

THE OFFICE BUILDING OF THE YEAR (TOBY) AWARDS

Guidelines for Entrants

The Rewards of Entering the TOBY Competition

The TOBY Awards are not so much about buildings as they are about the people who take care of them; how those people manage, operate and cater to their tenants, and how well-informed and educated their team is.

Winning a TOBY award is not a casual award - it is the highest achievement in our commercial real estate industry. Not a "Beauty Contest", the TOBY Award acknowledges exemplary professionalism and high standards in a property management team, distinguished by their peers and labeled the "Best of the Best".

This program is designed to evaluate all facets of a building's operations. Including the display of overall superior quality in the areas of tenant relations programs, community involvement, emergency evacuation procedures, ADA provisions, preventive maintenance schedules, security issues, policy and procedure manuals and continuing education for building personnel.

There are many benefits to entering your building, whether or not you earn a TOBY award in the end. Participation in the process will require a thorough examination of your building, an invaluable exercise itself. It is a morale builder, encouraging growth and a sense of camaraderie, pride and loyalty in your staff and tenants. Your company, the property and building staff will enjoy confirmed recognition as one which takes service to the "next level". Participation in the TOBY program shows your building ownership that your property management team believes their building is a "Winner". And, it also provides excellent free advertising which money cannot buy for your building.

I. Are You Ready for a TOBY Inspection? *A Positive Approach.*

- ❖ You, as the property manager, are the team leader. Relax; this is not “Fear Factor”. This is your opportunity to grow your knowledge, show off your team, take pride in your building, meet industry professionals, and maybe even have a little fun.
- ❖ Prepare your team (day porters, engineering and garage staff, vendors, tenant contacts, co-workers and building owner). Get everyone to ‘buy-in’. Let them know how important each and every one of them is to the success of the property. Give them an opportunity to shine. We cannot emphasize enough that the judges *always* comment on the cohesive, enthusiastic staff of a winning TOBY building.
- ❖ Partner with your vendors. Get them involved - your winning building will provide a great opportunity for vendor recognition and advertising for their company.
- ❖ Use the TOBY judging sheet as an outline. Make sure you are prepared to discuss, showcase or demonstrate all of the items listed on the sheet.
- ❖ Rehearse for your inspection. Invite your co-workers (or a member of the AOBA TOBY Committee) to take a tour of your building and pretend they are the TOBY judges. They will give you valuable feedback.
- ❖ Greet the judges. First step, introduce your staff and tell the basics about your building. The judges need to get to know the building first - then they can truly appreciate your great team and shining property.
- ❖ During the building tour, expect the unexpected. Just like any typical day in the property management field, anything can happen. The judges understand this; they are in the same business. It matters not so much what happens, but how you and your team handle it.
- ❖ Make information available to the judges so they don’t have to “dig” for answers. For example, to highlight your building’s excellent customer service, define your service call procedures. Demonstrate how the program works and what makes it special (“our goal is to respond to requests within 2 hours and close out work tickets within 24 hours. If a ticket is open longer than 24 hours, it is automatically escalated to the General Manager, etc...”)

II. Is Your Building Ready for a TOBY Inspection? *Areas to Focus On*

Review and know the TOBY judging sheet. This sheet lists all the areas the judges will be inspecting and grading at your property. The following are some special comments on each section:

ENTRANCE & MAIN LOBBY

- Pre-designate a parking spot for the judges' car, and reserve with cones (VIP - TOBY JUDGES).
- **The entire team should greet judges and make them feel welcome.**
- All staff should be aware of the scheduled tour and the time judging is to take place.
- **Offer light refreshments before and after tour.**
- A small memento for the judges is fine, but do not overload them with gifts.
- **Be certain all lighting works and is at appropriate levels.**
- Floors should be cleaned and buffed, ensure metal in lobby has been polished.
- **Make sure there are no dead plants or flowers.**
- Be certain there are no odors present.
- **Lobby should be clean of debris, dust and dirt.**
- If security desk/guard is present, be sure the guard is on duty & alert, and their area is neat and clean.

SECURITY/LIFE SAFETY

- Discuss what types of security the building has and highlight any special features the management team has implemented.
- **If a security guard is present, discuss security protocols and have available manual for review.**
- Make certain Emergency Procedures manuals are up-to-date. Simply having a manual isn't good enough - it has to be current.
- **Highlight staff training procedures for emergency situations.**
- Make sure inspection tags on all panels and life safety equipment are current and not expired. Generator tags need to be current also.

MANAGEMENT OFFICE

- Office area should be neat and clean.
- **Staff should be dressed professionally, in suits, on judging day.**
- If your office is typically dull looking, jazz it up with plants and artwork. Interior landscaper will let you borrow plant material.
- **Have all your manuals displayed neatly on a conference room table for review. Take time to highlight any "Best Practice" your property does that sets you apart from other properties and management companies.**
- This is the time to "Toot Your Own Horn!"

