How to write a submission for your local small business awards

a practical guide
Small Business Development Corporation

About us
We are a Western Australian government agency that has been delivering relevant, practical support to small businesses since 1984. Our primary role is to offer free, confidential advice and guidance to small business owners at all stages of their business development from start-up to succession planning. We also provide a broad range of business resources (available in printed and online formats), business workshops, business licensing information and a dispute resolution service.

Led by the Small Business Commissioner, our team also works at State and Federal levels to advocate on behalf of the small business sector.

This workbook is designed to give you the knowledge and guidance to successfully complete a competitive business awards submission.

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Introduction

Throughout Western Australia there are many award programs for small businesses to enter – region or industry specific, or Statewide.

Entering award programs can bring your business many benefits; it isn’t just about fame and fortune, there are significant marketing and business development opportunities to be gained.

Award programs are designed to delve into the management of your business, to determine if you are ahead of the game and worthy of an accolade.

Regional small business awards

Regional awards, usually run by local chambers of commerce, are generally held between April and September and cover most areas of Western Australia. These awards are a great way for your business to gain recognition locally. While each awards program is run independently, most will require you to enter with a written submission and follow the questions that have usually been supplied by the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC). Winners of local business awards that are eligible can enter the Western Australian Regional Small Business Awards.

Western Australian Regional Small Business Awards

The Western Australian Regional Small Business Awards (the Awards) is a Statewide program, managed by the SBDC, which acknowledges the ‘best of the best’ of regional small businesses.

Nominations are exclusively for businesses that have won a regional award during the current year (a list of participating regional award programs can be viewed at smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/awards).

Since its launch in 2002, the Awards program has celebrated the success and achievements of hundreds of regional small businesses. There are currently nine award categories:

- Home-based Business
- Franchise Business
- Aboriginal Business
- Start-up Business
- Community Engagement
- Customer Service
- Business with 0-4 Employees
- Business with 5-10 Employees
- Business with 11-20 Employees

How this guide will help you

This guide covers every question in the Awards program providing useful tips and sample answers. It is designed to help you write an awards submission to be proud of.

Writing a submission is not a quick process, it can take hours. However, once you have written one submission and it has been judged favourably, you can use it as a template for future submissions. Some things will change, such as your financial information and goals, strategies and results, but the template and much of your business information will remain the same.
Section 1 Business overview

1a – Provide a general overview of your business, including a brief history and summary of your current operations.

| Word count: | 250 words |
| Preferred format for your answer: | ✓ Paragraphs | Bullet points | Table | ✓ Graphs | ✓ Sub-headings | ✓ Map | ✓ Images | ✓ Testimonial |

Tips:
- This is one of the most important questions as it sets the scene for your whole submission.
- Your answer should have passion – explain why you started the business and how your business has developed. Tell your story and help the judges fall in love with your business. Make them want to keep reading.
- Keep in mind that the person reading your response has probably never heard of your business, visited your location or, in some cases, experienced anything like your business offering. So remember to be specific in your explanation.

Example:
In 2011 we had our first baby – a life changing experience! Coming from an accounting background, where attention to detail is everything, our little bundle of joy shook our world.

After maternity leave the thought of returning to work full-time was not appealing. My husband felt the same, so we decided it was time for a sea change. We packed up our Perth lives and headed south to Denmark. We had always dreamed of owning a café and decided it was now or never.

In late 2012 we turned our dream into a reality and opened Ashley & Max (named after our two children, little Max was born during fit out). Our café is niche and targeted at families. We believe that having kids shouldn’t signify an end to gourmet indulgences, so we have created an atmosphere and menu that suits big and little people.

We have a dedicated ‘fun zone’ which is fully enclosed and includes a range of toys and games. For adults, we have comfortable chairs, couch areas, incredible food and of course the best coffee.

Ashley & Max proudly uses only local produce to develop our innovative and ever-changing menu. We specialise in brunch, but also offer delicious lunches and homemade treats. Our staff are mostly mature, extremely friendly and fun to be around.

Having a baby changed our corporate mind-set and allowed us to follow our dream. Running a café is hard work, but it is also heaps of fun.

Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 245 words
Section 1 Business overview

1b – Describe your products and/or services. What makes your business unique and sets you apart from your competitors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word count:</th>
<th>250 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred format for your answer:</td>
<td>✓ Paragraphs ✓ Bullet points Table ✓ Images Testimonial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Tips: | • Your response to the first question should have set the scene for the judge, given them an idea of what your business is about, this answer fills in the details.  
• Be specific and clearly describe your products and services – your range, prices, methods etc.  
• In this answer, you should also explain why your business is unique and how you differ from major competitors. Is it your location, attention to detail, customer service or range of products that set you apart? |

Example:

Ashley & Max is an intimate café located in the heart of Denmark. Our main point of difference is that we cater for the seasoned gastronome and their kids. We want families to enjoy good food together in a welcoming atmosphere.

We are open 7 days a week 7am to 4pm and have a seating capacity of 60. We specialise in brunch, but also offer a diverse lunch menu and a range of decadent baked goods. Our café has the following unique features:

• **‘Fun zone’** – At the back of the café is a fully enclosed kids’ area that includes a chalkboard, games, books and toys. It is perfect for 2 to 6 year olds.

• **Innovative menu** – Our menu is constantly changing depending on seasonality and availability of produce and our chef is forever experimenting with flavour combinations to create taste sensations.

• **Dedicated kid’s menu** – Kids shouldn’t be left out, so we have a mummy cook on staff who whips up meals the little ones are happy to devour.

• **Bottomless gourmet tea** – As well as freshly ground coffee, we also have an extensive gourmet tea selection. Customers can try as many as they like through our ‘bottomless pot’ policy.

• **Mature staff** – Where possible we hire mature staff, mostly mums, who are keen for part-time work in a fun and relaxed atmosphere.

• **Groups and events** – Ashley & Max caters to mothers’ groups and other community groups and we often run specialised events, such as parent education classes.

Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 245 words
Section 1 Business overview

1c – Provide an overview of the financial performance of your business over the past 12 months and how this compares to previous years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word count:</th>
<th>200 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred format for your answer:</td>
<td>☑ Paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-headings</td>
<td>Map</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips:

- Your financial data needs to be explained/shown simply. Not all judges are accountants, so make it easy for them to understand your figures by using graphs and everyday language.
- The judges want to see how well your business has performed, so provide actual figures or percentages to show year-on-year comparisons.
- You should include the five key financial figures – revenue, cost of goods sold (COGS), gross profit, expenses and net profit.
- If your business hasn’t experienced growth, or you have had a difficult year, explain why. For example, you may have reinvested in the business, or perhaps suffered a loss due to unforeseen circumstances such as an aggressive competitor. If you can provide a reason for your decline or stagnation, and details of the strategies you have put in place to overcome the hurdle and move forward, the judges will be satisfied.

Example:

Ashley & Max has been operating for just under 3 years and we are pleased to say that we have seen growth every year, recording our highest profit during the past 12 months. We attribute our steady increase in revenue to word of mouth promotion which we have boosted through an active social media presence.

During the last 12 months, my husband has stepped away from the daily operations of the café to focus on business development. This has given us the opportunity to look objectively at the business and has provided the time needed to monitor our financial performance and adjust where necessary. My husband has successfully streamlined our expenses and reduced the costs of goods sold. This has had a big impact on our bottom line which is evident in the 7% increase in net profit over the past 12 months.

The table and graphs on the next page provide a snapshot of our financial performance.
Section 1 Business overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>$578,250</td>
<td>$680,800</td>
<td>$705,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of goods sold</td>
<td>$262,430 (45%)</td>
<td>$279,121 (41%)</td>
<td>$266,350 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross profit</td>
<td>$315,820 (55%)</td>
<td>$401,679 (59%)</td>
<td>$439,150 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
<td>$284,450 (49%)</td>
<td>$319,976 (47%)</td>
<td>$305,600 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net profit</td>
<td>$31,370 (5%)</td>
<td>$81,703 (12%)</td>
<td>$133,550 (19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 153 words, plus table and graphs**
Section 2 Business planning

2a – Describe your business goals over the past 12 months, the strategies you’ve used to achieve these goals and the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word count:</th>
<th>250 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred format for your answer:</td>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-headings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips:

