Ballot Best Practices Guide

How to drive more revenue and engagement with 'Best Of' ballots

U Second Street

'Best Of' Ballot Overview

'Best Of' ballots are some of the biggest engagement tactics for your local businesses, and are used extensively by Second Street partners to drive revenue through advertisers and grow their database.

More commonly known as 'Best Of', Reader's Choice, Listener's Choice, or Viewer's Choice, Second Street ballots enable our partners to feature every business in their community. Your audience nominates and votes on their favorite businesses across many categories in your market.

A ballot should be set up in three phases:

1. Nomination Phase

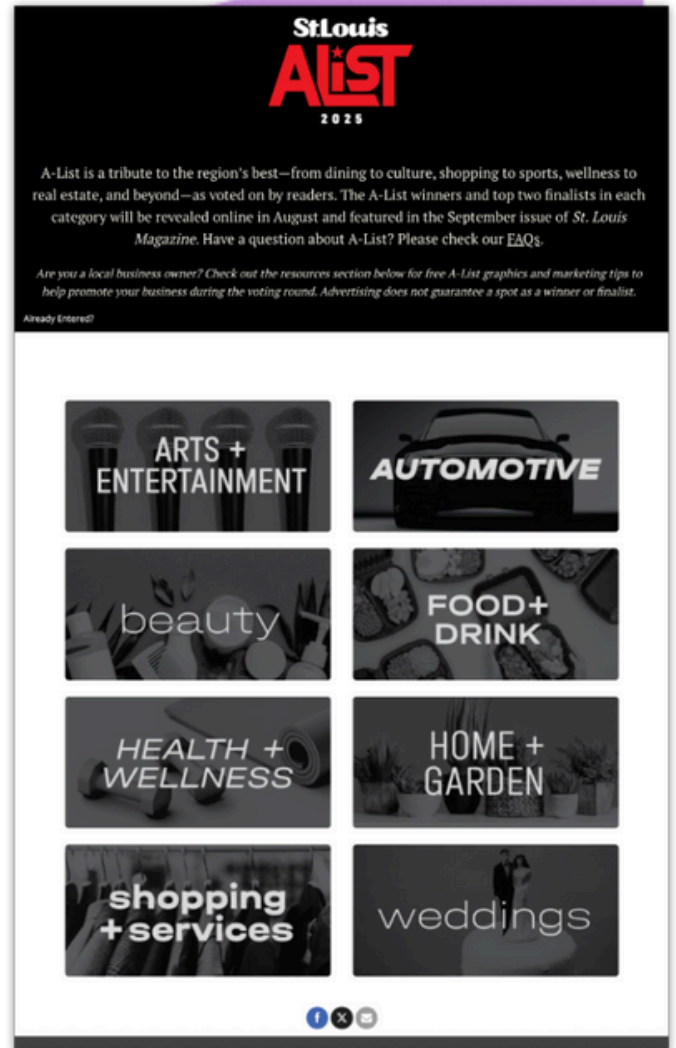This is where you get your audience to nominate businesses for each category

2. Voting Phase

This is where you push out the ballot for your audience to vote for who they want to win across your business categories

3. Winners' Phase

This is where you get to announce the 'Best Of' ballot winners

Planning for these three phases enables you to garner more excitement and more engagement with each round. So when it comes to revenue, this means you now have three opportunities to sell to advertisers instead of just one!

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The Plan

Run a 3-phase ballot

In order to have the most success you should start planning your ballot as soon as your last ballot is over. If you're new to 'Best Of' ballots, you should ideally start planning six months out from the launch of your Nomination Phase.

For example, if your special issue prints in June then your nomination phase begins in February, and you should start planning in August.

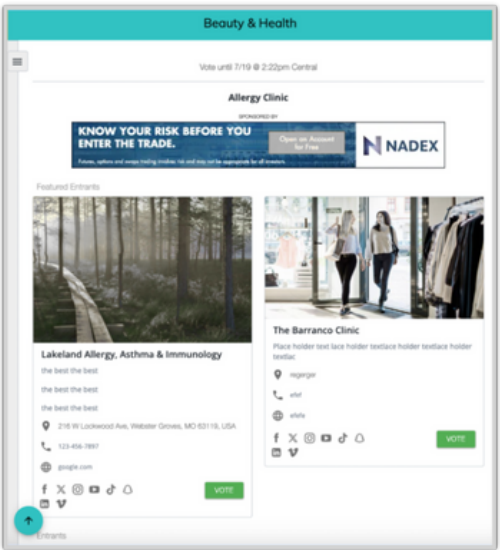As part of this planning, you should have a checklist for each task.
Need help getting started with your checklist? We created one for you!

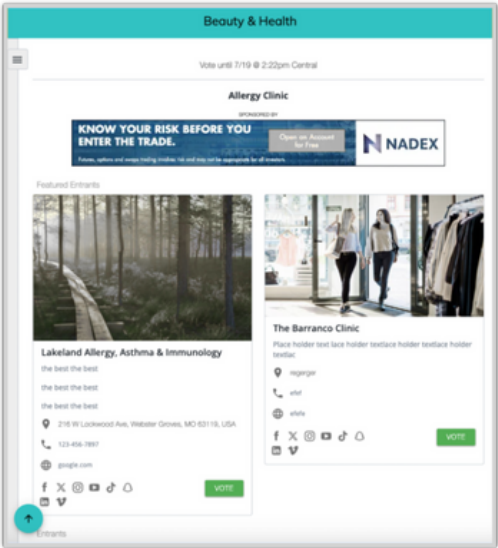**Download the checklist**

Ballot Gallery Layouts

Narrow Scroll

Our original layout which groups entrants in 2 columns and provides an ever present navigation in a column on the left.


Wide Scroll

Provides you with 2 columns for entrants and collapsible navigation. Gives advertisers more real estate with larger category ads and featured entrants.


Category Drawers

Categories are collapsed with collapsible side navigation. This provides an enhanced mobile experience with less scrolling, allowing users to explore the ballot categories they want. Category interstitial ads also get more exposure between drawers.
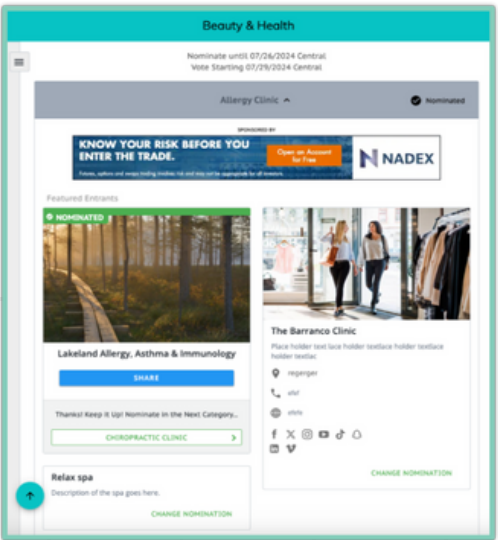
Category Pages

