

# THE TRUE VALUE *of Awards*

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**LOOKING** to climb the ladder in the world of luxury B&B properties? Hospitality awards are a fantastic way to formally declare that your B&B is the best of the best.

Proudly displayed by the winners', these accolades prove that you really are the best in the business.

Awards inviting self-nominations are highly popular. Earlier this year we announced the results of our inaugural Excellence in Luxury Service Awards, and since announcing the second year's awards, we have already received dozens of high-quality applications. Many 2020 awards programmes have been delayed or restructured owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, originally planned as a live event to have been held

The hospitality industry is supported by a comprehensive array of awards celebrating outstanding achievements in everything from staff training, excellence in service and outstanding breakfast to best B&B in a particular region. But just how valuable are such awards?

in June this year, the VisitEngland awards, now in their 30th year, took place as a virtual event on 17 August.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Co-owners of The 25 Boutique B&B in Torquay, Andy and Julian Banner-Price and haven't let the pandemic stop them from sweeping up all the awards. Not only have they been named the Best B&B in the World with tripadvisor for the second year running, but they also won Gold for the Best B&B at the Visit England National Awards for Excellence in August. But why should you nominate your business for awards?

## **SELF-EXAMINATION**

As participants begin the application process and prepare for the awards, previous winners become icons of aspirational achievement and the bar is set high across the board.

Entering your business into the fray provides you with the ultimate chance to better



**"Awards in this industry are about recognising quality and best in class and being able to promote your business at a national level!"**

**CHARLOTTE SANDERS,  
VISIT ENGLAND**

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yourself and your trade. The application forms are detailed and demand a lot of thought and supporting evidence, providing the perfect opportunity to scrutinise your work and 'up your game'.

Uplands House near Banbury has won a number of Visit England Awards as well as awards from other organisations. Owner Poppy Cooksey says that she "tends to carry on as usual but it is nice for somebody to notice" all of her hard work.

Wendy Veale from The Old School B&B has won multiple Visit England and Trip Advisor awards. She said: "Awards keep me on my toes. There is only one way to go after winning one and that's downwards," so you have to work hard.

"I am a perfectionist, everything has to be 100%. I love everything to be top notch," Wendy added.

Andy Banner-Price at The 25 insists: "Although it takes quite a lot of time to fill the forms in comprehensively, it really helps us because it makes us stand back and look critically at the business."

He says: "You realise particularly if you can compare it to a previous form you've filled in you can look at how you have started doing things better and what you have done new since last time, but also what you could be doing better, and you really start to question whether you are doing everything you possibly can, as well as you possibly can.

"We can get more out of the application stage than we do from actually winning the award."

There are two types of award entries, he says. "One is where you are given an award when you didn't necessarily even know you were nominated for it, and the other is the awards that you choose to go for where you often have questions to answer that vary by level of detail."

### PR OPPORTUNITIES

For luxurious B&B properties the right kind of PR is often the only kind. Even if you don't claim the award for yourself, the process offers great PR opportunities. Whether you receive Runner Up or otherwise, there's still a chance of being featured in local news or online.

The Reading Rooms won the 2017 Dorset Cereals best overall B&B award. Using their background in design and marketing to their advantage, the owners of The Reading Rooms carry out lifestyle photography of their rooms making you believe the photos come straight out of an architectural magazine or a fashion shoot. Co-owner Louise says: "We

usually strike a deal with an exceptional local professional photographer," as they opt to work with portrait, or interior photographers, which is worth the investment for the high-quality images which help to produce publicity.

Poppy from Uplands House says the "most important" award her property has been awarded is the Rose Award from Visit England. However, she says the awards themselves aren't always particularly helpful for press opportunities as "people usually search for 'Luxury B&B Cotswolds' or 'Banbury'" and it's not until they're on the website that they see the awards. Wendy Veale said that when The Old School B&B



was announced as TripAdvisor's No.1 B&B in the UK and Europe, "the phones and emails did not stop until way past [her] bedtime". She added: "I had fantastic coverage and continued to participate in local BBC radio programmes and being the 'Best B&B in Europe' went down well. I am called upon frequently to chat and it's great fun and free PR."

