



THE AWARDS PEOPLE

TAP INTO SUCCESS

Your FREE Tips & Hints Guide

**All You Need to Know About
Awards ... and More!**

It's time to TAP into success – your success!

It's time to put a feather in your cap!

In short, it's time to shout your story from the rooftops!

You've done a brilliant job and now it's not only time to receive the recognition you deserve for doing that great job, but also to use that praise to raise your profile and enhance your reputation.

... and yet 'things' keep getting in the way. Entering that prestigious business / industry / community award isn't a high enough priority and so every year you read about the winners, see them getting talked about in the media and across social media channels and think, "I / we are as good as them", "But I / we do that" or "My / our results are as good - if not better - than that / those!"

Friends it's time to take action! Let's start at the beginning and have a look at the world of awards and see what's in it for you / your business / your charity / your arts organisation / your organisation!

Why should you consider entering awards?

The short answer is because becoming a finalist (let alone a winner) of a credible award will help to raise your profile – FACT.

You may have noticed that we do say 'credible awards' because there are some awards out there, run purely for profit which offer little or no benefit to those entering them. You'll soon learn to spot them but if you need any help then give us a buzz and (assuming we've had dealings with, or at least heard of them) we'll let you know our thoughts ... for FREE!

So why else should you consider entering awards? Well, credible awards, whether local / regional business awards, national industry awards or indeed any other type of credible award are newsworthy and are often supported by media which almost guarantees you coverage online and / or offline.

Here's an example to illustrate the point. The Leicester Mercury Business Awards are open to every business / businessperson in Leicester/shire. They are supported by the Leicester Mercury which is the local daily paper and as such goes out across the whole city and county, with very active daily, weekly and monthly business sections. The Mercury team cover the awards beforehand, throughout the judging process, on the night itself and then print a summary post-event. They also run an incredibly busy website and various social media feeds. Enter and you may get a mention (especially if you have never entered before! Top tip there folks). Become a finalist and you definitely will get a mention complete with photo. Win and well it's a real big deal for the Leicester/shire business community let's put it that way!

Awards also give that all important third party endorsement. It's not just you saying, "I / we are great!". Judges have sifted through all of the applications and have agreed that you are the best innovator, community champion, business. Rather than purely your own declaration of greatness, others are agreeing and rubber stamping that assertion and that really does count.

Entering awards gives you content (and content is King!) which you can use across social media, blogs, (e)newsletters, press releases. Not only does this keep people informed about what you're doing but also helps Google (in the case of online content) to keep interested in your website and keep you up there, nice and high in the search result rankings.

Awards can also often offer valuable face-to-face networking opportunities, including the ability to use the awards lunch / dinner to host clients, potential clients, staff and those in your circle of influence.

Finally, awards also seriously help to boost morale across your whole business. There are fewer nicer things to be able to do than bring home the trophy and say, "Look guys, we did this!" The positive stories we have heard from happy clients who have won awards and shared it with their staff reminds us time and time again of the power of entering and winning awards.

So, what awards should I be looking to enter?

That really depends on whether you are looking to enter as a business, an individual business person or as a private individual. What you enter also depends on what you are looking to achieve in terms of recognition. For instance, are you looking for your innovation to be recognised or is it your community spirit / corporate social responsibility you want to highlight? What you're looking to have recognised will determine whether you look at local / regional awards, business / sector specific awards or, indeed, more niche and often higher profile awards such as those offered for Innovation, Export, Entrepreneurship (The Queen's Award being one for example).

Once you've decided on the focus for your awards campaign then you can start searching online for award options. Good old Google is a great place to start. Try:

- Regional awards *[and add your county here]*
- Innovation awards *[followed by the year we are currently in which should stop very old and out of date information also being offered]*
- Corporate social responsibility awards 2017
- Fine art awards 2017
- Women in business awards 2017

Tip: You may find it easier to use a semi colon and add in 'UK' to refine your search further

I know what I want to enter. Now what?

Great news! You're well on your way. Now it's time to really review the awards website and understand the timelines you need to work to and to very carefully check the criteria of the awards / category in which you are interested. Here at The Awards People we create a very simple spreadsheet with;

- Name of the award
- Web address
- Contact name, 'phone number etc
- Award and / or category you are interested in entering
- Criteria
- Details about that particular awards process (for instance, is it a downloadable form that needs to be completed or an online one? Is it shortlist, interview, finalists, winners announcement or another process altogether?)
- Timelines including when interviews are (if required) and when the announcement will be
- Cost (if there is one)
- Notes – do you need to be a member to enter? Is there a requirement for supplementary information to be posted out / provided? How highly recognised is the award within your region / industry? (This last point will help you to make decisions about which awards to actually go ahead with and enter.)

Our summary spreadsheet will keep you nicely on track so you know what you're doing, by when and should, therefore, stop any last minute rushes.

Tip: Last minute rushes usually result in an award application / submission / nomination being made that doesn't do you justice. Schedule plenty of time and build in lots of 'wriggle room' so that you can share it with trusted colleagues / friends for input whilst giving you all the time you need to hone it to perfection!

