

Ad Age **Leading Women**

Entry kit 2026

2026 Leading Women Submission Guideline FAQs

What is Ad Age's Leading Women program?

For more than 20 years, the Ad Age Leading Women program (known as Women to Watch prior to 2020) has celebrated women who create opportunity and drive transformation within the industry. It's been our privilege to watch these women continue to succeed; many of them are now industry icons in their own right. Ad Age Leading Women empower teams, build relationships, drive business results, advocate for diversity and inclusion, take risks and serve as catalysts for change. As in the past few years, we have expanded eligibility beyond the U.S. and Europe to reflect the more global and international scope of senior roles.

When will Ad Age publish the next class of Leading Women?

All winners will be profiled in an Ad Age special report to be published on AdAge.com on Aug. 10, 2026.

When do nominations begin?

Submissions will open March 24, 2026 and close May 13, 2026. The link to enter can be found at AdAge.com/events-awards and on the AdAge.com/LeadingWomenAwards award site.

Who is eligible?

We are looking for leading women who reside and work anywhere in the world, focusing on leaders in the fields of marketing, advertising, media and tech.

What are the qualifications for Leading Women?

We are looking for women who have made significant contributions to the worlds of media, technology, advertising and marketing within the last year. Leading women are changing the industry and making names for themselves at companies of all kinds— brands, agencies, technology providers and media platforms. Nominees do not need to be in the C-Suite; we are looking for women at any point in their careers.

What does the entry form require?

The entry form asks for basic information about the nominee's role, career and recent impact. Specifically, entrants must provide:

- **Current role and leadership scope:** What the nominee does today and what they oversee (such as teams, brands, regions, functions or revenue responsibility).
- **Career background:** A brief, factual summary of the nominee's career path and key prior roles or milestones.
- **Evidence of impact in the past 12 months:** Up to three measurable results the nominee has delivered, ideally supported by quantitative metrics.
- **Supporting context:** Additional details that help explain the nominee's leadership or work, such as initiatives, campaigns, teams or projects.
- **Additional context:** Provide additional context about the nominee's work or trajectory, such as cross-functional collaboration, first-time initiatives, recognition or expanded responsibilities not covered above.
- **Quote from the nominee:** One quote that may be published as submitted.

How can I nominate someone for Leading Women?

Nominations must be submitted online at AdAge.com/LeadingWomenAwards. The entry fee is tiered; all pricing is in U.S. dollars.

- **Regular pricing** \$350 per entry. Ends April 22, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET
- **Final deadline pricing** \$400 per entry. Ends May 13, 2026 at 5 p.m. ET

Will I be informed if my nominee was not selected?

No. Only selected nominees will be informed in advance of publication of the list. If you have not heard from the Ad Age awards team by mid July, please contact our awards team at awards@adage.com to check on the status of your entry.

If I have not heard from Ad Age by Aug. 1, does that mean my nominee was not selected?

That would be a fair assumption, but there may be delays in notifications. For questions please reach out to awards@adage.com.

Can an executive be honored more than once? No, a Women to Watch/Leading Women recognition is a one-time honor.

Can I just call you or send you an email with the name of the person I'd like to nominate?

No. We need to have the online entry form filled out, including contact information for the person you are nominating.

Can I self-nominate?

Absolutely! Judges look at those who self-nominate in exactly the same way as someone who was nominated.

I want to nominate my boss, but would it be better if someone higher up nominated them?

Can I nominate a family member?

You can nominate anyone you feel deserves the Leading Women honor. The nominator doesn't weigh into the judging process; we use the nominator information to help gather info should your nominee be chosen.

How does the judging process work?

After we receive nominations, reporters and editors vet the candidates. The editors and reporters then hold a series of meetings to determine which candidates will be chosen, usually from a collection of several hundred nominees. We strive to come up with a diverse list that represents a broad spectrum of the industries we cover.

What is required of those who are selected?

Candidates who are selected must make themselves available for an interview with a reporter if applicable. Honorees will be asked for a recent headshot and any other pertinent information our reporters need to do a write-up for the feature. The editorial and awards teams will reach out to honorees via the contact information supplied in the entry form. We will also host our Ad Age Leading Women event in October 2026 and honorees will be asked to participate in the awards portion of the event.

Can I contact you to see how my nominee is doing in the judging process?

