

HOW TO WIN AN AWARD

You have fewer than six weeks to enter the MM&M Awards. Need help? **James Chase** asked 16 of last year's judges what you could have done differently. Their advice might just get you to the podium

MM&M
Awards
2012

The deadline for entries to the MM&M Awards (April 13) is fast approaching. To help give you an edge, we asked our 2011 judges to offer a few choice tips, based on their experiences of the review process.

"In a nutshell," says Paul Ivans, president, Evolution Road, "the winning entries demonstrated a clear business need, explained how the campaign strategically and tactically satisfied the need, had great creative and then delivered business-oriented results."

The first step is to do your groundwork. "Be thorough," says Mike Boken, senior director, operational excellence, Shire. "Read the information in the entry kit closely, and use this to determine which campaigns/tactics that you are going to submit."

Make sure you pick the right categories, too. "Too many worthy entries get serious consideration, then lose out when judges question whether a TV ad with a web address at the end is really an interactive campaign," notes Jack Barrette, CEO, WEGO Health.

Now for the really hard part: the written submission. "Communicate how you innovated the product, the delivery and the process," says Sean Moloney, CEO and cofounder, Dramatic Health. "Emphasize the research behind each decision, then highlight the key messages and tie them to the research."

And fill it out completely and thoroughly. "Even if the work submitted is stellar, if the application looks like no one took the time

to include the relevant information, it doesn't matter," says Cynthia North, customer marketing director, Bayer HealthCare Pharma.

Why is the write-up so important? "It's usually the first thing we see," says Jennifer Rinaldo, senior product director, Forest Pharmaceuticals. "It should captivate enough that we look forward to seeing the creative. I've seen the same agency submit a similar campaign in the same category with the exact same write up, and only change the title."

It's important to identify clearly the marketing challenge and objectives so the panelists can assess the communication effectiveness in the proper context, says Paul O'Neill, president, ICC Lowe. "Be pithy and direct as there are numerous entries in each category," he adds.

This is a great point. The judges don't have time to wade through reams of materials, so don't make them hunt for key information. "Use short or bulleted descriptions and attributes," suggests Monique Levy, VP of research, Manhattan Research. "And highlight the differentiators versus the competition."

Be sure to link both creative and media execution to customer insights, says Deborah Dick-Rath, SVP, healthcare practice leader, Symphony Advanced Media, and detail how this is reflected in the work. "Something else to consider," she adds, "is to describe alternative ideas that were rejected for the creative, and why."

Always highlight the one or two distinctive ideas, messages, or technologies that you, as an agency, brought to the project based on your research or audience insight,” says Dave Ormesher, CEO, closerlook. “That’s how we provide value. Everyone can execute well, but not everyone can come up with brilliant, insight-based ideas. We want to reward that.”

Overall, your submission should invite the judges to learn more. “I have to be honest,” says Thomas Thill, senior director of marketing, Kinetic Concepts. “The ones with good production values did help tell the story.”

Some judges reported difficulty in viewing some of the work. “The way you submit images, video files and web links is critical,” says Mike Myers, president, Palio. “Regardless of what you’re entering, it needs to be easy to understand and/or navigate.”

And make sure your website is working properly on judgment day, warns Marjorie Martin, former general manager, AOL Health, “It sounds obvious, but I was stunned at the number of entrants who fell victim to it last year.”

Next up: report your results. “A complete submission that has solid success metrics to support it will significantly increase your chances of winning,” notes Boken.

“Push to include the most impactful and surprising results as that

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is ultimately what trumps the subjective factors that may influence judging,” says Anita St. Claire, chief client development officer, HealthEd. “ROI is best, impact on the audience is next best.”

Of course, this is easier said than done. “We know that often clients do not like to divulge specific share or script data,” says Dick-Rath, “but it really enhances the view of the campaign to understand what effect it had.”

Note that judges must sign a confidentiality agreement before they review entries and also that any data marked “confidential” will be omitted from the winners’ write-ups.

Even if you can’t include all the numbers, there are other things you can try. “A recent winner was hobbled by company confidentiality, but triumphed with blinded data that gave compelling context, notes Barrette. “Think along the lines of ‘cost per new customer lead was 80% lower than industry standard’ or ‘product starts rose 47% over the previous year.’”

Peter Justason, director, e-marketing, Purdue Pharma, sums it up perfectly: “The more quantifiable the impact, the more attention the piece is going to get.”

Last, but not least, try to have fun with it. “If you deliver your entry and materials in a fun way, we will pick up on that enthusiasm,” says David Zaritsky, managing director/problem eliminator, Healthcare Regional Marketing. “I have been impressed when an entry jumps off the page, conveys the personality of the creative company and re-invigorates the judging table. Put yourselves in our shoes and imagine it is you who is opening that envelope or box of dimensional items. Making us smile is never a bad thing.”

■ **For information and an entry kit, visit awards.mmm-online.com. Deadline for entries is April 13, 2012.**

INCREASING YOUR CHANCES

DO enter in the first place. As obvious as it sounds, you really do have to be in it to win it. And the deadline (April 13, 2012) will come around before you know it.

DO abide by the rules. General entry rules and specific category requirements can be found in the Entry Kit which you can download from awards.mmm-online.com.

DO keep your summary short, sweet and results-focused. Our judges appreciate thoughtful, impactful entries that demonstrate results.

DO submit marketing budgets and ROI data where appropriate. If you really want to stand out, particularly in the more strategic categories, then you’ve got to prove to the judges that you moved the needle. (Don’t worry, we won’t publish this data if you ask us not to.)

DO assemble your supporting materials wisely. Last year, we received more than 700 entries. This year, we could get even more. Be selective with your supporting materials. Don’t send us everything you have or you risk overwhelming our judges.

DON’T assume the awards are only for the big companies and brands. Size really doesn’t matter to our judges; small, nimble agencies and lesser-known brands have often beaten out the big boys in years past.

DON’T blind us with jargon. Our judges are seasoned marketing executives, agency principals and industry thought leaders. They’ll see straight through marketing speak and unsubstantiated hype. Pitch them on the merits of your campaign using clear and simple communication.

DON’T assume the judges are superhuman. They work tirelessly to review your submissions but it is unlikely they will have time to go through reams and reams of superfluous information. So before you send your entry, try to put yourself in the shoes of the judges and imagine what it would be like to view your submission for the first time and have to score it in a limited period of time.

DON’T charge the intern with assembling your submission. Give it your personal attention. Make sure it’s done right. Because if you don’t, the judges will probably notice.

DON’T do it at the last minute. As with any marketing campaign, the more thought you put into it, the better your chance of success.

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