



Guide: Creating winning award entries

Follow Chime's top tips for creating killer industry award entries that will help you get shortlisted and fill your trophy cabinet.





Turn up *your* volume

An award-winning agency knows the benefit of taking a strategic approach to entering awards as part of its fame strategy.

Chime's guide helps you put it into practice.

Awards Checklist

Before putting pen to paper, follow these tips to select the best campaigns and awards to enter.

Selecting an award to enter

Make sure you are only entering your agency's very best work. It's easy to get excited about campaigns that were fun to work on or used a new skill. But you must consider your entry within the wider industry context.

There must be a balance between

1. Creativity
2. Effectiveness

Awards are often split into these two categories, however, the best entries will have a compelling story in both creativity and effectiveness. No matter how brilliant your idea or execution was if it didn't shift the dial for your client, it won't be winning any awards.

Be self-critical, always interrogate if the campaign is worthy of winning against the competition and if not, don't enter it.

Awards Calendar

Create a calendar with all the awards you want to enter for the year in it and link it to your marketing plan.

This will give you plenty of time to see when closing dates are looming. You can also populate it with shortlisting announcements and ceremony dates so you can keep on top of external comms and announcements.



Not all awards are equal

When to enter your campaign and into which awards and categories.

When to enter

If you have a longer-term campaign on one which has only just launched, you may find that waiting a year to enter it is a wise move. If you know you will ultimately get better results after the awards deadline, you can always consider waiting a year so you can tell a full and compelling story of how your work impacted the client.

Which awards to enter

If your awards budget is finite be choiceful about the awards you enter. Balance the likelihood of a shortlist/winning versus the cost and most importantly the reputational gain you will receive by being associated with these awards.

Not all awards are created equal!

Which category to enter

Understanding which categories to enter is also crucial in successful awards submissions. If you can enter the same campaign in multiple categories it can stand you in good stead:

1. Tailoring for each category is important, but if you've already done the hard job of telling the story for one category it is then easier to copy-edit it for another category in the same awards.
2. If you have multiple entries across multiple categories, it will put you in a better position to win agency or team of the year categories too.

However, be realistic about the competition in each category. If you are entering into a Consumer category consider the calibre of work, clients and budgets that will also be entering.

When writing, make sure you have the category-specific questions, entry and scoring criteria to hand so you can ensure your award entry hit each requirement.

Don't let your Account Manager write the award entry.

While your client lead will need to feed into the award entry and give a full account of what was completed for the client and campaign, they are rarely the best people to write the award entry.

They're too close to the work, and are unable to remain objective or separate the reality of the project from creating a compelling story and narrative. They also may not be confident writers.

Using an external person who did not work on the campaigns to write your award entries – or at least interrogate them, is a really useful exercise.

How to get the info you need.

If you didn't work on the project or account you will need a way of extracting information from those that did. If you already have case studies written about the campaign these are a really good starting point to begin building an outline of the campaign based on the award submission and its questions.

However, you will almost certainly need to interview someone who worked on the account and/or the client themselves.

These interviews will always bring much more colour to the entry and give you a truer sense of the interesting challenges you helped to solve. You could develop an awards template which allows the client teams to give you the factual information and form the basis of a 20-30 minute discussion with them about the work.

Stand out from the pack.

Most awards will allow you to submit supporting evidence alongside written text.

Try and invest time and effort into making this supporting evidence highly visual and easy to navigate. You can consider referencing these materials in your written award entry, especially if highlighting highly visual campaign work or elements of PR and social coverage to back up your results for instance.

Some award entries specifically request video evidence – this can be costly and time-consuming to produce if you don't have production skills in-house, so don't leave it to the last minute. Consider investing in these assets and how you can use them (at least in part) again in the future for further award entries or case studies.



Crafting awards

Once you've chosen the best work, awards and categories to enter, here are some tips for crafting winning award entries.

Storytelling

Always try to create a story or narrative around your award entry. Develop a sense of jeopardy. What is the big problem your activation or campaign solved for your client or their target audience? Give some context into the macro environment within which this activation or campaign took place. Be aware – this may not always be the challenge they came to you with in the pitch.

Always try to show how your agency worked in partnership with the client to solve a strategic business, institutional, industry, cultural or even whole world problem.

Tone and style

Forget corporate jargon and acronyms only used internally by you and the client, this award entry should be able to be read by a total layperson, from outside of your industry or profession. In fact, writing award entries for the reading ability of a ten-year-old is a good rule of thumb.

Don't assume the reader will know who your client is and the context within which they operate. They may also not be a specialist in your particular field of expertise, so you must always spell out what you did, how you did and why. Use an informal and friendly tone. No matter how corporate the client or awards, you are ultimately writing for another human being.

Word count

Word count is always a challenge to navigate in entries. So avoid any repetition across different sections. The whole entry should flow nicely from one question to the next to tell the story as a whole.

