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Business Support Guides

Award Winners' PR Toolkit 2021/22

Helping tourism businesses make the most of winning an award

Introduction

Congratulations on winning an award. As well as recognising your quality product, this win represents an urgent PR opportunity.

Media coverage won't magically ensue: you'll have to be proactive and tell the right journalists why they should cover your business.

Produced for those who are time-poor and not marketing professionals, this PR Toolkit advises you on how to secure and maximise the media coverage around your award win. It is split into four main sections covering **who** to contact, **what** exactly to say, **how** best to say it and **when** to say it. You can also read case studies from previous winners who have scored media coverage on the back of winning an award. The final section focuses on the world of 'influencers'.

Good luck in making the most of your fantastic award win!



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“To me, the best PR pitches are the ones which ‘get’ the publication and the readership, sum up the idea in a snappy subject header and then expand – briefly! – on the idea in a subsequent paragraph. They’ll explain why it’s newsy, and why it is a great fit for Metro.”

- **Laura Millar,**
Travel Editor of Metro

Who?

Here is an overview of the UK's many media outlets which produce travel content:

Type	Examples	Audience	Best contact
National broadsheet newspaper	The Times, The Guardian, Daily Mail	Readers with money to spend, generally 30+	Deputy Travel Editor (if one) or Travel Editor
National broadsheet website	theguardian.com/travel , telegraph.co.uk/travel	Readers with money to spend, usually more millennial than the print version	Digital Travel Editor
National tabloid newspaper	The Sun, The Daily Mirror	A wide readership and price range, with luxury less likely to feature	Travel Editor NB: The Express, Mirror and Star share editors
Regional newspaper (see below)	Evening Standard, Liverpool Daily Post	A wide readership and price range	Travel or Features Editor
Regional magazine (see below)	Cornwall Life, Midlands Living, Round & About	Visiting tourists, local residents	Features or News Editor
Travel magazine	Wanderlust, Suitcase, Condé Nast Traveller, Coast	Regular, affluent or niche (e.g. adventure) travellers	Features Editor or Editorial Assistant
Lifestyle magazine	Psychologies, Prima, Sainsbury's Magazine, Absolutely Mama	A wide range aged 30+, foodies, mothers, etc	Travel (if one) or Features Editor
Other niche-sector magazine	Horse & Rider, Cyclist, Breathe, The World of Interiors	Hobbyists or devotees of a specific activity, art, science or practice	Features (if one) or News Editor
Travel-trade magazine	Travel Trade Gazette, Travel Weekly	Travel agents (including shops and online)	Deputy News Editor
Travel website	Adventure.com , Mummy Travels , LoveExploring	Avid travellers or niche travellers	Features Editor (if one) or Editor
Lifestyle website	Stylist.co.uk , MarieClaire.co.uk	A wide readership, typically more millennial	Travel (if one) or Features Editor

Type	Examples	Audience	Best contact
National radio show	Traveller's Tree (BBC Radio 4)	Affluent, mostly 50+, plus aged 35-54	Series Producer
Regional radio station	Island FM, Radio Borders, Lincs FM	Affluent, mostly 50+ local residents	News team
Travel podcast	The Carry On , Footnotes (Cicerone)	Travel fanatics of all ages, sometimes niche	Usually the podcasters
Travel TV show	BBC World Service's The Travel Show	Travel fanatics, usually 50+ and affluent	Series Producer
Local TV channel	BBC London, BBC East Midlands	Local residents, usually aged 40+	News Editor

Regional newspapers

As this is such a practical target area for award-winners, we've listed the main regional newspaper publishers – although please be aware that this isn't an exhaustive list, and some of your biggest local papers may be published by other companies:

Media Group	Examples of Titles	Website
Reach (formerly Trinity Mirror)	Manchester Evening News, Liverpool Echo, Daily Post (Wales), Birmingham Mail	reachplc.com/our-newsbrands
Newsquest	Dorset Echo, In Cumbria, The Argus, Oxford Mail	newsquest.co.uk/news-brands
JPI Media (formerly Johnston Press); owned by National World	Lancashire Evening Post, Sunderland Echo, The (Sheffield) Star	jpimedia.co.uk/newsbrands
Archant	Eastern Daily Press, Ham & High, North Devon Gazette	archant.co.uk/news-brands
Midland News Association (MNA)	Express & Star, Shropshire Star, Shrewsbury Chronicle	mnamedia.co.uk/news-titles
Tindle Newspapers	Cornish Times, Surrey & Hants News, Island FM radio station	tindlenews.co.uk/brands