- When describing your goals think SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and timed).
- Try to list at least five goals from a broad range of business operations, for example marketing, profit, staff and logistics.
- The strategies you employed to achieve your goals should be practical.
- Ensure your outcomes are specific by gathering data from your accounts, customer surveys, and marketing analysis tools.
### Section 2 Business planning

**Example:**
The following table outlines our goals over the past 12 months, including the practical strategies employed to achieve these goals and the outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase net profit by 5%</td>
<td>• Broaden marketing to include tourism.</td>
<td>• Net profit up 7%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increase community engagement.</td>
<td>• Revenue up 3.6%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage staff to up-sell.</td>
<td>• Expenses down 5%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Streamline operations in the kitchen by hiring additional cooks to help the chef with prep.</td>
<td>• COGS down 3%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reduce cost of goods sold (COGS) by improving stock ordering process and minimising waste.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase customer spend by 5%</td>
<td>• Encourage staff to ask customers if they would like another drink, or takeaway coffee</td>
<td>Average customer spend increased from $25 per person to $26.50 (6% increase).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• At checkout encourage sale of ‘decadent treats’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Facebook engagement by 6%</td>
<td>• Encourage all loyal customers to ‘check in’ through incentives.</td>
<td>• Engagement level increased from 38% to 46%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Offer FB specials to encourage sharing.</td>
<td>• ‘Check-ins’ increased by 4%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Post questions, images, videos to encourage engagement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Respond to all comments where appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase tourism patrons by 10%</td>
<td>• Network within the local tourism industry and broader South West region.</td>
<td>• Tourist patrons increased by 12%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Offer discounted rates to staff at key family friendly accommodation.</td>
<td>• Joined VC and RTO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hire brochure distribution company to assist with menu delivery.</td>
<td>• Distributed 5,000 menus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Join local visitor centre (VC) and Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase community involvement</td>
<td>• Sponsor a local sporting team.</td>
<td>• Donated vouchers worth $3,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Donate vouchers to charity events.</td>
<td>• Secured board position with CCI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteer at community events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Apply for board positions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 248 words*
2b – Describe any improvements or changes you have implemented over the past 12 months to improve your business operations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word count:</th>
<th>250 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred format for your answer:</td>
<td>□ Paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Sub-headings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tips:**

- Your improvements or changes don’t have to be huge, just significant in relation to you and your business operations. They can be everyday things that you have recently introduced. For example, upgrading to a cloud based accounting system, creating an Instagram account or diversifying your product range.
- Innovation is very important in small business. Show the judges how you have adapted your business during difficult times, or made a change based on customer feedback.
- Try to include at least three changes across your business operations and include examples of how these changes have improved your daily operations.
### Section 2 Business planning

**Example:**

Over the past 12 months we have been fortunate enough to step away from the daily operations of the business and think strategically. This was achieved by employing a part-time café manager and reducing my husband’s contact hours. By stepping away we could objectively review our business and improve operations.

As well as this significant change to our staffing situation, the following improvements were also made to our daily operations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hired two additional cooks</td>
<td>To assist our head chef, we hired cooks to help with basic food preparation. This enabled our chef to work fewer hours with more efficiency.</td>
<td>Kitchen staff costs down by 2%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduced parent nights</td>
<td>During the past 12 months, we hosted 15 special parent nights that all sold out. A single ticket provided a three-course meal, presentations from various family focussed agencies, and discounted baby-sitting vouchers.</td>
<td>Overall revenue is up 3.6%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service training</td>
<td>All our wait staff have undergone specialised customer service training delivered by the Tourism Council of WA. This training focussed on the customer experience and how to confidently up-sell.</td>
<td>Average customer spend per transaction increased by 6%. Ranked number one on TripAdvisor and Zomato.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on tourism</td>
<td>Denmark is a tourist hot spot and Ashley &amp; Max has always attracted a large proportion of travellers. However, we decided to dedicate time and effort into actively engaging the sector through networking, menu distribution and our online presence to boost transient traffic.</td>
<td>Our tourism patronage increased 12% over the past 12 months.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 248 words*
Section 2 Business planning

