

# 2024 Microsoft Partner of the Year Awards

## Guidance from the Judges

Showcase your achievements and celebrate your success by nominating your organization for the 2024 Microsoft Partner of the Year Awards, celebrated annually around Microsoft Inspire.

Sometimes, the difference between being named a winner or finalist and just another award entry isn't the quality of the project, but the quality of the entry itself. The entry you submit is what the judges will have to work with to learn about your successful solution. We've prepared this guide to help you create your very best entry—one that shows your solution and the results you've achieved.

No matter which award you nominate for, make it count. **We wish you the best of luck!**

### GETTING STARTED

#### **Start early.**

Don't wait until the last minute. All resources that you will need in order to prepare for your submission are available now on the [Microsoft Partner of the Year Awards website](#) before the awards submission tool opens, so you can give yourself a big head start and increase your chances of success. Plan to spend 10 to 15 hours on your submission. You can reuse the content to enter other awards and/or for your own case study.

#### **Draft your entry offline.**

Uploading your entry to the award submission tool is the LAST step in the process. You will want everything polished in Microsoft Word before you start inputting your answers into the tool on our website. Remember there is a character limit for your executive summary.

#### **Brainstorm with others.**

Get into a room with the go-to people on the project(s) in your organization. Two heads are better than one, and six heads... well, you get the idea. You will learn unique angles and creative stories that can make a memorable difference in your entry.

### **Gather your facts.**

In the words of one judge, "The best entries are those that include the most impactful details." Metrics, numbers, and statistics are all vital. You need all the facts, so you can describe the challenge specifically, and communicate your solution strongly. How many regions, organizations, or people did your solution serve? Is the solution repeatable and usable across industries? What was the bottom-line impact? Did productivity increase? By how much? Did the solution save the customer money? How much? Use solid stats to show what you achieved. All of this information will lend to a more well-rounded story.

### **Talk to your customer(s).**

Some of the strongest evidence of your success is the satisfaction of your customer. Talk to them. Gather testimonials. Draw on case studies if you have them. Let them help you tell the story.

### **Choose your awards.**

You probably already have an award in mind, but after you've done the groundwork, read and choose which awards you're going to apply for carefully. By selecting the most appropriate awards, you can ensure your entry is as relevant as possible.

### **Consider more than one entry.**

Yes, writing more than one entry will take more time, but it will also give you a better chance of being a winner or finalist. Don't go overboard though. Spend your time submitting your best one or two stories, rather than trying multiple categories with less compelling entries.

## **WRITE YOUR ENTRY**

**1. Address every question asked in the guidelines in your Executive Summary.** Each submission is carefully reviewed by several judges, and they will be looking for all the points the guidelines have asked you to address. Be sure to completely answer each one in the most concise way possible.

**2. Put your best points up front.** Start with a compelling opening statement that is relevant to the award. Draw the reader in with the "who, what, why," and most importantly the "why care" of your story. You want to make sure the judge wants to read further. If you save the best for last, they might never get there.

**3. Create a compelling story with a beginning, middle, and end.** Define the challenge vividly using specific details. Make your story human. Your solution is ultimately for people.

**4. Showcase your solution.** Position your solution value in terms of business innovation, technology innovation, and customer ROI.

### **A few other pointers:**

- Highlight your solution's creativity.
- Show how it leveraged various Microsoft Cloud technologies.

- Describe how it helped you win against the competition from a technical and a business perspective.
- Include information about how you went above and beyond in answering your customers' needs.
- Highlight how your solution is delivering meaningful, accessible, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes for customers.
- When possible, show how your solution was tailored to target an untapped market.
- If your solution can be replicated, say so, and mention any other deployment examples.
- Highlight any Microsoft AI Cloud Partner Program resources that helped.

**5. Prove your success.** Here's where all those numbers come in. Include your metrics. Have a measured return on investment. Show exactly what you achieved, with the stats to back it up.

**Include customer evidence.** The best way of ensuring your entry gets noticed is to include direct evidence of your customers' satisfaction and success with your solution. Include relevant customer testimonials in your answers. And include links to supporting materials such as case studies, white papers, other awards, videos, or anything else that helps document you and your customers' success. Don't forget to ask your customers' approval to use any of their content, although entries will not be disclosed without your consent.

**6. End where you began.** Remember that compelling opening statement? You want that same message to resonate throughout. So be sure to tie your ending back to the beginning.

## **EDITING AND FINAL REVIEW**

**1. Don't upload until it's final!** Wait until your entry is 100% complete and final before uploading it to the award submission application tool. The tool will help you catch minor misspellings but does not review grammar or mis-entered words. Please review your content thoroughly before submitting it.

**2. Get professional help.** Enlist the help of a writing professional with technical and marketing experience. If you don't have access to one, get a marketing writer and work with them to make sure the technical details are correct. A communications professional can help you polish your entry, ensuring that it tells your story well and is a good read.

**Questions?** Please send an email to the [Microsoft Partner of the Year Awards team](#) and allow 48 hours for a response.

**Good luck!**