Award Preparation
&
Pit Judging 101

Hi, I'm Ruth Toomey!

★ Introduced to FIRST by Camp REACH and FRC 190 in 2000

★ Joined FRC 1735 as a student in Fall 2005
  ○ Mentored with 190, 319, 1024, and currently mentor 2713

★ 20 years in Customer-facing communication roles
  ○ Customer Success at Sphero, Inc

★ Served as a Judge in FLL, FTC, and FRC for 12+ years

★ Specialize in processes and soft skills

★ Approximate knowledge of many things

★ Anxiety, ADHD, Depression

Two truths and a lie

1. I've driven across the continental US twice over multiple trips - **TRUE**

2. I have over a dozen robots in my house - **TRUE**

3. This presentation will teach you how to win awards - **LIE** *(SORT OF)*

Well, why are we here? Main goals:

1. Confirm best practices for defining your story and applying the awards to your team's work (and not your work to the awards)
2. Give you tools to help reframe the Pit Judging interviews into a situation where your students feel comfortable and in control

COMPARISON IS THE THIEF OF JOY

"But I yearn for data"

★ If you must make comparisons, consider Week over Week, Month over Month, Season over Season, Off-Season over Regular Season, or Year over Year instead of Your Team versus Other Teams
  ○ Don't limit this to just robot performance!
★ Awards are just a piece of hardware
  ○ Unless you're in a District, in which case they're just 5 or 8 points
★ The real treasure is the lessons you learned building your students while they think this is all about building a robot

Best Practices

- ★ What, How, and Why?
- ★ Understanding Each Award
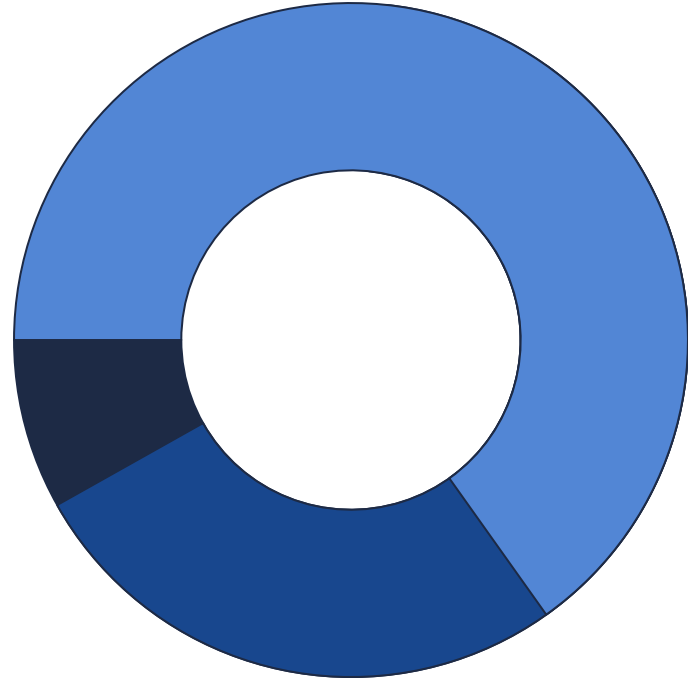- ★ How to Apply the Awards to Your Work

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What, How, and Why?

What are you doing?

How are you doing it?

Why are you doing that way?

# Understanding Each Award

Machine, Creativity, and Innovation (MCI)

★ Autonomous Award
★ Creativity Award
★ Excellence in Engineering
★ Industrial Design Award
★ Innovation in Control Award
★ Quality Award

Team Attributes

★ Engineering Inspiration (EI)
★ Gracious Professionalism
★ Imagery Award
★ Judges Award
★ Team Spirit Award
★ Team Sustainability Award

Which award do you think is **most** important to your team?
Which do you think is **least** important? Why?
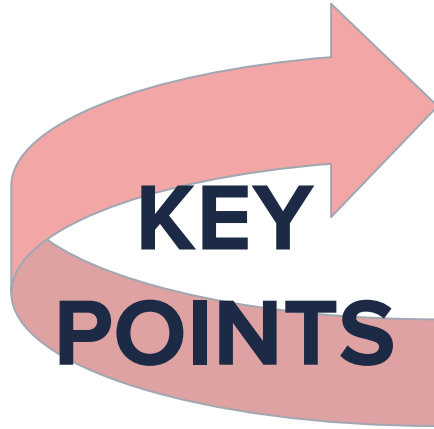
DEFINITION

GUIDELINES

Let's step through an example...

Imagery Award - Definition

This award celebrates attractiveness in engineering and outstanding visual aesthetic integration of machine and team appearance

Let's step through an example...

Imagery Award - Guidelines

- Appearance of machine and team are integrated in an attractive theme.
- Visuals of the integrated team/machine are exceptional.
- The team theme is supportive of the principles of FIRST Core Values.
- The team's theme is original, can be explained by a team spokesperson, and is fitting to the objectives, character, and/or history of the team.

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Let's step through an example...

Imagery Award - Vibes

Let's step through an example…

Imagery Award - Key Points

- AT THE EVENT
  - A e s t h e t i c (but make it everything)
  - Look good, feel good
  - How does the brand connect us with our school and sponsors
  - Why does our brand make sense
- WHAT DOES THIS TARGET
  - The Robot
  - The Pit
  - The team uniform
  - The branding

...and Apply To Your Work

- New t-shirt policy
- Bows?
- Director of marketing
- Brand works with school brand
  - MHS colors
  - Red Hawk Robotics - school mascot
- 3d print in specific team colors
  - Streamline and standardize color selections for more efficient ordering and cost effectiveness
- New custom cart along with our brand
- Brand considered in every part, supply, and tool order
- Inclusivity
  - Pronoun pins
  - Stickers
- Sponsor panel

Taking Charge

- ★ Set the narrative
- ★ Drive the conversation
- ★ Review early and often

Set the Narrative

- Know who is going to be the Subject Matter Expert for which areas of questions
- Practice discussing key points with a variety of folks
  - Mentors
  - Teachers
  - Parents
  - Sponsors
  - Other Students

- Determine if there are any awards your students don't want to pursue before you get to the event
  - It's ok to recognize that there are areas for growth in either skill or enthusiasm
  - It's ok to not have the bandwidth to pursue every award, too

Drive the Conversation

- Students don't have to wait for the Judges to ask the questions you want to answer
  - Segue from adjacent areas into the features you want to hype
- If you don't know an answer, redirect to someone who does
  - "I worked on the intake, but Jo was our PM for that. Jo can you tell them more about XYZ?"

- Don't make the judges feel like they have to chase you
  - Try to have someone in the pit at all times
  - Saying "walk with me, we can talk along the way to the rest of the team" is a great trick

Reflect Early and Often

- What went well?
- What can be improved?
- Was there a particular subject that interested the Judges?
- Did everyone have the chance to participate?

Don't wait until the event is over to start reflecting with your students! (As long as it doesn't add additional stress at the event)

Post-interview analysis can help polish your Team's answers in the second (or third) rounds of re-interviews.

Thank you for joining me!

Questions?