

**THE SOLAL<sup>®</sup>  
AWARDS**

**GLOBAL  
GUIDELINES**

**2025-2026**

INCLUDES UPDATED DATES AS OF MARCH 2026

# WELCOME

## WELCOME TO THE SOLAL AWARDS 2026

The Solal Awards are back for 2026!  
It's time to celebrate the very best in retail and leisure marketing.

After last year's record-breaking event we're getting set for an even bigger and better awards programme and educational conference in 2026.

The Solal Awards offer a moment for shopping destinations to showcase their most effective work and receive acknowledgement from world-class judges. The awards gala is run as the finale to an inspirational marketing conference which showcases the latest ideas and best practice in shopping centre marketing.

Run as an independent 'not-for-profit' organisation, the Solal team works collaboratively with other forward-thinking industry professionals, businesses and organisations, so we're immensely grateful to our key sponsors for helping us to encourage entries from right around the world.

You can find more information along with inspiring case studies from previous winners on our website, [www.solalawards.com](http://www.solalawards.com).

**We look forward to judging your entry and to celebrating your success!**

**Dominik, Anita, Agnieszka, Charlotte, Alan**

*The Solal Awards Team.*

---

# KEY FACTS

## WHAT ARE THE SOLAL AWARDS?

The Solal Marketing Awards recognise innovation, excellence and successful marketing performance across retail and leisure destinations.

The Awards are run as a not-for-profit organisation by a team of industry volunteers.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SOLAL AWARDS?

We have three key aims:

- **To reward excellence, innovation, creativity and effectiveness in place marketing**
- **To educate and inspire marketing practitioners**
- **To showcase industry best practice**

## KEY DATES (UPDATED JANUARY 2026)

Entries can cover activities over the period between 1st January 2024 to April 10th 2026. Earlybird entry deadline 31 March 2026.

Final entry deadline 8th May 2026.

The Marketing Conference and Awards Announcement is likely to be in mid-October in Budapest. Check the website for updated details.

## WHO CAN ENTER?

The awards are open to shopping centres and destinations which have retail and leisure at their heart.

Entries are welcome from any country (excluding EU boycotted countries).

Marketing teams, managing agents, asset managers, developers and owners can enter. Marketing agencies can enter if supported by the asset owner.

Entries are welcome from individual venues but can also include joint applications covering a portfolio of locations or companywide projects.

## ELIGIBILITY

The majority of your programme must have been implemented between 1st January 2024 and 10th April 2026.

Multiple entries for the same initiative are not permitted.

Previous entries for the same activity are ineligible.

## ENTRY FEE

The price for an entry is €575 for a first entry, then €475 for any subsequent entry.

There is a €50 early-bird discount on these prices for any entries received by 31st March 2026.

The entry fee can be paid in either Euros or Pounds sterling must be received by bank transfer in by 11th May 2026. You can also pay by credit card.

## LANGUAGE

All applications must be submitted in English with costs shown in Euros.

## AWARDS AVAILABLE

The Solal Shortlist - making the shortlist means you are in the top tier of marketing campaigns.

- **Solal Bronze**  
typically entries scoring around 33 points or more
- **Solal Silver**  
typically entries scoring around 35 points or more
- **Solal Gold**  
typically entries scoring around 40 points or more
- **Solal Platinum**  
the top scoring entry
- **Solal Innovation**  
the entry that scores highest on Innovation
- **Solal Excellence**  
the highest scoring entry with a budget under €10.000.

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY

First, log on to the Solal Awards website and follow the "Enter" section. Then follow the easy steps to upload your entry.

## PUBLICITY

The details of winning entries may be showcased in PR, social media or partner publications.

## QUESTIONS?

*For additional help or questions please contact the Solal Team via [support@solalawards.com](mailto:support@solalawards.com)*

# THE AWARD CATEGORIES

## **STRATEGIC MARKETING**

A big campaign idea using multiple marketing channels.

## **TACTICAL ACTIVATION**

Campaigns and activities designed primarily to generate footfall or sales.

## **GRAND OPENING/EXPANSION/REFURBISHMENT**

The marketing of the opening of a new centre, or the re-launch of an existing scheme.

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Projects which aim to benefit the centre's catchment area or local community.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Acknowledging projects where social media at the centre of the project.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Campaigns centred around the communication of key messages in the media, human interest stories and crisis management comms.

## **BRAND & TENANT PARTNERSHIPS**

Rewarding relationships between tenants, third party brands and sponsorships which have achieved positive marketing results.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICES**

Campaigns and initiatives involved in customer service and guest experience.

## **EMERGING TECHNOLOGY**

Projects which have technology at the heart of the programme.

## **BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS**

Campaigns targeting a business audience to raise the profile of assets and leasing opportunities.

