

## Section 7: Business

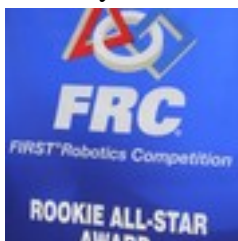
By Team 1718 – The Fighting Pi

[www.fightingpi.org](http://www.fightingpi.org)

Rookie teams hoping to get a leg up on the competition would do well to participate in the business aspect of FIRST that, while sometimes overshadowed by the robot, is equally important. In addition to the more obvious benefits of a good team business program (getting more sponsors, more fundraising, business experience for students) there are also many competition and awards-related incentives. Winning awards gives teams points to help qualify them for states or worlds, and some, such as the Rookie All-Star automatically qualify them for these upper-level competitions. A well-rounded robotics team will be involved with both the robot and business because participation in both aspects gives it the best chance at doing well at competitions.

### Rookie All-Star Award

The primary award a rookie team needs to be concerned with is the Rookie All-Star Award. This is the highest award a rookie team can achieve. If won at the district level, it automatically qualifies a team to participate for the award at the State Championship. If won there it gives them a ticket to the World Championship in St. Louis. This award is basically the rookie version of the Chairman's Award (see below.) It “celebrates a team exemplifying a young but strong partnership effort, as well as implementing the mission of FIRST to inspire students to learn more about science and technology.” Only teams which won the Rookie All-Star Award at a district are eligible to win at states, and the same applies at the state level to qualify for world. At the state and world level students will need to participate in a time-slotted interview with judges in an interview room to win.



### **What to do to get this award:**

- Get involved in the community: Get the word of FIRST out there. Some examples: Partner with your home high school to put on a robot demo (or if the robot's not working, just a presentation) to the students, adopt a road or trail, organize demos at local elementary, middle, or high schools. Organize a spaghetti dinner fundraiser and do a presentation about FIRST there. Check with your local library and see if you can organize a science and technology day. Get a spot in your town's parade. Run a toy drive for St. Jude's hospital or a food drive for Ronald McDonald House. Partner with a local business or community organization (Knights of Columbus, Lions, Rotary, etc.) to put on FIRST demos. The more you are able to put into your team's resume, the more impressive it will look to the judges. Typically events which involve FIRST, science, or technology in some way are better than just generic events like a road cleanup, but for a rookie team these are all valuable assets to winning the Rookie All-Star Award.
- Send out a team newsletter. These can be a lot of work, but it is exactly what your team makes of it. If you have some members who love to write let them run with it. If you can't send it out on a weekly basis, (very rare for rookie teams), send one or two out a month. Or don't worry about a 3+ pages newsletter and just

send out a one pager every week. Send the newsletter to any sponsors of your team, parents of students, school faculty, and anyone who is interested.

- Compile everything into one nice binder. Gather any newsletters you sent out, any flyers your team used for events it put on, newspaper clippings about your team, etc. and put them into a binder. You can even include pictures you took to help illustrate what your team has done. Perhaps assign students to make a page about an event the team did for the binder, kind of like a scrap book. Having a couple of these binders ready at your pit will be an invaluable asset when the judges come around. Make multiple copies so the judges can hold onto one for the competition and your team can still have some for your use.
- Train some students in the art of presenting. Make sure you've got some kids (KIDS, not adults!!!) at the pits who are well-versed in the various community and business events your team has done, and who are good at articulating that in a professional manner. A good sales delivery can work wonders. But above all, make sure it is the students talking to judges as much as possible. The judges like that better.
- Have some kind of formal presentation prepared for your "Rookie-All Star" presentation group to give when they go into a judges interview (not to be confused with talking to judges just walking around the pits.) At competitions like states, teams competing for the award need to have time-slotted interviews with judges, just like older teams have to give a Chairman's presentation. Walking into a judges interview dressed professionally, and with an organized and smooth presentation ready, will make your team stand out above one that goes in and wings it.



### **Rookie Inspiration Award**

This award, much like the Engineering Inspiration Award at the veteran-level, can be seen as a sort of second place to Rookie All-Star. It "celebrates a rookie team for outstanding effort as a FIRST team in community outreach and recruiting students to engineering." This award is often given out to teams who dealt with and overcame a significant issue or problem. Follow the same procedures as Rookie All-Star to win this award. This award does not automatically qualify a team for states or worlds, but is worth points to help them get there.

### **Rookie Highest Seed Award**

Celebrates the highest-seeded rookie team at the conclusion of the qualifying rounds.

### **Other Awards**

The following awards are rarely, if ever, won by rookie teams, but a strong effort a team's first year to work towards them will make them extremely competitive for them in future years.

