

## **Winning Ways to Promote Your Business**

By Linda Welter Cohen, APR

Some of the most successful entrepreneurs I know have discovered one proven way to effectively promote their business. They've mastered the art and science of winning awards.

In Tucson, there are a number of highly credible award opportunities for businesses that provide invaluable marketing exposure. Winning these awards can promote your business and its brand position through news coverage, public recognition at events and publications long after the awards ceremony is over.

To win the award, you have to be very strategic in how you approach the entire awards entry process to increase your chances of making a memorable impression on the judges. Here are some guidelines to keep handy next time you are tempted to throw your hat in the ring.

### **Find the Right Awards**

Make sure you pick an awards category from a reputable, sponsoring organization that promotes a quality awards application, nomination and judging process. Then thoroughly review the awards and judging criteria to ensure you meet all of the requirements and have a good shot at winning before spending any time or resources preparing the entry.

### **GIVE YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME**

After you've found the perfect award opportunity, make sure you can devote sufficient time and resources to completing the entry before the deadline, thereby increasing your odds at submitting a winning entry. One tip: Gather your supporting documents, photos, letters of reference or any other materials required for the award entry throughout the year and store them in one project file. Preparing in advance will save time and stress when the deadline to complete your award entry draws near.

### **Learn About the Judging Process**

Find out more about the judging process before investing a great deal of time in your award entry. Local judges may have first-hand knowledge and awareness of your accomplishments, which may increase your odds at winning. Also, judges not knowledgeable about your industry, products or services may decrease your odds at winning. Also, how many other award entries will you be competing against? These factors should be considered.

### **Answer the Questions with PASSION**

Judges often spend hours and sometimes days reading several awards entries. By the time they get to your award entry, you need your entry to stand out from the pack. One sure way to accomplish this is to answer questions with a compelling story from your heart. Don't skimp on the passion, emotion or hardship you endured to reach a milestone. Real-life stories are memorable; calculated answers are not.

### **Follow the Guidelines**

Each award has specific guidelines to follow; therefore, make certain you read through them carefully. Failure to comply with just one of the guidelines could result in disqualification or a large reduction in your score. Businesses can't afford to waste time and money on an awards entry due to a simple oversight.

### **Think About Packaging**

Many businesses fail to win awards because they do not think about how the award entry looks, including layout and design, fonts, colors and packaging. If you do not have talent in-house to prepare a nice-looking award entry, then hire a professional to help package your award entry. The presentation of your entry can make a huge impact on the judges – and your final score.

**Check and Double Check**

After your award entry is completed, read through the entire entry again and check for grammatical or spelling errors to ensure all the guidelines have been met. Double check your work by having a second or even third person read over the entry to make sure it communicates why you deserve the award.

**Meet the Deadline**

Know the deadline and prepare for meeting it. Hand deliver the award yourself rather than relying on a courier, and allow plenty of time so you do not get stuck in traffic.

**AND THE WINNER IS...**

After you have followed these suggestions and won your award, it's time to toot your own horn. Sure, you may not like to brag about your accomplishments, but the recognition you will receive for the award is an important tool to promote the brand you have built for your business, service or product.

You can inform key audiences about your award by distributing news releases to the media and business and professional trade groups to which you belong. You can also announce your accomplishment in your company website, advertisements, marketing materials and letterhead.

Winning awards can prove to be an invaluable investment in your business and its long-term branding strategy. So don't delete that email or toss that direct mail piece announcing the next awards opportunity. Instead, get to work on preparing your winning award entry.

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Time of Year	Award or Recognition	Sponsoring Organization	Phone
Winter	Workplace Excellence Awards of Greater Tucson	Tucson Newspapers	622-1075
Winter	Tucson Woman Business Owner of the Year	NAWBO	326-2926
Spring	Man & Woman of the Year	Tucson Chamber of Commerce	792-2250 x 176
Spring	Women of Influence	Inside Tucson Business	294-1200
Spring	Business Ethics Awards	Better Business Bureau	888-5353
Summer	Arizona Companies to Watch	ASBA	265-4563
Summer	Arizona Business Leadership Awards	Arizona Chamber of Commerce	602-248-9172
Summer	40 under 40	Tucson Business Edge	807-8040
Fall	Minority Enterprise Development Week	Minority and Small Business Alliance of Southern Arizona	792-2250
Fall	Up & Comers	Inside Tucson Business	294-1200
Fall	Copper Cactus Awards	Wells Fargo	388-9658
Fall	Business Man & Woman of the Year	Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	620-0005
Fall	Hot Growth Companies	bizAZ	602-444-1558
Winter	Women on the Move Awards	YWCA	884-7810