## **BEST PLACEMAKING**

Celebrating temporary or long-term innovations which add to the placemaking experience where people shop, live, eat, work or play.

# HOW TO ENTER

## YOUR ENTRY MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE

Log into this website and follow the registration instructions. [www.solalawards.com](http://www.solalawards.com)

## REGISTER FOR A USERNAME AND PASSWORD

You only need to register once and will use your Username and Password to log on in the future.

## ADD TO CART

Once you have completed your entry add it to the cart. This will bring you to the Review and Checklist section where you can edit, change or print your entry.

## PAYMENT

The price for an entry is €575 for a first entry, then €475 for any subsequent entry.

The entry fee can be paid in either Euros or Pounds sterling must be received by bank transfer in by midnight on the 31st March 2026. You can also pay by credit card.

The Solal Awards Ltd is registered in the UK, therefore no VAT is payable (unless you are entering from the UK).

These are the banking details to use:

The Solal Awards Limited  
IBAN: GB91CLRB04060520863499  
SWIFT: CLR BGB22  
For UK entries: Account Number: 20863499.  
Sort Code: 04-06-05

## EARLYBIRD ENTRIES

There are two ways to make a saving of €50 on your entry:

1 / Complete your initial entry and submit it by midnight CET on the 31st March.

2 / If you haven't yet finished your entry, simply type "Pending" in the missing fields within the entry and hit "Submit". This allows the system to accept your submission so that you can pay the lower fee. Log back into the portal at any time before the 8th May deadline to replace all the pending sections.

Be careful - the system does not automatically save your entry after the first submission, so you will need to ensure you save your entry every time you amend it.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR ENTRY

It is advisable to prepare all the content of your entry in advance in Word and Excel formats. Once completed you can then copy the content into the website. Note the word count restrictions!

## DESCRIPTION OF ENTRY

The Description of Entry is a brief summary of the project which sets the scene for the judges and will be used to introduce your entry at the awards ceremony if you win. We also use this to update the website with the winning entries. (Maximum of 700 characters with spaces).

## IMAGES FOR THE AWARDS PRESENTATION

You must upload up to 12 images of your campaign. If your entry wins, some of the images will be used during the Solal presentation, Solal finalist brochure and on the Solal Awards website. Any photographs with copyright must be accompanied by a release from the copyright holder, in addition to any preferred credit acknowledgements. Accepted image file formats: High resolution: JPG, JPEG, PNG, GIF.

## YOUR ENTRY

You need to summarise your entry by completing the following five sections - The Goals, Action, Innovation, Results and Budget. We recommend using bullets rather than narrative paragraphs where possible. Please limit your response to a maximum of 2100 characters per section, including spaces.

## GOALS (WORTH UP TO 10 POINTS)

Use this section to give the background to your project. What is the rationale behind the idea? Was there any research? How did it fit with your overall strategy? Make sure you provide clear, believable, measurable, SMART goals and objectives. Don't start describing what you did. This comes in the next section. (Maximum of 2100 characters including spaces.)

## ACTION (WORTH UP TO 10 POINTS)

In this section, explain what you actually did to deliver your project and what resources you used. (Maximum of 2100 characters including spaces.)

## INNOVATION (WORTH UP TO 10 POINTS)

Explain what was truly original about your project. How did you approach difficulties or obstacles in a creative way. Was there anything new in what you delivered that makes your entry stand out? (Maximum of 2100 characters including spaces.)

# HOW TO ENTER CONT.

## RESULTS (WORTH UP TO 10 POINTS)

What was the impact of your project? It's important in this section to relate the results back to the measurable objectives you set in the earlier Goals section. Did you achieve them? Include any qualitative and quantitative results if available. Show a clear link between costs and results and add ideally an ROI calculation. (Maximum of 2100 characters including spaces.)

### ROI

ROI is the euro-for-euro return that is achieved from your programs and initiatives. ROI is the practice of attributing profit and revenue growth to the impact of marketing initiatives. By calculating return on marketing investment, organisations can measure the degree to which marketing efforts contribute to revenue growth, so we recommend you include an ROI calculation where possible.

ROI % - Return on Investment (ROI) is calculated in the following way:

Financial Gain from the Initiative minus the cost of the Initiative. Divide this by the cost of the Initiative and multiply by 100.

#### What to include for "financial gain + savings" from an initiative

Total all cost savings such as all revenue generation from sponsorship, sales, or any other income generation PLUS all in-kind, donation and any unpaid media that directly resulted from the initiative, etc....

