



Recognising:
Roberto Nickson, unsplash.com/@rpnickson

Running remote

How to manage a remote awards program, without physical events.

**AWARD
FORCE**



Recognising: Adrien Olichon,
unsplash.com/@adrienolichon

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Intro

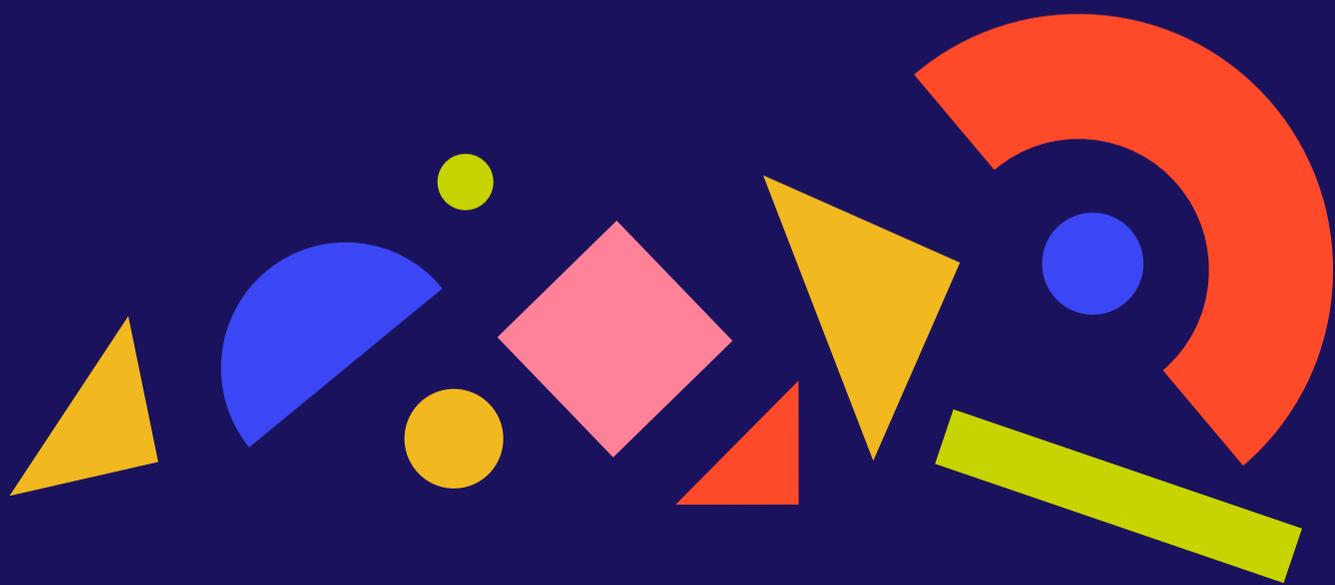
Awards programs regularly include live events – program manager meetings, live judging sessions, and typically a culminating, well-attended awards ceremony. But, if circumstances force you to cancel your live events, your awards program does not have to stop.

First, it's time to take a minute and exhale. We come bearing good news! You can avoid cancellation and postponements. **It's simply time to pivot your program to digital** – to take your awards program online and continue to recognise excellence in your industry and field without physical events.

Yes, it's possible! And, you might even be surprised how easy it actually is. As a 100% remote company, Award Force understands how to run things virtually. We know what it takes to run remote meetings, how to make assessments in hiring online without ever meeting a person face-to-face, and we're experts on how to use our awards software to facilitate virtual awards, grants and contests.

And, we've created this guide to help you every step of the way. (We also have a team of dedicated and readily available experts to help too, should you need them!)

Keep calm and read on to learn how to run your awards program remotely.



