

# Awards count for more than you think

By [Nici Stathacopoulos](#)

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Industry awards come in many guises. The ones that count in our industry, where it's all about talking to the consumer one-to-one, include the pre-eminent Cannes, Caples and Echos internationally, as well as our very own Loeries, where direct marketing is now taking its rightful place for the second year running.



Having adjudicated at the world's top direct marketing awards, it has certainly been encouraging to see the direct category not only becoming a significant contender, but growing to attract more and more entries from around the world each year.

While some agencies might believe that entering and winning an award is not integral to their success, it is worth keeping in mind that clients do look at your performance in relations to your peers. When your display cabinet is chock-full of the evidence of gold, silver or even finalist honours, chances are that a potential client will be choosing your services from among those whose shelves sit empty.

## Reflect clients' "pride and joy"

Agencies certainly need to realise that their campaigns also reflect their clients' "pride and joy". When you lose, they lose, and their disappointment can often be quite disheartening.

Awards communicate an agency's creative and strategic ability, and put you above the clutter. While creative counts, any campaign needs to be recognised for the results it achieves. In my own experience, judges look for meaning in the creative and its application in a given context. The agencies that are winning awards are proving the high standard of their creative ability, as well as the measurability of their campaigns - a sure-fire way to retain your customers.

The opportunities to enter and win awards also abound. Digital media, for example, is only now starting to be viewed in terms of its creative potential, even if we are still hamstrung by limited access to genuine broadband services in South

Africa. We haven't even begun to venture onto the vast canvas for innovation and to provide as strong an expression of creativity in the digital space as we have in the more traditional media.

As a judge at the recent Dubai Lynx Awards, in fact South Africa's first, I was particularly struck by the degree of out-of-the-box thinking for direct communications in the online world. Digital media was not judged separately from the direct awards, as there is limited access to physical mail addresses in Dubai. Forced into the digital space, more creative licence was given to online campaigns, which have typically been far more conservative.

## **Opportunity to be highly creative**

This also means that a significant margin exists for collecting the accolades in this space as it is only now being viewed as an opportunity to be highly creative, and certainly going way beyond just putting another boring banner at the top of a web page.

Every winning campaign, regardless of the media, also puts SA on the map and demonstrates our competitive capabilities. You may well be surprised at how great South African work actually is, but if you don't enter, you'll never win. Even being a finalist is also better than not winning at all.

Don't forget that the process of entering awards is an art. Judges do need to know why you did what, but faced with thousands of pieces to judge, and pages of typed up copy, we can only appeal to your sense of modesty to keep those entries short, to the point and strictly relevant.

## **ABOUT NICI STATHACOPOULOS**

Nici Stathacopoulos is CEO of marketing services agency proximity#tp, a newly formed innovative South Africa marketing services agency. This joint venture between Proximity Worldwide, The Tipping Point and BBDO SA focuses on breaking through behaviour changing ideas.

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