

THE SPONSOR DOC

With Bruce L. Erley, APR, CFEE

Are Awards Worth It?



Dear Sponsor Doc:

My staff is going to kill me. A week after our event is over, we have a bunch of award submissions due for IFEA and another industry group we belong to. These take a bunch of time to prepare and frankly I'm asking myself if it is worth all the effort. What do you think?

- P.W. Tucson, AZ

Dear P.W.:

It is a good question! We too have been burning the candle at both ends to complete our spring and summer events and frankly going through the grind to complete submissions is the last thing I want to spend my (or my team's) time on. However, I have made these submissions a priority and there are a number of reasons why I think it is worth it!

1. The process of reviewing the categories for the awards requires us to reflect on the past year and ask the question, "What work are we especially proud of this year?" It is very revealing and rewarding to discuss as a group some of our recent "hits" and evaluate if they are worthy of submitting for evaluation by our industry peers.

2. Completing the submissions and having to go through the process of responding to the questions, (e.g. what were some of your obstacles and how did you respond to them?) is a healthy intellectual exercise. As event producers, we are so busy getting stuff completed during our events, rarely do we have the discipline to reflect on our work and challenge our self-improvement.

3. As an agency, these submissions strengthen our relationship with our clients and sponsors and I suspect it would do the same between you and your senior managers or board members. Our clients get excited to know we believe a recent project we have done with them is "award-worthy" and become great cheerleaders in the process.

4. No regrets! The years we have not submitted, I often disengage from the awards ceremony and usually grouse that we did better stuff and would have won if we had submitted. It's kind of like playing the lottery. You can't win if you don't play!

5. There is no doubt to the excitement of the actual competition. We want to win. We are proud of our work and enjoy the recognition we receive from our peers. Further, those back at the office are excited to receive text updates on the judges' decisions.

6. Awards are a great relationship-builder with our sponsors. There is really nothing like calling a sponsor to tell them that an activation program we worked on with them has won an industry award. You can be sure they tell their bosses about this recognition. It helps everyone's stock rise and improves renewal rates!

7. Awards sell! We use our industry awards to demonstrate our abilities and herald our successes. When your event wins awards, whether it is for a flier, website or a Grand Pinnacle, you can still call yourselves "an award-winning event." This provides you with third-party credibility and separates you from the competition in your local market.

So yes, PW, I think it is worth the time and energy to submit for industry awards. If you do, I'll be in the crowd rooting for you!

With more than three decades in sponsorship sales and consultation, **Bruce L. Erley** is the President and CEO of the Creative Strategies Group, a full-service sponsorship and event marketing agency based in Denver, Colorado he founded in 1995. Accredited in Public Relations (APR) by the Public Relations Society of America and a Certified Festival & Events Executive (CFEE) by the International Festivals and Events Association, Erley is a highly-regarded speaker on event marketing and sponsorship having spoken on the topic around the world in such places as Dubai, Vienna, Beijing, Toronto and New York.

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