



Let Richmonders know that your business is The Best

The Richmond Times-Dispatch's annual readers choice contest is underway and we want you to be nominated. This quick guide will help you craft messages for use on social media, on your website, in email newsletters and in your store.

The Best is decided solely on nominations and votes from our community, so spread the word about your business and make sure that you are nominated. Reach out to your network and ask them to reach out to theirs. After all, isn't it time Richmonders had a chance to name your business The Best?

Here's how it works:

- **April 29 - May 20:** Richmond.com visitors nominate their favorite local places, personalities, businesses and organizations in more than 100 categories. At the end of the nomination period, the five businesses with the most nominations will proceed to the voting round.
- **July 22-Aug. 5:** Users vote for the top businesses in each category out of the Top 5 determined in the nomination phase.
- **At Best Fest in October:** The Best finalists will walk the blue carpet at Best Fest, our big contest celebration, where we'll announce the winners at one of Richmond's best parties.

URL FOR THE CONTEST/FINDING THE CONTEST ONLINE

The URL for The Best is www.Richmond.com/The-Best. When you use this link in online promotions, users can click directly to the contest. The contest will also be linked from Richmond.com's homepage during the nomination period.

When you share a post on social media, or mention The Best on your website or in your email newsletter, always provide the link so that your fans can access the contest and easily nominate your business.

Sometimes we remove the beginning of the URL in print since users aren't clicking directly on the link. If you include a message about The Best in a printed product, such as a sign or handout in your store, you may want to direct users to **Richmond.com/The-Best**. When typed into the address bar in their web browser, that URL will take users to the contest.

PHOTOS

We encourage you to feature your products and services – the things that make your business unique and that are related to your nomination.

Are you asking your fans to nominate you for the best BBQ restaurant in Richmond? Show your fans a plate of mouth-watering ribs when you share the link for them to nominate your business. Are you a top real estate agent? Show photos of current listings or standout previous sales with your posts.

You are also welcome to use the logo for The Best in your promotions. You can download the logo on DropBox using this link:

www.dropbox.com/sh/kpfxgxdwcv67xju/AAB_6mJ4ezoZ8dPftX4z6EN3a?dl=0

SOCIAL MEDIA

Your social media followers love your business. That's why they follow you and read your updates. Let them know about The Best and encourage them nominate your business.

If you have a Facebook page, Twitter account, Instagram account, Pinterest boards or a YouTube channel, you have what you need in order to communicate with your fans.

Your regular social media usage will determine the frequency that's best for you. Just keep in mind that the more times you share the link, the more exposure your organization will gain.

And if you have multiple social media accounts, spread the posts across your accounts so you can catch your fans in more places and at different times. Post regularly!

Most importantly, have some fun. Your personality and the things that have made your business successful are why your fans will want to nominate you.

It's okay to be direct. You want your fans to nominate your business for The Best, so ask for it! Short posts are best – show your personality, but get to the point. Examples:

- We know you love our happy hour, so help us pack the patio and nominate us for The Best.
- We love serving our customers and appreciate your support. Nominate us for The Best and help us spread the word about our services.
- You tell us that you love our burgers, now help us tell the rest of Richmond. Nominate us for The Best burger spot so that we can win some bragging rights to hang on the wall.

Tap into what your customers are interested in and use interest-related posts that encourage them to nominate your business for The Best. Examples:

- Stop in for a quick oil change before you hit the road this summer. And if you like your service, nominate us for The Best so we can help more customers in Richmond.
- Looking for the perfect graduation gift for your grad? Stop here first and if you like what you find, nominate us for The Best. We love helping Richmonders find great gifts, and treats for themselves, too.

Hashtags will expose your posts to new people. The hashtag for our contest is **#RTDTheBest**. Use it on social media, use it in your store, use it wherever you see fit. We especially encourage use on Twitter and Instagram.

You also can use other relevant popular hashtags related to your business and community, such as #rva, #rvadine and #rvamusic. If you're not sure which hashtags are right for you, or what is already out there and being used online, search Twitter and Instagram for your business or industry and see what people are saying. You can also use online tools to learn more about hashtags for your business. Many of the online tools have free features that are available without a subscription. Try:

- Hashtagify - <http://hashtagify.me/>
- RiteTag - <https://ritetag.com>

EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

Email communication with your customers is a great place to mention The Best and ask your audience to nominate your business. Share the story of your business and ask for your customers' support to nominate you, and eventually win the contest.

If you send out a daily or weekly email newsletter, carve out some space for The Best and keep the link to the contest in there for the duration of the nomination period (through May 20). Or dedicate an email specifically encouraging nominations for your business in The Best.

(Is your email list not as long as you would like it to be? We can help you get your business in front of almost 60,000 people with your email message. Ask your Richmond Times-Dispatch advertising rep how.)

AND DON'T FORGET THESE OTHER IDEAS FOR PROMOTIONS

- Include a link to nominate your business for The Best in your email signature. Every email that you send throughout the duration of the nomination period will also promote your business.
- Print out a sign and put it beside the cash register, entry way or other prominent location in your store. Every customer will learn that you're participating in The Best and will know to nominate you.
- If you have active advertising campaigns during the nomination period, update your creatives and message to further promote your participation in The Best.
- Make one video, use it in multiple ways. If you make a quick video starring your business and the reason that you want to be nominated (your great patio, awesome music, beautiful landscaping, etc.) you can share that video on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and more to reach your audience in a different way. Keep the video short, showcase what makes you great and mention the URL for your fans to nominate you for The Best.

CONTACT US

We want you to be successful and enjoy participating in The Best. We're available to answer questions about promoting the contest and using this guide. Give us a call or send us an email and we'll do our best to help you out.

Nicole McMullin, Online Brand Director

804-649-6777

nmcmullin@richmond.com