01

Moving to remote operations

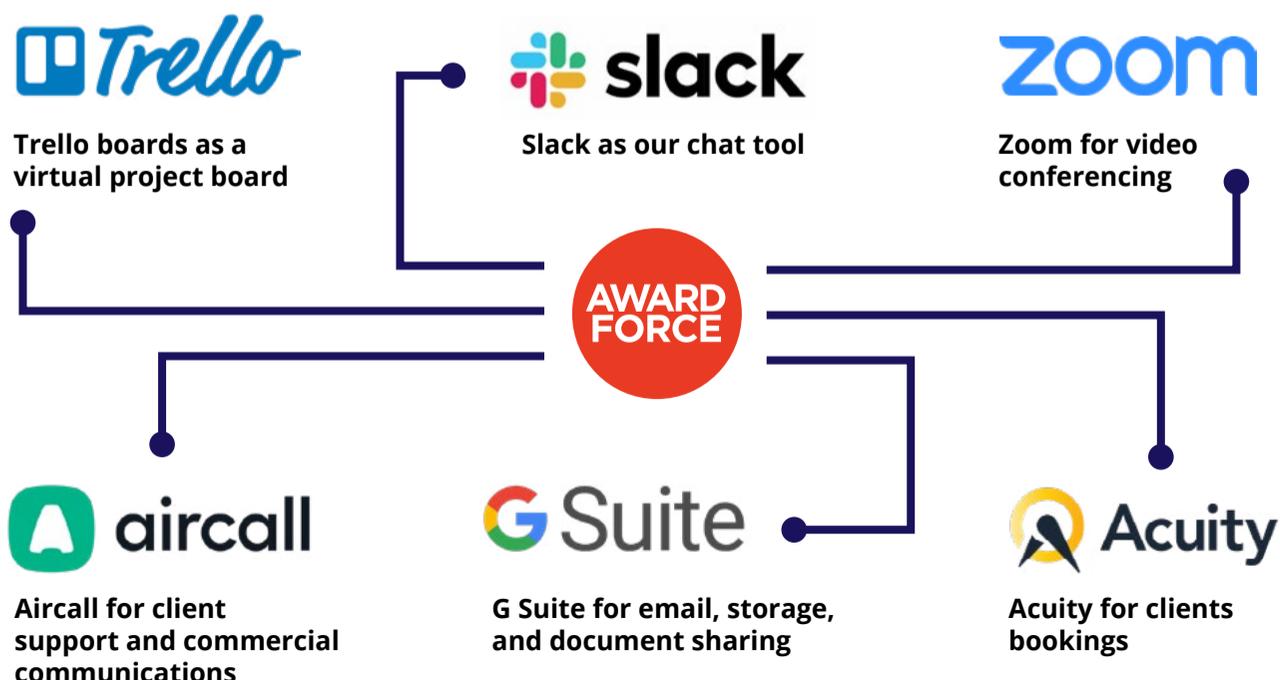
Recognising: Hanson Lu, unsplash.com/hanson-lu

It can be a scary challenge to change how you operate. While more companies and organisations than ever before are pivoting to virtual environments, remote work is not a new trend.

While technology makes remote operations easy, it's also important to understand the mindset and leadership required to manage a remote team. As Jason Fried, author of "Remote: Office Not Required" recently stated on Twitter, *"Working remotely is not buying Zoom and filling your time with video conferences. Proper remote working requires a shift in mindset, a dissolution of fear of the unknown, and putting trust in your people."*

Here a few tools and tips for your team's success, from our remote team:

Our favourite tools of the remote trade



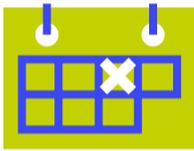
Internal communications

In a virtual work environment, effective communication – often across time zones – is vital. Our team relies heavily on Slack but there are several choices available on the market, so assess what will work best for you. With Slack, you can create multiple channels, each related to its own topic, such as sales, marketing, operations. We also have a few lighthearted channels to foster employee engagement and friendship where we chat about our pets, families, travels and favourite recipes.

Instant messaging is a fast and effective addition to email correspondence and keeps our team connected, despite our locations across the globe.

Productivity + time management

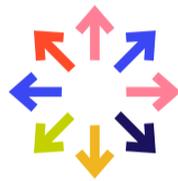
Most people experience an uptick in productivity when working remotely. But it's important to put policies in place to keep your entire team productive, happy and healthy. We recommend:



A regular schedule of weekly activities: Meetings, to-dos, and deadlines that everyone in your team is across.



Regular video chats and meetings for work and project updates, including one-on-ones with your team



A project management tool like Trello or Basecamp, to organise your work and set your team up for success



Clear policies about work hours and what is expected, ensuring people take proper rest and sign off when finished

Client support

With a distributed customer support team, it's helpful to use a cloud-based phone system and call centre software to help manage and support your clients. This is a simple way to distribute and manage your program support workload. At Award Force, we use Aircall, it's reliable and offers a good quality line.

