

Guidance on submitting a compelling award entry

There has never been a more important time to recognise successful outcomes from customer service strategies. The past year has been extraordinarily difficult for many organisations, but it has also given an opportunity to reflect and review. Entering the UK Customer Satisfaction Awards will lift morale and let your people know you value them.

Organisations of all types can benefit from the process of entering awards. Taking time to submit a written entry and sharing that across the various teams internally enables the exceptional endeavour achieved to be crystallised and analysed, giving a layered richness of measurement and recognition.

The compiled list of Guidance Notes has been collated to help individuals and organisations achieve the most effective outcomes from their awards submissions. We want all entrants to gain from submitting an award, but also to enjoy the process. This information is designed to help, whether you are a seasoned entrant or considering it for the first time.

Who can enter?

The Institute of Customer Service urges all organisations – members and non-members alike - to enter the UK Customer Satisfaction Awards to recognise the exceptional endeavour required to create a strategic customer satisfaction proposition which improves satisfaction levels and raises the bar in delivering customer service excellence. There are 18 categories each with its own specific criteria concentrating on different Customer Service disciplines. You can view and download entries via the link below: <https://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com/events/uk-customer-satisfaction-awards>

Presentation

A common thread of discord amongst judges is spelling and grammar in an awards submission. Our advice on preparing a compelling entry starts with checking the spelling and grammar before submitting.

Communication

The most compelling entries in the UK Customer Satisfaction Awards have provided the judges with a concise insight into the business/organisation to set the scene. This usually requires the entrant to harness information from multiple departments covering several disciplines. Inform colleagues about the award entry and gain their input, engaging them in the process.

Tone

The point above (communication) refers mainly to the 'elevated pitch', but it is essential that you pitch the entry at the correct intellectual level that the judges will find engaging. All the judges in the UK Customer Satisfaction Awards are selected for their expertise and their ability to be analytical and each will have had impressive business backgrounds. Avoid overly simplifying your entry but be mindful that they will not know your business as well as you do, so do make your submission clear and to the point.

Jargon

'Industry speak' and 'PR puff' are a definite 'no'. Almost universally, the judges we interviewed cited these styles as the least engaging, so try to avoid over-stating achievements and using industry jargon. If you need to use a word or acronym specific to your business or sector, please explain what the acronym means before using it throughout the submission.

Focus

The UK Customer Satisfaction Awards has introduced a specified word count for each question, requiring you to make good use of the allotted words. Keep to the facts and keep the purpose in mind. Answer the questions fully and ensure all information given is relevant.

Rules

The UK Customer Satisfaction Rules of Entry state that entries should be limited to 8mb. **Do not exceed the size limit** as this may make receiving the entries difficult for servers to handle.

Answer all questions

In some cases, either for commercial or legal reasons, some organisations, are unable to disclose certain information. If you are unable to complete an answer, explain why, do not leave blanks.

Validation

When giving examples of positive outcomes in your submission, always give evidence to support your claims by giving a clear validation. Show evidence to support the claim. This will help judges to evaluate the level of impact that you are reporting and may affect their scoring.

3 C's

One frustration cited by the judges is when the answers on the submission create more questions. Before submitting your entry, be concise, complete and clear. Try to ensure that the answer does not create more questions.

Illustrations

If you are using graphs, illustrations, or other graphics, ensure that they are legible and not too small to read. If you intend to include video, house it on a private part of your website and insert a hyperlink into the submission (remember you only have an 8MB size limit).

Timing

Entering awards invariably takes longer than expected, especially now when internal sign-off is likely to take much longer as more people are working remotely. Give yourself more time than you think you will need. Build in time for review, editing and sign off, submit well ahead of the entry deadline.

PR

Prepare to win and be prepared to maximise the opportunities in the media and social networking sites. Being named as a finalist is a gratifying and worthy achievement, especially as this programme is national and pan-economy – be prepared to share your success with all stakeholder groups – colleagues, customers, suppliers, investor groups and all external channels too.

Revision

Build in ample time to have your submission critically reviewed by a colleague. Check all the component parts are contained in the document and satisfy yourself that the submission is as concise and accurate as possible. You will sign to say that the information is true to the best of your knowledge – if you are unsure, seek clarification before submitting.

Confirmation

When submitting an entry by email, request confirmation that the entry has been received. Be specific and name the category that the entry refers to. Do not rely on 'Read Receipts' or 'Delivery Confirmation' through your internet provider, because this only confirms email information and not attachments.

Dates

The date of the Awards Ceremony is documented at the outset of the entry process. Be sure to clear the diaries of anyone you want to attend the awards ceremony. Decide who will be representing your organisation and whether you need to think about buying a table for a group celebration.

For more information, please go to: <https://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com/awards>
We hope you found these guidelines helpful to prepare your entry for the judging panel.

We wish you every success with your submission!