

5 insights to create a winning (Bookmarks) awards entry

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Fresh off judging the IAB Bookmark Awards 2023, here are my inside scoops on how to create a winning awards entry.



Matthew van der Valk, executive creative director at VMLY&R, gives his inside scoop on how to create a winning awards entry

Entering awards can be a demanding process. It's easy to fall short due to inadequate preparation and misunderstanding the criteria and requirements.

But neglecting to align your narrative with the judges' expectations can significantly diminish your chances of success.

Here are some insights from this year's Bookmark Awards marketing panel, shedding light on essential factors that can help you increase your odds of winning.

1. Clarity and relevance

A notable observation from this year's judging panel was the lack of clarity in some award categories. Agencies must pay close attention to the specific requirements of each award category they enter. It is crucial to demonstrate how your entry aligns with that specific category and clearly articulate why it fits. In addition, ensure that the results presented are relevant to the award category you're targeting.

Do this: If it is a research category, include qualitative and quantitative methodologies. If it is a strategy category, highlight how the communication strategy fulfils the business objective and how the results validate the campaign's success.

2. Innovation and application

Judges also emphasised the importance of showcasing innovative ideas and the media chosen. It is not merely about applying concepts to channels. It's about pushing the boundaries and innovating within the given parameters. When entering categories like mobile, demonstrate how you innovatively utilised mobile technology. Judges are looking for campaigns that stand out and differentiate themselves.

Do this: Ask yourself, would I be jealous of this idea if someone else had it?

3. Clearly defined objectives

A common shortcoming observed by the judging panel was the lack of clearly defined campaign objectives. Including this allows judges to evaluate the results more effectively and assess how well the creative solution aligns with the medium, strategy, research, and other elements that contributed to your campaign's success.

Do this: Clearly state what you intended to achieve with your campaign from the outset.

4. Attribution and reporting

It is crucial to attribute the success of your campaign to its different components, particularly in categories like integrated media. Indicate the mechanisms used to validate that the achieved results were solely due to the campaign impact and not external factors. Another vital aspect is the reporting of results. Provide benchmarks for the measurement of success. Merely stating impressive figures, such as a 300% increase in sales, without context can be misleading (especially where a sales base was already low to begin with).

Do this: Consider the overall narrative of your entry and ensure it ties back to the campaign's success and creative execution.

5. Results and effectiveness

When focusing on campaigns and categories that rely on results and effectiveness, aligning your narrative with the achieved outcomes is imperative. Judges appreciate entries that demonstrate how campaign results directly contribute to business objectives.

Do this: Start with the results and craft a compelling story around them. By doing this, you can strengthen your argument for the campaign's success and creative relevance.

Winning awards requires careful preparation, attention to detail, and a deep understanding of the criteria.

By taking the time to comprehend the requirements of each category, clearly defining objectives, showcasing innovation, attributing success, and reporting results accurately, you can significantly enhance your chances of converting your entry into a winning campaign.

Remember, it's not just about executing a creative concept well; it's about standing out, innovating, and showcasing the campaign's impact in achieving tangible results.

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