



Podcast #024

Why entering awards is good for business marketing

Hi listeners and welcome to The Marketing Menu podcast brought to you by Nicky and Liz. Hi Liz, how are you and what are we talking about today?

Well, I apologise in advance to listeners for the state of my voice! I've been laid low with the Aussie flu so am still a bit bunged up and hope it doesn't spoil this week's episode which all about entering awards and how to maximise the marketing opportunities surrounding them.

I suppose some listeners could be forgiven for thinking that awards are really just for national organisations. However, there are a growing list of awards run now which may be by local Chambers of Commerce, local publications, educational establishments, manufacturers or local business groups before you get on to the national business awards which tend to be more industry specific.

So think about whether your organisation is known for its great customer service? Have you created an outstanding innovation? Perhaps you are a great employer or a successful entrepreneur. No matter what your business strengths are, you need to shout about them to make sure potential customers choose you over your competitors.

Yes, so we've both had experience of this not only for clients but for ourselves too. Before we give some examples, let's talk about why listeners should think about the benefits.

Well, they do give businesses a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of their brand, even if you are just shortlisted. The publicity that an award can generate may last months and you will attract interest from people who may not necessarily have been on your radar. Not only that, you will be on a platform with other successful businesses and

it's a great way to connect. You will be noticed by your business peers and may have opportunities to do business with others, so even if you don't win, it could open up a whole new world for you.

Yes and of course make sure you are posting regularly on your social media accounts, showing support for other nominees and making sure that you follow other nominees as it's a great way of starting new conversations. And it may well be that there will be a hashtag associated with the award that you should include in every post. This enters you into a much bigger conversation and gets you noticed.

Could I just add here that it's a good idea to keep an eye on your website traffic and social media analytics if you do decide to enter because it's important to track the success of the project. Sometimes it's easy to lose track of followers and hits but it is important to know whether it has been worth all the effort.

That brings up another good point. You do need to put time aside to put the entry together. It's not something that can be rushed but we'll cover this a little later on.

If you are lucky enough to win an award, you will probably be given the judges comments and these are great to use in Press Releases and other marketing materials.

They could also be used to support another award entry!

Good point!

In fact, even if you don't win but get feedback, it's really important to act on it, particularly if you intend to enter the same awards again.

Actually, going through the awards process is a great way to get an overview of your business and to determine what really makes you different. Are you delivering what you think you are? What do your customers say about you?

We've talked before at The Marketing Menu about how any kind of marketing activity, particularly blogs and opinion pieces, should be aimed at positioning you and the business as experts in your field. An awards entry and a win does exactly that. It makes you stand out amongst the competition.

Yes, it can help in many ways. Imagine if you were applying for funding and the funders could see that you have been recognised as the best in your field? That's got to be worth extra brownie points.

Indeed. Another fantastic side effect of applying for an award is the effect it has on you and your team, if you have one. Whether it is an individual award or one for your business in general, there's nothing better than a group of professionals saying 'we think you're great'!

Absolutely. And getting dressed up to go to the Awards ceremony itself is a great team building exercise and a good excuse for saying thank you to your team.

So, all in all, awards can be a valuable opportunity to build your brand reputation, be seen on a professional platform with your business peers, stand out from the competition and boost staff morale.

Before we give you some real-life examples of the benefits of entering awards, just a reminder that if you are enjoying this week's Marketing Menu podcast please do make sure you write a review for us via your streaming service when this item has finished as we've just talked about the importance of reviews! We're a growing channel and we'd really like to help as many growing businesses as possible and remember you can also sign up for updates and other marketing news items which regularly feature on our website the www.themarketingmenu.com

So, Liz, you've worked with a client recently who was successful in some local awards, weren't they?

Yes indeed, Forum Jewellers recently won the Retail and Leisure Experience Award at the 2017 Dorset Business Awards.

I know everybody was really excited when they won!

Yes so was I. It was so funny because I was filming it for Facebook and it got a stage during the judges feedback where I thought 'oh my goodness, they've won it', then he announced their name and I couldn't scream because I was filming. Luckily the rest of the team screamed loud enough for everyone.

They had entered the awards for several years, hadn't they?

Yes, and that's a very good point. Don't be disheartened if you don't win the first time. Forum took on board the feedback from the mystery shoppers for 3 years and eventually won. And this local award win has given them evidence and confidence to enter the national Retail Jewellers Awards now which is obviously a massive coo for a smaller retailer as they compete with all the national players.

So let's hear from Helen Molloy, Director at Forum Jewellers.

"Forum Jewellers decided to enter the Dorset Business Awards because of the Retail Experience category. We pride ourselves on offering excellent customer service and this was an ideal opportunity to prove that we could do it and learn from the experience. The added bonus was to get our name and brand out to fellow businesses in the Dorset area.

And what kind of response did you have? Has it helped with your marketing efforts?

Each year, we've attended the awards, which has been a fantastic night sitting amongst big companies, small companies. So it's been great to get our name alongside those fellow businesses. Since winning the awards, it's been amazing. We've had phone calls, we've seen our name in publications that we never would have expected to.

And you also entered some national awards, didn't you? Tell me what that has meant to the business.

We've always aspired to enter the Retail Jeweller awards, which are national. It's an amazing opportunity to get our name out with peers and businesses that we aspire to be like. There are some really big businesses that always win the awards. So to finally be shortlisted for an award was a real honour and an amazing evening. Unfortunately, we didn't win so we're going back this year to get an award!"