### **Chairman's Award**

“Because the Chairman’s Award recognizes sustained excellence and impact, not just a one year team effort, it is not possible for a first-year (rookie) team to receive this honor. However, *FIRST* invites and encourage rookies to develop a Chairman’s Award submission which may be evaluated by the judges in the Pit who are determining the winner of the **Rookie All-Star Award**. This submission will document where the team started its *FIRST* journey and will also provide background for documenting the results of the team’s efforts – it will be a great way to start the team’s efforts to win the Chairman’s Award.”

This is the veteran version of Rookie-All Star. A team must have a very developed program to win this most prestigious award in all of FIRST. This includes community outreach, partnerships, and getting the message of FIRST to people everywhere (the near-community, people around the state, the country, and especially **students/kids**. Consistency is also looked for in a Chairman's team; judges like to see that a team has done increasing levels of community outreach, met their goals, and continued to grow and expand for multiple years. To win this award, form partnerships with groups and organize events, fundraisers, presentations, demos, etc. For example, Team 1718: The Fighting Pi won a Chairman's Award after giving a presentation to the Michigan Association of School Boards, giving their state representative a tour of their build space, demoing at events like a car show, the Henry Ford Maker Faire, facilitating a demo at the Chrysler Headquarters, etc., in addition to all the things they had done for years, such as regular road cleanups, fundraisers, community service work, sponsor relations, a high-quality weekly newsletter, and others. As stated, teams have to sign up to present for this award at a district event, and if they win are automatically qualified to compete at the state championship. Winning Chairman's at states automatically qualifies them for the World Championship, and they will present for it in St. Louis.

### **Engineering Inspiration Award**

This award can often be viewed as a sort of “second-place Chairman's Award” but it is still very prestigious. The award “celebrates a team's outstanding success in advancing respect and appreciation for engineering and engineers, both within their school as well as their community”. Many of the things that will get you a Chairman's Award, then, can also get you an E.I. Award. But judges also give out the E.I. Award to teams which overcame a significant challenge and still were successful. Beginning in the 2011 season there was even a monetary award to teams which won this award.



### **Entrepreneurship Award**

“Celebrates the entrepreneurial spirit by recognizing a team that, since inception, has developed the framework for a comprehensive business plan to scope, manage, and achieve team objectives.” This award basically recognizes a team with the best business skills. A team winning this award will have a good, stable, business program that will keep it running effectively and smoothly for years to come. They have strong sponsor

relations, good fundraising, and a comprehensive written business plan. Things in this business plan include, but are not limited to: costs, product description, market description, sales and trends, competition, labor, structure and organization, contingency plan, etc.

### **Safety Award**

Teams that do a lot to promote and practice safety will win this award. The safety judges are primarily focused on safety at competitions, but any kind of safety outreach outside competition is good to have. Teams should practice safe procedures carrying and moving the robot, working on the robot, always wear safety glasses, etc. They should have a first-aid kit in the pits, baking soda for battery leaks, and the correct kind of fire extinguisher. Teams that win this award usually have impeccably organized pits, with clear labels and easy access to everything. It is as much as an award based on a display (that being the pit) as one of actual merits (safety procedures and safe conduct). The safety judges absolutely love to see documentation. Have safety rules and procedures written down and all stored in a nice, neat safety-binder. Possible procedures include battery spill procedures, first-aid procedures, MSDS sheets, and generic safety rules. Good safety outreach complements a quality safety program very well. Teams can give out “safety packets” with things like band aids, pit safety rules, safety glasses, and alcohol wipes, to other teams at competitions. Teams often hang up informative and funny safety posters, which remind people at the venue to act safely. Include in your safety binder any information about non-competition safety your team does, such as safety procedures at your home workspace, safety demonstrations in the community or at school, safety seminars for your own team, etc. It is great if the person designated as your “Safety Captain” (who must be in the pits) knows the safety program inside out and knows all about safety procedures, the different ways a battery can leak, what the different types of fire extinguishers are, etc., but it is even better if the entire team is knowledgeable on this.



### **Numerous Other Awards**

In total there are about 14 awards given out to veteran teams. Seven of these are for robot performance in competitions and robot attributes, while seven are for team attributes and professionalism. Award descriptions can be found on the FIRST website: <http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc/awards>

### **Bylaws: Their Importance to Business Awards**

Every well-run organization has a clear set of bylaws the members must abide by. Bylaws establish a structure for the team to follow and lay out in clear terms what the team's goal is and what is expected of every student. Having bylaws helps the team run smoother, which allows them to accomplish more. For example, Team 1718: The Fighting Pi wrote their bylaws before the 2010 season. In the document we established business groups, and placed each student into two of them. Having students know what group they were in and having a set of clearly-defined goals allowed the team to work wonders, and resulted in our first



Chairman's Award. The bylaws also look good to complement judges binders and business plans. The organization they create are almost necessary to make a business plan work. Examples of sections to put in a bylaws document are procedures, team structure and leadership, policies, positions, etc. A good way to create this document is to form a bylaw committee of any students and mentors who are interested in creating the first draft. The team should ratify them, and at the end of every season form a bylaw revisions committee to make appropriate changes.