#### What to include with "cost of the initiative"

Total all expenses directly associated with the initiative: production, media/social media fees, creative fees, labour, services, and incidentals (the same number used for total expenses in the application)

#### Example calculation

Total cost of initiative = 25,125

Total savings & financial gains = 75,350

Step 1:  $73,350 - 25,125 = 48,225$

Step 2:  $48,225 \div 25,125 = 1.919$

Step 3:  $1.919 \times 100 = 191.9\%$  or round up to 192%

**The total ROI of this initiative = 192**

## BUDGET (WORTH UP TO 10 POINTS)

In this section show how you spent your budget. This must be uploaded as an attachment and must be in Euros. Judges will consider if this seems a cost-effective means of achieving your aims, irrespective of whether your budget is large or small.

Was creativity and resourcefulness shown in budgeting without compromising quality and ability to get results.

Show your project budget as a percentage of your overall marketing budget.

Please include all creative fees and agency retainers in your expense summary.

(Maximum of 2100 characters including spaces.)

We can keep the budget section confidential if you tick the relevant box on the entry platform.

## DOCUMENTATION SECTION

Include one digital file that has up to 25 pages of information related to your entry. You may add supporting materials which further explain your entry. This can include a summary of your publicity coverage, advertising, brochures, photos of events, publicity and press releases.

## ONLINE

This section allows you to add up to five relevant links.

## AUDIO AND VISUAL

You may upload only one audio file, and only one video file per entry. Your audio or video can relate to either the advertising or the publicity of your entry. All advertising and publicity examples must appear on the same audio or video files. Each file is limited to a maximum of four minutes of content. Judges will view or listen only to the first four minutes of each file.

Accepted audio formats: MP3.

Accepted video formats: 3GP, AAC, AVI, FLV, MP4 and MPEG-2. You may provide edited and narrated footage of actual events, publicity, and advertising as long as the video clip does not exceed the four-minute limit. Please note that this must still be considered your only eligible video file.

# HOW THE JUDGING WORKS

## THE JUDGES

The judging panel is formed of over 20 leading marketing professionals from across Europe and beyond. Entries are scored against specific criteria and each application will be judged multiple times to ensure a balanced score. Judges will not review entries from their own companies or projects where there could be considered to be a conflict of interest.

## THE SCORING

The Solal Awards programme is designed to recognise the highest level of marketing excellence, so entries must achieve a minimum number of points to be considered for an award.

Entries are judged on their own merit to ensure that the size of centre or the size of budget do not affect the results.

There is no limit on the number of possible winners so any particular category may have many winners if the quality of entries is high. Conversely, if no entries meet the high standard of excellence required then there might be no winner in a particular category.

During the judging, any submission can be subjected to an audit and verification of the materials submitted.

The judging committee might need to reclassify or disqualify entries if required. All decisions are final and scoring results remain confidential.

# TOP TIPS

## HERE ARE TEN TOP TIPS TO ENSURE YOU HAVE A STRONG ENTRY.

### 1: ENTER THE RIGHT CATEGORY

Make sure you enter the most appropriate category. Some criteria overlap between categories so carefully check the definitions before you start. Your project may be entered into more than one category; however, each entry must be adapted to the category's specific objectives.

### 2: TELL A STORY

Your entry needs a clear storyline with a beginning, middle and an end. The judges are unlikely to be familiar with your situation, so make sure your entry describes why and what you did, and outlines all the resources employed, the costs and the results.

### 3: BE CONCISE

The structure of your entry should be clear, concise, and relevant. Use short sentences and bullet points to convey detail.

### 4: BE SMART

Everything you submit should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable and Realistic, and a clear time frame.

### 5: BE HONEST

Show how the project achieved good value for money and Return On Investment (ROI), but don't exaggerate - the judges will spot this. If some aspects of the project did not work well, or gave you an idea for improvement next year, then this shows a believable and realistic approach.

### 6: EXPLAIN WHY

Explain why the idea behind your entry is good and why the implementation was successful. Why did you choose this idea and not something else? Was it aligned with your overall strategy? Did it answer your business brief? Were objectives and goals achieved? Is this entry a good benchmark for the industry?

### 7: DON'T FORGET THE POWER OF THE SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Make sure you have solid supporting evidence to show how you achieved your objectives. Images, photographs and/or videos, testimonies and market research results are always great advantages.

### 8: ALLOW ENOUGH TIME TO CREATE YOUR ENTRY

The best entries are planned well in advance and written with sufficient time for reviewing and editing.

### 9: BE YOUR OWN BEST CRITIC

Ask tough questions. Are you entering because you think you ought to apply, or because you have an excellent project? Is your entry innovative enough? Will it stand out? If you were a jury member would you give it a high score?

### 10: TEST THE ENTRY ON SOMEONE ELSE

Get someone not connected with your work to review your submission. If it makes sense to someone unfamiliar with your centre and the details of your project, you likely have a robust project.

**THE SOLAL<sup>®</sup>**  
**AWARDS**