Regional magazines

Media Group	Examples of Titles	Website
Archant	The Life (e.g. Cornwall Life) and Resident (e.g. Suffolk Resident) titles	archant.co.uk/magazines
Newsquest	The Living (e.g. Hampshire Living) and retirement-lifestyle Prime series	living-magazines.co.uk prime-magazine.co.uk
Midland News Association (MNA)	Select Magazine, Shropshire Magazine, Gourmet Shropshire	mnamedia.co.uk/magazine-titles
Other smaller/independent publishers (print)	Pride Magazines, Lincolnshire Engine House Media, Cornwall Loop, Yorkshire & Lancashire RMC Media, Yorkshire Dalesman, Yorkshire Round & About, southern England	pridemagazines.co.uk enginehousemedia.co.uk looppublishing.co.uk rmcmedia.co.uk dalesman.co.uk roundandabout.co.uk
Other regional lifestyle magazines (online)	Index Digital, SE England Viva, Manchester	indexdigital.co.uk vivamanchester.co.uk

Find as many local magazines as you can and trawl the staff page to see who publishes it, and their contact details.

Choosing targets

That's a lot of options, right? Don't be overwhelmed; the important thing here is to select key targets.

Which newspapers, magazines, podcasts, etc. might your typical customer – or the customer segment you want to reach – be likeliest to follow? Those are the ones you should target. Rather than trying a vague catch-all tack, make personalised approaches to five or ten relevant, viable outlets. This is likelier to succeed, and will take you less time.

Bear in mind that national newspapers and lifestyle magazines will be the fussiest (and most besieged!), so you'll need something truly compelling and unusual to interest them. But we'll discuss this later, in the **What?** section.

Useful links:

- newsworks.org.uk lists the latest circulation figures of national newspapers, plus details of their readership
- abc.org.uk does the same, also covering many magazines and websites
- media.info/radio has useful radio-station statistics, including local stations
- visitbritain.org/visitor-segmentation has an overview of the main domestic tourism consumer segments as defined by VisitEngland

Top Tips: Tracking down contacts

1. Google the name of an outlet plus the relevant job title – i.e. ["The Times" + "Travel Editor"]. Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram can then help you check whether the info is up to date
2. Read or listen to the travel section/magazine/show/etc, and see what names come up
3. To get an email address, phone the outlet's switchboard and ask nicely. Note that you may simply be connected, so have your idea ready to pitch orally (see the **What?** section)
4. Are there travel writers who regularly cover stories about your specialism (e.g. a family-travel specialist)? If so, try them. They'll likely be a freelancer whose website lists their email address
5. Your local Destination Organisation (DO) may have regional contacts. Their details can be found at visitbritain.org/business-advice/find-local-support

Case Study #1

Jacqui Gooding, owner, Letheringham Water Mill Cottages

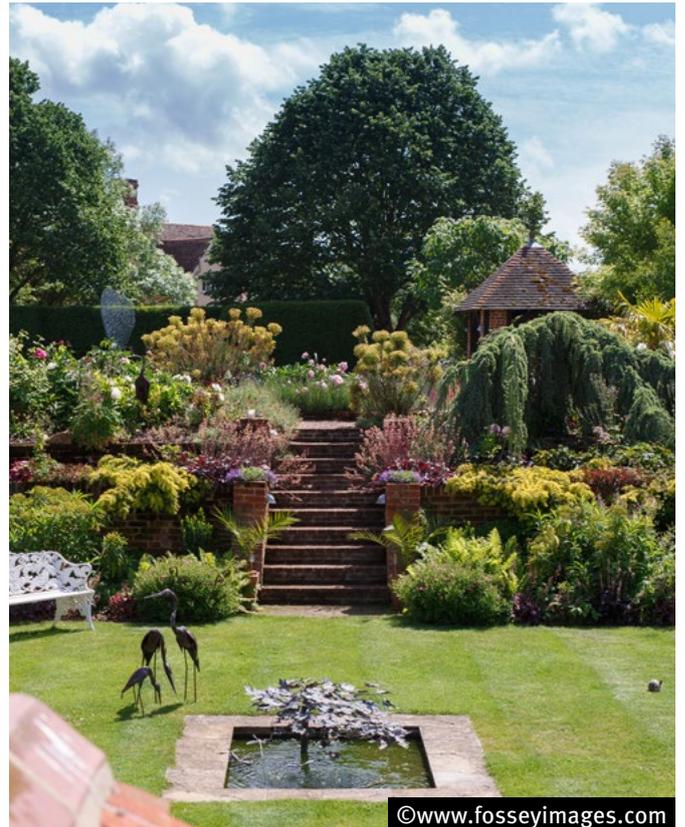
Size of company: Six part-time staff

letheringhammill.co.uk



What we did: After we won the Dog-Friendly Business Award, our freelance PR first concentrated on local press, including TV & radio – emailing out releases and following up contacts she knew well by phone – and we featured in nine titles. She then reached out nationally, securing articles in The Sunday Telegraph and The Daily Mirror. My highlight was being included in Hello! Magazine's '10 of the best tourism destinations in England'.