Valuable remote resources for further learning

- [The Fast guide to going remote... right now](#)
- [The Remote Work Summit 2020](#)
- [The Best virtual team building activities](#)
- [REMOTE: Office Not Required](#)



02

Using software to manage your program

Recognising: [Burst, pexels.com/@burst](https://burst.pexels.com/@burst)

Managing your awards program online with a cloud-based software not only saves time, it's also less stressful. We promise – awards management software will make your life easier. And it is vital when moving your operations remote, where every participant in your program – whether program manager, judge, or entrant – can access the platform online, via the cloud. Not to mention, you can finally say goodbye to those pesky paper forms and PDFs.

Award Force revolutionises the awards management experience, helping you streamline and reduce administrative processes and decrease support calls from entrants and judges so you can focus on making your awards the best they can be.

Here is how you can use our software to manage your awards program remotely no matter the geographical distribution of your team and participants, and without any need for physical events:

Save time and stay organised

The Award Force platform offers a host of powerful online management tools, which you'll have at your disposal, no matter the size of your program, number of entrants, or size of the management team. (We have no limits or hidden charges on users or program entries, so as many people as you wish can access the platform.) Program managers can easily track, manage, tag, filter, search and report on entries in real-time.

You can keep your program clutter-free and in top shape with powerful admin features like manage duplicates and plagiarism detection, which can be used on an individual entry level or in bulk.

And you have granular control over the roles and permissions of everybody who interacts with your program online. No matter where your team is located, you can work in parallel in Award Force.

Divide the workload

For awards programs that have entries and/or judging arranged by say, geographic area—it's easy to divide and manage these with multiple chapters.

Award Force provides helpful functionality to organise your program by entry dates or categories, and you can assign chapter managers to oversee entries and judges for a particular chapter. You might want to report on entries, by chapter. And you can set up judging panels (groups of judges) to judge specific chapters, ideal for virtual assessment.

Manage your program information – all in one place

Your program is unique, and we want to help you keep it that way. With Award Force, you can provide your users with relevant and in-context information they need to nominate, enter or judge in your program.

It's easy to directly update and manage content immediately, with no developers needed. There is a range of flexible features and functions, designed to keep your program participants informed, every step of the way, including:

- **Default content** – All new accounts start off with helpful default copy, provided to help you get started fast. Edit, delete or add new content as you please.
- **Content blocks** – A fast way to put content where you need it across the platform. You control the format, the text and can include high-res images and video too.
- **Adaptable language** – You control the terminology. Want to change the word “entries” to “submissions” instead? No problem. Award Force uses several words and phrases repeatedly in various locations around the platform— and you can change them to suit your program. It's easy and efficient.

Gather actionable data insights

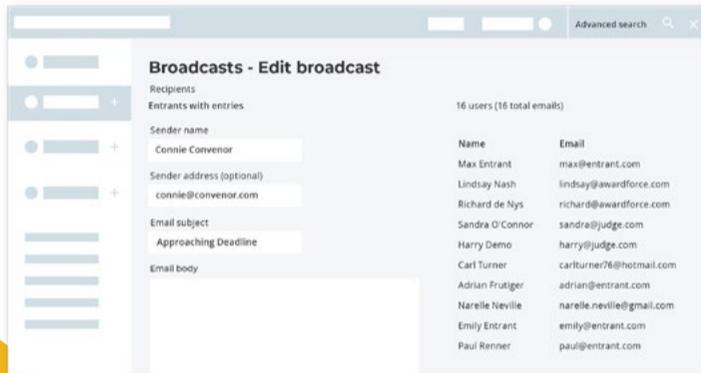
Once you take your program online, it's easy to reap the data benefits. Award Force allows you to easily monitor data in real-time, such as entry submission status, judging assignments, results, and more.

You'll always have access to all your program data, and you can export and bulk download what you need, when you need it. By having all your data online, it's easy to email and share with program managers and others in your organisation. No paper needed.

