

## The Bizarre World of Healthcare (5)

# Sleazy Commendation

Business suffering?

Your company falling behind?

Don't worry! Take comfort in dodgy awards!

**N**obel prize, Nobel prize, everybody's greedy for Nobel prizes. But those who haven't got their share can be helped. There are endless other prizes to suit every taste and individual strength. The "Wella International Trend Vision Award", for example, awarded "for the ability of the hairdresser to interpret a new trend and create innovative styling", or the "European Beer Star Award Medal", for the "outstanding taste and unadulterated nature" of your brewery's bitter.

No experience as a trendy hairdresser and never owned a brewery? How about the "British Insurance Award" in the "Major Loss" category? Or the "Superior Taste Award", granted by The International Taste & Quality Institute, a really outstanding award that, "reflects the overall feeling of hedonic pleasure" of, well, eating?

Well, you'd be right to conclude that hairdressing awards and insurance company prizes will win you no more than a condescending smirk from jealous academic colleagues. But what should you do if not only the Nobel prize and Lasker award but also every lesser-known academic accolade remains out of reach? Must you accept the hard fact that your work simply isn't worth recognising?

No, you mustn't. There are trophies for the neglected, too, and it's simple to get one. Just pull out your cheque book and even you can receive awards galore.

That's no joke. There are dozens of bizarre prizes waiting for those who lack skill but own an Amex Centurion Card. Along with the trophy, winners get to go to a prestigious 'banquet' where they receive an official-looking certificate (perfectly suited to being framed and hung somewhere prominent in the office where envious colleagues won't fail to see it).

One of the respectable institutions that sell, er, that *award* such formidable prizes, is the consulting company Frost & Sullivan (F&S). Jeff Frigstad, a director at F&S, operates a striking scheme known as the "Frost & Sullivan Best Practices Awards" (F&SBP Awards). How does it work?

The F&SBP Awards are targeted exclusively at companies and their executives. F&S has created numerous categories and sub-categories of award, covering dozens of market sectors. Altogether, there must be at least 400 awards (F&S doesn't specify the exact number on its website [www.frost.com](http://www.frost.com)).

The F&SBP Awards have names like (no sniggering, please!) "Technology Innovation in the European Bone Densitometry Systems Market", "Enabling Technology of the Year in the European Point-of-Care Testing Market" and "North American Patient Monitoring Best Customer Value of the Year Award". All very exclusive.

**"Haven't you always longed for a 'Competitive Strategy Leadership Award'? Pull out your credit card and you can have it!"**



Each year, F&S writes to hundreds of companies as follows:

*"We are delighted to inform you, F&S have chosen the Award [...] to your company [sic]. [...] Keep this news internal [...], until such time it is made public. [...] I may call you to provide further details regarding the marketing of the Award and publicity guidelines [...]"*

Marketing of the Award? Publicity guidelines?

If you agree to receive further details from F&S, they will first send you a price list, from which you can select different promotional packages, including the "Option 3 package". This package comprises, amongst other things, "Full publicity rights to market your Award, an Award logo for online and off-line usage, eight Award plaques, and a congratulatory e-mail from the chairman of F&S, sent to your employees."

The cost of this package? Well, peanuts really. A mere €35,000.

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