The tactics: Initially the award win was our main story, but we still mention it on each press release – using the hashtag #DogFriendlyBusiness2017, tagging VisitEngland on all social media and always referring to ourselves as 'award-winning'. Much of our coverage focuses on our dog-friendliness, so having the award to back us up is extremely useful.



©www.fosseyimages.com



©www.fosseyimages.com

The effect: I firmly believe that without our award, Letheringham Mill would not have had the same PR success. Locally, we're still regarded as 'one to watch' and nationally we are now taken seriously: titles such as Coast took an interest following the award, and now feature us quite often. We also received support from pet bloggers whose reach is powerful, and whose very-relevant content has a long shelf life.

Top tip: I think professional photography is a MUST. We regularly work with photographer Suzanne Fossey, and having fabulous high-resolution images ready to send makes a tremendous difference to our promotion.

What?

Knowing your story

“What’s the hook?” is a common question travel editors ask when they’re offered a story. A hook (AKA ‘peg’ or ‘angle’) is what makes a story idea newsworthy and noteworthy.

As an illustration, consider Las Vegas. If a big casino-hotel opens on the Strip it will be newsworthy by dint of being new. But it won’t be very noteworthy: there are already tens of places just like it. Equally, if there was a women’s-only casino-hotel which had been open for 34 years, that would be noteworthy (by being unique) but not newsworthy, as it wouldn’t be new.

But if a new, women’s-only casino-hotel opens? Now that would be a hook.

Your award win is your hook. It has just happened and it offers a unique, independent validation of your offerings. It is newsworthy and noteworthy.

To boost your noteworthiness, consider what else is unique about your product? That’s what a Travel Editor or Series Producer wants to know. What are you doing differently to competitors, and why? Distil these unique selling points (USPs) into a few lines, and include them in your approaches to editors alongside news of the award win.

This gives you the best chance of earning precious coverage.

Now you know what to say, the **How?** section (starting on page 11) will tell you how to say it...



Local or national?

Local press – newspapers, magazines, radio stations – are the likeliest to give you publicity. They'll be most excited about your award, simply because a local business winning awards is big news.

That publicity may simply be a short news story, or an in-depth feature or report. Again, specifying your USPs will boost your chances. “[Company name] wins award” isn't as good as “[Company name] wins award thanks to tempting new [product name]”.

National coverage is usually more desirable. The reader numbers will be bigger, and you'll be reaching potential clients from further afield who are less likely to know about you.

Bear in mind, however, that almost every award winner will be contacting national travel editors – alongside numerous other people with numerous other stories. Getting noticed is hard.

Your best chance? Work out your USPs, as above, and then follow our **How?** section.

Useful links:

- innovateuk.blog.gov.uk/2016/10/12/define-your-usp has digestible, general tips on ascertaining your USPs
- wanderlust.co.uk/content/5-tips-for-pitching-your-article-to-magazines – advice from Lyn Hughes, the Travel Editor of Wanderlust magazine
- guide.saferoutesinfo.org/media/identify_hook.cfm is a deep-dive in what makes a hook



What can you offer?

Some editors or producers may request to send themselves or a reporter to sample your wares, promising a big story or feature. Typically they'll expect this to be provided for free in exchange for the publicity.

Can you afford this? If so, then it will probably be worthwhile – the bigger the coverage, the better the impact. You'll never be given a promise of when coverage will come out, but you can request specifics regarding the story's length or (if radio/TV) duration.

If you can't afford this, it's totally okay to say as much. Just confess that you're a small business and that, as much as you'd love to, you can't provide complimentary stays or experiences at present.

Ideally, be clear in your initial pitch – at the end, briefly – about what you can or can't offer.