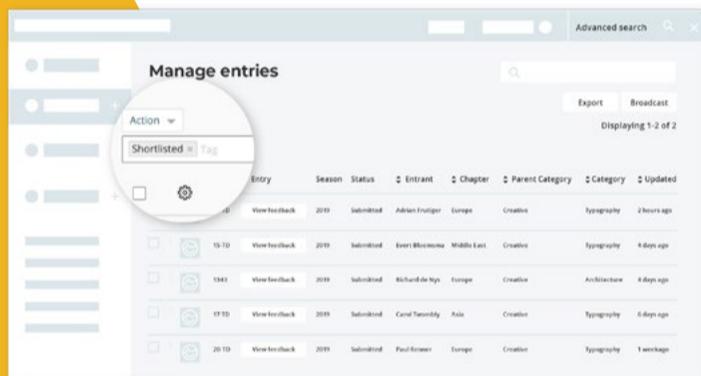
02

Communicate with your participants

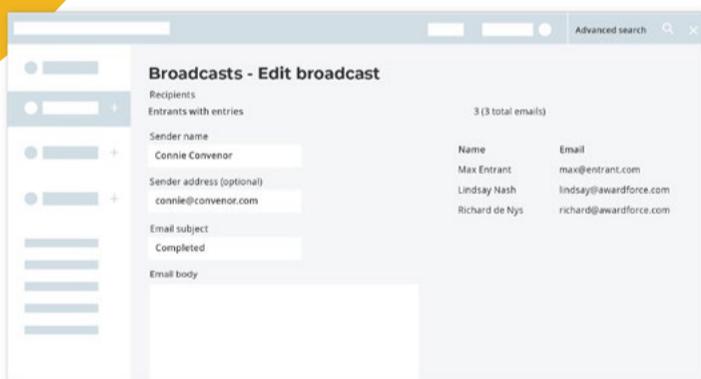
With no face-to-face events, you'll need to pivot your communication strategy to digital, as well. In the Award Force platform, it's easy to communicate with your entrants in each stage of your program with these features:



Broadcasts – a way to send emails to specific, registered users directly from the platform. For example, you can send registered users a reminder to finish their entry before the deadline, effectively increasing your submitted entries. Or you can send program updates, like important dates or winner announcements.



Tagged entry notification – a way to send emails to entrants with entries at the time a tag is applied. Tags are typically applied by program or chapter managers and can mark an entry as a “finalist,” for example, which would then trigger an automatic email to the entrant letting them know. This feature makes use of merge fields and other custom fields to personalise the emails. **Time-saver!**



Review flow notifications – a way to send emails to entrants, managers or third-party recipients about the status of an entry. Once a step in the review flow has been completed, an email can automatically be triggered to inform the relevant party. This can be done on an individual entry level or in bulk. Also a **time-saver!**

Security and integrity built in

A SaaS platform like Award Force provides the advantage of top-notch security features to protect your program's data.

All of the software's features are architected and implemented with best-practice security, privacy standards and protection of data integrity. You'll be able to rest easier knowing your program's data is safe and secure, no matter where you and your community of participants are located.



03

Entrant recruitment and engagement

Recognising: Steven Lasry, unsplash.com/@stevenlasry

Digital marketing makes it easy to recruit entrants to your awards program. With an easy platform for entrants to submit their applications, Award Force clients achieve 26.35% growth in entries, season-on-season.

Here are ways you can drive entries to your program, online, with Award Force.

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01

Get social

Don't worry, we don't mean organising a large gathering. We're talking about social media, from the privacy of your home or office. It's surprisingly affordable to get your messaging and content out in front of large, targeted audiences across social media these days with as little as a sponsored post. You can keep it as simple as stock photos with your program information and a link to your award website or dive in deeper and promote your program with art and visuals from previous winners. Award Force boasts beautiful galleries for you to showcase your entries, making it easy to share visually engaging content from your program.

02

Social sharing

Speaking of social, Award Force has built-in social sharing features to make it easy for your entrants to share their participation as soon as they hit submit, putting your program in front of each entrant's online community.

