

Business Awards

Earlier this year Clark Hearsey sponsored the Independent Retailer of the Year category at the inaugural East Lindsey Business Awards. #ELBA2018

As a result we were given the opportunity to help with judging the category and this came down to me.

If you do an internet search on “entering business awards” lots of information will come up. Some of it is advice on how to complete your entries but lots of it is essentially saying “do it” – it is, after all, free publicity. Certainly these awards got lots of on-line coverage and were featured in the local papers. Some of those shortlisted for prizes included it in their advertising – at least one was heard on local radio saying they’d been shortlisted.

All in all then it is a “good thing”. So if you are going to do it, why not do it well?

I wanted to make sure that I marked fairly so I started off by looking at the Entry Rules and Terms and Conditions. A few key phrases were:

Each category has unique criteria and businesses are urged to read the criteria for the award(s) they are completing a nomination form for.

Decisions on who should win the award will be based solely on evidence submitted with the nomination forms and a visit from the judging panel.

The nomination form for all categories clearly stated:

Please provide a description of the business and a brief statement (no more than 500 words) explaining why the business should win this award, with reference to the criteria for the award applied for.

You may provide supporting evidence where appropriate and can include any document which will help your application or nomination, such as financial performance, promotional literature, news features, testimonials, brochures or pictures.

It was a very interesting experience and I enjoyed reading about the different businesses and how they’d come into being – when they told me that is.

Given that for each award there was an information sheet giving an overview of the award, the details of what the judging would be based on and the evidence requirement I’d expect anyone entering to go through this information and start doing a list of the things that they could immediately think of to tell the judges about.

Let’s look at the evidence requirements suggested for the Independent Retailer award:

- Previous awards won.

Hopefully these will be on display so I should be fairly straightforward to make a list. If there are photographs of these being presented and copies of press coverage that’s great.

- Average weekly sales.

Depending on who is filling out the application form they may have this information at their fingertips or may need to ask the accountant.

- Profit margin.

Again, the accountant may need to provide this information and obviously some businesses may not wish to disclose this (although it is only revealed to the judges and in strictest confidence).

- Opening hours.

Nice and straight forward.

- Year-on-year sales variation and services provided.

Another one for the accountant, if you're happy to give this information.

- Customer satisfaction reviews.

Some businesses have a feedback section on their website or Facebook page, others have a "visitors book". If not perhaps there are regular customers who would be willing to write a testimonial.

- Demonstration that the business performance is sustainable in the long term.

How does the business review its success and its future development plans? As the judging criteria did state "Retailers will demonstrate their commitment to driving change by improving the sustainability of their operations, including how the business performed during the last 12 months" one imagines that the businesses entering this category will have been established long enough to have had at least one set of accounts produced. There was another category for new businesses, although some did enter both.

Other items which you may be able to include are:

staff training records may be available showing the business's commitment to staff training and development;

a statement about the business, when and how it started, how it has grown, changes made, objectives for the future;

details of promotions run by the business;

photographs of the business/products;

copies of sales literature.

Entering for an award is free and is a fantastic opportunity to get free advertising and to meet with other local business people.

Entries are now open for the 2018 Awards. The business Expo will take place on Friday, 20 April at Stanhope Hall in Horncastle with the Awards Ceremony a week later at Southview Park Hotel, Skegness.

More information can be found at: <http://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/ELBA>