

Fairtrade Business Awards : A Guide

In March 2012, Bristol Fairtrade held the first ever Fairtrade Business Awards. There were 35 entries for the 5 Awards. The Awards Ceremony, hosted by George Alagiah, was attended by 124 local business people representing 59 local businesses and press, including 2 local MPs and the Lord Mayor.



In March 2013, the Awards were expanded to the South West region. There were 46 entries for 6 Awards.

The Awards Ceremony, hosted by Levi Roots, was attended by 158 local business people.

In March 2014, Lucy Siegle hosted the Awards. There were 52 entries for 7 Awards and 150 people attended.

In March 2015, Divine and Aardman Animations hosted. There were 77 entries for 8 Awards and 152 people attended.

Aim:	To increase the visibility of Fairtrade through an award scheme which provides a tangible benefit for the organisations participating, including reputation and increased trade.
Objectives:	(i) To support businesses who already actively promote or sell Fairtrade
	(ii) To raise awareness of Fairtrade in businesses who are only passively, or not currently, engaged with Fairtrade
	(iii) To increase the amount of Fairtrade products bought/sold/ consumed
	(iv) To provide an additional marketing resource for those achieving a Fairtrade award

Categories

Best Fairtrade Accommodation/Conference Centre

Best Fairtrade Café or Restaurant

Best Fairtrade Office

Best Fairtrade Retailer – Multiple Products

Best Fairtrade Retailer – Single Product

Best Fairtrade College or University

Best Fairtrade Advocate

Best Fairtrade Business winner is the top-scoring business from all categories.

Each category has bronze, silver and gold levels.

Key factors for success

1. Partnership - partnering with local Chamber of Commerce or local business organisation, to help promote the awards to their membership, and give them business kudos. We partnered with Business West (who hosted the first Awards ceremony) and Destination Bristol and both had reps on the Steering group.
2. Sponsorship – to fund the Awards we sought sponsorship from local companies. The Co-operative were our main sponsors for 3 years, followed by Shared Interest Foundation. We sought sponsorship for each of the Awards from local businesses. We engaged 3 law firms in sponsoring awards and raised £3,000 - £5,000 in sponsorship each year which covered all costs as well as Co-ordinator time to project manage the event.
3. Media – important to engage a media partner (Bristol and Swindon Business News in our case) early on to have regular media output at each stage of the process:
 - (i) To advertise that they are being held

- (ii) To invite applications
- (iii) To give one week's notice before deadline
- (iv) To advertise Awards ceremony
- (v) To announce winners
- (vi) Individual email and Twitter invitations to key local Fairtrade businesses to apply for the awards, as well as the generic invitation via press and publicity.

4. Criteria

Applicants needed to prove support for Fairtrade in 4 ways:

- (i) Using Fairtrade products
- (ii) Informing and engaging staff and customers about Fairtrade
- (iii) Support for Fairtrade at management level
- (iv) Involvement in and support for Fairtrade events and campaigns in their local town/area

We wanted to ensure maximum number of entries whilst challenging companies to do more. This response from one business shows this had the desired effect:

'in order to participate we effectively did an audit of what we were doing already, and we also improved a few areas on the spot, advertising Fairtrade more widely, for example, on our website and in our offices'

Victoria Finlay, Director of Communications, Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)

- 5. Awards Ceremony – needs to be in high profile venue, preferably with local celebrity or leader hosting and presenting the Awards. Invite all local leaders and large businesses to attend even if they did not enter the Awards. We are lucky enough to have a Fairtrade producer from Nicaragua each year through our Twinning, and she has a huge impact on the audience, inspiring businesses to take more steps to use and promote Fairtrade.

6. Local partners to deliver the ceremony

We tried to engage as many local businesses as possible in the process

- (i) Bristol Blue Glass designed and made the Awards for us at cost
- (ii) A local graphic design company designed the logo, award certificates and event programmes at low cost
- (iii) Local sponsors for the Awards



Outcomes

Objective 1: Press coverage in 20+ local newspapers and websites, as well as radio interviews, mean that the winners received a huge amount of publicity as well as an opportunity to explain why they support Fairtrade.

Objective 2: Over 50% of businesses that won an Award posted an article about it on their websites, hugely increasing the presence of Fairtrade in local business web space. Many of them emailed to say the Award had increased their commitment to Fairtrade, and I had emails from 4 companies who had attended the ceremony but not applied this year, saying they wanted to apply, or in one case, sponsor the Awards next year.

Objective 3: With increased commitment to Fairtrade comes increased sales. Peros, Fairtrade catering suppliers, gave out all their catalogues at the first Awards ceremony and had numerous enquiries after the event.

Objective 4: All winners (bronze, silver and gold) receive an e-logo to use on websites and letters etc as well as a certificate to display in the office to advertise their commitment to Fairtrade and demonstrate their ethical commitment. Lush display their award very prominently in the Bristol store and were telling customers all about it during trading the following day, raising the public profile of Fairtrade.

Jenny Foster, Bristol and South West Fairtrade Co-ordinator 2015