2c – What are your future goals for the business and what specific actions are you taking to ensure you achieve them?

| Word count: | 250 words |
| Preferred format for your answer: | ✔ Paragraphs | Bullet points | ✔ Table | Graphs |
| | Sub-headings | Map | Images | Testimonial |

Tips:
- This question gives the judges an idea of your plans for the business. Try to include short and long term goals.
- It is important to remember that there is no point stating grandiose plans without listing the practical actions you are going to take to achieve them.
Section 2 Business planning

**Example:**
To date Ashley & Max has achieved what we had hoped. It has been a difficult journey and we have had setbacks, but we have always stayed focussed. Our future vision is to expand to a second café in Albany and eventually sell both businesses and retire.

To achieve this aim, we have a series of short and long term goals, detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future Goals</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase café manager position to full-time</td>
<td>• Manage financials to ensure timing is right to increase salary level.</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Re-assign owner/operator responsibilities to allow smooth transition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Up-skill additional staff to take on more responsibility.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce after-school kids cooking classes</td>
<td>• Organise staff rosters to allow the café to open outside normal hours.</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure all staff involved in project have working with children checks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote product through social media, schools and loyal customers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialise in ‘decadent treats’ catering</td>
<td>• Hire a part-time pâtissier to create decadent masterpieces that can be sold at wholesale rates to cafés/businesses/groups etc. in Denmark and surrounding towns.</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemise business</td>
<td>• Dedicate time and engage a consultant to help systemise the entire café operation, including all roles, duties, cleaning, ordering etc. Develop a comprehensive operations manual that ensures the business can operate smoothly without the owners being present.</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Get accredited through the Australian Tourism Accreditation program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open second café in Albany</td>
<td>• Monitor financials to ensure budgets are achieved and business is not over-capitalising.</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure all systems are running smoothly without regular owner involvement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 244 words*
Activity – You be the judge

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>What are your future goals for the business and what specific actions are you taking to ensure you achieve them? (250 words max)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business:</td>
<td>Joe Blogs Tyres (tyre retailer and service centre)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Answer:   | When we first opened our doors in 1983 our operation consisted of me, Joe Blogs (qualified mechanic and tyre fitter) in the workshop and sometimes in the shop front, and Alison Blogs, as administration officer looking after ordering, secretarial duties, accounts and customer service. Since then the business has grown to accommodate a staff of eight and the newest apprentice is my son George Blogs.

Since starting his apprenticeship, George has shown a keen interest in learning all about the business operations and because I am 55 this year, I am starting to think about my retirement/succession plan. After employing the services of a small business management consultant, I have written the following key points into my 10-year plan.

- In the next six months I plan to change the business name to WA Total Tyre Services.
- Successfully open a smaller store in another regional town (80km away from main store).
- This is where I plan to build my retirement house. George Blogs will supervise the smaller store and I will remain part-time manager.
- In five years I plan to franchise our business. Due to the regional and rural focus of the business model WA Total Tyre Services will only be available for franchisees in these areas. I will manage these franchisees on a part-time basis.
- Hand over the smaller shop to George on my 65th birthday.
- Manage the franchisees part-time in my retirement and hand over to George before my 75th birthday.

Rate this response: _____ / 10

What could they have done better?

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
Section 3  Marketing

3a – Describe your target customers, how you market to them and the effectiveness of these activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word count:</th>
<th>350 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred format for your answer:</td>
<td>✔ Paragraphs ✔ Bullet points ✔ Table ✔ Graphs ✔ Sub-headings Map Images Testimonial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips:

• This is a difficult question to answer as you have a limited word count and three separate sections to answer:
  - Who are your target customers?
  - How do you market to them?
  - How effective is this marketing?

• Your answer must be succinct; a table will help you to reduce word count.

• When describing your target markets think about your ideal customers. Profile them by detailing their age, sex, location, likes, dislikes, purchase behaviour etc. The more specific you can be the better. Claiming that your product or service appeals to ‘everyone’ is not a sound marketing strategy. How you promote your business differs depending on the audience, for example seniors often read local newspapers, whereas tweens read Snapchat.

