



Specialty Categories

Tips for Stella Awards Entries

A Note on the Use of AI in Award Applications

We recognise that many businesses now use AI tools to support their writing, and we agree with their thoughtful use. The strongest applications start with real experiences, genuine examples, measurable results, and authentic stories from your business. AI should only help refine your wording, not create the substance for you.

Please remember that finalists will progress to interviews with a judging panel. These conversations are designed to explore and validate the experiences, achievements, and examples shared within your written application.

Tips for using AI well

- Start with real stories and examples
- Use specific results and outcomes
- Avoid generic or overly polished language
- Keep your own voice and personality
- Be prepared to talk about what you've written

Authenticity and substance will always stand out.

Dream Team

Note - there must be two or more staff working in the business to enter this category.

Question 1

We are looking for specific programs or initiatives that you implement to nurture your Dream Team. While it's great that you have a company policy and strategies around team work, what do you actually do? Give us the detail.

Examples:

Your team might play a sport together, have a regular game night or other shared traditions

Perhaps you have a special way the team celebrates individual wins

You might attend a Greening Taupō planting day every year or volunteer as a group for a local charity.

Question 2

Tell us a good story about a special moment where the whole team got involved, creating the feeling of being unstoppable as a team. Give us the detail: who, what, how, when, where.

Examples:

Your team dug deep, worked extra hours, pulled resources to fulfil a contract that filled the team with pride.

Stella AWARDS

The team was empowered to accomplish a major task; showing they are trusted with the business's biggest decisions.

A team member was going through a rough time. Everyone rallied around, assisting with projects, dropping off kids, making meals, acting like a real family.

Question 3

Teamwork makes the dream work. Tell us how your team works better, faster, stronger because of your team building efforts. Tell us how all that effort has improved the customer experience, and the business as a whole.

Examples:

Does the team feel a sense of pride from the group efforts, making them more confident in their individual work.

Has empowering the team as a whole given individuals a sense of ownership, lifting their pride in the business?

Have there been an uptick in sales or positive reviews since seeing the team thrive, as described above?

Solo Superstar

Note - this category is for sole traders only.

Question 1

We understand being in business on your own can be exhausting, so we want to hear what you do to get up day in and day out to deliver outstanding results for your customers.

Do you attend industry backed workshops to refine your skills?

Do you set benchmarks, goals or targets for your business so you have something to aim for?

Do you reward yourself in fun ways when you achieve great accomplishments?

Question 2

We want to hear about how with a party of 1, you can compete with larger outfits. Tell us an example of when you delivered like a big company and how you made it happen.

Did you find efficiencies where many others wouldn't have?

Did you use your time wisely by subcontracting portions of the job that didn't need your expert touch?

Tell us how this experience gave you a new perspective on what you're capable of.



Question 3

We want to know the specific levers you can pull to turn yourself from a sole trader to a solo superstar. What makes going solo an advantage over the larger, more cumbersome organisations?

Are you able to pivot faster when the winds of the market change?

Is it easier for you to stay up to date on the latest tech or trends in your industry?

Does dealing with the same person give your sole-trader business an advantage when it comes to delivering great a customer experience?

Stella Survivor

This category is open to any size business that has faced significant challenges and survived to tell the tale.

Question 1

Be specific. What was the thing that you had to overcome? We want to appreciate what you went through and how much it tested you and your business.

This could be personal, financial, operational or existential.

Tell us what was at stake if things went pear-shaped.

Question 2

We ask for what you did to overcome these challenging circumstances. Again, be as specific as possible.

Did you have to invest?

Did you have to pivot the company in a new direction?

Did you have to restructure, downsize and go back to basics before growing again?

Question 3

We ask about the challenges you faced during this period of transition and how the lessons learned have equipped you to be more resilient in the future.

Did this experience help you broaden your customer base?

Did going back to basics allow you focus on what matters most and shed frivolous parts of your business?

Were there parts of your business that you didn't realise were not operating at a high level, but have been rejuvenated?