Supports single category pages using previous/next buttons. This gives you dedicated category pages with unique URLs, less scrolling, and "floating" interstitial ad pages that appear every X category pages.
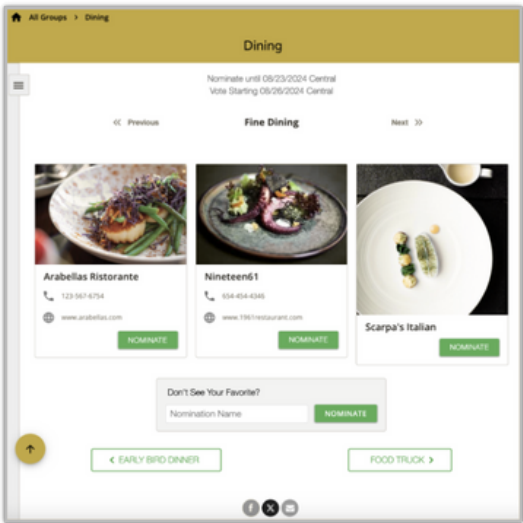
Nomination Phase

The Nomination Phase (or write-in phase) typically lasts 3-4 weeks. This phase is where you ask your audience to tell you which businesses should be on your ballot. Based on the number of nominations a business receives, you can determine whether it makes the cut for the final voting ballot.

If you are a mid-size or large market, we recommend a minimum of five businesses moving onto the voting round. If you are a small market, three businesses are sufficient. This means businesses and your audience will be motivated to drive up nominations for their favorites. A nomination phase typically lasts 3-4 weeks

FAQ

In the nomination phase should we have write-ins only? Or approve nominations to the ballot as they come in?
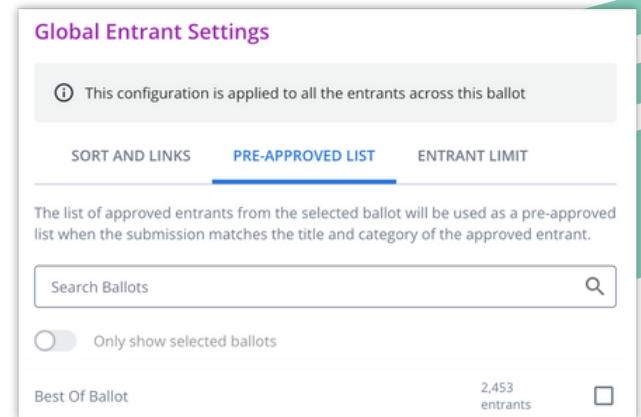
Best Practice:

When collecting nominations Second Street recommends using 'Write In' nominations only. This allows for a better user experience on the front end as it allows your participants to nominate their businesses of choice, without needing to scroll through a list of businesses to find a specific nominee.

*However, if you would like to push nominees to the front end, we do have time saving features that allow you to auto approve approved entrants from ballots run in previous years or you can import approved entrants. If you're worried about too much scrolling, you can choose different layouts to make the display more appealing - like the Category Drawers layout.

Nomination Phase Time Savers

Pre-Approving Entrants

To reduce time moderating entrants, you can easily assign a pre-approved list of entrant names from ballots you've run in past years that will automatically be approved when a user submits write-ins matching those names and categories.

Import Vetted Entrants

You can import entrants to your ballot that will be added in the moderation section. You can choose for them to be approved and those entrants will be immediately added to the front end of the ballot. Or you can import them as unapproved entrants which will set them as pending nominations, reducing the time it takes to approve each entrant and making your nomination round much more efficient for your staff and your end users.

Automatically Move X Entrants to Voting Round

You can set a limit to the number of entrants moving on to the voting round, ensuring only a specified number of approved entrants will be visible to users for voting. This means when moderating entrants, you can leave all entrants in an approved state and only the number of top-nominated entrants that you chose per category appear on the ballot for the voting phase.

Transition period

The transition period is the time between your nomination phase and the voting phase, and typically should be a minimum of three weeks. During this time, you will:

- Moderate your ballot

- Merge entrants to determine the top nominees in each category
- Move these nominees on to the voting phase of the ballot
- Sell voting packages to your top nominees
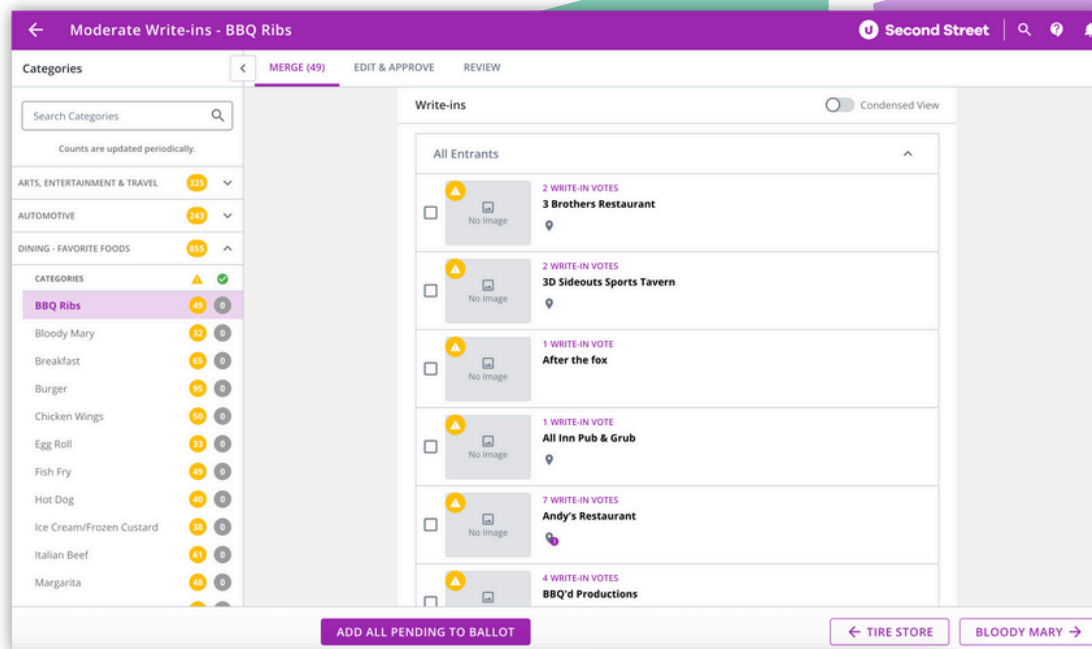
Once you have determined the top nominees that are moving on to the voting phase of the ballot, you will want to provide this list of entrants to your sales team to sell the voting phase of the ballot.

Once the sales period is over, you will add featured entrant data to the entrant within the admin tool.
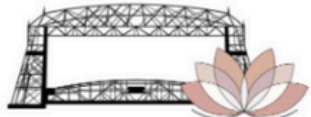
Voting Phase

During the Voting Phase, participants will only be able to vote for entrants that have been added to the ballot for the voting phase. (Our best practice is to allow the top 5 nominees to move on to the voting phase.) In this phase, participants will not have the option to write-in a vote, but instead simply place a vote for their preferred winner. A typical voting phase should last three to four weeks.

