



YARDSTICK



CHECKLIST SERIES

Checklist #9 : How to prepare an effective award entry

We believe that entering carefully selected financial awards can be an important part of your marketing strategy. Here are our top 15 tips on how to boost your chances of winning. For a full list of the key financial services industry awards, visit www.theyardstickagency.co.uk/adviser-award-index

1

Select awards you can win

The award category needs to be relevant to your sector or specialisms otherwise, you are highly unlikely to win. Writing entries can be very time-consuming, so carefully select the awards you have the best chance of competing in. Remember, not all awards are equal.

Done



To do



Not for us



2

Collect award entry forms throughout the year

To help you decide which awards are worth entering, collect entry forms throughout the year and identify what it is the judges are looking for. If they are seeking to recognise an attribute that you have, then an entry may be worth your time.

Done



To do



Not for us



3

Make the judge's life easy

Make your entry easy to read by using short, uncomplicated sentences. Avoid superfluous words and get to the point quickly. If you can, break it up with bullet points and sub-headings.

Some financial awards allow you to submit supporting documents. This can be useful, but only include items which are essential to support specific points in your entry.

Done



To do



Not for us



4

Answer the question

Carefully consider the criteria and questions you are being asked, then respond directly to both. Bear in mind which areas the award or category is slanted towards. If in doubt, ask for clarification on what the question is asking. Avoid repeating answers from a previous entry as they probably won't answer the specific question being posed. And answer all of the questions; not just the ones that you want to!

Done



To do



Not for us



5

Don't be late!

Carefully consider the criteria and questions you are being asked, then respond directly to both. Bear in mind which areas the award or category is slanted towards. If in doubt, ask for clarification on what the question is asking. Avoid repeating answers from a previous entry as they probably won't answer the specific question being posed. And answer all of the questions; not just the ones that you want to!

Done



To do



Not for us



6

Work as a team

Your team, including suppliers, will know parts of your business better than you do, so pick their brains. Ideally, get your team together to brainstorm a list of everything that should be included. You can then craft an entry based on the best ideas. Then circulate the final entry to your team for their feedback.

Done



To do



Not for us



7

Get the right people involved

Linked to the above point, it's essential that you have the right people involved who have the time to commit to this exercise. Some awards will require you to be available for an interview. If this is the case, make sure that you have the right people with the right knowledge of the business available to take part. Work to your team's strengths; some people are great at writing, but fall apart at a presentation; others struggle to write a sentence, but come into their element when talking to a panel of judges!

Done



To do



Not for us



8

Remember the word count

Some online entry systems simply won't let you go over the word count, so ensure that you finalise your entry before copying and pasting it into an online system. The word count is there for a reason i.e. to enable the judges to read multiple entries as efficiently as possible, so don't annoy them by going over the word count!

Done



To do



Not for us



9

Be specific, demonstrate excellence and avoid platitudes

You won't win an award by being average. If you're going to make a claim then make sure it elevates your business above the others, is specific and supported by evidence. Every claim you make should be supported by evidence:

- Your clients are happy? Demonstrate it through social proof.
- You've got great client engagement? Quote your retention rate, the number of referrals you receive or open rates on client communications and so on.
- You're growing by taking on new clients; quote the numbers, show improvements in turnover and enquiry levels.

Done



To do



Not for us



Remember the word count

Your entry should focus on your achievements during the relevant period, not promises or predictions of what might happen in the future.

10

Phrases such as “planning to implement...”, “working towards...”, “intending to...” should all be avoided. After all, anyone can promise anything. Far better to focus on what you have achieved already instead of what might happen. If you find yourself struggling, it might be the time to fast forward to our final point.

Done



To do



Not for us



Proof and edit your entry

Don't be surprised if editing your entry to stay within the word limit, without losing any of your key points, is the hardest part of the entry process. You may spend longer editing an entry than writing it in the first place.

11

As tempting as it might be to quickly submit your entry, especially if you are up against a deadline, it absolutely must be proofed before clicking 'send'; typos, spelling errors and grammatical mistakes will make you look amateurish. Ideally, the proofing should be completed by someone who hasn't been involved in writing the entry.

Done



To do



Not for us



Make friends with the judges

Of course, we're not advocating bribery here, but it's well worth chatting with people who are frequently asked to judge awards, to try and understand what is important to them. If you can tap into what they are passionate about, you may stand a better chance of winning. A face-to-face meeting over coffee is ideal, but connecting over social media is the next-best approach.

12

Done



To do



Not for us



Collect evidence throughout the year

In addition to supporting your social proof, collecting evidence such as client testimonials, growth rates and statistics from client surveys will give credence to all of the reasons why you should win the award - and save you from rushing to collect it all in before the entry deadline!

13

Done



To do



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Be prepared to allocate budget

Be aware that you may have to spend some money to attend the award ceremony, and it usually isn't cheap! Sometimes being allowed to use the winner's logo in your publicity will also come at a cost, so think carefully whether it's worth the investment.

14

Done



To do



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Be prepared to admit it's not your year

If you're struggling to fill the word count, it's a sure-fire sign that you might have chosen the wrong financial awards or it's just not your year.

There's nothing wrong with taking a year out or switching your attention to an alternative award. There's little to be gained from wasting your time with an entry which stands little chance of success.

Done



To do



Not for us

**What if you are a finalist or winner?**

Congratulations! Your hard work has paid off. So now what do you do?

To download our checklist #10: Eight ways to capitalise on your award success, visit:

www.theyardstickagency.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Checklist-10-vis1.pdf

We hope this helps

As you can see, preparing an effective award entry is as much about identifying which awards you have a good chance of winning as it is writing the entry itself. Like all things, it is a project which can be run internally or outsourced to a specialist. If you take the former option, we hope this checklist proves useful. However, if time and resources do not allow you to take on the project, we would be delighted to prepare your award entry for you.

If you would like to learn more about working with us on your award entries, please call **0115 815 7770** or email hi@theyardstickagency.co.uk

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