

Fairtrade Business Awards : A Guide

In March 2012, Bristol Fairtrade held the first ever Fairtrade Business Awards.

There were 35 entries for the 4 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.



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 Fairtrade in their day to day activities
	(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

Best Fairtrade Catering Outlet

Best Fairtrade Office

Best Fairtrade Retailer

Best Fairtrade Business – over all winner to be selected from all entrants

Each category had 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 and give them business kudos. We partnered with Business West (who hosted the Awards) and Destination Bristol and both had reps on the Steering group. Engage with Local Authority as well.
2. Sponsorship – to fund the Awards we sought sponsorship from local companies. The Co-operative were our main sponsors and we sought sponsorship for each of the Awards from local businesses. We engaged 3 law firms in sponsoring awards and raised £4,800 in sponsorship which covered all costs as well as Co-ordinator time to project manage the event.
3. Media partner – important to engage 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

4. Criteria – see attached. 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 were lucky enough to have a Fairtrade producer from Nicaragua speak, and she had a huge impact on the audience, inspiring businesses to take more steps to use and promote Fairtrade.
6. Local partners
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
 - (iv) Individual invitations to key local Fairtrade businesses to apply for the awards, as well as the generic invitation via press and publicity.

Outcomes

Objective 1: Press coverage in 9 local newspapers and websites, as well as 3 radio interviews, meant 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 Awards ceremony and have had numerous enquiries since the event.

Objective 4: All winners (bronze, silver and gold) received 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 displayed their award very prominently in the Bristol store and were telling customers all about it during trading the following day.

Future plans

Criteria for each category will be enhanced next year. Given the low numbers of entrants for the accommodation category we will review this one and look to make more approaches eg via tourist bodies.

Given the success and the buzz surrounding the Awards we aim to extend the awards to cover the south west region in 2013.

*Jenny Foster, Bristol Fairtrade Co-ordinator
April 2012*