**J.C. Brown Sample Entry Form**

**Award Criteria**

The nominations will be judged on the completion of the following four criteria. Each response is limited to 500 words. Point values have been assigned to each criterion to guide the panel of judges. The final score of each nomination will be determined by combining the four individual criterion scores.

1. **Strategic Communications Approach (25 points)**

*In what ways does the nominee integrate communication into the organization’s strategic planning and management processes? Evidence may include, a well-defined strategic communication plan, active CEO engagement as well as adequate annual budgets and resources devoted specifically to communication.*

Consider:

1. How is the nominee engaged with staff/board/consumer-members?
2. How does the nominee foster communications innovation?
3. How are communications included in the co-op’s strategic planning process and in other leadership meetings where important co-op issues, practices and challenges are discussed?
4. How often is the strategic communication plan updated and reviewed for its effectiveness?

Note: Budget size alone is not a major factor; it is part of the overall plan.

**Your answer (500-word limit):**

1. **Internal Leadership Approach (25 points)**

*In what ways does the nominee ensure co-op employees are informed, engaged, and empowered with the information they need to be effective communicators?*

* 1. Does the nominee view all employees of the organization as part of the communication team? For example, are staff members in all areas of the organization—particularly those who have contact with consumer-members—kept informed about the co-op’s priorities and kept up to date on important organizational developments and on changes to major co-op products, services, and programs?
  2. Is there evidence of an effective employee communication program at the co-op, as well as two-way communication within the co-op, i.e., top-down, and bottom-up?
  3. Are there examples or indicators demonstrating how information on critical projects and management decisions is shared in timely and open fashion in executing the cooperative’s communication plan.
  4. Other examples include a dedication to hiring professional communication staff people, as well as providing adequate educational and training opportunities for staff.

**Your answer (500-word limit):**

1. **The Cooperative Difference (25 points)**

*In what ways does the nominee’s commitment to communication, both internal and external, help advance the seven cooperative principles, philosophy, and way of doing business?*

1. Evidence may include any type of leadership action, communication activity or product that promotes the cooperative principles to staff, consumer-members, or other audiences.

**Your answer (500-word limit):**

1. **Measures of Success (25 points)**

*Please note indicators of the success of the cooperative’s communication/marketing programs during the nominee’s tenure, and on which he or she has had an influence. This criterion is not intended to be an evaluation or showcase of the cooperative’s communication products and services as defined in the larger Spotlight on Excellence awards program.*

* 1. Other information may include awards received by the cooperative during the nominee’s tenure but should not be limited to that. For example, the evidence should include how the organization measures the success of its communication programs and projects, i.e., what evaluation techniques and methods are used to determine whether strategic communication goals have been met. CEO/GM involvement or endorsement should be described.
  2. Additional evidence may include how the organization’s communication programs have led to changes in thinking, attitudes, or actions among consumer-members and/or other key audience, and how the nominee has been a part of this result.

**Your answer (500-word limit):**

**Supplemental** **MaterialsSupplemental Materials**

Up to three additional supporting materials may be added to reinforce your submission. All supporting material will be viewed by the judges but will not be separately scored. If included, supporting material must be uploaded using the area provided in the online nomination form.

**Submission Tips**

Your nominee may be a great communications champion, but unless you provide solid proof points, your score sheet won’t reflect what you see in your co-op’s leader.

Successful entries should:

1. Closely match your responses to each of the four questions and prompts.
2. Provide proof points and details such as examples, evidence, and data to support your contention.
3. Include optional supporting material to provide additional context and dimension for your contentions.
4. Recognize that every question is important. Past winners have scored in the highest part of the “excellent” range across all four categories. See score chart.

Don’t get discouraged if your submission doesn’t win this time. Every cycle is different. For most award winners, it took more than one cycle before they won the top honor.

*As of 08.28.23*