



REAL ESTATE AWARDS: TOP 10 TIPS TO WIN THE RECOGNITION YOU DESERVE

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You know a winner when you see one. Whether it's a development, a design, a deal, or day-to-day property management, you know when the work you're doing deserves a medal. You also know the value of earning industry recognition, especially in tough times like these. But winning awards doesn't just happen. It takes a game plan. To help you get started, here are our top 10 tips for taking home the gold.

CHOOSE YOUR TARGETS

- 1. Scope out the awards for which your project might qualify.** Cast a wide net. While major industry honors have great cachet, don't overlook specialized awards. Review the entry requirements and make sure you have all the information and material you'll need for your submission. Pay special attention to eligibility time frames and how project completion is defined. Find out, too, whether you can resubmit if you don't win the first time.
- 2. Understand the selection criteria and judging process.** Do due diligence on the selection committee and the type of projects that usually win. Some awards favor cutting-edge design or innovative solutions. Others lean toward hard numbers or economic success. Play to your strengths.
- 3. Know the competition.** As you read trade publications, notice other projects that might be going after the same major awards you are. If you see a blockbuster in the making, consider whether to go head-to-head or pursue niche awards you'd have a better chance of winning.
- 4. Prioritize.** Unless you're made of time and money, you can't pursue every opportunity. Pick your best shots and put your effort there.

The Winning Formula

- > **Target your most promising award opportunities**
- > **Capture supporting material from day one**
- > **Collaborate with fellow team members**
- > **Deliver a knockout nomination**

GATHER YOUR AMMO

- 5. Zero in on the requirements.** If you can plan that far ahead, start your project with an award in mind, and make sure to capture supporting material from day one. Will you need to demonstrate how a project affected the client's staff? Conduct benchmark and post-completion

surveys. Will you need to illustrate how a design transformed a community (or a condominium)? Take “before” pictures *before* you start work. Will you need to document a year’s worth of tenant events? Have your camera always at the ready.

- 6. Collaborate with other team members.** Let them know about awards that would apply to them more directly than to you, and offer to support their nomination. Think about preparing joint nominations, sharing the cost of photography and producing the submission packages. Or pool your resources and hire marketing professionals to prepare your submissions.
- 7. Pave the way with PR.** Judges, like everyone else, are attracted by the familiar. Your chances of winning go up if the judges have heard of your project before they open your submission packet. A PR campaign can help give you that kind of advance recognition — as well as support sales, leasing and business development.

DELIVER A KNOCKOUT NOMINATION

- 8. Read and follow instructions.** Pay attention to all the minute details that could get you disqualified. Contact the competition organizers if you need clarification. If you have an opportunity, take the submission a step beyond the stated requirements. Just don’t step out of bounds.
- 9. Look at your project from an outsider’s viewpoint.** What’s compelling to the award judges? It’s tempting to stress the parts of the project that gave you the most gray hair or the greatest pride. Resist that impulse — or save those thoughts for your acceptance speech. The judges want to know how your project meets their award criteria. Hammer that message home.
- 10. Make sure your submission reflects the excellence that characterized your project.** Check everything at least twice. Involve the project team for their expertise, command of the facts and access to the details. Enlist fresh eyes from people who weren’t on the project; anything that isn’t clear to them might not be clear to the judges, either. If the award regulations allow, use testimonial quotes or letters of recommendation from constituencies such as city officials, end users and community groups to back up your nomination. Dot your i’s, cross your t’s, cross your fingers and wait for the results.

WIN OR LOSE

If you don’t win, remember, that isn’t the same as losing. You got your name out in front of respected leaders in your industry, and that visibility has value. See if the judges will give you feedback or pointers. Then go back to your list of targeted awards and start on the next submission. This is no time to quit!



If you do win, check with the organization conferring the honors to determine how and when you can promote your award. Share the good news with the rest of the project team. They have bragging rights, too. Then go back to your list of targeted awards and start on your next submission. This is no time to rest on your laurels!

About DickinsonGroup

DickinsonGroup has produced winning nominations for the Urban Land Institute's Award for Excellence, the Building Owners and Managers Association's international TOBY (The Office Building of the Year), about a dozen Chicago Commercial Real Estate Awards and other industry honors. (It helps that our clients do great work.)

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