Winner's Phase

The Winner's Phase is where you will publish the results from the voting phase of the ballot. As a best practice, we suggest replacing our graphic with your own custom winner's graphic.
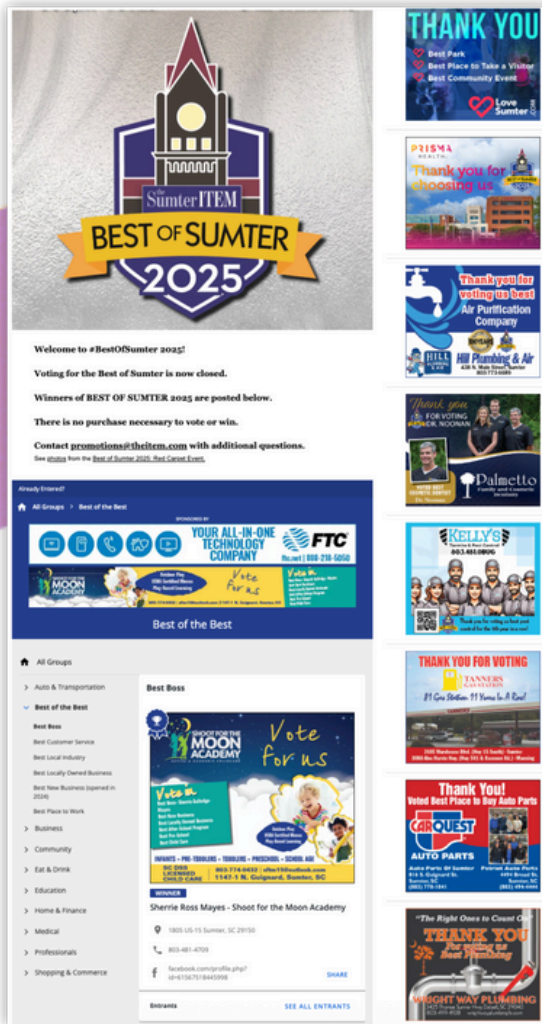
You should plan to publish/recognize winners not only online, but also within your core product.

- **Online Winners' Directory**
- **Special Issue**
- **On-Air mentions or production**
- **Live Event**

After the voting phase is over, you will identify winners of each category, pulling a winners list. You will then provide this list to your sales team to sell winner packages.

Use a Planning Checklist

Your 'Best Of' is a massive undertaking and requires multiple departments within your organization to work together. You will need a champion. Someone to "captain the ship" and hold everyone accountable for the part they play. 'Best Of' is a huge opportunity for growth in all areas. To keep you on track, we've created a **checklist** with everything you will need to execute your 'Best Of'.

Audit and Prep your Categories and Audience

FAQ

How far out should I start planning and what are the steps I need to take to ensure success?

Best Practice:

Start planning at least 6 months ahead of your nomination phase and utilize our sales and marketing **checklist** to make sure you don't forget anything.

Audit your Ballot

Each year you need to review your previous year's ballot, reviewing the Groups and Categories and how they performed year-over-year

• What categories performed well?

• What categories did not perform well?

• Was the category relevant within the community?

• What categories need to be added?

• What categories need to be removed?

To help determine what categories belong on your ballot we have three Key Performance Indicators:

• **Did it drive engagement?**
• **How much revenue was generated?**
  ○ Have competing businesses within the category historically purchased advertising, or not?
• **Is there a potential revenue opportunity**
  ○ Is there an emerging category that has lots of businesses and therefore potential revenue? Was there a reason a category might not have advertised previously but may do today?

Categories on your ballot MUST fall into one of the above buckets. If the category doesn't meet one of the above outlined KPIs, it's dead weight and should be removed from your ballot.

FAQ

How many categories should I have on my ballot?

Best Practice:

There is no magic number for categories on your ballot. As long as they fall into one of the three Key Performance Indicators, they should be on your ballot.

Audit your Audience

Similar to your ballot, you need to audit your audience in order to recognize trends in participation year-over-year. Use these trends to identify ways you can increase participation and generate more nominations/votes per user.

Key data to review:

- Total number of users
- Total number of Nominations
- Total number of Votes
- Average number of nominations per user
- Average number of votes per user

Key reports to review:

- **Entrant Report** – Export of your ballot that contains nomination and vote totals
- **Nomination Report** – Individual nominations by email address
- **Voting Report** - Individual votes by email address
- **Nominations and Votes per Category** - total # of nominations and votes per each category

Reports

Ballot Schema	⬚	⬇
4.5K People	⬚	⬇
Votes	⬚	⬇
Votes Per Category	⬚	⬇
4.5K People Fraud	⬚	⬇
Entrant Fraud	⬚	⬇
614 Yes, I would like to be invited to receive emails from...	⬚	⬇
49K Nominations	⬚	⬇
Nominations Per Category	⬚	⬇
Entrants	⬚	⬇
Current Leaders	⬚	⬇
Ads	⬚	⬇

DONE

Audit your Revenue

How can you continue to grow your ballot revenue year over year? The most successful companies do two key things:

- They have a champion to oversee the project from start to finish.
- They audit their revenue from previous years to look for trends and opportunities. Check our our calculator!

Ballot Champion

In markets with a ballot champion, we have seen as much as 50%-450% revenue growth year-over-year! The champion will work with departments across the organization to set the strategy, audience and sales goals. They will work closely with the sales leaders to coordinate training and sales materials. They will also work with the marketing team to develop the promotional materials for both the Business-to-Business and Business-to-Consumer marketing efforts (more on this to come in the Marketing section).

The champion should essentially be your project manager and motivator to ensure maximum success.

Audit your Sales Efforts from Last Year

Again, the most successful companies running 'Best Of' ballots tend to have two things in common when it comes to their sales efforts.

- They have simple packages for their ballot that are easy for businesses and advertisers to take up.
- They look for creative opportunities that add value for their clients each year, and use case studies, testimonials and ROI statements from other advertisers to make the investment compelling.

When reviewing last year's sales efforts ask yourself these four questions:

- What packages generated the most revenue?

- What packages did not meet your goals?

- Where can you increase the value in your packages?

- How can you simplify your packages? (both for your sales team and your clients)

Revenue Growth Tactics

Use these tactics to determine how you can edit your packages to target more growth:

- Get one more business in each category to purchase a package
- Increase investment of packages
- Include new ad placements/featured entrant pages
- Get 1-2 businesses in each category to move up to a larger package
- Look at where you can offer new types of packages (title sponsorships, etc)

FAQ

How do I grow my revenue YOY?

Best Practice:

Keep your sales packages simple and look for ways to add value for advertisers. If you need help getting started, here is your **Revenue Worksheet!** It has sample revenue goals by ballot round and package suggestions.

How to Sell

When you sell your 'Best Of' ballot to potential advertisers you need to do so with precision. To maximize your potential revenue, focus on setting goals, understanding what you can put in your packages, who to prospect, how to pitch and overcome objections. This section will cover each of these concepts for each phase of your ballot. You should have a checklist for the sales process to track each phase of the ballot.

