a winner you should, at the very least, ask to see their press releases *before* they are sent out and tell them which publications you would like them to be sent to. Better still, produce your own press releases and do your own PR. You can often even get great coverage if you are short-listed but don't win.
- 19 **Go to the ceremony** - Most award schemes have an Oscars-style award ceremony at which the winners are announced. So go to the ceremony even if you don't think you have won. Not only are they great fun, but they are also an excellent networking opportunity.
- 20 **Try again next year** - And finally, don't give up if you don't win. Many businesses have learned from their defeats and gone on to win next year. So perseverance really does pay off!
- 21 **Blow your own trumpet... again and again!** - Display your trophies, press cuttings and photos from the award ceremonies in your office. Carry copies in your briefcase. Incorporate the winners' logo in your letterhead and marketing material. And make sure that every single one of your targets, contacts and customers knows that you are a winner because you are special.
- 22 **Give yourself the Edge** - Ask us to explain how our *Business Edge* programme could help you to build an even more successful business for yourself. A business that is more successful in everything it does, including entering and winning business awards!

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