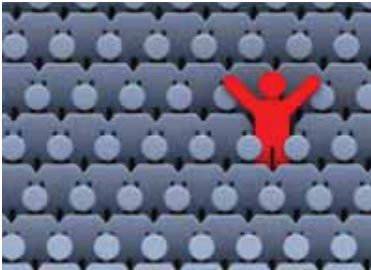


Small Business Marketing

Pursuing—and Winning—Awards for Entrepreneurship



Feeling competitive? There's no end of contests that spotlight and reward entrepreneurs for their business plans, new products, professional excellence and more. If you think you can't win, think again. If you think it's not worth the effort, read on.

Cash prizes can range from a few thousand dollars to seven figures. And the other benefits to you and your company from winning—or even taking part in—such competitions can be enormous.

Time well spent

Like any competition—or for that matter, investment—there's no guaranteed return for the time and trouble to prepare an entry. But when there is, well, take a look:

David Becker, founder of Philippe Becker Design spent two days applying for a business-excellence award sponsored by the local chamber of commerce. He entered branding and marketing work his agency did for a local philanthropy, and landed a new \$80,000 account because of the exposure.

Jennifer Elias and Julie Tucker filled out a 50-page application for the 2006 Make Mine a \$Million Business contest sponsored by Count Me In for Womens Economic Independence and American Express. The result was a five-figure package of loans and advice for their game company, SmartsCo, and the attention of a major game publisher.

There are new contests all the time. In mid-'06, Product Partners LLC launched a search for the most innovative new beauty product in the world. The prize: A business-development contract with the Beverly Hills, Calif.-based company, specializing in direct and online marketing.

"Submitters have nothing to lose because at least they'll get a team of experts evaluating their product and advice that should be worth thousands of dollars to them," says Marina Randolph, Product Partners vice president of beauty. Finalists will be announced in November.

Our Bottom Line

Business-plan competitions and other contests represent a chance to toot your own horn, learn how to improve your startup—and maybe pocket some long green.