

Inside the Midas Awards with Deb Ryan

New York Festivals recently appointed Deb Ryan as the executive director of the Midas Awards, which celebrates the best in financial advertising.

In this position Ryan will lead all facets of NYF's Midas Awards, oversee the strategy to expand the competition's global footprint, assemble the Midas Awards Grand Jury and secure strategic partnerships to benefit the competition and its entrants.

New York Festivals asked Ryan some questions about her new role and the World's Best Financial Advertising awards.



Deb Ryan

The Midas Awards® is celebrating its 15th year of honouring the World's Best Financial Advertising, in your opinion, to what do you attribute the longevity and success of this competition?

Ryan: The longevity comes from the quality of the work being submitted every year, combined with the expertise of the Midas Award Grand Jury. Having the work judged by agency leaders and incredibly well-respected industry experts from around the globe lays the foundation for the winners to know, with confidence, that they've earned their Midas Award.

This is your inaugural year at the helm of the Midas Awards, what are your goals to continue the legacy of Midas and expand its global footprint?

Ryan: I'm really excited and motivated to continue the fine job done by my predecessors, while making sure that we're exploring the financial advertising landscape with open minds and open eyes. So much attention goes to new mediums (which is warranted), that we must not lose sight of traditional methodologies that are still netting the results desired. It's easy to get caught up in the shiny new object in the room, and it's my job to make sure we're covering all of the industry bases.

What excites you about financial advertising?

Ryan: The challenge of doing impactful work within an industry where the message isn't always easy to understand right off the bat. Often times a product explanation needs to be woven into the message in this space. It's more difficult than creating campaigns for a baseball team or a chocolate bar. This is why it's so amazing to see the quality of the work we judge at the Midas Awards.

What are the criteria for recruiting the Midas Awards Grand Jury? What mix of disciplines do you aim for in your global jury?

Ryan: The Grand Jury is really the most important part of what we do. We have to get that right and the mix needs to include individuals who are well accomplished (obviously), but also open-minded to the new media world we live in, without holding prejudices towards some old-school methodologies that brands still utilise effectively. I absolutely love the mix of brand, agency CEO's and creatives, as well as some of the individuals who have been in the trenches at their places of work. The success or failure of advertising campaigns has had a direct effect on their day-to-day transactional jobs at some point in their careers, which provides perspective. Brand managers, copywriters and strategists are the lifeblood of our jury, but adding brokers and business managers to the mix provides so much value to the process.

Which trends do you foresee influencing this year's Midas Awards entries?

Ryan: I'd love to pull back the curtain a bit to see how social data intelligence is being utilised. We now have the ability to learn so much about the consumers we're after, which leads to precision in the messaging and the ability/need to be able to turn on a dime when needed. It adds to the challenge and makes for much better work in my opinion. Other trends that we have been seeing are sustainability, local focus and loyalty.

❏ *How important is story and personality to the brand and how does it influence consumers?*

Ryan: It's incredibly important. When a brand can touch a consumer through content that builds trust, you're winning the battle. Consumers want to know that you, as a brand, understand them and feel their pain. Proper content creation has to be able to do that without feeling fake, or brands run the risk of looking cold and manipulative. It's not an easy balance to strike, and it's up to the Midas Awards Grand Jury to figure out who does it best.

❏ *How is financial marketing adapting to the social savvy technologically adept millennial consumer? Can you share any examples of financial campaigns that are successfully connecting with millennials?*

Ryan: Those millennials can be somewhat tricky. As a group, they really need to see that a brand cares about them as people, and the planet we inhabit. They're so influenced by the connection between the corporate world and causes that are important to them, that brands need to really show that they're not only there to help them through important decisions in life, but are also good stewards of the planet. The work Accenture does on behalf of Save the Children, and The Hartford has done for a long time through its sponsorship of the Paralympic Games serve as fine examples of how a brand can connect to the millennial mindset through cause marketing that connects with them deeply.

❏ *How has digital and mobile changed the way consumers connect with financial brands?*

Ryan: We live in a world where instantaneous, seamless transactions are expected. Consumers need tangible proof that their needs will be met by the brands they do business with, or they will absolutely take their business elsewhere. It's really on the brands to have their digital infrastructure up to snuff, and/or have the dexterity to fix issues quickly so as to gain consumer trust. Without that, you're in trouble.

❏ *What do you personally do to stay on top of the trends and evolutions in the industry today?*

Ryan: I still read the trades daily to keep up on a lot, and also frequent the websites of the companies I personally do business with to see what they're doing to innovate. There are also many great newsletters and blogs that keep me up-to-date. I love reading about content strategies discussed by the Content Marketing Institute, as they seem to have it all covered by experts who know their stuff.

❏ *What makes a campaign worthy of the Grand Midas?*

Ryan: When the campaign translates easily and engages several important mediums simultaneously, you've got a winner! Last year's Allstate #MAYHEMSALE was genius. It was both funny and alarming, and not only tied social and TV seamlessly, but it utilised the Sugar Bowl sponsorship as a key part of the plan. Amazing work and absolutely worthy of a Grand Midas!!!

❏ *Do you have any inside advice for someone entering the 2016 Midas Awards?*

Ryan: Send me an email and let's chat! dryan@newyorkfestivals.com.

The Midas Awards World's Best Financial Advertising has just opened for entries. [Click here](#) to find out how to enter your campaign.

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