

FREE



**GUIDE 2019**

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

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# How to write a winning award entry ...

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathy Hayward is managing director of Magenta Associates, and a communications specialist with more than 18 years' experience in a range of journalistic, publishing and marketing roles. She founded Magenta in 2011 after a journalistic career spanning a number of different titles including *FM World*, the award-winning magazine for the British Institute of Facilities Management, *Marketing Week*, *Financial Management*, *Soccer Analyst*, *Supply Management*, *Unions Today*, *People Management* and *Director*. She holds a Masters degree in journalism, as well as the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' post-graduate diploma in PR.

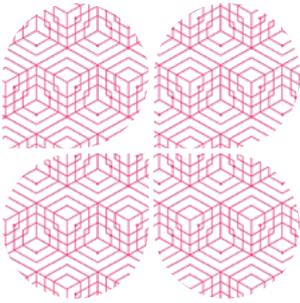
## Introduction

So, it's the deadline for the Big Awards next week. You mentioned it to your marketing director months ago, who passed it to the intern who sent a vague email to your PR company. With not much to go on they've pulled an entry together which has been stuck with the client for a month. They've now taken out all the interesting bits and you've discovered there aren't any good photographs of the site.

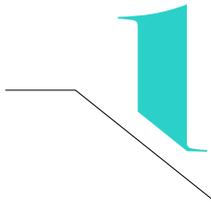
Still, the competition probably isn't that good. You must stand a good chance. Now, when did you last see your DJ?

Winning industry awards isn't just a matter of luck. If you're going to spend time and money entering an award scheme, then it's worth planning it properly and producing the best entry you can.





# This short guide takes you through the process.



## Choose your award

There are dedicated award programmes for the facilities management sector and you should certainly consider these. But also think about the impact you're trying to make. Do you want to raise your profile in a particular sector? It might be worth looking at awards for service in that sector - healthcare or education for example or the public sector.

Are you working outside of the UK? Consider entering a European or global award programme. Or maybe you want to demonstrate your work on CSR through winning an award from your local community or region.

- see FM and related award programmes on page four.



## Read the entry form and conditions ... then re-read them!

It's surprising how many entries are received by awards organisers that don't meet the entry criteria. Usually you'll have the opportunity to revise or re-submit but some schemes will just bin your entry.

Many awards have time criteria – for example a project must have been started or completed within a certain timeframe. Check your entry is eligible.

Some awards will require “counter-signing” of entries by clients. Make sure you have complied.

Deadlines can be flexible but organisers like to know if an entry is on its way. Don't run right up to the deadline and then try to plead for an extension! If there's a hiccup, make sure the organisers know you will be submitting an entry and that you're just waiting for some information.



Some awards organisers are sticklers for detail, so check maximum word counts and format stipulations. If they ask for entries in Word format don't send a PDF. If additional material is prohibited don't send it anyway and don't try to impress with folders and ring-binders if these are specifically excluded.



## Choose your category

You might want to win the 'Best Company' category but so do lots of other people. It's good to be ambitious but another strategy is to improve your chances of making the shortlist or winning by entering less popular categories.

For some awards you can ask the organisers which categories are oversubscribed and which are struggling for entries.

You might also want to check category sponsors. Do you want to receive an award from a competitor smiling through gritted teeth!



## Selecting your entry

Possibly the most crucial decision. Don't opt simply for your latest or biggest project. Think carefully about whether you have a good relationship with your client and the depth of material you'll need to put together a winning entry.

If innovation is a key criterion, have you genuinely broken new ground? If partnership is the theme can you demonstrate joint working. If site visits are part of the entry process will these be easy to arrange? If testimonials are required are you confident that your client thinks as highly of your performance as you do?



## Engage your client

Not all award categories involve clients but where they do, you want them signed up to the idea. Ideally they should want to win the award as much as you. Explain to them how winning the award will enhance their profile as well. This will make it easier to get cooperation when it comes to putting the entry together and getting it signed off.

It will also help should you win. Think about who you can nominate to be interviewed by journalists.





## Think of the judges – tell a story

Awards judges have to read a lot of submissions – yours needs to stand out. So don't simply list facts, provide a compelling narrative.

Explain how your work was part of a wider initiative to improve performance, reduce costs or rationalise locations. Provide some context - tie your project into your client's mission or objectives.

Take the reader along the timeline – from conception to implementation; from pilot to full roll out.

Make it personal – add quotes and feedback from staff, customers, visitors etc. But also provide a summary of the key features and achievements.

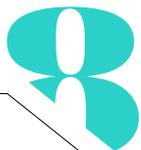


## Provide evidence

Many awards entries fail to score well because they don't back up their claims. Too many make assertions but don't produce the evidence.

If your new helpdesk system resulted in a “major improvement in customer service” then provide the KPI or survey data that shows this. If you achieved “significant cost savings” then quantify them or at least give the percentage reduction in costs.