Need help getting started with your checklist? We created one for you!
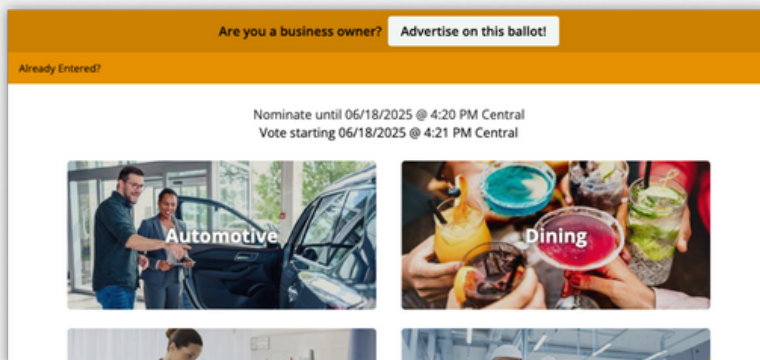
Download the checklist

eCommerce Capabilities

We utilize an integration with Stripe that allows you to sell either a la carte ads or full sales packages online through the ballot.
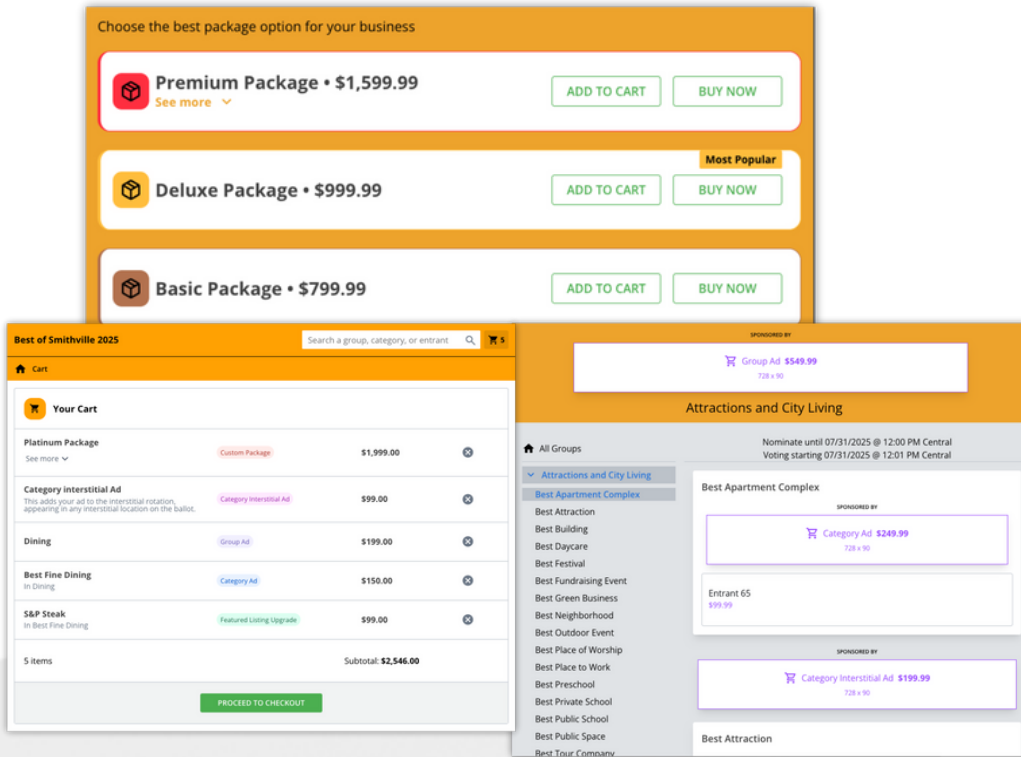
Include a CTA

Update the CTA and button text to draw in your advertisers and lead them to the purchase site.

FAQ

Should I sell ads a la carte or sales packages via eCommerce?

Best Practice:

We suggest selling both! You can set inventory limits on both the a la carte ads and sales packages.

The a la carte ads will be targeted for sales to those smaller advertisers your sales team may not have time to interact with. The sales packages will be targeted for your larger advertisers in multiple categories.

Check out our webinar to learn more about this eCommerce feature and our best practices!
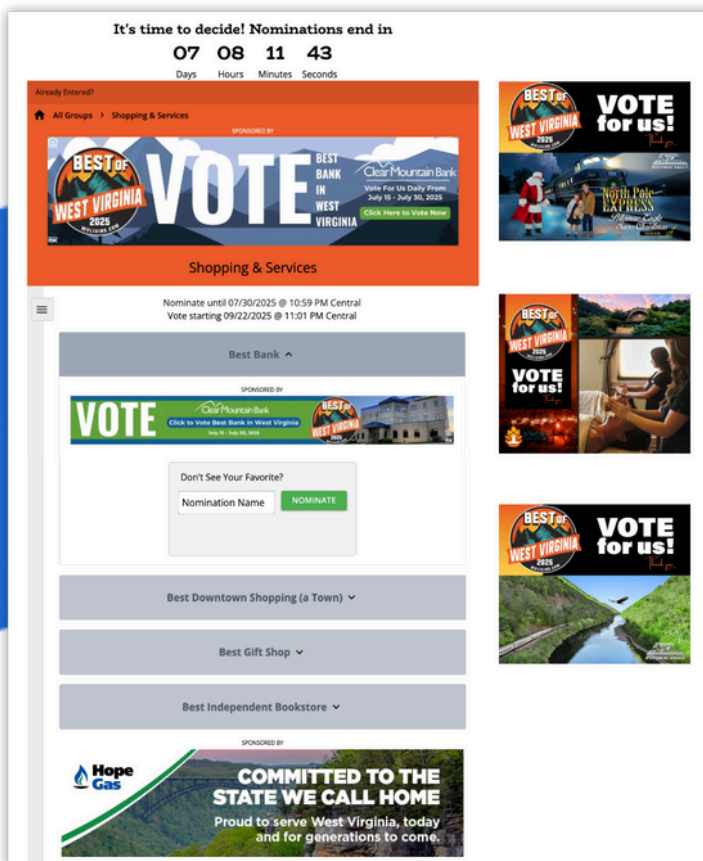
What can you sell?

Nomination Phase

In the nomination phase, you should sell these ads within the ballot itself:
- Groups Page Ad
- Group Ads
- Category Ads
- Category Interstitial Ads

Tip! All uploaded ads are trackable!

Don't forget to also include leaderboards or 300x250 ads in your nomination phase packages. These ads can run within your own website above and/or alongside the ballot.

- The **Groups Page Ad** appears above the individual groups on the group selection page. This is typically an ad that is saved for a title sponsor.
- The **Group Ad** is a large leaderboard ad that is displayed at the top of each group (e.g. A hospital could own the entire "Health & Wellness" group of categories).
- A **Category Ad** is a smaller leaderboard ad that is displayed at the top of each category (e.g. A landscape company above the "Landscaper" category).
- A **Category Interstitial Ad** appears between categories in a random order, so every user will see the ads in a different sequence. You can set Category Interstitial Ads to appear every X categories.

