



After Two Years . . . A Look At The WBA's All-New Awards For Excellence Program

As Ed McMahon Used To Say – You Could Be A Winner!

Now that we have two years of the new WBA Awards For Excellence program under our belt, it's a good time to review the program and declare it a success both in terms of the number of award entries and in terms of the stature of the awards in the view of our members and the public.

The change in the program was made to better showcase the terrific work being done by Wisconsin broadcasters. As well, the WBA Board Awards Committee and Board believed that part of the Association's mission is to encourage state broadcasters to do even better work and felt an improved awards program could assist in that effort.

The WBA Awards for Excellence program has almost doubled in size since it was re introduced 2 years ago. With 865 entries last year alone, it is one of the largest, if not THE largest, state broadcast awards programs in the nation. The competition is fierce but friendly (well, usually) especially for SOTY and NOTY (Station of the Year and News Operation of the Year), which are decided by total points awarded for both entering and finishing first, second or third in a category. The Awards Committee calls these the Cumulative Awards. Here's how the system works:

Each time a station enters a category, they are awarded one point. Even though each station can enter a category twice, they are given a "point for entering" only once. This "entry point" is critical to the concept of our awards program. The committee feels that the categories represented are what good stations SHOULD be doing. We WANT every station to enter every category. That way we feel we are encouraging good broadcasting.

When a station's entry finishes third in a category, they are awarded one additional point. When a second place award is given, that station receives two additional points. When a station wins a first place, the station is awarded four additional points. The Awards Committee feels strongly that first place winners should receive additional credit for their success. Then, it's a simple math proposition to determine the winners of the SOTY and NOTY with station's scoring the most points winning the awards. However, it's important to keep in mind that half or fewer of the categories count towards the NOTY awards.

Over the last two years some concern has been raised about the issue of awarding a point for entering and whether that system favored stations which spend the money to enter. This issue was discussed at length by the Awards Committee which did an analysis and reported to the WBA Board in May that was not the case. In that report, the Awards Committee made it clear that SOTY and NOTY winners were chosen based on points for the awards they won and not based on points earned because they entered. Of course, you DO have to enter to win. Remember, a station that enters a category can earn up to five points (one for entry and up to four more for being a winner) while a station that fails to enter gets nothing at all for that category. In other words, if you enter, you MIGHT win, but...if you fail to enter, you will NOT win.

Of course, what we've just described applies ONLY to the cumulative awards. Stations that don't want to compete for these awards don't have to. They can compete for each of the (greatly expanded) individual category awards, just as many stations (and individuals) have chosen to do. But if you expect to win a Station of the Year or News Operation of the Year Award, you need to have as few zero's (non-entries) as possible while racking up the maximum number of points from those that you did enter.

The unparalleled success of the new WBA Awards program has surprised some people, but that

success is rooted in the competitive spirit so basic to broadcasting in general and the top-flight excellence that we see in market after market and station after station all across Wisconsin. This program works so well because Wisconsin broadcasters work so hard.

One final note: Unlike the previous awards program, your new Awards program is not static. It is designed to adapt and adjust as our industry continues to adapt and adjust. The Awards committee was very aggressive in seeking member input in its original design and we have in place new initiatives to keep those ideas coming. Thanks for your support for this terrific program.