Top Tips: Supporting materials

1. Good photographs give you a far greater chance of publicity. Check our resource [visitbritainimages.com](https://www.visitbritainimages.com) for supporting images that you can use
2. They should be high-resolution – anything over 300dpi
3. But you don't want to clog an editor's inbox with lots of large files! So paste one or two images amid your pitch (see the **How?** section) and then, ideally, paste a link to an online file-share folder (e.g. Dropbox) where you have saved the remainder
4. A photo of you clutching your trophy or certificate will help your chances for local media thinking of a news story
5. Also helpful are detailed PDFs about your product – perhaps ones usually sent to customers. Attach these (or stick them in the file-share folder) if relevant

“You'd be surprised how many PR pitches are commissioned on the basis of an excellent image, which can convey the essence of a story perfectly. Conversely, many great ideas are ditched because of a lack of good imagery.”

- Jane Knight
freelance writer and former Travel Editor of The Times

Case Study #2

Lyn and Jason Martin, owners, Dorset House

Size of company: 2 full, 2 part-time cleaners

dorsethouse Lyme.com

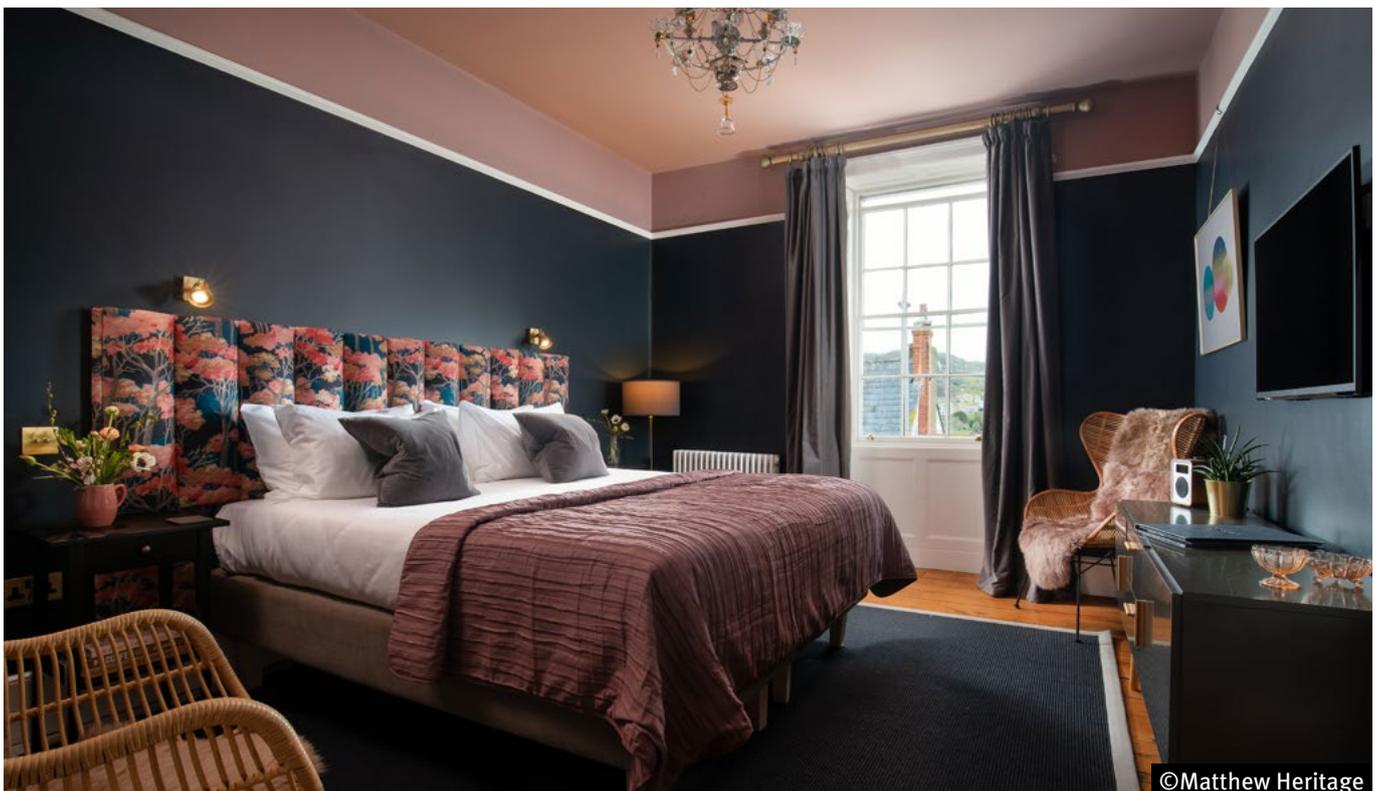


What we did: Using the award as an excuse to talk about our USPs, we drafted a press release and sent it, mainly via email, to 'warm contacts'. We then targeted regional press with a 'good local news story' angle, and contacted national travel and food writers, inviting their journalists for a stay at our B&B.