You can sell as many as you would like in any of these ad spots, but these are the limits we suggest:
- **Groups Page Ad: 1 advertiser**
- **Group Ad: 1-3 advertisers per group**
- **Category Ad: 5 advertisers per category**
- **Category Interstitial Ad: No set limit as these appear throughout the ballot randomly and provide share of voice**

It can be tempting to sell more but keeping it to these numbers creates exclusivity and maximum exposure for your advertisers.

Voting Phase

In the voting phase, you should sell:

- Group Ads
- Category Ads
- Featured Entrants including Entrant Ads

With a featured entrant, a business entry can showcase much more than just their name. Featured entrants get additional features by showing their business' address, contact info, and direct links to social media pages, and more.

By having an featured listing, the entrant will be placed at the top of the category, above all non-enhanced listings. They also include a unique URL to featured listing page. This page will feature a vote button and only one entrant.

What is included in a featured entrant listing?

- Vote for entrant in other categories option
- Unique URL
- 728x90 Entrant Page Ad
- Prevalent Vote/Share Buttons
- Entrant Main Image/Video
- Entrant Logo
- Google Maps & Multiple Locations
- Entrant Page Image Gallery
- Description, Phone #, Website Link, Social Links

Check out how to encourage nominees to upgrade their listing in the Voting Phase. Here is an [example](#) from Harrisburg Magazine.

Winner's Phase

This phase typically generates 60-70% of your total ballot revenue, so when selling, don't forget to include the **online winner's directory** in your packages. Offer featured listings, group ads, and category ads in the winner's directory, as well as leaderboards or right rail ads on the page where you are embedding your ballot.
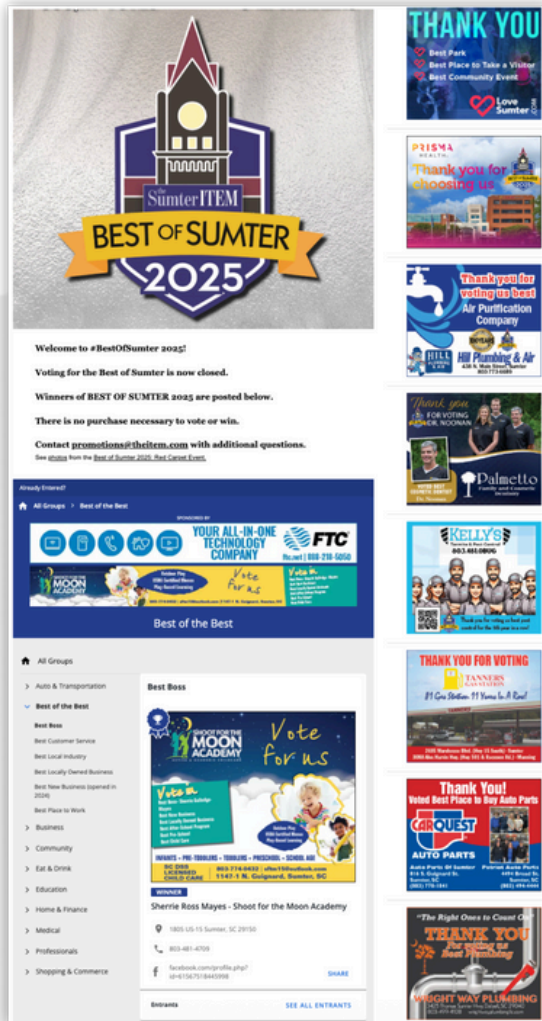
FAQ

How do I get my sales team excited/engaged to sell 'Best Of'?

Best Practice:

Have a sales launch party that makes it fun for your sales team. Ask them to give you exact numbers of users, votes and revenue from the previous year, and reward team members that guess the closest to your actual number. This is a fun game that gets them excited and also helps them remember important numbers when selling this initiative.

If you need help getting started, here's your Revenue Worksheet! And here are the sample sales packages for each phase by media type.

Sales Training

The most important part of sales training is to keep packages simple, have focused sales trainings, and make it fun for your team.

Prospect Effectively

Prospecting effectively is the easiest way to level-up your sales efforts, and you should be spending 90% of your time focused on the top categories that generate revenue.

In order to prospect effectively you must target businesses that fall into these 3 buckets:

• They show up in 3 or more categories on your ballot
• They are competitive in their categories
• They historically purchase ballot packages

These are the categories that we typically see as the best revenue performers:

- Home Services
- Specialty Healthcare
- Financial
- Insurance
- Real Estate
- Legal
- Automotive
- Hospitality

FAQ

Who should I be selling ballot packages to? Who do I target and why?

Best Practice:

You should be spending 90% of your time focused on the top categories that generate ballot revenue.

The Pitch

When selling your ballot, focus on the benefits to the advertisers. For example:

o   The value in advertising in a promotion that engages the entire community

o   Multimedia campaign that will not only reach our audience but will reach/engage the entire region

o   Audience reach is exponentially higher

o   Free to participate – not pay to play – but competition is fierce and your presence on the ballot helps your exposure

o   Remind community of your past wins – that you are the best

o   You'll find new clients, customers and supporters

o   It will help with recruitment efforts

o   Share stats from the previous year - for example:

- Total Users - % increase
- Nominations - % increase
- Votes - % increase

FAQ

What is the value proposition of a 'Best Of' ballot?

Best Practice:

'Best Of' programs, at their core, help businesses thrive. It's a year-round celebration that reminds local consumers that these businesses are the BEST in their market.

Sample 'Best Of' Ballot Scripts

Nomination Phase

"Congratulations on being a winner in our 2024 Best of the Best! Now it's time to defend your title as we launch the contest for 2025. Be sure to get nominated again so you make it to the final Voting Phase where you'll have the opportunity to win the Best of the Best Title again! We have nomination packages available, let's set up a time to talk!"

Voting Phase

"Congratulations on being nominated in our 2025 Best of the Best contest! Now it's time to begin your 'Vote For Me' campaign as we launch the Voting Phase of the ballot for 2025. We had a 75% increase in nominations from last year and expect voting to take off in the same way. You're so close to claiming or defending your title! We have integrated voting packages available to reach our growing audience, let's set up a time to talk!"

Winner's Phase

"Congratulations! You've been named 2025 'Best Of' winner in your category (or categories) in our largest 'Best Of' ever – with more than 175,000 votes and 30,000 users! At no cost to you, you'll automatically receive a framed certificate and a window cling to display in your business. You'll also be listed on the Winners' List in the 2025 'Best Of' magazine and on the website for the entire year. Winners' Packages are also available. Here are reasons you might pick one:

- Thank your supporters
- The special issue/magazine will be everywhere.
- Unique and bold online distribution in our winner's directory
- You'll find new clients, customers and supporters
- It will help with recruitment efforts

Overcoming Objections

Objections are buying signals and signify that the client has more questions for you in order to decide to purchase a package. Here are common objections and how to overcome them:

"It's rigged"

Its free to participate in 'Best Of'. We are presenting this package to you because it's truly good for your business. Our audience is exponentially bigger and more valuable right now - and always during 'Best Of' Season. We promote this program everywhere. We use a third-party software system with fraud detection and check IP addresses if we suspect fraudulent voting.

