



Pinnacles of Innovation: Top Awards Programs for New Products

Dozens of companies and awards programs recognize new product innovations. The following five stand out. All five competitions are global with equal access. Any size company can afford to enter. Only products ready for commercial sale may compete. Achievement of any level of recognition is rewarded in the marketplace.

R&D 100 Awards: Since 1962, *R&D Magazine* (<https://www.rdmag.com/>) has honored the top 100 innovations each year. The awards program encompasses five areas: mechanical devices/materials; IT/electrical; analytical/test; process/prototyping; and software/services. Additionally, a number of special recognition awards are bestowed for market-disrupting services, market-disrupting products, corporate social responsibility, and green tech. The key criterion for winning is technological significance. Judges from industry, services, and academia award points to each innovation, with the top 100 scores making the list. Notable among the 2017 winners were Dow Chemical (10 awards) and Taiwan's Industrial Technology Research Institute (9).

The **International Design Excellence Awards:** Since 1980, the Industrial Designers Society of America (<http://www.idsa.org/>) has been giving out Gold, Silver, and Bronze IDEA awards. IDEA awards span many industries and disciplines including: commercial products; entertainment; home goods; and social impact designs. Additionally, there are personal recognition awards and special awards for individuals and companies, respectively, and several more. The key criteria to win are design innovation, user experience, client benefit, society benefit, and appropriate aesthetics. Nearly three dozen members of the jury make the decisions. There were 25 Gold, 52 Silver, and 64 Bronze Winners in 2017. Gold winners are housed in a permanent collection at the Henry Ford Museum.

Edison Awards: Since 1987, Edison Universe (<http://www.edisonawards.com/edisonuniverse.php>) has been giving out Gold, Silver, and Bronze Edison Awards in 16 categories ranging from applied technology to consumer goods to health and wellness, and transportation and logistics. There's also an Annual Edison Achievement award, which was won this year by the CEO of Lockheed Martin. The key criteria to win, each of which

has three to four sub-criteria, are: concept, value, delivery, and impact. Nearly 135 people compose a nominations committee that makes recommendations to a 25-person steering committee, and it decides the winners. There were 45 Gold, 45 Silver, and 47 Bronze Winners in 2017 across the 16 categories.

Breakthrough Innovation Awards: Since 2008, Nielsen (<http://www.nielsen.com/us/en.html>) has recognized breakthrough innovations in consumer products. Only a few awards are given out each year. There were 18 Winners in 2017. Since inception, Nielsen has awarded only 110 U.S. products and 198 globally out of over 30,000 entries. The hurdles are quite high. First, the product must be distinctive and deliver a new value proposition to the market. Second, it has to have generated more than \$50 million in its first year of U.S. sales. Lastly, it has to have generated more than 90% of year-one sales in year two. Both the size and longevity of achievement differentiate it from other new-product innovation awards.

CES Innovation Awards: Since 2015, the Consumer Technology Association (<https://www.cta.tech/>) has recognized innovative consumer electronics products. There are 28 award categories including 3D printing, cybersecurity, gaming, VR and AR, and smart homes and cities, and two award levels, Honorees and Best of Innovations. The key criteria to win include: engineering qualities; aesthetic design; intended use/function and user value, uniqueness/novelty; and comparative analysis to same-space products. Each category is judged by a three-member team composed of an industrial designer, an engineer, and a member of the trade press. Because everyone likes an award, there are oodles of Honorees. But, to win Best of Innovation in a specific category, products must exceed a minimum number of points. Thirty-six winners were chosen this year across the 28 categories.

Edison announces its award winners in the spring, Nielsen in early summer, IDSA in late summer, R&D 100 in the fall, and CES in January. Are you planning to compete in 2018? **md**

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