

10 Easy Tips on How to Win an ISES Esprit Award

By Kathy Miller, 2005 Esprit Awards Committee Chair & Winner of 6 Esprit Awards, 6 Gala Awards, 16 NICE Awards, MPI-CAC Supplier of the Year, and NICE Lifetime Achievement Award.

If you are working on a program that you believe will be award worthy, than the work should begin as you are planning for the event, not following the event. Think in advance about the things that you will need to submit and make that part of the planning process for your event. For example, if you know that you are going to have a variety of collateral material, make sure that you print extra copies and keep them in your awards file. Here are some simple things you can do to get those judges interested in your submission.

1. Professional Photographs

I believe this is one of the most important parts of your submission- great photographs. When you are planning and know that the event is worthy of submitting, spend the extra money to get your program recorded by hiring a great professional photographer. Be sure and talk with them about what you are trying to capture and the reasons that you are having them take these photographs. We take the photographs to a professional studio where the copies tend to be clearer than if we are printing them off of our own printers. If you have a high quality photographic printer, go for it. I find that great pictures sure do help!

2. Document your Event

Be sure to spend the time immediately following the event to write down the most important elements of the event. Even though each award submission is a bit different, you can be sure that they will be asking you what made your event stand out, what made it unique and how did it met the objectives, so why not get it down when it's fresh in your mind.

3. Be prepared

If you have entered awards in the past, put them on your calendar for next year, not just the date of the ISES Esprit Awards Gala, but also when the Call for Entries come out and when they are due. These don't change much on an International level, they may on a local level, but at least you'll be ahead of the game if you mark it on your calendar. It won't seem as overwhelming, and you may be surprised at how many more you will be able to submit if you are prepared.

4. Collateral material

Again, be prepared and keep extra copies of your materials, or make sure that you can easily find the materials that you need to submit. Judges like to see the printed elements and it helps to paint the picture of the event in its entirety. If your client has printed invitations, brochures, or anything that would help to tell your event story, ask them for copies. And it's always great if you capture an event on video, it's worth the extra money to have a professional videographer.

5. Establish your style

For us, this has been a great time saver and it allows us to submit more entries. When I talk about a style, I mean the way that you put your entry together, your writing, how the inside of the binder is put together, utilizing, paper protectors, how you lay out your photographs (with or without captions). These may seem like little things, but they are the difference in what stands out. I know that there are many items that you are unable to make creative; however, being neat and presenting your entry in a professional looking way is important.

6. Be Concise

Make sure that you answer all the questions that are asked within the entry and in the appropriate spot. Remember, these judges may be judging hundreds of entries and reading long overwritten documents may become difficult for them to keep their attention. Bullet points are a great way to get your point across and a wonderful way to be concise. Try to stay away from writing something so flowery that you lose the point, remember these aren't your clients you are trying to sell an event to but some very savvy event professionals that have seen it all and done it all, so keep that in mind as you work on your entries. You need to make sure that you can hold the judges attention. One more small but important tip, put one page in a sheet protector only. Don't staple a document together and then make the judges remove the document and flip through it, it's a time saver for the judges and it's a smoother process for them to flip through the binder.

7. Follow Directions

This is the most important part of your entries. Take the time to read, re-read, have someone else read, have yet another person look over the entry in its entirety. The more eyes you have on it the better off you will be. (As long as everyone agrees with the style, the content, etc.) If you forget to follow any one of the directions you will be automatically disqualified, and that's not fun considering that you have taken so much time to create your entry. We make a copy of the entry form and put it with every entry and we use that as our check list to make sure that we have followed all of the directions. It sounds like the easiest of things, but you would be amazed at how many people don't follow the directions.

8. If you don't enter...You won't win!

It's like the lottery, if you don't play, you won't win, but if you do play, there is a chance that you might win. A friend once told me when I was single, that she could guarantee me that if I stayed home at night, I would never meet the man of my dreams, but that if I went out, she couldn't guarantee it, I just might meet someone. And do you know- she was right!!! This is no different; if you don't enter...you won't win!

9. Know this about becoming an award winner...

It is good for your business, when your clients know that you are an award-winning company, their confidence level changes. All the awards that we have

been honored with definitely helped in positioning our company in the industry. We also make an extra copy of the binder and use it for marketing our company. It is a GREAT sales tool!

It is an honor to be among colleagues in our business who have been winning awards for years. And with that in mind, follow tip number 10.

10. Keep a positive attitude, don't give up!

I have heard colleagues say that they aren't going to take the time to submit and I've heard all the reasons: no time to do it, too busy at work, it's fixed; the competition is too much, etc. However, I can tell you that with an attitude like that, you're right, you will never win. It's like anything else in life, with the right attitude it's amazing the things that can happen. Even if you don't win the first or second time that you submit, or maybe even the third time, I guarantee you that the judges do look at every entry with the same criteria, you do get equal judging and if you don't give up, you too will take home an award!