



Are the Awards still making a difference?

Results from a survey about the 2018 Awards

We believe they are! But it's not just our opinion that matters. We are passionate about raising awareness of plain English in New Zealand. We want to make sure the New Zealand public know to expect plain English in all written communications. So we regularly survey our Awards winners, finalists, and sponsors to make sure we're still hitting the mark!

Asking the people who support us

After running the Awards for 13 years, we wanted to find out why our sponsors supported the Plain English Awards, and why our winners and finalists entered the 2018 Awards.

We asked them:

- what motivated them to enter or sponsor the 2018 Plain English Awards
- what benefits entering or sponsoring the Awards bring to their organisation
- what benefits they believe the Awards bring to the people they serve or communicate with
- what benefits they believe the Awards bring to the New Zealand public.

Supporting the Awards brings credibility and recognition

Our sponsors believed that the Awards were a worthy cause to support. They felt that the Awards help to raise awareness of plain language in New Zealand, and that supporting the Awards added credibility to their organisation. One sponsor mentioned that they like to link their brand to plain language. And our founding sponsor said that supporting the Awards fits perfectly with their business values.

Our finalists and winners agreed. One finalist confessed that a benefit of the Awards was 'recognition that we're changing for good'. Another said, 'It gives recognition and validation to our work to make things easier to read'. Still another added that the Awards show that the work they do is valuable and valued.

Winning an award boosts confidence

One of our sponsors believed that the Awards increase public confidence in New Zealand's administration and its service industry.

One winner enthused, 'Communications is our thing, and to have won an award for what is essentially our day job is pretty cool.'

Another winner revealed, 'Communicating in plain English is a big part of who we are, and a number of employees have told us how proud they are that we won this award.'

One finalist thought that their placing was a feather in their cap and massive pat on the back!

Writing plain English documents with the Awards in mind

It's exciting to see that the Awards have motivated some organisations to write in plain English to set themselves apart.

One finalist commented, 'In the finance industry, it's great for us to establish ourselves as a plain English company. It's good for branding. Creating products with these Awards in mind is very good motivation for keeping things simple.'

The judges' feedback is 'priceless'

The feedback our independent Awards judges provide has a huge benefit for finalists and winners.

One finalist was incredulous at the amount of helpful comments they received, and they vowed to change their document's format and structure to align with the judges' comments.

Survey responses

We've included the full responses to our survey on the following pages.

Survey responses — 2018 Plain English Awards

Sponsors

What motivated you to sponsor the 2018 Plain English Awards?

- As the founding sponsor, we are in this for the long haul! We know the impact of plain language can reach far beyond what we can accomplish as a business, and so the Awards are the vehicle to help that happen.
- Great to support such an important area.
- Request from Write.
- We think the Awards are important, AND we want to lure strong writers to Streamliners.
- Brand awareness, and raising the profile, benefits, and value of plain language.

What are the benefits to your organisation of sponsoring the Awards?

- Supporting the Awards fits perfectly with our business values. We believe in the social, ethical, and financial benefits that come from communicating in plain language.
- Great to let the public and other organisations know that we support plain English and aspire to provide the best information we can in this way.
- Awareness of StyleWriter in New Zealand.
- They help raise our profile in a city where Streamliners is little-known, and we like to link our brand to plain language.
- Brand awareness, increased credibility.

What benefits do you believe the Awards bring to the people you serve or communicate with?

- Provides them with a good reminder to follow best practice, and also provides them with an opportunity to be rewarded for it.
- Raising plain English awareness.
- The Awards shine a yearly spotlight on plain language and give talented writers the chance to celebrate their best achievements. Publicity surrounding the event raises general awareness (for example, Lynda [Harris] on Radio New Zealand), and I like to think that with greater awareness comes greater appreciation of good writers. This helps to spread the word in business sectors that sub-par writing can damage businesses, and that they should seek out and value excellent communicators.
- They add credibility to plain language as an approach.

What benefits do you believe the Awards bring to the New Zealand public?

- The Awards promote people's democratic and ethical right to understand information. We know that over the years, the Awards have helped create a public preference for organisations that choose to communicate clearly. That's a huge benefit!

- Increases public confidence in New Zealand's administration and its supporting service industry.
- Better communication.
- Over time, I hope that the Awards contribute to public awareness that we don't need to put up with poorly written content. Also, they give hope to humanities students that there is important, meaningful work awaiting, in careers they might not have otherwise considered.
- Hopefully they add some pressure to organisations to use [plain English] more. I'm not sure how much this is true yet, though.

