

HOW TO WRITE A GREAT FCA EXCELLENCE IN FRANCHISING AWARDS SUBMISSION

Each year Awards Absolute receives many enquiries from FCA members who are keen to know how they should go about preparing and writing their submission for the FCA Excellence in Franchising Awards.

This year this aspect of the process is again vitally important, as all Awards nominees will be judged on their submission alone. Interviews will NOT be conducted.

Here are the questions that are most frequently asked:

AWARDS NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN, SO WHAT IS THE FIRST THING I SHOULD DO?

Read the eligibility associated with each category carefully to determine which category or categories you wish to enter.

I'VE DECIDED ON WHICH CATEGORY TO ENTER. WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

Look at each question asked in the submission separately and list what information you will need to fully answer that question. Collate all that information. Two tips: 1. You might find it useful to put this information in bundles that relate to each question, as this often makes it easier to find the information pertaining to each question when you're ready to start writing. 2. Wherever possible, include an example or statistics that substantiate the information you have provided in your answer. So decide which examples and statistics you are going to use at this early stage also.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PROGRESS?

Treat the award submission as if it were a job application, analysing and then answering each question in the order it is asked and making sure you have answered each part of every question. A tip: Look for the word "and" in a question as this often indicates that the question has more than one part.

DO YOU PROVIDE EXAMPLE SUBMISSIONS?

We do not provide example submissions because each category is diverse and submissions cannot be easily adapted from one entrant to another. Every submission is unique to the franchise, person or project being nominated. We encourage you to read through these FAQs to assist you.

HOW DO I MAKE MY SUBMISSION STAND OUT?

Remember that the judges will read dozens of submissions. Yours will stand out if:

- Claims are quantified and substantiated
- Writing is clear and concise - with no technical language or jargon
- Acronyms are avoided, but if you have to use them then spell them out fully in the first instance
- Bullet points are provided for easy-to-read information

- Relevant graphs, examples of marketing collateral, media clippings and illustrations that support your claims or broaden the judges' understanding are included as attachments
- Your franchise or the individual nominee is described accurately
- Points of difference and unique selling propositions – the things that make you and your franchise different from the pack - are emphasised
- You ensure that achievements and results are above and beyond what judges would typically expect from a franchise
- Your answers are specific. For example, rather than saying that you have “completed various training courses”, list the name of each course, when you undertook it, and the training or education provider.
- Do not assume that judges already know or understand your franchise or what it offers
- You demonstrate innovation. Show it in the examples you include. For instance, if you state that you offer exemplary customer service, then include testimonials, customer comments, survey ratings and/ or an example that clearly shows an instance where you went the extra mile. These examples and testimonials give your submission “personality”
- Never repeat information or use an example twice.

WHAT INFORMATION ARE JUDGES LOOKING TO SEE?

This depends on the question being asked. Read it carefully. A good way to determine what judges are looking for is to underline the key words in the question.

For example, let's say the question asks “Outline the goals and strategies within your business plan, how you derived them, and the outcomes you achieved in the past 12 months.” The underlined words are the important words. They tell you what format that answer should take – that is “outline” (a description that shows the essential features but not all the details). It is important that everything you say pertains to your “business plan” - the written document that describes in detail how you are planning to achieve your goals, including marketing, financial and operational aspects of your franchise. This is a multi-part question, so you need to address “how” you arrived at those goals and strategies (that is, the research and steps taken to ensure that you have chosen the right goals and strategies), and finally the “outcomes” – the results and achievements that directly relate back to the goals and strategies have outlined.

Follow this process for every question being asked and you will improve your submission quality. For small operations, the other benefit is that you will learn more about your business while going through this process.

IS THERE A COMMON THREAD TO WHAT JUDGES ARE LOOKING TO SEE?

As a general rule, no matter what you decide to showcase in your awards submission, judges will always look for proof of specific things. These things are the same no matter whether you're describing a business plan, a new product, a human resources project, IT outsourcing or a marketing campaign.

In each and every instance judges want to see evidence that you have:

1. Conducted research
2. Planned thoroughly
3. Implemented actions in an organised manner
4. Monitored progress regularly
5. Evaluated appropriately
6. Performed well

Think of these six things when you answer a question.

SHOULD I PROVIDE ATTACHMENTS IN THE SUBMISSION?

Each nominee can upload files to support their submission. This is designed to allow you to extend the judges' knowledge about some aspect of your franchise, activities or answer. These files should be cross referenced to a specific question and labelled appropriately. For instance, let's say you are explaining that your franchise has developed a new training program, and to reinforce this fact you decide to show the judges an excerpt from your Training Manual. As part of your response to the question about training, you should say something like "Please see Attachment 3 for Training Manual excerpts".

Make sure that graphs and diagrams that you include in these attachments are large enough to be easily read. Photographs should also be large enough to see clearly. Never write text or captions that are smaller than 10 point.

PREVIOUS FEEDBACK FROM JUDGES STATED THAT I DID NOT SUBSTANTIATE MY ANSWER. HOW DO I DO THAT?

Wherever possible make statements that include quantifications. This could be in terms of turnover, profit, examples, deadlines, feedback or policies. For instance, if you are mentioning how much media coverage you've attracted, then state the number of articles that you had published, the value of the coverage (based on advertising rates) and / or amount of airtime you achieved. Then you might want to direct judges to a specific attachment where they can see examples of media clippings to substantiate your claims.

HOW MANY WORDS SHOULD I WRITE?

The online awards process includes word limits for each question. You cannot write more than the maximum number allowable. These word limits have been carefully calculated, based on providing enough space for you to include the details in your answer that the judges are seeking. As a general rule of thumb, if your answer is less than 90 percent of the word limit, then chances are you have not provided sufficient detail. In other words, if the word limit is 100 words, then a detailed answer will most likely be between 90 and 100 words.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE AN AWARDS SUBMISSION?

This varies from person to person, franchise to franchise, and category to category, so don't leave writing your submission until the week that the awards close. Once you have collated all the information you will require then most people should be able to write about 250 – 300 words per hour. Always allow time afterwards for proofreading, having others proofread and uploading of supporting documents or images.

I'VE COMPLETED WRITING MY SUBMISSION. SHOULD I NOW HIT THE SUBMIT BUTTON?

We always recommend that you ask someone else, preferably someone who does not know your franchise, nominee or project too well and therefore will not make assumptions based on prior knowledge, to read your submission and confirm that the criteria has been met before you hit the "SUBMIT ENTRY" button.

HOW SECURE IS MY ENTRY IN TERMS OF CONFIDENTIALITY?

Throughout the judging process the information contained in your submission will only be accessible to the Awards managers, Awards Absolute, the FCA's Awards Team and the Award judges. Each judge agrees to a strict confidentiality agreement and downloads are not possible. At no time does any other party have access to the submissions.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CRITERIA?

Contact Awards Absolute, the FCA's awards convenors, by calling 1300 88 22 59 or via email to awards@franchise.org.au.

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On behalf of the FCA