03

03

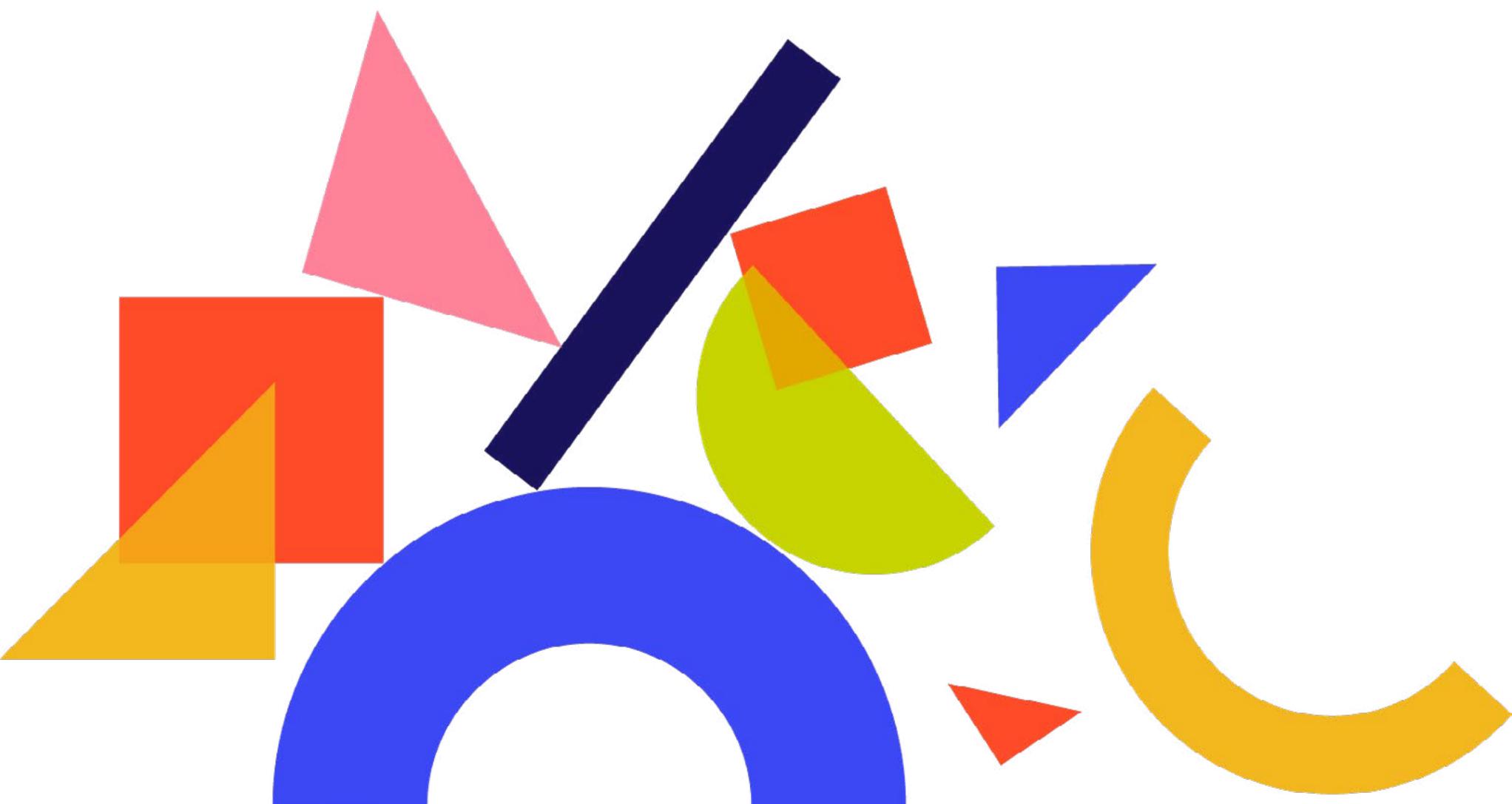
Email marketing

It's no secret that email marketing is effective. And with one streamlined place for entrants to read all program requirements and enter the program, it's easy to market your awards program entry page.

04

Advertise online

Get your program in front of a large audience with search and display advertising. Even a small budget can go a long way in placing your awards program in front of a relevant audience.





04

How to create a virtual judging experience

Recognising: Pixabay, pexels.com/@pixabay

There are a number of reasons why some awards programs choose to host a live judging event for their awards program. It creates hype around the contest and program, it helps judges work together, and it creates buzz for your program's results.

But running a live judging event can also have its challenges. For programs with a large geographical participant base, it can be difficult to bring judges together. It can be a costly endeavour when you factor in event costs, associated hotels and travel. And, unforeseen circumstances can sometimes make it challenging to attend.