• Always state how you measure your marketing success – is it through Google Analytics, customer feedback, revenue etc.

Example:

Ashley & Max has three main target markets, detailed below. To measure our marketing success, we ask all new customers how they found us, and monitor Facebook Insights, Google Analytics, review sites, and our turnover.

Local families – Denmark has a population of around 5,500, including a significant number of young families. The parents are aged between 30 and 40 and many have made the move from Perth to the South West. They have gourmet food tastes and trendy café expectations. On average, they have two children, aged under six years. They love to go out for weekend brunch, enjoy mid-week lunch catch-ups and attend parent education nights. They are very community focussed.

Visitors – Denmark’s population can swell to over 15,000 during peak periods. A significant proportion of these visitors are Perth based families who come down during school holidays and stay at either caravan parks or holiday homes. This customer type is looking for good quality local food, in a relaxed setting that caters to families. They are loyal in that they typically visit once or twice a year and recommend to family and friends.
## Section 3 Marketing

**Groups** – Our final target market are groups, mainly local mothers groups, who are looking for kid friendly spaces to catch up for coffee and cake. They visit the café mid-week, usually in the morning, and are regular with their preferred days.

The following table provides detail about the specific marketing we undertake to attract each of our target markets and the success of these activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target markets</th>
<th>Promotional activities</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Local families | • Community/school networking.  
• Social media, particularly Facebook.  
• Encourage Zomato reviews.  
• Regular communication through e-newsletter. | • 85% repeat business.  
• Facebook ‘likes’ increased from 675 to 1,230 in 6 months.  
• Facebook engagement increased by 8%.  
• Ranked #1 in Denmark on Zomato. |
| Visitors | • Secure reviews through ‘family-focussed’ bloggers.  
• Encourage online reviews.  
• Modern, fully-responsive website and SEO.  
• Menu distribution. | • Three blog/media articles published.  
• Ranked #1 on TripAdvisor.  
• Website first page of Google for relevant keywords. |
| Groups | • Networking.  
• Advertising in local paper.  
• Social media. | • Running daily mothers groups.  
• Parent nights sold out two months in advance. |
Section 4 Customer service

4a – What strategies does your business use to create and retain loyal customers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word count:</th>
<th>250 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred format for your answer:</td>
<td>✓ Paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Sub-headings</td>
<td>Map</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips:
- This is a two part question, so be sure to clearly explain how you both ‘create’ and then ‘retain’ loyal customers.
- This response should clearly describe what you do to ensure your customers come back for more or spread the word to family and friends.
- Do you have a loyalty program? Do you use social media to build relationships with your customers? What are your customer service policies and procedures?
- Do you have a customer database? Are you contacting customers after they purchase from you? Following up with additional discounts or offers helps build a loyal marketing base.
- If you have sent your employees to any customer service training – you could include that within this answer.

Example:
Providing an exceptional level of customer service has always been a top priority at Ashley & Max and we believe this is the core way to create and retain loyal customers. In a transient region, we are proud to have 85% repeat business which shows our customer service success.

How we create loyal customers
We have thorough recruitment and induction processes to ensure we find the right staff and conduct regular training to ensure staff understand their roles. We have strict customer service policies that are displayed prominently and staff are regularly reminded of them.

Our food is consistently excellent thanks to our dedicated kitchen team, our coffee is deemed the ‘best in town’ thanks to our highly skilled baristas, our café is sparkling clean, and our service is timely and friendly.

How we retain these brand ambassadors
- **Loyalty app** – We use eCoffee Card to keep a track of our loyal customers and offer regular incentives.
- **Surprise regulars** – Being a small town you get to know your regulars well; our staff will often just give a free coffee upgrade to someone on the spur of the moment.
- **Free baby chinos** – We offer all our little customers a free baby chino with marshmallow and chocolate buds.
- **E-newsletters** – We keep in weekly contact with our subscribers through an e-newsletter that details the signature food of the week, recipes, exclusive specials, and kid’s activities.
- **Social media** – We have FB and Instagram accounts and use these to connect with our loyal customers.

Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 247 words
Section 4 Customer service

4b – What processes do you have in place to measure customer satisfaction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word count:</th>
<th>250 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred format for your answer:</td>
<td>☑ Paragraphs ☑ Bullet points ☑ Images ☑ Testimonial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips:
- This question is asking how you ‘measure’ customer satisfaction. Is it through an improvement in your review rankings? Or, do you have a metric that you use to judge your customer satisfaction after a survey?
- Describe the ways in which your customers can provide feedback, is it through online avenues such as social media and review sites, or surveys and in person?
- Also, include the processes you have in place to respond to feedback and detail how you action customers’ suggestions.
- Take your answer to the next level by giving real examples of changes you have implemented in response to customer feedback.

Example:
At Ashley & Max we want our customers to be happy with both the product and the experience. To ensure we are achieving this goal we monitor our customers’ level of satisfaction through the following avenues:

- **Reviews** – We encourage our customers to write reviews on TripAdvisor, Zomato and Facebook and are proud to have five star ratings on all these sites. Where possible we action suggestions so that customers know we have listened, for example one of our customers requested almond milk as an option. We listened and now have almond milk available alongside other dairy-free choices such as soy.
- **At the café** – Our staff are very approachable and we always ask customers how their meal/experience was either in person or through forms. During the past 12 months, feedback revealed that 97% of customers were happy with their service, 98% with food and 96% with atmosphere. If we receive any negative feedback it is instantly documented in our complaints register which the general manager and owner review daily. As an example, one of our customers complained that some of the toys in the kids ‘fun zone’ were looking very ‘used’. We actioned this immediately and replaced all old toys and books.
- **Social media** – We regularly post comments seeking advice from our customers about menu options, kids’ activities and parent nights. Customers also use this avenue to share their thoughts, either through reviews, or in comments. We monitor FB and Instagram daily and respond to all reviews and comments.

*Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 249 words*
# Activity – You be the judge

## Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>What processes do you have in place to measure customer satisfaction? (250 words max)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business:</td>
<td>Joe Blogs Tyres (Tyre retailer and service centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer:</td>
<td>Another feature of our previously mentioned scheduling/notification software is the ability to send a quick message to the customer the day after they have purchased a product or service. The message simply asks if they were happy with our customer service, prices and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One day we received a message from a customer who had a new set of tyres fitted the day before. He alerted us that our main competitor in the region had started a four for the price of three special on the same tyres that day. As this customer had been a loyal customer for his last two sets of tyres we matched the deal and invited him to come and collect his refund for the fourth tyre. He has since purchased all his family’s other tyres from us and referred three new customers to us. Identified through the new customer details form asking where they heard about our business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate this response: ____ / 10

What could they have done better?

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Section 5 Staff

5a – What strategies do you use to recruit, retain and motivate staff?

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<th>Word count:</th>
<th>250 words</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Preferred format for your answer:**

- Paragaphs
- Bullet points
- Table
- Images
- Sub-headings

**Tips:**

- The judges want to know about your staff, but more importantly they want to know what you do, day-to-day and in the longer term, to ensure that your staff enjoy working for you.
- What development opportunities are you providing for your staff? Include internal and external training.
- Within this answer, you could also provide information on the ways in which you attract staff. Do you use word of mouth or do you advertise in your local newspaper?
- Do your staff undergo an interview process or a trial period? Do you run any mentoring programs? What does your induction involve?
- Are you a family-focussed business? One strategy to retain staff could be offering flexible rosters as you recognise the need for your employees to take time out with their kids.

**Example:**

Ashley & Max has a low staff turnover rate, 80% of our staff have been with us since opening three years ago. We attribute this high staff retention to the following initiatives:

- **Recruitment** – To find the right people, we mostly use word-of-mouth. Being a regional community most people know each other, so it is easy for someone to recommend a friend or relative. As we are a family focussed café we like to hire mature staff who either have kids of their own, or have experience with them.

- **Induction and training** – All potential staff undergo a trial period to determine if the fit is right for both parties. Our induction takes place over two weeks and includes one-on-one mentoring from a staff member in a similar area, for example our head chef personally mentors all new kitchen staff. We conduct regular staff training sessions on a variety of topics, including customer service, tourism and local produce.

