

## Win, Lose or Draw--Enter the Competition

**Being an award winner or even receiving recognition as a nominee can help raise your corporate profile.**

By: Hilary Kaye | 02/26/2009



Print



ShareThis



Post a Comment



Get the Mag



Weekly Updates

[ - ] Text Size [ + ]

One less-traveled public relations avenue is a category referred to as "awards and recognition." When putting together your company's tool kit of PR tactics, don't forget to check into an awards and recognition plan. My approach is simple: Win, lose or draw--you come out ahead when you enter appropriate competitions to showcase yourself or your company.

Don't be thrown off by the term "awards"--we're not talking Hollywood here. Oscars, Emmys and Golden Globes may be among the most recognizable awards, but there are oodles of less glittery competitions that may help you achieve just the boost your business needs. Whether your business is just starting out or well-established, being an award winner can increase your customer base, generate greater confidence among your vendors and referral sources, and even raise morale on your home turf. In some cases, just receiving recognition as a nominee can help raise your profile, and that's what PR is all about.

Awards can be sought in many different arenas. Some will be related to your specific industry; others may be general business awards sponsored by media outlets. There are national and even international awards, and awards just for your own geographic community or business niche.

You may have noticed the same companies winning awards and gaining recognition over and over. They may not be any better than companies that don't win awards, but they have one thing in common: They recognize the value of winning an award. They even recognize the value of going after--and *not* winning--an award. Let's take a look at what this is all about. Here are seven suggestions for generating this recognition:

1. **Treat this as a serious PR endeavor.** The rewards can be substantial, but only if you take it seriously. Think about ideal targets, do some internet research and craft a plan for the year. The best plans will identify award opportunities and deadlines, and evaluate the complexity of the nomination process. Nominations range from thorough--multiple pages of essay-style writing and testimonial letters--to simplistic, with just a short form to fill out. By planning in advance, you'll avoid fitting back-to-back complex nominations into your already busy schedule, yet still take advantage of the simple ones that make sense for you.

2. **Be thorough--and creative--in finding recognition opportunities.** The internet is the obvious place to start, and knowing where to look can make the [search](#) easier and quicker. Websites can yield a treasure trove of information: Try looking up publications and conferences in your own industry. Google is a good [starting](#) point to begin your search. Next, local business journals often sponsor competitions; their websites will list what's coming up for the year. Also take a look at the websites of competitors who may have won previous awards, as well as companies in your field that may sponsor competitions. If you already use social media, your contacts may be golden. Query your social media friends, and they may suggest terrific opportunities for you.
3. **Realize when the game is about winning and when the game is about just entering.** Understand which is which, and respond appropriately. Some awards will be out of reach for your size or success level, but they may come with a built-in publicity feature. For example, many business journals have competitions in which every nominee receives a small write-up in the publication and a listing in the awards program and ads. Don't discount this opportunity.
4. **Review past winners and current criteria.** This will tell you whether an award is within reach for you. If it's in reach, give it all you have. Write--or have someone write for you--a nomination that showcases your company's best attributes. Provide complete, honest, objective answers--not hyperbole--but don't be overly modest. This is the time to trumpet the true accomplishments you and your business have achieved.
5. **If you are going for a win, make the judges' lives easier.** Make your nomination easy to read and visually appealing, and then add the personal touch. Of course, stick to the criteria. If it's an award for a product, provide all the specs. If it's an award for business success, provide the details that contributed to the success. But the less-tangible human element, in which you give the back story of your accomplishments, can make the difference between a so-so entry and a truly compelling one. Judges want to know how and why products came to be and what prompted your successes. If it's a big award, a packet of information with supporting testimonial letters, [marketing](#) materials and media write-ups can help you reach the winner's circle.
6. **When you win, tell the world.** Seriously. This is when publicity is your best friend. Send out a press release; don't rely on just the awarding organization to do this. Use e-mail and social media networks to carry your news. You needn't be boastful, just factual about winning an award. Make sure to post the news on your website. Add it to your company's blog. (You do have a blog, don't you?)
7. **If you don't win, don't give up or be disheartened.** There are many terrific companies out there; you may have to try a few times before succeeding with a particular organization. And if you provided a good entry, rest assured that you've scored invaluable exposure with the organization giving the award and the judges reviewing the entries. You never know where this internal exposure will lead. With an awards plan in place, just keep following the plan to ultimate recognition.

Don't forget, you can win, lose or draw and still be a winner. Understand the rules of the game you are playing, and this can be a valuable part of your PR tool kit.

---

Hilary Kaye is the founder and president of [HKA Public Relations](#), an award-winning public relations agency known for its ability to generate credibility and visibility via a variety of established and innovative PR approaches.