But your awards program doesn't have to fall victim to viruses. Your live judging event or meeting can continue, virtually, and it's easier than you think.

Here's how Award Force can facilitate a virtual judging event:

Choose a video or chat conferencing tool

There are many popular webcasting tools on the market, options like Zoom or Skype for Work. If you are not using video, there are also chat options like Slack or Google hangouts. Choose a tool that fits the needs of your program assessments.

Consider your assessment process

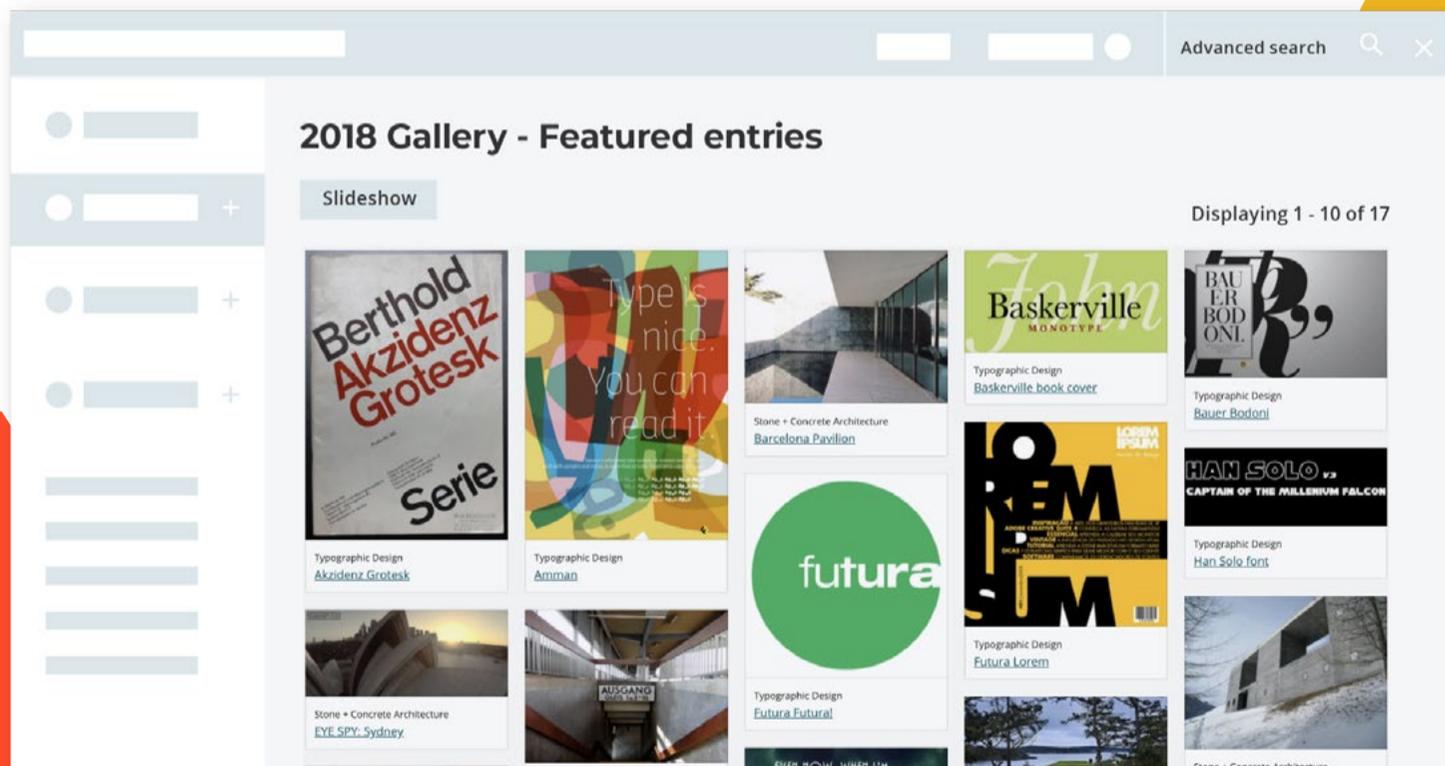
Will you allow your judges to talk to one another? Or should each assessment be made anonymously? Will feedback and scores be public as soon as they are posted? Or should they be hidden until all assessments are finished? Consider how and if your judges need to communicate with one another or your program managers. Is a chat group best? Should you provide multiple "virtual rooms"? Do they need video conferencing to see and communicate in real-time like at an actual event? Or will a chat tool suffice?