- **Wages and incentives** – Staff are paid well above the award rate and bonuses are given if the café achieves monthly targets. Staff are encouraged to challenge themselves by trialling new roles and taking on additional responsibility. Being a family-focussed cafe, we have very generous parental leave policies and are flexible with rosters as we understand that sometimes parents need to take time out for kids. We also host an annual staff day at a popular tourist hot spot, for example this year we all went whale watching in Albany.

**Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 252 words**
Section 6 Business ethics

6a – How do you ensure that your business minimises its impact on the environment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word count:</th>
<th>250 words</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred format for your answer:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Word count:</strong> 250 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️ Paragraphs</td>
<td>✔️ Bullet points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-headings</td>
<td>Map</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Tips:** | • This question is looking for practical ways in which you are minimising the environmental footprint of your business, for example, do you have rainwater tanks, LED lighting, a paperless office, recycling, or a carbon emission reduction strategy?  
• Include the environmental policies you have in place and how they are conveyed to your staff, clients and partners.  
• If possible, include outcomes, for example have your power or water bills reduced? |

Example:

Denmark is a beautiful town, in a stunning region, in a gorgeous State. We want to do our small part in helping to keep it that way. We try and minimise our impact on the environment through the following initiatives:

- **Rain water tanks** – It rains a LOT in Denmark and we take advantage of that through rainwater tanks which we installed this year. Our most recent water bill was down 58% as a result.
- **Recycling** – We separate all our recycling from normal waste and use biodegradable straws and unbleached chlorine-free napkins.
- **Garden** – We grow a wide range of seasonal herbs and vegetables on site and use food scraps from the kitchen as compost.
- **Monitor energy use** – We monitor our energy usage daily to help us reduce our carbon footprint. Low energy lighting has been installed throughout the café, computers are on a short standby mode, and all lights and power points are switched off when the café is closed. Our energy bill reduced by 9% as a result over the past 12 months.
- **Food packaging** – As well as making the best use of local seasonal produce in our menus, we do not use individually packaged items such as jams and instead use chef-made produce presented in refillable containers. Our kitchen deliveries arrive in reusable crates.
- **‘Green team’** – Volunteer staff from each area of the café initiate and oversee all our environmental initiatives. Our contractors and suppliers are made aware of our environmental management systems.

*Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 240 words*
Section 6 Business ethics

6b – Demonstrate how your business has had a positive effect on the local community.

Word count: 250 words

Preferred format for your answer:
- Paragraphs
- Bullet points
- Table
- Graphs
- Sub-headings
- Map
- Images
- Testimonial

Tips:
- This response should give the judges an idea of how your business is involved within the local community. For example, do you try to source supplies locally, employ local staff, donate to charities or participate in community events.
- Always provide outcomes for your involvement, for example the percentage of good sourced locally.

Example:
We love Denmark and have always tried to manage Ashley & Max so that it positively contributes to the local community. This has been achieved through partnerships with local suppliers, involvement in charity work, and active participation in local events and causes. Some specific examples of our involvement are detailed below:

- **Buy local policy** – We have a strict buy local policy and source 95% of our produce from local farmers and suppliers, including eggs, meat, fruit and bread.
- **Local staff** – Of our 15 staff, 10 were born and bred in Denmark or surrounds, and the remainder have lived in the region for more than two years. Employing local staff has been a great way for us to better understand the community and integrate into it.
- **Donations** – During the past 12 months Ashley & Max donated $3,000 worth of dining vouchers to local charity events, such as quiz nights.
- **Sponsorships** – Our café proudly sponsors a local soccer team and a local netball team.
- **Boards** – My husband is a board member of the Denmark Chamber of Commerce and Industry and I represent the café industry on the local tourism board.
- **Events** – Ashley & Max has been involved, through the supply of cakes, with two local charity events for breast cancer and autism. My husband and I have also volunteered our time to assist with set up and bump down of various community events.
- **Education** – I volunteer my time to present at local schools on the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