Include simple graphics to make the point.



## Photography and video

Even if the submission doesn't require images you'll almost certainly need them should you make the shortlist or win so be prepared.

Many submissions are let down by poor photography and there really is no excuse - with the consumer equipment available today - even if you don't want to employ a professional. Consider making a short (sub 3 minutes) video.

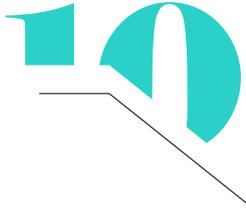


## Book the dinner

Don't forget to book the awards dinner and think carefully about who you invite. It might be an opportunity to recognise members of the team who seldom get accolades. Check who's providing the entertainment just in case there are sensitivities.

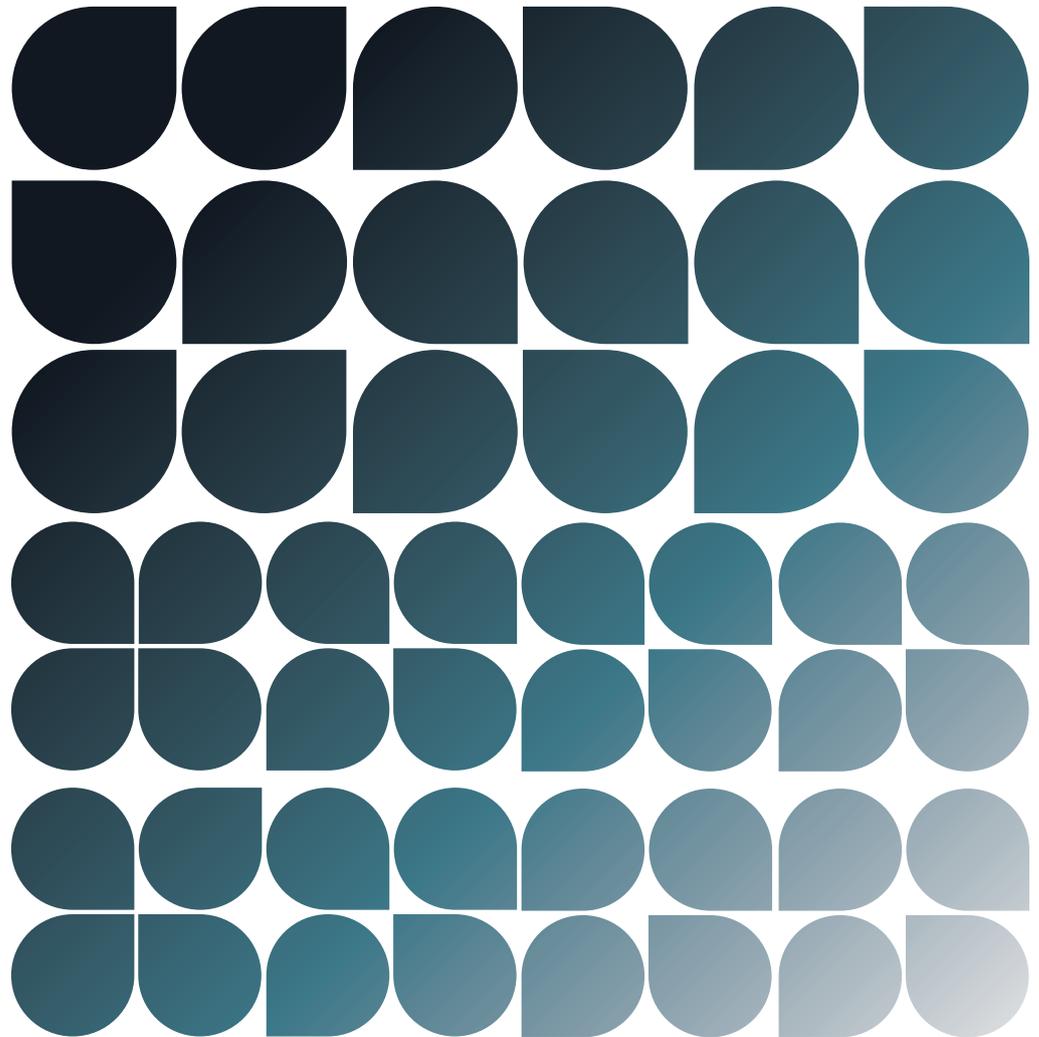
Check whether you can organise a separate reception for your guests.





## Publicising your entry and your success

You can make the most of your entry from the moment you make the shortlist. Issue a press release, publicise it internally, on your website, through social media and in newsletters. Many award schemes will offer downloadable media kits, including finalists and winners logos that you can add to marketing material, stationery and email signatures. If you really want to get ahead of the game, write your winner's press release before the event! That way all you'll have to do is drop in the judge's remarks and you can enjoy the celebrations safe in the knowledge that you won't be up at 6am trying to write sparkling copy with a hangover!





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