No. We don't give status reports. If we need any further information, we will contact you. Please be patient.

I was not picked for Ad Age Leading Women. Can you tell me why?

With hundreds of candidates and only a limited number of honorees, the majority of hopefuls will not be chosen. We cannot explain why you weren't picked because it won't be for any one reason, and may be for reasons that have to do with presenting a diverse range of professions and industries.

2026 Leading Women Rising Star Submission Guideline FAQs

What is Ad Age's Rising Star program?

For more than 20 years, the Ad Age Leading Women program (known as Women to Watch prior to 2020) has celebrated women who create opportunity and drive transformation within the industry. It's been our privilege to watch these women continue to succeed; many of them are now industry icons in their own right. Now we want to shine a spotlight on women who are making their mark on the advertising, marketing and media world, and displaying the promise and potential of great leadership in the short time they have been in the industry.

When do nominations begin?

Submissions will open March 24, 2026 and close May 13, 2026. The link to enter can be found at AdAge.com/events-awards and on the AdAge.com/LeadingWomenAwards award site.

Who is eligible?

We are looking for women who reside and work anywhere in the world, focusing on talent in the fields of marketing, advertising, media and tech. Candidates must have only been with their current company for 1-3 years in a non-managerial role (i.e. they do not manage teams nor are they in a leadership position that makes decisions for the overall business). Their position must impact marketing or advertising in some way.

How much does it cost to enter?

Although there is a cost to enter Leading Women, submissions for Rising Star are free.

What does the entry form require?

The entry form asks for key details about the nominee's role, recent work and the results of that work. Specifically, entrants must provide:

- **Current role and responsibilities:** What the nominee does today and what they are directly responsible for (such as projects, clients, campaigns, products, platforms, teams or functions).
- **Breakout work in the past 12 months:** The specific initiative, campaign or contribution that led to the nomination and the nominee's role in delivering it.
- **Evidence of impact:** Up to three outcomes or indicators showing the results of the work, with quantitative metrics preferred where available.
- **Quote from the nominee:** One quote that may be published as submitted.

How can I nominate someone?

Nominations must be submitted online at AdAge.com/LeadingWomenAwards. Entries are free.

Will I be informed if my nominee was not selected?

Only selected nominees will be informed in advance of publication of the list. If you have not heard from the Ad Age awards team by mid July, please contact our awards team at awards@adage.com to check on the status of your entry.

Can I just call you or send you an email with the name of the person I'd like to nominate?

No. We need to have the online entry form filled out, including contact information for the person you are nominating.

Can I self-nominate?

Absolutely! Judges look at those who self-nominate in exactly the same way as someone who was nominated.

I want to nominate my colleague, but would it be better if someone higher up nominated them?

Can I nominate a family member?

You can nominate anyone you feel deserves the Rising Star honor. The nominator doesn't weigh into the judging process; we use the nominator information to help gather info should your nominee be chosen.

What is required of those who are selected?

Candidates who are selected must make themselves available for an interview with a reporter if applicable. Not all honorees are contacted before the announcement. Honorees will be asked for a recent headshot and any other pertinent information our reporters need to do a write up.

Can I contact you to see how my nominee is doing in the judging process?

No. We don't give status reports. If we need any further information, we will contact you. Please be patient.

I was not picked for Rising Star. Can you tell me why?

With many candidates and only a limited number of honorees, the majority of hopefuls will not be chosen. We cannot explain why you weren't picked because it won't be for any one reason and may be for reasons that have to do with presenting a diverse range of professions and industries.

2026 Leading Women Terms & Conditions

The Leading Women program (the Program) is sponsored by Ad Age (the Sponsor), a business unit of Crain Communications Inc., 685 Third Ave., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10017 (Ad Age).

Eligibility

The Program is open to anyone in the industry who meets the General Requirements posted for the Leading Women program. Employees of the Sponsor, their affiliates and members of their immediate families are not eligible. Eligibility is subject to change each year.

How to enter

Instructions on how to enter are posted on [AdAge.com/Leading-WomenAwards](https://www.adage.com/Leading-WomenAwards). Entries must comply with the instructions for the applicable Program. Entries into the competition are subject to a tiered pricing system, with standard fees for regular deadline entries, and additional fees for final deadline entries. You can submit as many entries as you would like. All entries must be received through our awards website.