If possible use a copyeditor or proofreader who is not already affiliated with the intricacies of the campaign that can play devil's advocate about what is essential and interesting information for the reader.

What did you do?

Ironically the section about what you actually did can often be quite a small element of an award entry.

You need to therefore be very choiceful with the words you use. Very long or complex campaigns and executions will necessarily need to be summarised. Focus on the elements which are most impressive, groundbreaking, and different for the client, industry, and audience.

The judges will be less interested in the logistics required to pull off your work and care more about why you chose the approach, why it was interesting, and how it helped you solve the challenge and exceed expectations.

(This is another reason why the account manager working on the job is less likely to be the best person to write the award!)

Executive summary

Most awards submissions will require a short exec summary which can start at just 50 words or so. It is often easiest to write this last. Once you have the story fleshed out and understand all the salient points. You need to try and get across as succinctly as possible what you did that was interesting and the lead result.



Balancing objectives & results.

These are arguably the most important sections of your award entry.

Your objectives must tie beautifully to the results you saw. It is therefore often better to start with your results and build objectives for the award entry based on the output you achieved.

Again, this won't always align with what the client asked for! You may need to retrofit the objectives for the results/impact/effectiveness stats you have.



Objective Examples:

- There is no point in giving an objective of 'pan-European awareness' if you only got media coverage in the UK.
- Don't suggest increasing sales from the target audience is an objective if You can't track sales uplift or define the target audience or know what the uplift was in the target group versus the rest of the population.

Number the objectives in the entry, make sure the results are also numbered and mirror their corresponding objective.

You must be totally explicit in evidencing how your award delivered (or even surpassed) expectations.

Focus on results

Always give quantifiable results.

If you are suggesting there was an increase in awareness or purchase thanks to your campaign, you must make sure you can back this up with stats and numbers for it to be believable.

For some executions getting traditional results or attributing sales uplift can be very difficult. But this is when you must capture client testimonials and anecdotal evidence to back up your results (and those initial objectives). The best award entries will have a mix of qual and quant results.

Back up your claims

Avoid sweeping statements that you cannot back up. This is often seen when giving an insight that led or informed your strategic approach. It is always better if you can evidence these as it shows rigour and a strong foundation that informed your strategy. For example, if you reference new trends or a change in consumer behaviour – what is driving that, your client's data, primary or secondary research or in reality – just a hunch?!

“Avoid sweeping statements you cannot back up”

But what constitutes a result?

So often we see what are actually execution stats in place of results.

For example ‘We ran ten events nationally’ is part of the campaign execution NOT a result. A result must evidence the impact your work had and be tied back to the original objectives.

Running ten events on a national scale may be interesting to the story – especially if you did it on a tight budget or were able to give the client more coverage than expected. But the place to talk about this is in the strategy/execution element of the award entry.

Supporting testimonials

If you're including testimonials from your client or their customers, make sure they align to strategic objectives and aren't just that you're a nice bunch to work with!

Award entries are often written against the clock and client approval can often hold up submissions.

Consider penning your client's testimonial for them and asking for their approval. Alternatively, give them bullet points to flesh out. Either way, be specific and directional when requesting a client testimonial to be sure it does the job.

Amplifying your awards

When done right, writing and submitting award entries is a time consuming skill. Ensure you make the most of your hard work by saving core templates that can be used again throughout your marketing.

If you go on to get shortlisted or win, make sure everyone knows about by sharing on your social channels, newsletters, website and email signatures.



What our award-winning clients have to say...

"An expert in their field Chime, brings the professional side, as well as a personable approach, and they are great at really using our time together effectively. Chime has worked with our team across several projects quickly getting to grips with the business.

They are a huge asset to the business and I am really thankful our paths crossed."

Tonia Galati, Founder, TG Consulting

TG Consulting have been shortlisted in every category we have entered them for in the past 12 months, subsequently winning 10 awards... and counting.

Climbing Trees Founder Alex Holliman featured in the 2022 BIMA 100 as a Champion for Change.

"We've worked with Claire and the team at Chime for some time across a range of marketing initiatives. They took the time to understand us, our plans and helped coordinate work covering awards entries, strategy, thought leadership, webinars, website copy plus much more.

The whole Chime team are sharp, delivering work in a no-fuss way ensuring we keep on track."

**Alex Holliman, Founder,
Climbing Trees**

About Chime

To scale, your agency's brand needs the same care you offer your own clients.

With over 25k agencies in the UK and a tough economic climate, competition to differentiate and be heard is ferocious. But as an ambitious agency leader, it's impossible to dedicate time to marketing.

Enter, Chime.

Our content-led approach fuels meaningful conversations with your prospects, clients and talent.

It's time to find your agency's voice and get heard.





Chime

AGENCY

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on your agency's marketing?

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