04

Make a plan

- Communicate with your judges. Prepare a briefing document, and provide this at the start of your program, and, if possible, when the judge agrees to participate in your awards program.
- Set a date and time for the judging event. Let your judges know well in advance the date and time of the judging event, and remember to keep time zones in mind. Send reminders a month out, a week out, and the day before to make sure your judges are ready and present for the important event.
- Prepare an event agenda. A week before the judging event, provide an event agenda, letting your judges know what to expect, what technology they will need, how much time the event will require, and a phone number, hotline or email address to use if they have any problems during the event. If you have multiple stages of judging, it's important to lay these out, and let judges know what to expect, and at what points they will be asked to participate.
- Communicate technology requirements with your judges in advance. Let them know what tool you will use, and ask them to test it ahead of time. Provide system requirements well in advance so they can address any problems.

Tips on using Award Force to facilitate live, virtual judging





Use the slideshow feature to showcase entries. Just like you would at your actual living judging event on a projector, showcase your program entries with Award Force's slideshow feature on your shared screen. This way, all judges can see the same entry at the same time and discuss, if appropriate. **TIP: It's a good idea for the program manager or event moderator to use two screens to easily go back and forth between screenshares.**

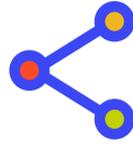


Use tags for quick marking of winners or finalists. Tag winners from the leaderboard or the Manage entries view in real-time as assessments are made. Be sure to have tags ready in advance, making it a quick and efficient way to mark entries in real-time.

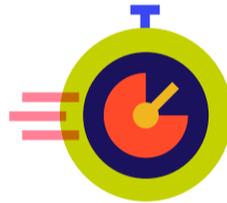
Take a dry run, or two

Once you've set up your web conferencing, be sure to give it a practice run. Invite program managers or other colleagues to join the call, and go through your event agenda. In Award Force it's easy to make test comments and feedback, and then go back and delete those before the actual judging event.

Make sure your computer and network can handle the bandwidth, and test it well before the event to work out any kinks.



Share scores, when applicable. You can enable the Share scores feature on the second round of judging so everyone can see all scores on each entry. But, if you need to keep scores private, the program manager or host can record comments in the manager's view. And, you can use the gallery view in Award Force to show each entry without scores or comments.



Set time limits, if needed. If your judging is unmoderated, your judges can simply log on at a specified time, and assess each entry within a certain timeframe as set forth in their instructions.

05

Recognising: Thomas Leuthard,
flickr.com/tomasleuthard

How to maintain (+ grow) sponsor revenue in a virtual environment

For many awards programs, sponsors are a vital funding and revenue source. And, without physical events or a gala to showcase their participation and branding, it's essential to lay out the value you can still provide.

Organisations want to know what they get out of sponsoring your program. Will you be offering them increased exposure in that new market they have been eyeing? An increased social presence on Twitter or Facebook? Increased brand recall when associated to a specific product type?

Present the value

It's important to have a great proposal. Show your current and potential sponsors the value and visibility you can provide through your awards program. The Award Force platform offers a range of sponsor placements and branding opportunities for high visibility, including:

The screenshot shows a registration page with the following sections:

- Start here:** Welcome to the awards and grants centre for The Grand Audience Chamber. It includes a list of steps: 1. Register an account, 2. Start your entry (and save as you go), 3. Submit your entry. Below this is a 'PRIZES' section listing Grand Prize (trip to the Exposed Galaxy), Gold Prize (\$500 gift certificate), Silver Prize (\$100 gift certificate), and Bronze Prize (certificate of achievement). It also mentions that all participants will be invited to the Awards Gala.
- Register:** A form with fields for First name, Last name, Email, Password, and Confirm password. It includes checkboxes for 'I have read and agree to the privacy policy, cookie policy and terms of service' and 'I agree to receive notification and communication emails or SMSs from The Grand Audience Chamber'. A 'Register' button is at the bottom.
- Log in:** A form with fields for Email or mobile and Password. It includes a 'Remember me' checkbox, a 'Log in' button, and a 'Reset password' link. Below this is an 'or log in' section with buttons for Google, Facebook, and Twitter.
- or register with:** Buttons for Google, Facebook, and Twitter.