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Have copies of staff achievement Certificates available (i.e. designations, certificates from continuing education, etc.) Highlight team training.
- **Have available your Tenant Surveys and possibly a graph showing improvement from year-to-year with action plan to address areas of needed improvement.**
- Have book with photographs of tenant appreciation events (i.e. ice cream socials, photos of gift baskets you have sent, blood drives, book fairs, etc.)
- **Highlight community events with pictures where possible. If donations were made to charities, have copies of "thank you" letters from those charities available.**

ELEVATORS

- Be sure all lights work including interior panel and up/down buttons on each floor.
- **Ensure elevator tracks are clean on every floor.**
- Have your elevator company service all elevators the day before judging to ensure they are working properly.
- **Have elevator mechanic on call nearby on judging day in the event he is needed for an emergency.**
- If elevators are ADA compliant, make judges aware of this. If they are not, discuss your plan to have upgrades completed for non-compliant items.

MULTI-TENANT CORRIDORS

- Ensure all lights are working, all ceiling tiles are seated properly in grid and that no tiles are stained.
- **Ensure carpet is free of stains. Complete shampooing two days before to ensure carpet is dry.**
- Be sure any dings and nicks on walls are repaired and repainted.
- **Ensure base boards are wiped down and free of debris and dust.**

RESTROOMS

- Ensure restrooms are free of odors. Flush drains to eliminate stagnant air.
- **Make certain there are no stained, broken or missing ceiling tiles, and that tiles are seated properly.**
- Ensure lighting is all working.
- **Be sure all fixtures are functioning and that none are missing, i.e. faucet, TP holder, etc.**

STAIRWELLS

- All lighting should be in working order.
- **Stairwells should be clean.**
- Ensure no chipped paint. If the stairwells need to be repainted prior to judging, do it far enough in advance so no "fresh paint" odor is present.
- **Exposed concrete stairs are acceptable. Some owners don't want stairs to be painted. As long as they are clean and lighting is working, that is acceptable.**
- Make certain hardware on doors and in stairwells is working.

TYPICAL TENANT SUITE

- Walk all your tenant suites.
- **Make sure all lighting is working and that no tiles are missing or stained.**
- Ensure all carpets have been spot cleaned and the spaces are free of dust on top of work stations, window sills, blinds and cove base around wall.

CENTRAL PLANT/ENGINEERING OFFICE

- Office should be neat, clean and uncluttered. Perception: "Should be able to eat off the floor".
- **Ensure inspection tags on Lock Out/Tag Out are current.**
- If possible, ensure pipes are painted in OSHA colors.
- **Ensure first aid kits are stocked.**
- Be certain you have secondary containment on chemical station, with chemicals properly stored neatly with little stock on hand.
- **Ensure rusted areas are treated and painted, if any. Ensure insulation is in good shape around piping.**
- Be sure there are **no non-business posters** displayed on office walls.

EQUIPMENT ROOMS/SERVICE AREAS

- Another area which should be neat, clean and uncluttered.
- **Clean floors.**

ROOF

- Clear roof of all debris.
- **Be certain walkways/pavers are not broken.**

PARKING FACILITIES

- Be certain striping, parking lines/sign markings are clear.
- **Area should be clean of debris.**
- All lighting should be in working order.
- **If there is a parking attendant, they should be available and friendly.**

LANDSCAPING/GROUNDS

- Pay attention to curb lines.

REFUSE REMOVAL AND LOADING DOCK AREAS

- Odor control, as well as cleanliness, in this area are **key!**

TENANT AMENITIES

- Concentrate on things that property management provides, such as seminars, events, especially with corporate facilities, plus standard items, i.e. ATM, café, dry cleaning, etc.

III. Special Considerations for Older Buildings Entering the TOBY Competition

The most important thing an entrant managing an older building needs to remember, as we stated earlier, is that the TOBY competition is not a Beauty Contest. A new, beautiful building does not a TOBY winner make.

The TOBY Awards were created to evaluate the management team and the policies and procedures they have in place at the building. Just because a property is fairly new and is beautiful on the outside does not mean it is a well managed property.

A TOBY Award is bestowed upon an entrant that clearly demonstrates superior overall commercial management. It is about how you manage what you have, and how you overcome obstacles at your property. You may have a building that is older than the other entries, and has outdated corridors, but if all your lighting is working, your tiles are all seated and free of stains, and your carpet, although old, is clean and free of spots, you will receive an equitable and appropriate score from the judges.

It is not the score of one specific section that will determine if you are a winner, but the overall score of all the sections combined. Aesthetic appeal of the building is just a small aspect of the scoring.

If you decide to enter an older building, highlight all the major projects you have accomplished to improve the property. If you have, or had, difficulty in an area of the building, discuss this with the judges and explain to them how you overcame the problem. Remember that it is “what you do with what you have” that means the most.

(If you are not ADA compliant, you should have an ADA survey available with an “Action Plan” on when you are going to be completing non-compliant areas. This could be a 10-year project, but having the plan is what is important, and making sure it is implemented.)

NOTE: This document is meant to serve as a helpful guideline to assist you in preparing for the competition and in no way is intended to be a complete instruction. As previously stated, please carefully review your Call for Entries materials and the judging sheet relevant to your particular building.