The tactics: As Dorset House doesn't have external PR support, we focused on core publications where our target guests would see the story, rather than scattergun coverage. We also used social media to thank our suppliers, encouraging them to 'share the pride', and the story, with their network – which was widely successful.

The effect: Every local newspaper ran coverage, which was great for local goodwill. The Telegraph then picked up the story and reviewed us – and have continued to include us in online Top 30s ever since – and the Sunday Times also used us for their next Lyme Regis piece. Several trade publications (such as Boutique Hotelier magazine) have also run stories that have been great for bookings: fellow hospitality-business owners tend to take their time off during midweek in low season, making them dream customers!

Top tip: Make the story bigger than just yourself – by including our suppliers in the glory, we magnified the story's reach far beyond our own network.



How?

Approaches can either be made by phone or email. Email is best: phone calls risk catching harried editors or producers at inconvenient times.

5 ways to write engagingly...

The best writing is chatty, succinct and to-the-point. You aren't here to be lyrical – that's the journalist's job – but you do need to quickly capture attention. These tools help:

1. Have a strong, concise subject line – e.g. “Cornwall’s only owl sanctuary scores national award”, or “New for 2021: Sherwood Forest visitor centre earns national recognition” – and don't try to be clever, nor use puns
2. Use questions in paragraphs. Why do so? Because it entices the reader to read on...
3. No preamble: mention your hook in the first line. An editor may just skim-read this line before making a decision
4. Keep paragraphs and emails short: long tracts of text seem daunting to time-pressed readers (as above, some good photographs help here, too)
5. Use alliteration (successive words beginning with the same sounds) – such as (and because) “it puts pace in sentences, making them fleet, fluid and fetching”.

... and 5 other press-release tips

6. Some bold text or italics can look good - but too much risks making an email appear messy
7. Put your contact details and succinct company details at the end, perhaps under ‘Notes for Editor’, so it's easy for an editor to glean more, or to follow up
8. Provide starting prices (or rack rates for a room) in the Notes to Editor section and briefly state what these include
9. Your email can either just contain a press release, begin with a personal note above the release, or disguise the release amid a personal email. The latter two tacks are better, as they demonstrate more effort on your part. Whatever you do, never attach the press release; attachments are tedious for time-strapped editors to open
10. The ideal length is about an A4 side, or 300-400 words. Any more constitutes waffle.

Q&A

Images and award logos

Q: What makes a good image?

A: Images should be over 300dpi and clear. They should be weather-appropriate (i.e. sunny for a beach). Above all, they should be appealing.

Q: How do I choose the best?

A: Trust your instinct. Put two or three distinctive snaps in the email or press release, then make clear that more are available in an online file-share folder.

Q: What about logos?

A: The relevant competition logo (e.g. VisitEngland Awards for Excellence) adds authenticity to your release, but if used it should be small: editors are interested in your story, not in a logo. The same applies to your company logo.

Q: Should I hire a photographer?

A: This could be a terrific investment. To save money, consider hiring a student photographer.

Q: How do I request photo credits?

A: If these are strictly necessary, make clear in parentheses after your online file-share folder link, and put 'Must credit: "XX"' in each image's filename, replacing 'XX' with the photographer's name. For more guidance, see [visitbritain.org/business-advice/tv-and-copyright-licences](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/tv-and-copyright-licences).

VisitEngland & VisitBritain marketing opportunities

The VisitEngland and VisitBritain (VE/VB) PR teams work with domestic and international media and influencers to tell England and Britain's stories through a programme of activity that includes media/influencer trips, media relations, events and content creation aligned to current target audiences and campaigns. This is supported by a digital Media Centre ([visitbritain.com/gb/en/media](https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/media)).

VE/VB's teams will review all national award-winners to see which marketing and PR opportunities are relevant. In the future, if you have any noteworthy news which you think may be of interest to a domestic or international media audience, please share it with press@visitengland.org and pressandpr@visitbritain.org for consideration for possible wider publicity and integration across social and website content.

You should also monitor VE/VB's integrated, nationwide campaigns such as the Escape the Everyday campaign to see if they align with your product and can potentially integrate into your own activity. Check [visitbritain.org/campaigns-opportunities](https://www.visitbritain.org/campaigns-opportunities) for the latest toolkit.