Now, Nicky, you also have some winning experience with a team you were working with, is that right?

Yes, I was Chair of a local community charity along with 7 other trustees and we put together a funding proposal to build a children's community space in our village. Obviously, we had to work heavily with the local District and Parish Council, community and the children who at that stage were very much unheard and as a result, after we'd built the play trail, HCC nominated us for a Charity award for Best Community Project. We ended up going up and having to present to a panel of charity advisors up at the Conde Nast Publishers in London which was pretty stressful at the time. However, we did get selected which was a huge feather in our cap at the time. Obviously, from a charitable point of view, the fact that we'd been part of this process was immensely helpful in helping us to secure future funding from other funding partners further down the line, so it was very beneficial indeed and worth taking the time over.

Some people are far more confident in applying for solo awards and, depending on the organiser, you may be required to nominate yourself or have someone do it for you. Whichever way, you might be required to canvas votes which can make people feel awkward because they don't to hassle people or become a pain.

Yes, the same rules apply though about positioning and boosting morale like we talked about earlier.

Have a listen to coach Bev Hepting from Discover Your Voice to hear what she has to say about when she entered the Fearless Women and also the Venus Awards.

"I entered the Fearless Women Awards in 2016 and I felt really, really self-confident about doing that because I'm a bit of an egotist. I went to London and I won it, and it's a real boost for your confidence winning that and I used the logo, told everybody and had photos, and I still use the photos today. I got nominated for three sections in the Venus Women Awards and I think in Dorset just getting nominated for Venus makes you feel really special. We all did and yes, it's great disappointment when you get

shortlisted and don't win but there are a lot of women entering for Venus in Dorset and they're all fabulous and they're all amazing and I think just the fact that you've been nominated, it makes you feel that people actually value what you do and that they're willing to put your name forward.

So from that point of view, great. Brilliant. And I went to the awards night and the women there were fabulous and it was all amazing and I will always put myself in for awards even if nobody else nominates me because why not? I think all women should start going, you know what, I deserve an award for what I do so I'm going to nominate myself if no-one else does. Let's do what men do and just go for it because sometimes just putting it on paper, about what you do and how well you do it, will make you feel better and actually boost your own confidence, even if you don't win. So everyone should enter for awards.”

So once people have found the right awards to enter, and that they are eligible, what are the basic rules to follow when writing your entry?

I would say make sure you allow enough time to do a proper job. It shouldn't be rushed. I doubt you would be able to do it in one go, so you will need to revisit it time and time again. There will be things you forget the first time so can add them in later. Don't leave it until the day before the submission deadline before you start!

Yes, and make sure you keep a copy! I would suggest drafting it all out in a word document that you can cut and paste and edit at your leisure before you commit it to the official entry. If it's online, you may get an option to save as you go along but you will need your own copy anyway. This is useful if you want to enter another set of awards and can use similar wording.

Make sure you read the entry criteria very carefully and tailor your answers to what they want. Use their language and refer to the name of their organisation with a bit of flattery if you can, without going over the top. This shows you have personalised the entry.

Oh yes, and please make sure you answer every question as fully as you can. If there is a word limit, don't exceed it whatever you do because they will ignore any words over the limit. But if it says 200-word limit, try to use that for as much relevant information as possible without waffling. Don't forget to get someone to proofread your entry before you push the final button – you don't want to give the wrong impression by having some needless typos.

Oh yes indeed. You will need to explain things very clearly and succinctly whilst making sure that you get all your key points across. Don't assume that the judges know anything about you, so stuff that you take for granted like the size of the business or actually describing what you do needs to be detailed. This is particularly relevant if you have applied before.

And finally, be real. Although it might be tempting to exaggerate your success or other elements of your story, it is not worth it as you will always be found out.

This is a great PR exercise so just stick to the facts. Your reputation is at stake here.

Actually, I was also asked by a client to help her select from her shortlist for a Venus Award her company was sponsoring. It was really interesting to meet the nominees and hear their stories and learn more about their plans for the future. I was surprised at the range of characters and surprised too that some really only had very small companies but they all had a big story to share. In essence, a couple of them still felt that they hadn't really achieved much but quite often they had very much on a personal level. So don't listeners be put off if you feel your company is not yet big enough to be part of the awards scene, it's often the hidden story that it going to get you noticed. It's as much about your journey and achievements as anything else.

Well, that brings us to the end of this week's podcast and we really hope you've enjoyed it listeners and are maybe inspired to enter your business for an award.

Don't forget, we offer a free transcript of what we've talked about on our website www.themarketingmenu.com so if you are not already on our website, head over there to download your copy.

And, you can follow us on Twitter & Facebook for more useful tips and tricks to help with your marketing.

Thank you for tuning in, we know there are loads of podcasts and webinars out there and we've specifically designed The Marketing Menu to offer practical, accessible marketing ideas that you can put into practice. We very much hope that some of what we've shared today resonates with you and allows you to make some real business changes. Let us know how you get on.

Just before we finally say goodbye, you may like to know if you are in the Bournemouth or Southampton areas, we are running a series of free marketing workshops in February and March so please visit our website www.themarketingmenu.com for more details.

Tune in again on 14th February when we'll be talking about the very romantic subject of email marketing!

Haha! Actually, that will be a really good one – I think it's a subject that loads of people really aren't sure about. So, it's goodbye from me, Liz Gordon, until next time.

And me Nicky Matthews, goodbye.

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