



## Are the Awards making a difference? (report on 2010 survey)

The answer is an unequivocal 'yes!'. After five years, the WriteMark Plain English Awards Trust surveyed past winners, finalists, and others involved in the Awards to gauge the impact of the Awards on organisations and individuals.

The feedback indicated that the Awards:

- are highly valued by entrants, award winners, judges, sponsors, and service providers
- provide a benchmark for organisations to assess their own performance
- have resulted in positive, productive impacts on organisations that enter and on the New Zealand public
- often transform organisations — the process leading to success in the Awards has created widespread change for some organisations.

### **The Awards are highly valued**

A consistent theme among those interviewed was that the Awards have raised public awareness about the value of plain English. They are a strong influence for greater use of plain English.

'There's huge recognition of their value.'

'The Awards have helped raise the standard.'

'The Awards encourage greater on-going commitment to plain English from organisations that enter.'

'The Awards provide lots of great examples that others can see.'

'We're thinking more about our customers and making sure we deliver on our business objective of improving customer service.'

'The Awards help motivate us to get it right for the people that need good info the most.'

'The Awards keep us focused and justify our approach.'

'Feedback from last year's Awards was really valuable. It empowered web writers (with the knowledge and capability) to rework content. The Awards have lifted our game dealing with complex processes.'



## **A benchmark**

Many respondents commented on how useful the Awards were in providing a valuable, low-cost benchmark for their organisation.

'The Awards allow us to get an independent view of us.'

'We can gauge how well we're doing versus costly surveys.'

'Entering was a way to measure our progress.'

'We wanted to enter to see how far we've come.'

'Winning the award has raised the bar.'

## **Positive, productive impacts**

Many winners and finalists commented on the positive impact of the Awards on their organisation. These impacts included changes in the attitudes of individual writers, changes in the organisation's writing practice, and positive responses from clients and users.

Respondents also commented on the benefits to the New Zealand public.

'The web team took on board all the 2008 feedback, and the difference was picked up in the results of a usability survey done after the work was completed.'

'We were shocked by being a finalist for the Brainstrain Award. That spurred a huge project. I personally did lots of research on plain English and came up with our own web writing standards that exceed the e-government guidelines.'

'We're making sure the judge's comments and feedback are used. [Entering the Awards] increased interest in 'Easy English'.'

'We're using our success as leverage for the discussions we have about content with the wider office team.'

'Site users see better communications, and we get less call volume from users.'

'Staff morale and confidence has improved. We aren't getting enquiries any more about people or organisations not understanding our documents.'

'We've had more website visits and less calls to the office.'



'As a direct result of the Awards, [two groups] are keen to work in collaboration with us. They are impressed with the logo we've got on our winning documents, and they wanted us to be the people they worked with.'

## **Transforming organisations and individuals**

The process leading to success in the Awards transforms some organisations and individuals into zealous advocates for plain English. People who made comments about this spoke of the Awards as the vehicle to achieve widespread change in the writing style of their organisation, to the benefit of the New Zealand public.

'With the kudos of winning the award, the CEO and senior managers are letting us come up with ideas for the plain English project. They've given us the mandate and the budget. Change is coming! Senior managers look at this project team as a model of excellence for the organisation.'

'As a result of our win, the CEO tasked 10 members of our Comms team to each come up with their own plain English project. That will make a huge difference to our organisation and the public. The best internal project will be entered into next year's Awards.'