Consider, too, signing up to our fortnightly industry newsletter ([visitbritain.org/newsletter-signup](https://www.visitbritain.org/newsletter-signup)) for the latest news about international market intelligence, partnership marketing opportunities or tourism events.

On the 'I Love Great Britain Community' Facebook group ([facebook.com/groups/LoveGBCommunity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LoveGBCommunity)), global tourists share tips about UK places to see, stay or eat. Join the group and you can share your local recommendations.

Useful links:

- theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/jul/14/how-to-write-press-release outlines many more digestible release-writing tips
- help.dropbox.com/guide/individual/how-to-use-dropbox
- pexels.com, pixabay.com and unsplash.com contain free-to-use images. Ditto images.google.com – having made a search, specify 'Creative Commons licenses' under Tools and Usage Rights.
- visitbritain.org/business-advice/market-your-business provides resources and guidance to market your business



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The Milkshed, in Luppitt. Photo: The Milkshed

A luxury self-catering home has scooped a silver award at the prestigious VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2018.

The Milkshed, in Luppitt, sleeps four in two bedrooms and unique features include a wood-fired hot tub and an onsite Michelin-trained chef.

Sally Balcombe, CEO of VisitBritain and VisitEngland said: "The standard of the hundreds of applications we received this year was extremely high and that's why The Milkshed's accolade is a testament to their excellent work."

Katie Hollyer, owner of The Milkshed, was presented with the award during a ceremony at the Bath Assembly Rooms last month.

She said: "We are absolutely delighted to win this award! We are so proud to have represented Devon and to have won the silver at national level. It is truly an honour."

The Milkshed is no stranger to accolades, having scooped top prize at the Devon Tourism Awards in 2017 and silver in the same awards a year prior.

Herald Express

Date: 25 April 2018
Page: 34

'Inn on beach' scoops sought-after Visit England excellence award

BY STAFF REPORTER

CARY Arms and Spa – the inimitable and multi-award-winning 'inn on the beach' in Torbay – has added another feather to its cap, with its impressive bronze for boutique guest accommodation of the year in the prestigious VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2018.

The winners of the sought-after Awards for Excellence were announced at an awards ceremony at Bath Assembly Rooms.

Other finalists in the highly competitive category were Yorkshire House, who were awarded gold, and Hever Castle who received silver.

Working collaboratively with the hospitality industry, VisitEngland's Awards for Excellence celebrate the very best in English tourism.

Cary Arms and Spa is owned by legendary hotelier Peter de Savary and his wife Lana. Speaking on behalf of Cary Arms and Spa, general manager David Adams said: "This is a phenomenal achievement for the team at the Cary Arms and Spa."

Sally Balcombe said: "These awards are a celebration of our thriving tourism industry. "They highlight the people and the organisations that deliver amazing experiences for visitors, raising the profile of England as a world-class destination."

"The finalists have shown themselves to be of the highest calibre, using their talent and innovation to deliver excellence."

"The hundreds of applications this year reflect the quality products across our tourism landscape and I warmly congratulate all the finalists and wish them the very best of luck."

Sitting majestically in Babacombe Bay, the Cary Arms and Spa combines all the charm, personality and values of an English 'inn on the beach' with the style and originality of a boutique hotel.

The VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2018 celebrate the best of English tourism. They promote high standards, helping to ensure England's place as a world class destination.



© Peter de Savary



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Below is a proforma press release or email for the time-poor. The square-bracketed sections require your input. We suggest that you write your own release, though, if possible, in order to stand out. Whether you use your own logo, VisitEngland's award logo, both or neither (see p16) is up to you.

[Insert your geographic region]'s leading [insert business type] triumphs at national VisitEngland awards

Your Logo



The [only/premier (delete as appropriate)] [insert business type] provider in [insert area], [insert business name] won the [insert award category] category at the prestigious VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2022 awards presentation which celebrated excellence across the industry.

[Insert job title of award collector(s) in photograph] [insert award collector's name] collected the award from [insert award presenter] during a ceremony at [insert venue] on [insert date].