Finalists

What motivated you to enter the Awards?

- It was a long-term goal for our team.
- We worked hard to create user-centric content and felt we had a shot at winning. It was a real feather in our cap and massive pat on the back to have made the finalists.
- Never done it before and wanted to see how we stacked up against other companies.
- We put a lot of effort into our first integrated annual report. A big focus for us at the outset was ensuring that it was written in plain language that everyone could understand. Entering your Awards was one way of being judged on whether or not we achieved this.
- Quality of the Awards. The Plain English Awards are not some awards for the sake of awards, ie like so many awards where it's a lame popularity contest with no merit other than who has the best PR telling porkies. The Plain English Awards vet candidates, and you can see from the previous entries it has quality control.
- We didn't! [We were] nominated for a negative award — the Brainstrain award.
- Easy entry — not too time-consuming.
- Were nominated.
- To show our clients and staff we mean serious business.
- We wanted to be recognised for the great work we do in the content world.
- I am a real believer in plain English and keeping things simple, and we had worked hard on our document. If we won, the recognition is great. It's also great to have goals to focus on.
- Recognition for the team's hard work.

What benefits do you believe the Awards bring to your organisation?

- It gives recognition and validation to our work to make things easier to read.
- Helped to convince the team of the value of creating content for the user.
- Recognition for our writers that they are producing quality work that can be used by the reader.
- Communicating in plain English is a big part of who we are, and a number of employees have told us how proud they are that we won this award.

- Being a finalist and displaying that on the website gives us credibility. I know the press didn't pick up on the Awards too much, which is a shame for PEA as a whole, as there is merit in what you do. But for us, the outcome was perfect.
- The Awards shine a light on poor communication via unnecessarily complex documents, and reward well-drafted documents.
- It gives credibility to the work we do. Communications is our thing, and to have won an award for what is essentially our day job is pretty cool.
- Credibility, customer focus recognition.
- Recognition that we're changing for good. Senior leadership exposure to the work. Networking with like-minded organisations.
- It's nice to be acknowledged — particularly our team as we've only been established recently and needed some kudos to prove our worth.
- In the finance industry, it's great for us to establish ourselves as a plain English company. It's good for branding. Creating products with these Awards in mind is very good motivation for keeping things simple.
- We may be adding the Awards logo to our website.

What benefits do you believe the Awards bring to the people you serve or communicate with?

- It raises awareness. It gives us a benchmark to hit.
- It sends a message that we're serious about providing a service that is user-focused.
- People now see that writing in plain English is the way to communicate; you don't have to be formal to be understood.
- Reinforces that we don't just say that we communicate with people in clear and plain language, but that we actually do. Also, that it is important to us that we do this when interacting with all our stakeholders, from our residents and their families to colleagues, suppliers, councils and shareholders.
- The judges' feedback is priceless — WOW. I am amazed we got through to the final round with all those improvement points. Whatever we paid to enter is nothing compared to that feedback document — worth \$1,000+ alone. So what does this mean? We change our format and structure to align with the judges' comments.
- Simplicity and understanding. Time benefits. Reduction in customer complaints.
- The credibility that a company is choosing an agency recognised for its communications skill. There's also an accessibility purpose we're contributing towards, too. People benefit from understanding what things are, mean, and do when more people commit to plain English.
- Work we do is valuable and valued.
- Understanding of what we're trying to achieve.
- Highlights the importance of clear writing.
- Probably none. It's a huge deal in-house, but I'm not sure JUNO readers mind about an award. Their real benefit is getting financial content in a clear and simple way.

- Regardless of winning the award, we would always strive to write in plain English.

What benefits do you believe the Awards bring to the New Zealand public?

- I think it brings easier-to-use services to people.
- Awarding and showcasing great work gets out the message that organisations care about the people who use their services.
- They can have more confidence in documents that are easier to read and understand. People feel good when they know what the writer is trying to say, and that words aren't being used to confuse or mislead them.
- A public forum in which to reward / admonish companies.
- Like a lot of awards, unless the public are directly involved or are served by a group that is involved, the [Plain English] Awards themselves have very little impact. However, the more professional communicators that take part, and commit to plain English in practice as well as the Awards, the better it is for New Zealanders.
- Public and community care is demonstrated through accessible communication.
- Hopefully makes organisations write clearer to help Kiwis understand the information they need to.
- Personally, I don't think the actual Awards do much. It's a big deal in-house for companies, and it's awesome that many are aiming for this plain English standard. So I guess if that helps and inspires companies to write better, then that helps the public.