"What if I buy a package and don't win?"

That could happen. But as a sales rep you can help them spread the word with not only the presence on the ballot (as part of their package) but with how they can solicit votes from their current customers. The key is to explain that they aren't paying for votes. They are paying for an integrated package that reaches your audience when it's at its peak. For example we had a 300% increase in votes this year and 20,000 unique users! Share how many nominations you had in last year's ballot. Share success stories of other advertisers.

"I don't need to buy a package to win. I am the best. The winner last year was a joke."

That's correct. Its free to participate in 'Best Of'. But your competitors want to claim your title. We are presenting this package to you because it's truly good for your business. Our audience is exponentially bigger and more valuable right now - and always during 'Best Of' Season. If you win every year, would you like to thank your supporters for making you the best?

FAQ

How do I overcome objections from business owners?

Best Practice:

Be prepared. Have scripts ready for common objections. Know your stats and your value proposition/benefits for the advertiser.

"Overcoming Advertiser Objections to Ballot Sponsorships"

Read Article

Don't forget your planning checklist!

Download kit

Marketing Your Ballot

Your 'Best Of' ballot is your pot of gold and the more audience you bring to it, the more revenue you'll generate each year. To get the best results for both Business-to-Business and Business-to-Consumer efforts you'll need a marketing plan and more importantly, a project manager. We see 50%-450% revenue growth year-over-year with our partners that have a ballot champion.

Create a Business Resource Page

A business resource page, or a ballot landing page, is a one-stop-shop that contains your content, resources, rules, and more for your Best Of. It will serve as the main hub for all opportunities within your ballot.

What to include:

- Email Sign-up Widget
- Media Kit
- Graphics
- Marketing tips
- Salse Packages
- Mission Statement
- FAQs
- Rules
- Past Winners
- Category List
- Category Definitions

Email Signup Widget

Include a signup widget where businesses can sign up for general information and updates about your Best Of.

Branding your Ballot Page

Make sure your ballot page is well-organized and has a header graphic, call-to-action text, and 6-8 maximum ballot groups.

Elements should include:

- Ballot header graphic
  - Size ratio: 2:1 (»1200 x 600 or 1000 x 500)
- Ballot logo
- Call-to-action
- Define phases of the ballot - "Nominate Now"
- Change your promotional text for each phase
- Give information about sweepstakes or prizes if you are running one to encourage participation

NOMINATE NOW!

HONOR YOUR FAVORITE BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS BY NOMINATING THEM FOR THE COMMUNITY'S CHOICE AWARDS

PARTICIPATE FOR A CHANCE TO WIN $250

★2025★ BEST OF THE **best** The Official Community Choice Awards CHESAPEAKE apgchesapeake.com

2025 Best of the Best Chesapeake Community's Choice Awards

Celebrate the best businesses and organizations in the area with the Chesapeake Community's Choice Awards! In this nomination round, submit your favorite companies in each category for consideration. Users who nominate in 25 or more categories will be automatically entered to win a $250 gift card!

To Nominate:

1. Navigate to your desired Section and Category in the ballot below.
2. In the Nomination Field, type in the company name to nominate.
3. On your *first visit*, complete the full registration form with YOUR information and click "NOMINATE."
4. Continue to nominate in other categories. Nominations are recorded as they are entered and there is no final SUBMIT button.
5. On future visits, log in to the ballot using the Already Entered function and nominate again up to once a day.

Nominations close on July 20, 2025, and the top nominees, by user submissions in each category, move on to voting in September.

Already Entered?

Beauty & Health | Beauty & Health - People
Dining | Dining - People

BEST OF WEST VIRGINIA 2025

Time to decide... **WHO IS THE BEST OF THE BEST?**

SPONSORED BY Hope Gas

Sample Call-to-Action Text

Nominate US!
Nomination Round
July 18 - July 25

the almanac · Observer-Reporter · re:mag:ne

Nominations are now open!

Important Dates

Nomination Round: July 18 - 25
Final Voting Round: September 19 - 26
Gala: November 20 - Hilton Garden Inn Southpointe
Special Section: November 21

Our 9th annual contest is gearing up with new categories!
Medical Spa
Mom & Pop Shop
Product Made in SWPA
Roofing/Siding
Tanning Salon
Travel Agent
Windows/Doors

Thank you for participating and continuing to support our local businesses!

For questions, contact:
orbest@observer-reporter.com
724-225-1326

Here's a template to use:
- Welcome to the (insert year and name of your ballot here). This is a celebration of the best of the best in our community!
- Make sure you outline the nomination and voting process and timeline.
  - **Nomination Phase**: Dates, How it works:
    - How often you can nominate, and the number of businesses that will move on to voting round
  - **Voting Phase:** Dates and voting frequency
  - **Winner's Phase:** When winners will be contacted & when they will be published
- Link to your Media Kit for advertisers to promote themselves.
- Link to your FAQs page for business owners
- CTA and button for eCommerce purchases

FAQ

How do I lower the amount of questions about our Best Of?

Best Practice:

Create an FAQ page. This should answer questions you get year after year. Questions like:

- What are the dates?
- How do I get nominated?
- Why have some categories changed?
- Do I have to advertise to participate?
- What are the restrictions on voting?
- Why do some businesses have images/extra info and others don't?
- Why wasn't my business nominated?

