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Award Programs - Which One's Are Credible?

By [Donna Snyder](#)

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A good award program will consist of more than a "submit a site" button, to be taken seriously. We have all seen those "free market me awards" which consist of nothing more than right clicking your mouse, saving their award graphic and linking back to the award program and "Tada" , you've won your first award. Award Programs such as these, bring absolutely no credibility to your website or award program. A credible award program will offer more details to assist applicants with web designs and offer solutions. Its criteria consist of a constructed list, which list more than the do's and don'ts, but also offers tips and suggestions to their applicants. On most credible award programs you will see the following.

1. The Award Program will state its purpose clearly. (Why they are offering their awards)
2. The Award Program will let applicants know, who is eligible to apply for their awards. They will also list a set of rules for applicants. Who may apply, who may not apply, reasons a site may be disqualified, etc.
3. The Award Program will not accept tasteless sites or sites that contain adult content.
4. The Award Program will not accept sites from children under the age of 14. They abide by C.O.P.

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5. The Award Program will have a "code of ethics" statement, showing their applicants that their standards for reviewing sites are high.

6. The Award Program will display a privacy statement, letting applicants know, that any information they send to your application form (other than the URL and name of the applicants site) is confidential.

7. The Award Program will display a copyright statement, protecting their content, award graphics and all the hard work they have put into constructing their award program.

8. The Award Program will give credit to anyone who helps with their site. Any graphics, content or donations made to their award site, will give appropriate credit to its creator.

9. The Award Program will offer custom award graphics for their winners. The graphics are usually optimized for fast loading and no larger then 200x200 pixels and under 20kb. (.jpg or .gif format)

10. The Award Program will display a "Statistics" page, in order to let applicants know how many applications have been received during the year and what their chances are of winning an award from your program.

11. The Award Program will display a winners list with the date the award was giving to their winners, as well as the country they are from.

12. The Award Program will display a prominent winners list. Gold Award Winners or special awards giving, usually displays a screenshot, country the winner is from, description of the winners site and the date they have received the award. (This is considered good marketing.)

13. The Award Programs winners list will always be up to date.

14. The Award Program often times will be listed with a prestigious rating service or ethics organization. Most high rated award programs will display a "Membership or Affiliates Page". We will talk a little more about this in our next section, "Memberships, Ratings and Organizations."

15. The Award Program will be able to win its highest award offered: Example: If an Award Program expects applicants to show advanced technical skills with flash, scripting, coding, correct use of tags, etc., then the AP should show the same and be able to win their highest award offered.

16. The criteria of a credible Award Program will consist of more then just a few statements and a short bulleted list. Example: (give detailed explanations and tips) If Award Programs requires applicants to "Optimize Graphics", they should explain the reason why. They should offer solutions such as, slicing images or creating thumbnails to cut down on loading time. If the Award Program require horizontal scroll bars not to be present, they should explain how not all browser settings are the same. If they require ALT tags be used, they should explain the use of ALT tags and how they are used to name graphics, while hovering over the graphic, etc. They should explain more then just the do's and the don'ts. By doing this, you they are also teaching applicants and beginner

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designers something they may not know.

17. The Award Program will display a "judging or scoring" page, that can be easily understood and explain to applicants how points can be achieved as well as deducted. This will give applicants an idea of what they need to show on their sites, to gain the highest points possible.

18. The Award Program usually displays, "Award Title Descriptions". AP's should explain what the "Award Titles" represent. Example: How many points it will take to win your Gold, Silver or Bronze and a brief description of the overall meaning of each Award Title.

19. A good Award Program will offer tools, resources or links to assist applicants with web designs.

20. The Award Program usually offers an "Award Process" page. Explaining to applicants the award process, how long it takes to hear back, who is notified and who is not, as well as what happens if they do not win an award. AP's should provide applicants the option to email your AP for tips and suggestions if they do not win an award from their Award Programs. Award Programs should show their applicants that they care and are willing to further assist them in gaining a higher Award Title, if they request suggestions on improving their sites.

21. The Award Program should list credentials they may have or an Evaluators/Judging Panel Page. Applicants are quick to ask, "Who is judging my site and what qualifies them to evaluate my site?"

22. The Award Program should display legitimate contact information and not just a form for applicants to fill out.

23. The Award Program should provide an alternative application process. Example: For applicant's browsers who do not support forms, they should provide you with the option to email your applications and what information you would like applicants to enclose with the application.

Written By Donna Snyder CEO Of American Association Of Webmasters

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