[Write a brief summary of your business, expanding on your USPs and range of offerings. No more than three sentences and four lines]

PASTE 2-3 HIGH-RESOLUTION IMAGES

“[Write a short, 1-2-sentence quote covering how long you've been in business, and mentioning any other recent awards – and any other USPs you didn't get in above. Finish with a short sentence about how delighted you are to win],” commented [insert job title] [insert name]

[Write a starting or sample price for your experience, rooms or other service, and state what that includes. Finish with your booking telephone number and website]

ENDS

[insert date of release]

Notes to editor:

- More images, including those taken at the award ceremony, are available at [insert file-share folder link]
- Please contact me on [insert phone or mobile] or [insert email] for further information
- Complimentary press-review experiences [are/aren't (delete as appropriate)] possible depending on the ensuing coverage
- For more information about VisitEngland or the Awards for Excellence, please contact **Charlotte Sanders**, Senior Press Officer, on 020 7578 1428 or charlotte.sanders@visitengland.org
- More information about the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence can be found at visitenglandawards.org

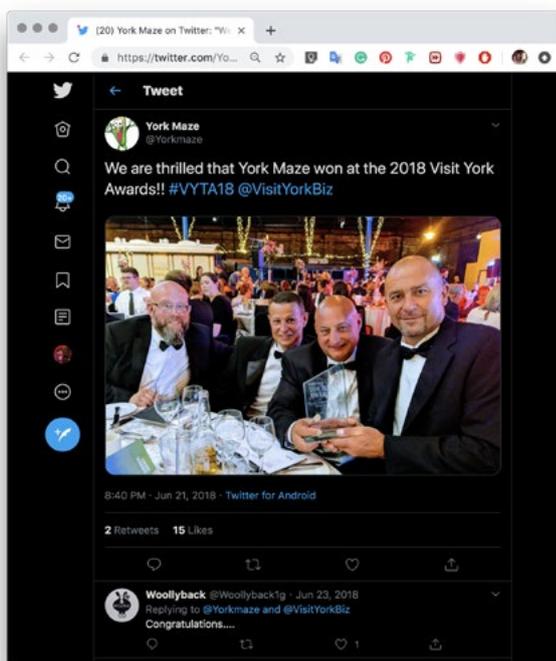
Social media

Using social-media channels is a great way to raise awareness of your award's success. Channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can be powerful tools for reaching and engaging with customers.

Top tips on how to use social media to publicise your win:

1. Follow your local awards' competition organiser on social media
2. Repost anything that mentions your business, destination or category
3. Use the appropriate # and Twitter handles in all of your posts for both the local and national competitions (for the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2021/2022, these are #VEAwards2022 and @VisitEnglandBiz)
4. Announce being named a winner in real-time
5. Congratulate other winners, including competitors in your category
6. Use images in subsequent posts with your awards logo
7. Post images of your trophy/certificate
8. Keep your tone upbeat and positive

For further guidance, read the social-media section in VisitEngland's Digital Marketing Toolkit at [visitengland.org/onlinemarketing](https://www.visitengland.org/onlinemarketing)



Example posts:

We are so proud to be chosen as one of [region's name] top tourism businesses [local awards hashtag]. Can't wait to find out if we've won [category name] on [date of local ceremony] [local awards handle]

Delighted to be chosen as one of England's top tourism businesses #VEAwards2022. Can't wait to find out if we've won [category name] @VisitEnglandBiz

Wow – we're national finalists #VEAwards2022! Can't wait to see if we win [category name]. We'll keep you posted @VisitEnglandBiz

We are chuffed to have won [gold/silver/bronze] in the [category name] category #VEAwards2022. Well done to all of the other finalists [handles of other category finalists]

Congratulations to all our staff and thank you to all our customers who helped us win [gold/silver/bronze] in the [category name] category #VEAwards2022!

We are proud to announce that we have won [gold/silver/bronze] in the [category name] #VEAwards2022! It couldn't have gone to a more hard-working team!

(plus a photo of the team smiling/cheering with trophy or certificate once received)

Awards Logo

Make sure that VisitEngland or your local competition organiser send you the correct logo for your win as soon as possible. This year's win is unique to you, so you should be making the most of it!



Top tips on how to use an awards logo:

1. Display it prominently at your business – consider putting it on a sign to gain maximum exposure. (You may also receive either a certificate and/or a trophy – display those in a prominent location too)
2. Put it in a prominent position on your website – ideally in the header or footer so that it appears on every page. (If your website includes multiple locations/properties, then the awards logo must only be displayed on the page/s that relate to the specific award winning location/property.)
3. Add it to your email signature
4. Use it on any printed materials – leaflets, brochures, headed paper, adverts, posters, etc.
5. Use it in social-media posts
6. Do not modify the competition's logo in any way. Use the version which will give the best contrast from its background, rather than placing the logo over images or colours that could make it illegible.
7. Embed a hyperlink into any digital versions of the logo, linking to a press release or the official winners' list
8. If you are lucky enough to have received a number of awards over the years, avoid the temptation to display every single logo. As a rule of thumb, display the most significant



Do use the version of the logo that will give the best contrast from the background.



