the influence crowd

How to write a **winning** education award entry

Being **‘award winning’** is a fantastic accolade, and a great way to raise the profile of your brand, your products and your customers.

Award entries are a great way to get recognition for your brand and your products.

Winning a gong for one of your products or services means potential customers have external confirmation that your offering is best of class. It can also lead to additional media interest and social media buzz so the accolades are a good tool for ensuring more people know about what you offer.

The downside is the entries themselves can sometimes take a long time to put together, so you only want to invest the time if you are certain you will get the recognition you deserve.

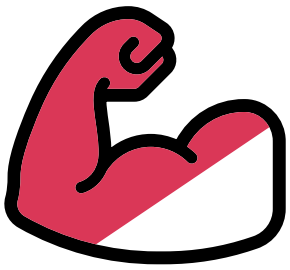
So what do you need to do to increase the likelihood of you winning the award you're after?

1 Choose something that deserves to win

This might sound like stating the obvious, but if you have spent years carefully crafting what you do and how you do it, it's often hard to be truly objective about its strengths and weaknesses. While you might have full confidence in your product's exciting range of innovative capabilities and benefits, the judges could find it harder to differentiate it from a long list of competitors doing very similar things.

A well written award entry alone may get you onto the shortlist for an award, but remember that it is genuinely the best products and the most ground-breaking services that tend to win the accolades. So the first step is to choose wisely and realistically when it comes to deciding which awards to enter.

2 Start off strong



As with any piece of writing, capturing the attention of your reader from the off is of paramount importance.

Think about it from a judge's point of view. If they have 100 award entries to sift through in a day, and yours is number 89 in the pile, it will need to be pretty special to make them sit up and pay attention.

Your first couple of paragraphs will be key. Start with a story, a strong quote, or a real-life example of the impact that your product or service has made. For example, instead of stating that your product 'is the best lesson planning tool available', try leading with something about how much time a lesson plan takes an average teacher to do, how much time they save using your product and how that time could be better spent on enhancing outcomes for children.

3 Make it easy for the judges

When you have been living, eating and breathing your business for a long period of time, it can be easy to forget how much industry jargon you use.

A phrase you think is commonplace may be unfamiliar to a judge, so make it as easy as possible for them to understand what you mean.

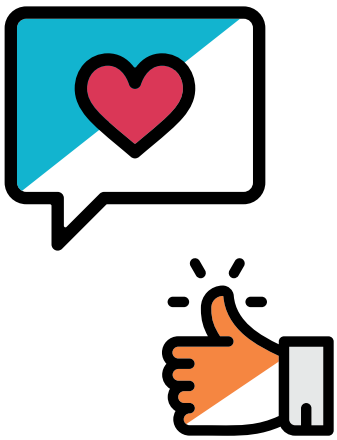
Take the same approach when it comes to clearly spelling out any benefits too. The judge may not automatically see that making a core process quicker for an early year's teacher will mean that they can spend more time with pupils so make this link obvious for them.

4 Prove it

Every time you make a claim, make sure you add specific evidence to back it up. You saved your customers money? Great! But how much money?

Stick to the facts, of course, but use comparisons and percentages where possible to highlight your successes. It's fantastic that 90% of your customers are satisfied, but that figure becomes even more powerful if it sits in contrast to a notably low industry average, or if that figure was only 60% a year ago.

5 Get your customers to back you up



Testimonials can be a game-changer when it comes to award entries.

After all, it is one thing when you claim that your company is pioneering and inventive, but quite another if your customers are happily singing your praises.

Judges will be on the lookout for your customers talking about the difference you have made by helping them. Make this as tangible as possible by peppering any quotes or case studies you use with facts that back up the claims being made.

6 Tell a story

Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools we have as human beings to motivate, persuade and communicate with others.

So while it's imperative to always stick to the truth, it's worth considering the language and examples you use to bring in a human element that judges can connect with.

Think about using emotive language to demonstrate the importance of your system or service. Remember your story doesn't have to be complex to be interesting, and it's also fine to mention if progress hasn't always been plain sailing. Overcoming setbacks, showing resilience and thinking differently about issues can all make your entry stand out.

7 Remember the little things

You'd be surprised how often entrants don't read the small print, and therefore blow their chances from the start by not adequately fulfilling the necessary criteria.

To make sure this doesn't happen to you, here are some classic dos and don'ts to consider:

- Do make sure you meet all the conditions of entry from the very first stage, and that you have chosen the most relevant category for your product or service.
- Do stick to the word count. If you waffle, you run the risk of boring your reader before they get to your most persuasive points. And if you go over, you could be automatically excluded from the next stage or judges will probably stop reading anyway.
- Do select what supporting material you offer carefully. Judges simply don't have the time to read all 10 brochures you have attached to the award entry. If supplementary evidence is required, make sure you send whatever is strongest and most relevant.
- Don't forget the deadline. All your work with be in vain if you do.
- Don't be put off if your first attempt doesn't succeed. Sometimes it's practice that makes perfect.

PR and marketing is our thing, which means we live and breathe great writing. We always create copy that keeps the reader in mind, so you can rely on us to know the best way to get your message across. If you would like any further guidance on writing your award entry, please do not hesitate to contact us at **hello@theinfluencecrowd.co.uk**

We look forward to hearing from you.