The 25 boutique B&B in Torquay has built up an impressive awards portfolio since opening in 2015, but Andy says it is the 2020 TripAdvisor Award for 'World's Best' that generates the greatest new business.

The World's Best award provided a lot of PR opportunities that really got The 25 noticed. Andy said: "We were in a number of national newspapers and on the national news, so that really helped from a business perspective in attracting more guests."

Holding multiple awards is great for PR opportunities and raising your profile with both your guests and peers. Andy at The 25

### Our 7 Top Tips for applying to awards:

1. Take your time with the questions
2. Assume the judges know nothing about your business
3. Back everything up with plenty of evidence across all of your online platforms
4. Make sure you use high quality, professional photographs and other marketing assets
5. Don't focus on just the National Awards. Local awards can be just as rewarding and create just as much business
6. Shout about your achievements on your website and social media
7. Consider all the costs associated with applying. Many awards do not charge to enter, but do charge for attendance

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**ANDY BANNER,  
THE 25**

argues that multiple awards can help to drive bookings and says: "If I was looking at two or three places to stay in a particular area, and if they were all very similar in terms of standards, facilities and reviews, I'd probably be thinking that while there's not much in it, one in particular one has won a number of awards, and I'd plump with that one."

From a business perspective the type of awards that Andy, and his fellow co-owner Julian, prefer to enter, or be nominated for, are regional tourism awards, not least for their potential ripple effect.

"We'd bid for the Visit Devon award, and if we did well, we'd be put through to the South West awards," he says. The local focus of course helps drive bookings by people hunting the best place to stay in any particular area.

"People seeing [the awards we've won] in the national newspapers or on Apple News or our interview on This Morning really helps."

#### AWARD CEREMONIES

Achievements aside, one of the burdens can be the time and cost of attending the award ceremonies. The expenses can be dramatic: even if there is no charge for entering the award, there's usually travel costs associated with attending. There's travelling to the ceremony, a hotel room, and of course the potential financial strain on your business if you have to turn down guests.

On the plus side, awards ceremonies

do provide an unmatched opportunity to meet and mingle with your peers.

Andy says: "We do generally attend the ceremonies mainly as we enjoy the opportunity to meet new people in the industry as well as the sense of occasion."

#### APPLICATION TECHNIQUES & TIPS

Applying for awards takes time and effort. You can only participate in a certain number of awards per year. The 25, for instance, entered the Visit Devon and Southwest awards one year but not the following year owing to the time and effort it took.

Andy and his partner Julian at The 25, are self-confessed perfectionists. Andy says: "Even if there is just one question and it is limited to 200 words, we would read it, rehash it, and then re-read it. We'd then leave it for a day and then go back to it, all the time thinking of new things, and trying to phrase it in the best possible way, with as much evidence as possible."

As a winner of dozens of awards in the five years since The 25 opened, Andy recommends imagining the judge has never heard of you.

"Everything you say needs to be backed up by evidence, so you need to make sure you are giving examples in the application itself, but you also need to carry through with that."

If for example you claim to be environmentally friendly, then you need to make sure there is an environmental policy on your website.

Andy adds: "If you say you update social media regularly this needs to be true as they can easily check and find out you only do so every six or so weeks."

It's very much a case of walking the walk and taking the talk, Andy says. "If you are entering an award it is important both to provide evidence to support any claim and to tell a story in your answers and to give examples. It's no good for instance simply saying you are really good at customer service."

#### CONCLUSIVE VALUE

Asserting the value of industry accolades, VisitEngland senior press officer Charlotte Sanders tells Luxury BnB magazine: "Awards in this industry are about recognising quality and best in class and being able to promote your business at a national level. It's also about promoting choice, delivering for the winners another form of recognition that can be put on display."

Not only do awards offer valuable PR opportunities, but they also push you to make your business better than ever, improving the hospitality industry across the nation.

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