Media Kit
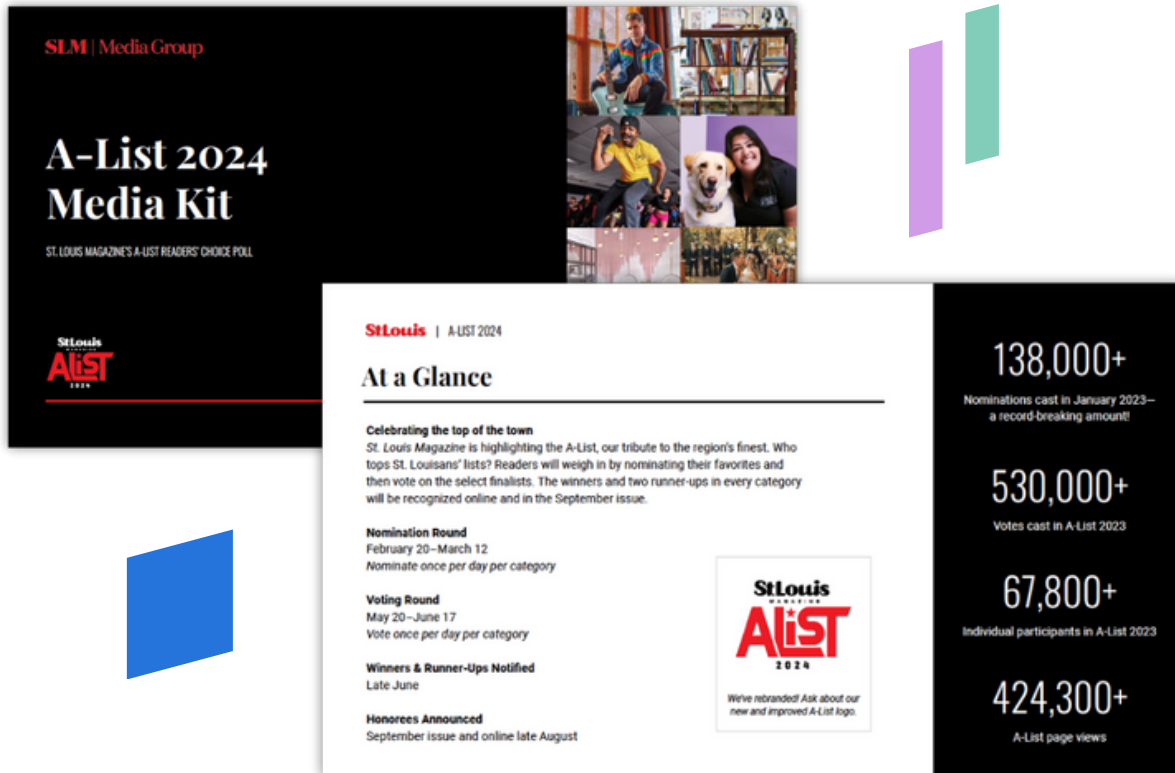
The Media Kit is essentially your 'Pitch Deck' that includes all information and value propositions of advertising within your ballot.

What to include:
- Mission Statement
- Audience Stats
- Dates
- Packages
- Ad Placement Examples
- Special Section and Online Directory examples

Always put your assets **behind a form** so you can collect data on the interested businesses!

Form should include:
- First Name
- Last Name
- Email
- Company Name
- Phone Number
- Job Title (drop-down)
- Opt-In
    - "Please send me information onadvertising as part of 'Best Of'"
    - Use the HOT LEADS feature!

Promotional Graphics & Marketing Tips

Download A-List Graphics

Is your business an A-List 2024 winner or finalist? Download these free graphics to share the news with your social media followers.

Promotional Graphics are free graphics for businesses to use to promote themselves within your ballot. Utilize your Best Of branding when designing and include an explanation of how to use the graphics and example social media and email scripts.

FAQ

How do I encourage businesses to promote themselves?

Best Practice:

Provide a promotional graphics that all business owners can download and use. This is a kit of graphics for business owners to promote themselves and the ballot. This kit should always live behind a form (you can use the Second Street survey tool for this) so you are collecting leads for your sales team.

What is included in the Promotional Graphics Kit?

Social Media Graphics that include:

- Your ballot logo
- CTA text:
  - Nominate Us
  - Vote for Us
  - Thank you
- Change up CTA when you move from one phase to the next
- QR code

Vote for Us for Best of Morgantown – Facebook Cover Image 820 x 312

Vote for Us for Best of Morgantown – Facebook & Instagram Story 1080 x 1920

Vote for Us for Best of Morgantown – Square Social Media Image 1000 x 1000

Bitly Links
2021 Ballot: http://bit.ly/cc2021ballot
Lowcountry Favorites: http://bit.ly/cc2021favorite
Food & Dining: http://bit.ly/cc2021dining
Health & Wellness: http://bit.ly/cc2021health
Drinks & Nightlife: http://bit.ly/cc2021nightlife
Arts & Entertainment: http://bit.ly/cc2021arts
Automotive, Boat & RV: http://bit.ly/cc2021auto
Just for Kids: http://bit.ly/cc2021kids
Home & Garden: http://bit.ly/cc2021home
Pets: http://bit.ly/cc2021pets
Local Shopping: http://bit.ly/cc2021shop
Professional Services: http://bit.ly/cc2021prof
Real Estate: http://bit.ly/cc2021realestate
Recreation, Leisure & Outdoor:
http://bit.ly/cc2021recreation

Examples of elements to include:

- Instagram Post
- Instagram Story
- Facebook Post
- Facebook Cover Photo
- Facebook Story
- 8 ½ x 11 Poster
- Point of Purchase Display
- QR Code
- Bitly Links for each group on your ballot
- Give examples of how local businesses should use the graphics to promote themselves
- Example social media post scripts

Registration Page

This is where you are collecting information on users in your ballot. You will want to make sure to include the following on this page:

- Email

- First name/Last name

- Demographic Data: What demographic data s important to you or your marketing efforts? These are optional based on what is the most important to you:
  - Birth date
  - Gender
  - Postal code

- Core Newsletter Opt-ins (unchecked): Make sure you include an opt-in to the lists that generate revenue for you. This could be your daily headlines, or your promotions list. Don't add more than two opt-ins to your registration form. One is ideal.

Email   Required

First Name   Required

Last Name   Required

Postal Code   Required

☐ I'd like to receive the Dinning newsletter, covering the food scene in St. Louis.

FAQ

Should I include my sponsor's opt-in on the registration form?

Best Practice:

Absolutely not. You only have 1-2 opt-ins that you should be adding to the form. Make sure they are growing your lists. Your advertiser has more opportunities within the ballot to get in front of your audience.

B2B Marketing

Create an email campaign targeted to your list of business owners to boost participation and sales opportunities.

Announcement Phase
- Send 3 months before your nomination phase starts
- Best of is coming soon!
- Announce dates
- Link to Business Resource Page

Pre-Nomination Phase
- Send 1 month before launch, 7 days before launch, & 2 days before launch
- Use strong sales language
- Call-to-Action: "Are you Ready to Win?"
- Link to Business Resource Page

B2B Marketing

Create an email campaign targeted to your list of business owners to boost participation and sales opportunities.