As a reminder, anything in an entry will be considered potentially public information. There's no space for explicitly confidential information, and we ask entrants to anticipate that anything in their entry could become public—mostly because we don't want to wind up trying to honor a winner without being able to tell anyone why we want to honor them. Entries will not be acknowledged or returned. Entries will be accepted until May 13, 2026 at 5 p.m. ET.

All work entered into the 2026 Ad Age Leading Women and Rising Star Awards must be work that was legitimately created, commissioned and executed as described. This includes any use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools or processes in preparing entry forms, which must be transparently disclosed and accurately represented. Exaggerated results, inaccurate financials, misleading or fabricated case studies, speculative work presented as real, or undisclosed/inauthentic use of AI are grounds for disqualification. Ad Age may request verification at any point in the process and reserves the right to disqualify entries or bar future participation for any violations.

Certification/Acknowledgment/Consent

EACH ENTRANT CERTIFIES THAT THE MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN CONNECTION WITH THIS PROGRAM (INCLUDING ARTWORK, IMAGERY AND IDEAS) ARE THE ORIGINAL WORKS OF THE ENTRANT. ENTRANTS RETAIN THE COPYRIGHT AND OTHER INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INTERESTS IN THEIR MATERIALS. HOWEVER, EACH ENTRANT ACKNOWLEDGES AND IRREVOCABLY CONSENTS THAT ANY AND ALL MATERIALS SUCH ENTRANT SUBMITS FOR THIS PROGRAM MAY BE REPRODUCED, DISPLAYED, PUBLISHED (INCLUDING IN PRINT AND DIGITAL FORMATS), ARCHIVED (IN PRINT AND DIGITAL DATABASES) AND OTHERWISE FREELY USED WITHOUT LIMITATION OR RESTRICTION BY AD AGE, CRAIN COMMUNICATIONS INC, AND ITS PARTNERS AND AFFILIATES IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROGRAM. EACH ENTRANT ACKNOWLEDGES AND IRREVOCABLY CONSENTS TO THE USE OF ENTRY INFORMATION IN PUBLICATIONS, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WEBSITES, ADVERTISING AND IN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PROGRAM, UNLESS PROHIBITED BY LAW.

Winning

All category wins are at the discretion of our judges. Judges have the right to not select a winner if they feel materials submitted did not meet the standards, creativity or other qualities they are looking for in entries. The decisions of Ad Age and the judges are final and binding in all matters relating to this Program, including interpretation and application of the rules. For Leading Women, the program should produce approx. 40 honorees. No duo or team entries will be accepted. Each honoree will receive an award. This Program is based on the quality and other factors determined by the judges of the materials submitted and winning depends on the views of the judges. Winning is not based on the number of eligible responses received and Ad Age cannot predict the number of entrants who will participate in the Program.

General conditions

All entrants agree to release Ad Age, sponsors and its partners and affiliates from any and all claims and liability with respect to and in any way arising from participating in the Program, accepting of any award, prize(s), or technical, hardware, software or other failures of any kind, cost or unavailable network connections, incomplete, garbled or delayed transmissions, injury or damage to an entrant's or third person's computer, whether caused by Ad Age, sponsors, entrants, users or by any of the equipment or programming associated with or by any technical or human error which may occur in the processing of submissions which may damage an entrant's system or limit an entrant's ability to participate in the Program. Ad Age reserves the right to modify or cancel all or any part of the Program for any reason at its sole discretion with a refund of the applicable entry fee paid as the sole remedy for any entrant.

Subject to applicable laws, entrants irrevocably grant to Ad Age, Program sponsors and their successors, assigns and sub-licensees the right and permission to use their name, voice, likeness and/or biographical material for advertising, promotional and/or publicity purposes in connection with the Program, in all forms of media and by any and all means and media (now and hereafter known), and on and in connection with related products, services, advertising and promotional materials (now known or hereafter developed), worldwide, in perpetuity, without any obligation, notice or consideration except for the awarding of the prize(s) to the Grand Prize Winner. All entrants agree to comply fully with each provision in the Program rules. Any person attempting to defraud or in any way tamper with the Program and any person who does not comply with the Program rules, will be ineligible for any award or prize. Program void where prohibited or restricted by law.