Anything else for me to think about?

Yes! In the UK we are notoriously modest and, whilst that's not a bad thing, you really do need to big yourself up if your application / submission / nomination is going to shine and catch the judges' attention.

Let's be 100% clear here – we're not suggesting for one minute that you should tell a fib or exaggerate your achievements. The truth *will* out. What we are suggesting is that you write your application / submission / nomination as you would if you were doing one for your best friend / nearest and dearest work buddy. You'd be happy to sing their praises wouldn't you? You'd think long and hard about all that they have done that is relevant to the award / category they're entering. You'd ask for help if you were struggling to answer a particular question.

Well this is exactly what you need to do for yourself. You've worked darn hard and it's time for you / your company to be recognised!

Tip: If you're really struggling ask a trusted friend or colleague (or even a family member) to tell you why you are so good at X or what you did in Y. You really can't afford to be modest but equally you don't want to come across as the 'big I am'. It's a fine balance but you can do it!

Is that everything?

Heck no!

Here are just a few more examples of what to think about:-

1. Do ensure that you really do fit the criteria of the award / award category that you are entering. Best to wait another year than enter and not really answer the criteria and end up submitting something that is deemed as weak by the judges. Judges will just wheedle your entry out in the very early stages but you will have done the work and used up your very precious time in submitting the application
2. Even if the award entry is online write it offline, keep a copy, edit it and then copy and paste it onto the online form. Why?
 - a. You may need to refer to it prior to an interview with a judge and quite a few awards portals close and give you no further access to what you've written!
 - b. You can use the information you've submitted on other award applications / submissions / nominations (where relevant and edited of course) which will speed up the process next time around
3. Re-read, proofread and repeat! If you can't see the wood for the trees anymore then do ask someone else to be a friendly critic and cast their eye over it. Whilst small typos may get past, a badly constructed sentence can cause judges to misunderstand or simply 'skip through' and read on

4. Don't fill your award application / submission / nomination with lots and lots of industry jargon, particularly if you are entering a non-industry award. Judges may be generalists and really not know anything about your sector / innovation / processes. Remember to KIS – Keep It Simple!
5. Don't ignore the word count. It's there for a reason and best case the online forms just stop you from writing. We've also sat on judging panels where entire sections of text have been blocked out because they are over the word limit. Assume if it's over the word limit it won't get read. What you're aiming for is a comprehensive, cohesive and coherent response to the question asked
6. Which brings us on toanswer the question (we feel like teachers back in school now at exam time! Do you remember? "Make sure you answer the question!" Urgh!). It is true though. You need to answer the question rather than simply providing information you want them to know. There will, in all likelihood, be an opportunity to give that information somewhere in the application / submission / nomination or as a separate attached support document. Quite a few awards also give bullet points under the question, giving a really clear idea of what they are looking for so we have no excuse really to answer the question!
7. ... and do answer every question. Quite often points are allocated to each question so if you miss out one or two then you are shooting yourself in the foot. Worst case? You'll be disqualified and all that hard work will have been for nothing. Some questions will almost undoubtedly be harder than others but that's why you leave yourself plenty of time to mull over, rethink where necessary and ask for others input
8. Do consider what you are going to send in to support your award application (assuming that there is an opportunity to do so). Please don't just fling something together or post off some old marketing collateral that you found at the bottom of the drawer. It will do you absolutely no favours at all
9. If the award requires supporting evidence from clients etc then do please give yourself enough time to gain their approval. Some awards do check and the very last thing you want is for someone to say, "no, that's not the case at all" or possibly even worse, "who? Sorry mate no idea who you're talking about. Hang on Oh yeah we did something with them last year. Now what was it"
10. Choose your awards wisely and make it a planned and sustained part of your marketing / PR activity that is properly supported via social media and press releases
11. Enjoy the process and learn from it. We always ask for feedback whatever the outcome is for our clients including when they've won! Why? We want to know where they fell short and where they won clear points so that we can pass that information back and begin to build a really solid picture to help us as we move forward

Tip: You may not win first time around, or even get shortlisted, but we guarantee you'll learn loads from the process which will make your next attempt stronger and better. Please don't be disheartened if you don't win first time around. Sometimes it's a marathon and sometimes it's a sprint ... and sometimes you just need a little bit of coaching or support to help you really crack it! You know where we are if you need a little bit more help and advice. Have a look at our 'Awards Packages' and 'Additional Support Packages' on our website to find out how we can help you write a cracking award entry.

Phew!

So there's a few things to start thinking about and to help you along your award winning journey. No doubt as soon as we publish this we'll think of more so do check into our 'News & Views' page on our website for regular updates plus other FREE Tips & Hints guides. We'll also publish links to them via our social media feeds so please follow us on:

Twitter - @TheAwardsPeople

Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/TheAwardsPeople>

LinkedIn – <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rachelhargrave/>

Good luck, enjoy, celebrate like mad when you win ... and if you need any further help, advice or assistance you know where we are!