Example business – Ashley and Max Café in Denmark – 247 words
### Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>What strategies do you use to recruit, retain and motivate staff?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Joe Blogs Tyres (Tyre retailer and service centre)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Answer   | Seven of our eight staff members have been with us for more than three years. We take pride in running the business together and work like a big family.  
As a way of keeping our staff engaged, we have a very active social club with monthly events. We make sure our social club actively engages with our local community. In the last 12 months, we entered a Joe Blogs Tyres team in the local fishing competition, and won second prize. We have also organised a table at the local football team’s quiz night, and donated a full set of tyres with fitting as one of the prizes. We also regularly enter local charity sporting days (walks, triathlons etc.).  
The main social club event for the year is our Christmas party weekend. We close down for a weekend and book an area in a national park camping ground for all staff to bring their families, relax and socialise as a close team. This event is always the highlight of the staff’s year and I believe this and our monthly events assist us in retaining our staff. |

**Rate this response: ___ / 10**

**What could they have done better?**

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## Final tips

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow the rules – layout requirements, submission dates, word counts etc.</td>
<td>Don’t ignore the rules and lose points or be disqualified before you even start!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set aside enough time to complete the submission. Realistically, it could take you several weeks (working in short periods) to complete your submission.</td>
<td>Don’t leave it until the last minute and wonder why you’re sitting at your computer until 3am every night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact the awards coordinator if you need help with questions or guidelines – they are there to help.</td>
<td>Don’t ‘wing it’ and hope for the best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write your submission in a basic Word document before looking at design.</td>
<td>Don’t get excited about design and forget that the words you use are the most important thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write the questions in full at the top of each page or section (it won’t be included in your word count), including the question number, with your answer below. This will make it easier for the judges to read and score.</td>
<td>Don’t forget to write the question before the answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use an easy to read font, for example Tahoma, Calibri, Verdana, or Arial.</td>
<td>Don’t use Comic Sans (or similar).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use a medium font size, for example 11 or 12 point.</td>
<td>Don’t make your font so small that even a judge with 20/20 vision has difficulty reading it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure images are high quality and clearly represent your staff and your business operations.</td>
<td>Don’t use ‘stock’ photos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include testimonials. Source them from your social media pages and review sites, you could also include those you have received directly through feedback forms or email. Be sure to accredit the source and date.</td>
<td>Don’t place testimonials within the body of the text, display them in a separate text box off to the side instead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design your submission to make it visually appealing for judges and easier to read. Stick to your branding.</td>
<td>Don’t forget that judges will be reading many submissions, make yours stand out with design.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stick to the word count. It’s best to write too much and then edit back to the word count, rather than trying to find extra things to say.</td>
<td>Don’t write significantly less than the word count as this means you are unlikely to have provided sufficient information. Words that go over the word count won’t be judged, so all that information will be lost. Use the word count to help you write succinctly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Final tips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Do</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carefully read each question before preparing your answer, making</td>
<td>Don’t start writing without a firm plan.</td>
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<td>notes as you go. Avoid repeating the same facts and information</td>
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<td>throughout the submission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write your submission one section at a time and give yourself</td>
<td>Don’t try to complete the entire submission in one sitting.</td>
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<td>breathing space to revisit sections with fresh eyes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Answer all parts of every question.</td>
<td>Don’t skip key elements of a question, or entire questions by rushing.</td>
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<td>Remember that all financial information provided will be treated in</td>
<td>Don’t fail to give accurate financial data.</td>
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<tr>
<td>strict confidence and viewed only by the judges.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Double check your content before you submit anything and use a</td>
<td>Don’t assume a spellchecker will do the job for you.</td>
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<td>reliable proof reader who will give valuable feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Look at your business through fresh eyes; sometimes when we are</td>
<td>Don’t underestimate the uniqueness of your business.</td>
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<td>immersed in our business we forget that what we consider ordinary might</td>
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<td>be extraordinary to others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Include a map if your business is in a remote area as it will assist</td>
<td>Don’t include a small, hard to read map that doesn’t add to your business</td>
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<tr>
<td>the judges to better understand your operations.</td>
<td>‘story’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write your submission in the first person (I, me, we, us) and don’t be</td>
<td>Don’t write in the third person (ABC company) unless your business is</td>
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<tr>
<td>afraid to show your personality; the judges want to know about you and</td>
<td>large and you have outsourced the writing to a trusted staff member or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your business.</td>
<td>consultant.</td>
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