

# Add the Unexpected to your Awards Program

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When you think of awards ceremonies, what comes to mind? Long speeches, an endless procession of winners, interrupting your meal, same old same old? While most of us don't have the budget for big splashy productions, we can use our creativity to add some unexpected elements to make it fun! Here are examples from two recent programs I attended that did just that.

## Remember When

The first example was a recent conference where the awardees were all experienced in the industry (I'll say it, all over 40 years old!). The award was created to recognize their contributions and demonstrate that while with age comes wisdom, these people are young at heart and stay current with happenings in the industry.

So, as each winner was brought to the stage, instead of showing a recent headshot on the screen, a photo of their younger self (baby or elementary school photo) appeared. The audience loved it! It was a 'then and now' moment that was fun, inexpensive, and unexpected. Another twist to this program, was instead of a certificate or award, each person received a medal with the program logo – they felt like Olympic athletes!

[full disclosure – I was an awardee, here's my headshot and medal!]



## Walk of Fame

The second example was an awards program which featured a red carpet for attendees to follow as they entered the ballroom. The unexpected element was that the carpet was like the Hollywood Walk of Fame – each winners' name was printed on a star that was affixed to the carpet. Once attendees realized what they were walking on, they stopped to look and

find their names. After the ceremony there were many photos taken with their star (and lots of folks took their star home).

What have you done to change up an awards program? What can you do to add an element of fun and surprise without breaking the bank?