

Top tips for a great entry

Entering the kbbreview Retail & Design Awards is really easy and completely FREE.

It's all done online, and you can log in and out at your leisure to add to or change your entry right up to the closing date. All the information on the entry process is at www.kbbreview.com/awards but here's a few tips to help you make the most of the opportunity.

GENERAL TIPS

Read the instructions and fill the whole form in

This sounds really obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people fall at this first hurdle. The form has been designed to put the right information in front of the judges and subjectively compare businesses, people or design projects in the best possible way. So, fill it all in as much as you can - spending the little bit of extra time to fully understand what you need to do can make all the difference.

It's not a writing competition

Be concise and to the point, this isn't a school essay. You are not judged on how good a writer you are or how many superlatives you can cram into a statement. If the information is correct, relevant and tells the story, that's all that matters. Judges have a LOT of entries to get through so they love bullet points!

It's fine to use ChatGPT or similar if it helps you tell the story you want to tell but don't forget to keep it concise and to the point.

Remember the judges are professional peers

This isn't a sales brochure. The judges know their stuff so approach your entry by thinking about what information YOU would want to see if you were asked to evaluate another design or retail business. What would be the most relevant things you would be looking for?

BUSINESS CATEGORY TIPS

Facts, facts, facts

You should start planning your entry by making a list of the basic facts you want to get across. For example, "Sales are up 12% since we changed the showroom", "Our event saw 50 people come through the doors, the most we've ever had" or "We have invested £10,000 on local marketing and advertising that has already seen a big

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increase in footfall". These tangible facts are evidence that substantiates your claims rather than them being simply bold statements like 'our events are really successful', 'we do lots of marketing' or the dreaded 'we have the wow factor'. This is where bullet points can come in really handy...

Remember it's '...of the year'

All the retail and business categories cover the 12 months up to the closing date.

The backstory is really important for context but the judges are specifically briefed to look at what you have achieved over the last year. Make sure you answer those questions as fully as possible.

Be a storyteller

While getting the facts across is obviously crucial, don't be afraid to tell the judges WHY you have made the decisions, plans and strategies you have. What is the backstory that led you to make those changes, revamp that showroom or try a new revenue stream? Businesses are made by people and often it's the personal touches that make the difference between winning and not – this is especially true when talking about a local business that plays a part in the community.

What's your angle?

It's not a competition for the biggest companies with the most money, but you do have to show why you're the best at something in your local market – the best showroom, the best team, the cleverest marketing, the most community minded, the most sustainable, the most innovative...you get the idea.

The changing market

Make sure you talk about what you're doing to tackle the biggest issues the sector faces. Don't be afraid to say what you've tried that didn't work as well as what did – it demonstrates a willingness to embrace new ideas. How you changed your business to tackle those challenges and look to the future is as important as what successes you've had in the past. The market is really difficult at the moment so just standing still in your local market might be a real triumph, tell us about it!

It's not all about the money

This isn't a competition for who's made the most money or who's got the biggest showroom, in fact the judges are specifically briefed to disregard size. It's about your local market and how your business tackles it with the resources available to you.

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The tiniest showroom with a good turnover can be a fantastic retailer simply because of the role it plays in the local community, the creative and inventive ideas it's had to keep itself going in a difficult market and how it's a model of best practice

DESIGN CATEGORY TIPS

Focus on the point

The questions on the form are very straightforward but they've been honed over the years to provide the information that the judges use to differentiate one design from another. So, get to the point and answer them fully.

Plans, plans, plans

The judges are professional designers too, and to really understand your project they need to see floor plans and elevations. It is absolutely essential that you include them in your entry. We can't stress this enough!

Pictures sell more than words

It is so important that you have good pictures of the project. It's not a photography competition but you do need several pictures that show the entire room space from different angles. Remember, think about what YOU would want to see to evaluate someone else's project. Oh, and include plans. I know we said this already but, trust us, it's worth repeating.

Details, details, details

It's often the smallest details that set designs apart from each other and, frequently, they are not necessarily aesthetic choices. The limitations of the space, the problems that needed solving, unusual products or finishes, why you put things where you did, managing client requests, bespoke elements. These details are especially important if you're using branded furniture or products – what have you done to make it more than simply a choice out of a brochure?

Consider the criteria

There are seven different judging criteria and each carries EQUAL weight. Aesthetics is only one, this is why the prettiest – and most photogenic – design doesn't always win. The other criteria are:

- Aesthetics
- Meeting and exceeding the brief
- Problem solving
- Bespoke elements
- Product and material choice
- Unique ideas and initiative
- Value for money

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Don't waste your time...

The rules are that named individuals can only enter each design category once, so don't do more than one as you'll have wasted all that effort. If several different named individuals from the same company want to enter the same category, then that's fine – in fact we encourage it!

Ask for help...

Good luck and if you have any questions at all about putting entries together, contact Andy on andrewdavies@taylistmedia.com