Pre-Voting Phase

- Send to businesses who made it to the voting round
- Send as soon as you confirm all nominees, 1 week before voting starts, & 2 days before voting starts
- Call-to-Action "Claim your Title"
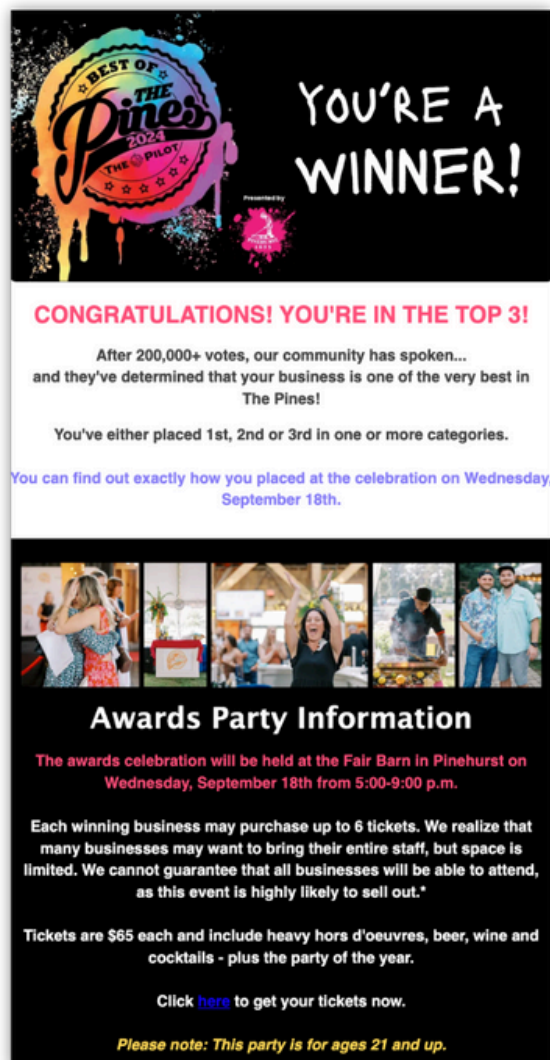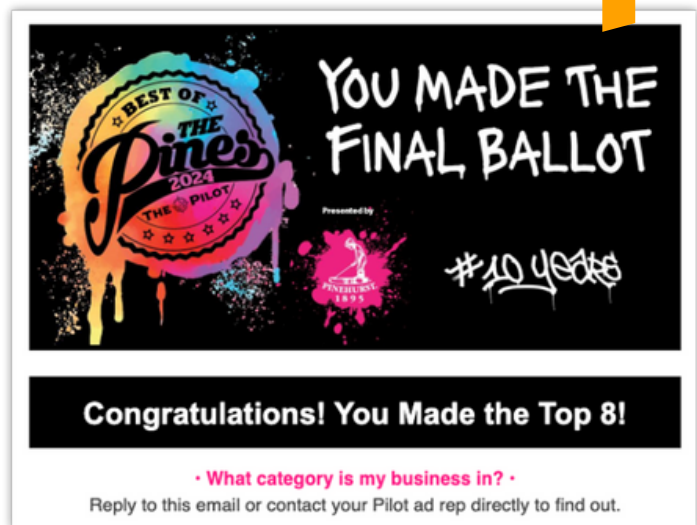
Pre- Winners' Phase

- Send to businesses who are winners/finalists
- Send at least 3 emails
- As soon as you confirm winners/finalists
- Cadence should be determined by how much time you have between when voting ends and when you announce winners

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B2C Marketing

Make sure you are increasing participation each year by promoting to your audience.
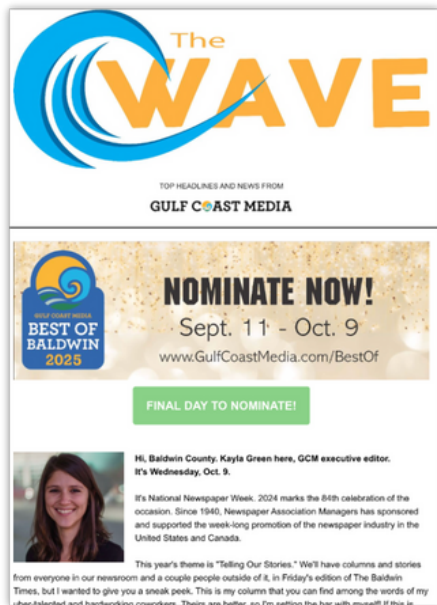
Email Campaign

Craft an email campaign targeted to your audience to entice them to participate in your Best Of. Also include Best Of announcements in your applicable newsletters.

Nomination Phase
- Send the day the nomination phase launches, 1 week before nominations close, & the last day of the nomination phase

Voting Phase
- Send the day the voting phase launches, ½ way into the voting phase, and 1 week before voting closes

Winners' Phase
- Send Winner Announcement to users that opted in to your promotions list

FAQ

What are ways I can promote to my audience?

Best Practice:

Include a sweepstakes for users that nominate and/or vote in 25 or more categories. Also make sure you have an integrated marketing campaign!

Digital

- Run of site ads
- Promotional videos
- Homepage takeover
- Unsold Digital Inventory
  - Pop-ups
  - Rich Media
  - Pencil Pushdowns

Core Media

- Article announcing launch
- Print/On-Air ads
- Use talent to promote
- Put QR codes that lead to the ballot on ads

Morgantown magazine
Scan Me!

Publish a Winner's Directory both online and in print (if applicable)

Drive traffic to the Winner's Directory year-round:

- "Thank You" ads on your digital winner's directory year-round
- Use winners' directory as a landing page to drive traffic to your winners
- Featured listings that highlight your winners with:
  - Large photo or video
  - Winner icon
  - Description, location, map
  - Website, phone, social links

FAQ

What are the steps I need to take to ensure success?

Best Practice:

Start planning for your ballot the day after this year's ballot is over. At the very least, plan six months out from your go live date. And don't forget to download the **Planning checklist** (again!)

Celebrate Year-Round

Your Best Of is your #1 initiative of the year. Utilize the information and content collected to drive revenue throughout the year!

Event

- You can offer a free event, ticketed event, or full blown party
- Provides sponsorship opportunities like Hall of Fame, photo gallery, 360-degree videos, etc.
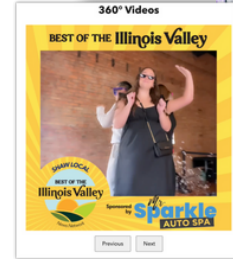
Winner's Ad Program

- Runs in the 'off season' after the winners' event and special section is published
- These are simply "pick-up ads" that your team has already created
- Runs continuously for 6 months leading up to the next year's Best Of

Email

- Include sections in your newsletters
- Curate a Best Of branded newsletter
- Branded marketing campaigns that feature winners in categories that spend
- Thank You emails from winners

Content

- Create content that engages your audience and drives traffic back to your winner's directory (On-Air Features/Segments, Articles, Videos, Listicles)

Contests

- Niche Brackets
- Niche Ballots
- National Day/Week/Month promotions
- Leag-gen sweeps for winners with Best Of branding
- Spin-off events/contests using Best Of branding

Additional Resources

Ballot Calendar & Revenue Calculator

In this kit, you'll find everything you need to get the most revenue out of your 'Best Of':

- Planning Checklist
- Revenue & Growth Calculator
- Sample Sales Packages

Download the Kit

On-Demand Ballot Webinars

How to Grow Best Of Revenue

How to Grow Best Of Audience

Creating a Year-Round Celebration

ⓤ Second Street

Upland Second Street is an audience engagement software platform used by over 4,000+ companies. Our platform gives users the power to build contests, interactive content, and emails. This includes sweepstakes, photo contests, ballots, quizzes, polls, newsletters, drip campaigns, and more! Our partners use Second Street to drive revenue, database growth, and audience engagement. They do this by selling sponsorships to advertisers or creating custom solutions that identify hot sales leads, add new people to email lists, and attract new site traffic.

Want to learn more?

Contact us.

uplandsof tware.com/secondstreet