

# And the Winner Is...

By Brian P. Gallagher

**N**early every trade association and magazine sponsors an awards program. Taking advantage of these opportunities is an incredible opportunity to build awareness and create a positive impression for your firm. Award program success, however, requires research, preparation, and exceptional presentation. Whether you are a material supplier, an engineer, or a contractor, award programs provide an excellent forum for publicity and marketing.

## Understand the Requirements

The first step in entering an awards program is reviewing all the submittal requirements. Make sure you meet all of the eligibility requirements for participating. If you are not sure, contact the sponsoring publication or association with any questions you may have.

## Follow the Rules

Once you understand the submission requirements, make sure you follow the rules and include all required information. The requirements and specifications are there for a reason. Also find out what criteria will be used to judge submissions.

## Identify a Partner

Numerous companies are involved in various aspects of the construction process of any project. Consider working with a supplier, an engineer, an architect, a contractor, or another company that contributed to the project. They can help share the effort and costs, bring additional resources, or even provide a different perspective.

## Get the Owner Involved

Most award competitions require permission from the owner as part of the submission. Take it a step further and involve the owner. In most cases, the owner will support and even appreciate your efforts to showcase his or her project. Be sensitive, however, to any concerns the owner may have. This interaction can help forge a closer relationship.

## Start Early

Identify potential award-winning projects early. This will help you plan for photography and other documentation that may be required. By starting early, award submissions can be developed over time to relieve the stresses of deadlines.

## Develop the Content

Gathering all of the relevant information can be challenging, but engaging a team of internal and external co-contributors can improve the process. Consider interviewing a healthy cross section of those involved in the project. Ask engaging and intriguing questions, and then start to build your story in a clear,

concise manner. Depending on the requirements, consider including the written description, photographs, illustrations, schedules, budget, newspaper articles, and other items that help tell the story and set the project apart from others. Consider reviewing award winners from previous competitions to determine what was successful in the past. Also make sure proper credit is given to all parties involved in the project.

## Separating from the Pack

Differentiation can be the key to award success. Consider adding a little style and flair to the award submission to distinguish it from the rest.

## Photography Photography Photography

In real estate, it's location, but in award programs, it's photography. The photography must be engaging and capture the judges' attention. In addition, the photography must also help tell the story.

## Leverage the Submission

Now that you've done all of the work, repurpose the award submission for other uses. Award program submissions can be edited and turned into technical articles, project reports, case histories, direct-mail pieces, and web content. If you have won an award, be sure to include the award information on these marketing tools. Even if the award is not a winner, you can still get value by leveraging the content. Once you've done the work, consider submitting it for other award programs. With a little effort, you can customize the submission for other programs.

## Celebrate your Success

Many award programs involve a public relations program to tout their winners. Developing a press release or campaign around your award winners will result in increased exposure. Awards also provide an excellent opportunity for internal public relations. Employees who contributed to the project will take pride in their work and appreciate the recognition.

When the "Call For Entries" arrives, the award submittal process may seem daunting, but the award rewards can be countless. With proper planning and execution, award programs can be a winning component of your marketing efforts.



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