

Awards



The CCF European Call Centre Awards

And the winner

If you're one of those people who looks at the award entry form for the CCF European Call Centre Awards and thinks "can I be bothered?" then the good news is, you're not alone: dozens of your peers are no doubt having exactly those thoughts at exactly that moment in time. And yes, no one can deny that writing the dreaded award submission is a pain in the backside that you could do without. But bear with me for a moment while I explain why you should make the time.

Getting a good result in a customer satisfaction survey, or having some good sales after a training programme might be worthy of a pat on the back, but is it really good enough? If you are perfectly happy with "good enough," then you may one day be replaced by someone with higher standards. The best statement you can make to your boss or your call centre can make to its stakeholders is this: "we will only be happy when we are independently proven to be the best." And that's the key, independent proof. That wonderful "don't take my word for it" that comes when something becomes award winning.

What's more, the process of simply entering has its advantages too. Sitting down and thinking about your entry can serve as a timely reminder of just how much your staff have achieved over the past year and provide

A gleaming award trophy starts with a well written entry. **Chris Robinson** reveals how to prove your success

a huge morale boost in the face of ever-increasing targets and shrinking budgets.

There are lots of other benefits to entering awards, including: the opportunity to stick one in the eye of your competitors, your association with the values of well-respected competitions, staff recognition, maximising PR with local and trade media, and the opportunity to network and share knowledge with other high-flying organisations.

So, if you, your team or even a recent initiative was indeed excellent, then prove it. There can be no better proof of being one of the elite than securing a place in the CCF European Call Centre Awards finals.

Writing a winning entry

Ok, so now you've decided to write a submission, and a blank document is staring

you in the face, what next? Here are a few top tips to help you get started:

1. Think about what your main achievements have been first: This is so, so important. Don't just enter a category because you like the sound of it: play to your strengths. Any submission needs hard quantified 'wow' results, so find these first, and if you can't find them for your favourite story, find another story and perhaps another category.
2. Get close to the guidelines: Now you know the category that suits you best, copy the general instructions and category-specific guidelines onto the top of your blank document and make sure you keep reading them over and over again when you plan and write your submission. There's no point in putting a huge amount of effort into your entry, only to go off on a tangent and use up your word limit on elements that may not put your centre in the best light.
3. Plan your submission: Work out your headings and sub-headings and the nub of each section before you write any content. It also helps to set your own word limits dividing the 1,500 between the sections (leaving a good chunk for the results section). Remember that the judges have hundreds of entries to read through, so you need to make your entry as easy to follow as possible. Help the judges by signposting the criteria in your submission so



You could be one ecstatic winner at the glamorous gala dinner

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- that they can easily pick out the salient points.
4. Focus your words where it counts: 1,500 words is not a lot, so don't squander them on unnecessary detail, unsubstantiated waffle or 'we are committed to' brochure speak. Judges want the facts and stats, and are far less interested in the destination than in the journey. If you need to give them details about your activities, then focus on those that are in some way interesting, risky or innovative. It will also help hugely if you can get input from a top-level member of staff who can support your story—try arranging a short interview with the person who has ultimate board-level responsibility for your site.
 5. Provide the evidence: While the judges are keen to see the journey you have been on as an organisation, it's important that your anecdotal evidence is backed up by cold hard facts. Make sure you have performance statistics to illustrate your submission, but remember that they need to be relevant to the story you are telling. And don't feel restricted to graphs and pie charts—if you are delighted with your team spirit, why not include some photos of a team night out or activity? ■

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