Program registration page

Entry form, including category and chapter pages

Email headers and footers sent from within the platform

Social shares upon entry submission/completion

Provide access to your community

You may have an audience that your sponsor wants to reach. Perhaps offer them access to your community with branded emails. Or ask relevant companies to provide the prize. For example, if you run an awards program that recognises high performing schools, you could reach out to an EdTech company to provide the grand prize – a sponsored high-tech classroom. Sponsors find immense value in providing a product or service they directly sell themselves since they get to expose their product/service in tandem with their brand.

Create digital opportunities

In our digital world, social currency matters. Think about what you can offer your sponsors. If you have a large social following, for example, provide visibility and sponsored posts to get their brand in front of your community. Think about ways you can connect and thrive together, in a digital partnership.



06

Leveraging video inside + out of your program

Recognising: Flo Maderebner, pexels.com/@fmaderebner

It's no secret – video is popular. So much so, that more video content is uploaded in 30 days than all major U.S. television networks have created in 30 years!

Video conveys a message like no other medium, and with Award Force, you can leverage the power of video easily, with our powerful high-definition video streaming capabilities.

You can use it to accept video submissions, augment written entries, or require entrants to submit a video to tell you why they should be the winner of your coveted award. The possibilities are really endless on how you can leverage it, but here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Provide how-to videos for your entrants and judges**
Let them know details about entry and judging. A quick how-to they can watch directly in the platform where they already are.
- **Request videos as required criteria for entrants**
Perhaps it's why they should be the winner. Or maybe it's to supplement the data they've provided for their submission. These videos are great content shares for the following season when you are looking for visuals to attract new entrants.
- **Produce multimedia content featuring your judges**
This could be an interview done remotely through video chat or a video your judges record themselves.

Once you have a library of video assets from your program, you'll also have an endless supply of marketing content you can use in promotions, on your website, or perhaps a new YouTube channel.

Share videos often on social media, and don't forget to tag your judges, entrants and other participants so they can see and share it, too! There is nothing wrong with repetitive sharing in today's day and age!

07

Celebrating the winners, virtually

There are many ways to celebrate the winners, and a physical gala is not required.

Here are some creative ways you can announce and celebrate your winners, without a physical event.

Create a video, live or pre-recorded

You can create video announcements where a judge or program manager/ host announces the winners. To add more excitement around the event, you could also do it live, and make sure your finalists are all available via Facetime at a specific time. Then, you can livestream the Facetime call, and share it across social in real-time.

Host a virtual awards gala

If your awards program culminates in a final awards gala, but you're avoiding physical events, it's completely possible to create a virtual event. While virtual reality technology is a growing trend at events, it can be expensive. But it's possible to create a remote-hosted event without fancy technology, where participants can simply call in and participate, with or without video. Enlist presenters and speakers who are comfortable on webcam, and plan the event in advance. Who will announce the winners? Who will be on camera? How can the audience participate? A video conferencing tool like Zoom can easily facilitate this type of event.

Celebrate through service

An awards announcement doesn't have to be all glitter and glam. Consider using the celebration as an opportunity to move your community or industry forward with a service project that builds on the winners' well-recognised talent and skillset. It will build further respect and integrity into your program, and provide new opportunities for your winners.

Conclusion

Running an awards program remotely is an excellent way to keep your organisation moving forward and your community engaged. And don't forget the reason we are doing it all – to continue recognising the excellence around us.

We hope you find working remotely as productive and successful as we do. But, if you'd like more help, our friendly experts are available Monday through Friday, across the globe.

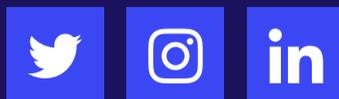
Award excellence, beautifully.

Running a successful awards program is easy with Award Force.

[Watch a demo](#) to see how Award Force provides diverse programs across the globe the foundation they need to succeed.



Award Force is the leader in award management software. Easily manage your award or recognition program and create a great experience for your entrants, judges and program managers. awardforce.com



Found this guide useful?

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