

Awards Programs: Ethics

By Richard Lowe

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One of the characteristics of an excellent awards program is the presence of solid ethics. This is very important as all awardmasters must understand that they wield a certain amount of power over their fellow webmasters. They have the power to cause individuals to blossom and become better at their tasks. Conversely, they can easily cause discouragement and despair which can lead to much evil.

That's probably one of the most important facts to remember about being an awardmaster - you have the power to help or to harm. Use that power wisely and you will give people pleasure, reinforce their self-worth and perhaps make them better webmasters. Use it unwisely, and you could even cause them to stop creating web sites altogether.

Don't believe me? Take a look at this note from someone who won one of our awards:

"Hello Mr. and Mrs. Lowe, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the "heart and Soul" award! I cried when I saw it, as I had given up on it! My health is taking a downward plunge, therefore it means a whole lot more! You just can't imagine how informative and useful your newsletter is to me. Hang the superstitions; Friday the 13th is lucky for me! :o) Mrs Lowe, I hope this letter finds you in good health! God Bless"

Wow! Now that's having an impact on someone's life!

This is why it is very important to be completely ethical when you run an awards program (we are talking about real website awards programs here, not those that simply give the awards to whoever

applies). What makes an ethical awardsmaster?

First and foremost is a desire to be constructive at all times. Never give any kind of criticism. Some awardsmasters give advice when specifically asked - personally, my recommendation is to stay away from this practice. Why? Unless you are very, very good at giving advice without making it seem like criticism you are bound to cause someone to become discouraged and upset. Really, your goal is to award good works (and you define what is a good work), not to give out advice.

You should have a well written set of criteria which more or less explains exactly why a site did not win. There really is only one answer to the losers - "look at the criteria. Compare your site to the criteria, point by point, and it should become obvious why you did not win."

Another strong ethics point is to remember that your criteria is your contract with awards submitters. You should use no other standards except for your those criteria which were posted at the time the person submitted for the award. Why? Because you need to stick to the agreement that you have made and not use some arbitrary standard known only to yourself.

Remember your power and be professional at all times. A professional is smooth, honest, hardworking and helpful. Don't get into arguments, flame wars or any other petty behaviors as regards your awards program.

Another important point to understand is an awards program should be pure. You should have no requirements, no string attached, except for the common request for a link back to your site. You can, of course, request people to sign your guestbook, but never make it a requirement to win an award.

Remember, again, to base your decisions only on your criteria. It does not matter if the site you are judging belongs to your boss, your mother or your best friend - just judge against the criteria. If you feel you cannot give an unbiased opinion for any reason, then by all means inform the submitter of the fact and do not judge the site.

A very important ethical point is your awards program is only as good as your own site. In other words, your own website should be a model to others as to what it takes to win one of your awards.

There are many other qualities that make for an ethical awards program. For a more complete list, see our statement of ethics at <http://www.internet-tips.net/Winawards/awardsethics.htm> .

In summary, by remaining ethical you can build an awards program that makes you proud and very effectively advertises your own site and professional skills. What better way to promote yourself than that?

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Richard Lowe Jr. is the webmaster of Internet Tips And Secrets. This website includes over 1,000 free articles to improve your internet profits, enjoyment and knowledge.

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