

# AND THE WINNER IS...

STEP-BY-STEP DIRECTIONS FOR ENTERING AND WINNING  
INDUSTRY AWARDS. BY DEBORAH ELIAS

THIS JANUARY I WAS NOMINATED for my first Gala Award, which in the special-event industry is like the Academy Awards—well, at least in my mind. I was hoping to win and put the award next to the Esprit I won in 2005, which to me is like the Golden Globes. I didn't win the Gala but I did learn how to get nominated, and believe me, after several years of trying, I was glad to know that it was possible. ¶ I also have won several other awards from the Texas Star and Crystal Icon competitions and I have served as a judge several times. So, here are some tips that may get you started on the way to a mantel full of industry awards.

## PICTURES, PICTURES, PICTURES:

At every event you do, whether you are a florist, event producer, entertainment provider or serve another function, my No. 1 piece of advice is to take lots of pictures. Invest in a quality camera—and in this day and age, that shouldn't cost you a ton of money. Make sure to take pictures of the set up, so if a room is transformed the judges will get to see that. Most events will have a professional photographer, so I suggest that you form relationships with them and ask for high-quality images that you can add to your portfolio.

## DOCUMENTATION:

Throughout the event process, document everything so that when you are writing up your entry, you easily can have the information to recall.

## PRESENTATION:

Many awards are going green, and so the days of putting together a creative binder are gone. If you still use a binder, the outside should be plain but the inside should be a definite reflection of the style and creativity of the event. It is very important to have high-quality glossy prints of the images—and lots of them.

## CATEGORY SPECIFICS:

It is really important that you submit in the appropriate category. As a judge, I have seen blanket entries where a hopeful nominee will enter in floral décor, entertainment production and overall event planning, but the budgets and write-ups will be about the

event as a whole and not about the particular parts. Also, if you are entering a budget-specific category, make sure not to fib. Many judges will know if you are trying to fudge the numbers to make yourself eligible for a certain category.

## TIMELINES, SCHEDULES AND DIAGRAMS:

You need to have timelines, schedules and diagrams for your client—at least I think I should. And judges like to see that you know your stuff, so having these details will only support and justify that notion.

## MORE TIPS:

- » Make sure your client approves of your award submission. Some may not.
- » Keep a folder about each event that you can easily refer to when submitting.
- » If you are not the best prose writer for the event descriptions, find someone who is.
- » Try, try and try again. Your persistence and hard work will pay off. ¶

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