Do not stretch or alter the logo



Do not angle the logo in any way.



Do not alter the logo's colours.



Do not place the logo on images or colours that will make it illegible.

Case Study #3

Tom Percy, director, York Maze

Size of company: 8 staff

yorkmaze.com



What we did: As usual, the awards were well covered by regional media, including the all-important TV, so winning one gave us great exposure without having to chase it. We shared all the publicity through our social-media channels, and then used the award as leverage to create further publicity.

The tactics: We used the tagline 'award winning York maze' in all our communications, as well as in advertising. All coverage gained was then shared on social media once again. I've always found that tourism success makes for a great 'good news' story that local media are keen to use, so this award served as a real opportunity.

The effect: We had various stories about us broadcast on regional TV channels, and others published in regional and local print and on digital media.

Top tip: Don't be shy when it comes to shouting about your success, and always try and get yourself in the middle of any photo ops at the awards!

When?

When to make your approach

There is no exact science to this, only common sense. Just avoid Monday mornings – editors arrive to lots of emails – and that dead time known as Friday afternoon.

Although anything in-between is fine, Tuesday mid-morning might be the best time of all: most inboxes will be calm, and no-one yet has the sense of the week's time running out.

Most weekly travel sections produce their content about a week ahead, and often plan a month or two ahead. The same applies to radio shows and TV channels. So time-sensitive ideas based around an anniversary, film release or seasonality – i.e. outdoor pursuits – should be sent 3-6 months in advance of the relevant time for the best odds of success.

Monthly magazines' travel sections are written 3-6 months ahead of publication, with issues also coming out a few days ahead of their stated month (e.g a September issue published on 29 August). So allow for even more advance notice if contacting a monthly magazine.



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“Ease is key. I need approaches to have all the information I require (dates, prices, links, images) and to leave enough time for me to research the story, pitch it and wait for editors’ response. Frustratingly, I often receive invitations or releases relating to events happening in just a couple of weeks. Ideally, these should be coming 3-4 months in advance.”

- Lizzie Pook
freelance travel writer

The art of chasing



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Sent a personal pitch to an editor or producer? You're perfectly entitled to follow it up should no response be received. You can couch this by citing a desire to make sure they received the email, or just be honest: say that you want to give them first dibs, but will – quite reasonably – otherwise take the idea elsewhere.

Whether to follow up an impersonal press release is more questionable. As before, it might well be that the editor has seen your release, not been smitten and deleted it; but you have less right to a reply if it wasn't sent personally. Chase, and you risk only causing long-term annoyance. But that is more concerning for a PR professional: if such media contact is rare for you, then it's probably worth the risk.

Wait a week before chasing, unless you've reason for extra haste. Chase by email (never phone) with courtesy and not even a whiff of an accusatory tone. Reply to your initial email, and say something breezy like "I know you get 75,633 emails a day, but your readership fits our product so darn well that I'm following up to maximise my chances. Here's my idea again..."

You can also monitor if your release has been used online by using a tool such as Google Alerts.

Useful links:

- thefreelancersyear.com/blog/following-up-editors-guide is intended for fellow freelance journalists, but equally useful from a PR perspective

Working with influencers

Another potential way to leverage your award win via social media is by building a relationship with a local or national Instagrammer, vlogger or other influencer. But how to go about this?

The first trick is to identify the right person. Follower numbers are important – anything over 5,000 on Instagram is good, for example – but equally so is the right sort of content and engagement, and also the right platform for your product and target clientele. If you've carefully chosen an influencer that you reckon is a good fit for your brand, chances are they'll think the same.

Be clear, courteous and professional: despite the common perception, the best bloggers aren't blaggers, and nor are Instagrammers or vloggers. They are proud and professional. Given that, and given that you don't want disappointment down the line, it pays to be open about your content expectations from the start.

Unlike journalists, reporters, editors or producers, influencers aren't employed by a salary-providing company. So most require payment for their work.

It's easy to feel aghast at this: "they want a freebie AND payment?" But it makes appreciable sense when seen from their side. Before making an approach, have an idea of what you can pay for the content you expect, bearing in mind its expected worth.

If you can't host an influencer for free, consider organising a tempting event – perhaps a sample of your product – and inviting one or some to that. That may lure them out to produce some initial content, which in turn will help you to measure their impact.

For more guidance on working with influencers, see VisitEngland's Digital Marketing Toolkit at [visitengland.org/onlinemarketing](https://www.visitengland.org/onlinemarketing).

