



NXTcomm

NXTcomm EoS Awards Beat the Clock with mBLAST

mBLAST CASE STUDY

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NXTcomm needed to move fast. The telecommunications and IT trade show, run by the two most-recognized associations in the telecommunications space, was starting virtually from scratch after the two groups agreed to merge their trade show and conference efforts in late 2006. Although the show was hosted in the same venue and date as previous years' shows -- when the organizations ran separate shows -- the merger created a host of new challenges, including staff changes, brand changes and process changes. The NXTcomm staff had less than six months to secure partners, speakers and exhibitors, develop a web site, and market to the approximately 18,000 expected attendees.

Launching an awards process wasn't the first item on the organizers' agenda, but as exhibitors began asking when applications for the awards program would be live, they realized they needed to move quickly. Even more pressing was the need for the awards to be completely wrapped up a month before the show began.

Exhibitors viewed the awards as much more than PR fluff—receiving an award from NXTcomm and its prestigious panel of judges *meant* something. There was a need for well-respected third-party judges, multiple categories, and automated communications with entrants and the judges.

NXTcomm turned to mBLAST to get its Eos awards program running quickly. Within just a few weeks, the EoS Awards web site went live and personalized invitations were issued to all exhibiting companies to participate. Because the process was entirely online and form driven (no PDF downloads, faxes or e-mailed entries), entrants found the system easy to manage. One of the favorite features of users was the ability to start their entry, invite others to collaborate, and log-in again to make changes -- all before pressing the finish button. This "Draft Mode" feature was especially appreciated among large companies, who oftentimes needed approval from several individuals before it is finalized.

Once the entry period was closed, judges found that same ease of use. They could log into the awards system from wherever they were in the world, review and rate entries based on NXTcomm's criteria, and make comments, all within the mBLAST system. They could also "Save" their work and come back into the mBLAST system as manytimes as they needed to complete their process. When the judges were finished their individual judging, they pressed finish and the scores were added to the overall scores. The process was easy on the Eos Awards administrator as well. "One of my favorite features was the ability to track hour to hour the progress of each process," said John Salak, who ran the Eos Awards for NXTcomm, and has used the mBLAST system for previous trade shows. "I knew how well entrants were

responding to e- mails, where judges were in their processes, etc.” The mBLAST system sent automated e- mails to possible entrants and judges at intervals and deadlines pre-determined by NXTcomm, making Salak’s job even easier. “I didn’t need to chase people down. We set our deadlines for each process and mBLAST sent the invitations, sent reminders, tabulated the results and gave us scores and comments for each entry.”

After the success of its awards program, NXTcomm is investigating using mBLAST for its Call for Papers and Call for Speakers programs, creating vertical news portals on its sites, as well as mBLAST’s media credentialing module. NXTcomm needed to move fast, and mBLAST delivered.