10 things to consider when entering awards

It's great to have your successes and those of your customers recognised by winning prestigious industry awards – but choosing which categories to enter and preparing vote-winning submissions that follow the rules, while standing out to the judges, requires skill and hard work. Below are 10 things to consider from BASDA (Business Application Software Developers' Association) based on members' experiences both as award winners and award judges.

1 Is this the right time?
Are your solutions benefiting live customers or involve projects which have shown tangible results? If not, would it be better to wait until next time, when there may be better metrics and evidence available to persuade the judges?

2 Choose the award categories wisely
To do justice to your company standout awards entries will require effort and input from colleagues and customers. This involves cost and time. It may seem the best strategy is to enter as many award categories as possible but it's likely that the more selective you are the better your entries will be. Is a particular category focused on software developers, resellers, customers, projects or individuals? Don't fall at the first hurdle by trying to shoehorn yourself into inappropriate categories. Clear focus will increase your chances of winning.

3 Are you committed?
Can you spare the appropriate resources to complete the award submission(s) to the standard needed to give you the best chance of success? Assign an owner who will drive the process and oversee the deadlines. They may be the actual writer of the entries or you could assign this task to colleagues, a PR agency or copy writer. You may need input from across the business – account managers, project managers, the support team and/or a selection of happy customers. Think of entering awards as a mini project with a manager, timescales, dependencies, success criteria and outcomes.

4 What are the rules and deadlines?
What is the closing date and time for the completed entries? How should submissions be made – online via an awards website; via email as Word documents or PDFs? Register for the awards ahead of time, especially if logons and passwords are needed to make a submission. Ask for any clarifications as soon as possible. Will the organisers give additional information on how the awards are scored – do some sections have greater weight than others? Are supporting materials allowed or expected – such as additional case studies; customer videos; product collateral? Stick to word limits which may apply section by section or to the submission as a whole.

5 Put yourself in the shoes of the judges
Imagine you are a judge who has volunteered to review award entries. They may be judging multiple categories with a dozen or more entries in each. How can you make life easy for them? How can you help them to like your submission over others? How can your submission stand out? Firstly, follow the rules – if a section has a word limit the judges will probably stop reading if it runs over. Make entries attractive to read – photographs and diagrams are great IF relevant; annoying if not. Attachments may be allowed but again if they lack relevance, they can work against you – don't just attach your latest piece of marketing collateral because you worked hard on it. After reading multiple entries judges may get confused between submissions so try to make your entry memorable – include your logo, photos, bold your company name etc. Don't assume the judge is a subject matter expert in every aspect of your entry so avoid jargon and explain acronyms. Judges are people with their own foibles so don't annoy them by accident, for example with bad spelling; poor grammar; your own prejudices and assumptions etc. – and don't expect to win just by listing the other awards you've already won!

6 Tailor your entry for each award category
Don't just submit duplicate content into several awards categories. If the award is worth winning the submission(s) will be distinct, requiring tailored answers. Remember the same judge may well see all the entries and any duplication.

7 Avoid jargon and 'marketing speak'
You'd be surprised how often judges see entries like this: "The new release of software XYZ is an innovative game changer which delivers a paradigm shift in the industry; driving down costs, improving performance and project successes." This means little without facts, real world examples and customer testimonials.

8 Provide proof
The most valuable content in any submission is a customer quotation or endorsement which includes figures and examples of how the software made a change; delivered measurable savings; increased revenues etc. Bullet points make facts and figures stand out. Before and after scenarios paint a vivid picture for the judges. Judges may regard you as lazy if you just provide standard case study material as attachments rather than picking out the most relevant metrics and putting these into a tailored answer.

9 Will you need sign off before submission?

It's a good idea for someone to proof-read and sign off the entries before they are finally submitted. This could be someone who hasn't been involved in putting the entry together. This should pick up any errors and unevenness of tone. Do senior management need to also approve the entries? If customers or external stakeholders are quoted it is a courtesy to ask their approval before including.

10 Are you prepared for success?

Make sure you are ready to maximise the value from winning the awards you have worked so hard to win. What will the follow ups be? Make sure the team have any award ceremonies in their diaries; invite customers as guests; take photographs of the event and your win; consider controlled updates across your social media channels during the event – but stop if celebrations take over! Pre-prepare press releases, web page updates and social media posts to share your successes with the world as soon as possible. Display trophies and certificates with pride. Remember to thank customers who were involved.

Whether you win or lose, preparing awards entries is a valuable exercise, highlighting the successes of your organisation and your customers.

About BASDA

BASDA is the trade association which is the voice of UK business software. BASDA doesn't promote any specific software nor engage in any customer commercial discussions. BASDA focuses on common issues, needs and regulatory matters which affect members (and their customers). BASDA members provide a wide range of solutions for organisations of all sizes. To find out more, visit **www.basda.org** BASDA members include:

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ExpenSys	exportmaster SYSTEMS LIMITED	EY Building a better working world	Frontier software	giant	GOsimpletax	Husky
intelligo	INTUIT	JUSTACCOUNTS	KEYPAY	LDM	Merlin BUSINESS SOFTWARE	moneysoft
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pegasus	Pyramid	MANAGEMENT software ltd	Reckon	RedSky	RIB CCS	RUBICON COMPUTER SYSTEMS LTD
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