

The APEX Awards: Not just pretty pictures

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The [APEX Awards 2014](#) briefing was held this week in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The briefing, which is compulsory, is key to the Awards, which judge the effectiveness of a communications campaign.

Odette van der Haar (Roper), CEO of the Association for Communication and Advertising (ACA), which hosts the APEX Awards says advertising and communications adds to our clients' bottom line. "This is what an agency can do for a client. APEX shows this. It demonstrates that the industry is more than just a party and pretty pictures. It is about showing a sustainable industry where agencies contribute to a clients' bottom line. Therefore these Awards show that there is effectiveness in creativity and that creativity is more than just pretty pictures, but a business case. This is the higher purpose of the Apex Awards."

Two sides of the same coin

Ivan Moroke, CEO, TBWA/Hunt/Lascaris and 2014 Jury member said creativity and effectiveness are two sides of the same coin. "Creativity vs effectiveness has been a debate since the beginning of time, but the two are in fact not mutually exclusive. What is true is that you get creative campaigns that do nothing. This is not easy to admit, but it is true. You also get effective campaigns that are boring creatively. However, campaigns that are creative and effective are the ones that build brands and the ones that are successful for a client, adding to their bottom line."

Jury member Boniswa Pezisa, Group MD, Network BBDO added to this: "The APEX Awards is an opportunity to make a compelling case to demonstrate how advertising has affected your client's business objective."

Van der Haar says that despite the high standard over the past few years, an APEX Grand Prix has been scarce. "There has been no awarding of the Grand Prix recently and a few years ago only Bronze APEX Awards were given. To win a Grand Prix the communications campaign has to be something extra special."

Ensuring only the best of the best are rewarded is the job of the APEX Awards Jury. Van der Haar says the Jury comprises seasoned and high level marketers, agency creatives and media and digital specialists. "All Jury members have all been in the industry for a long time. They cannot be fooled." There are also two rounds of judging which also means that all eyes see all the entries and notes are compared so any anomalies will be picked up. "If the judges don't believe it they will not score it," she adds.

You have to prove the worth of your submission

At the briefing the importance of the submission was emphasised. For Jury member, Gareth Leck, CEO Joe Public the most important element of the submission is the isolation of factors. "The isolation of factors to demonstrate that it is advertising so you have to throw out the case study. The time of year, what your competitors were doing, etc - any other factors that can have impacted on the outcome - must be given. It is like a case of law and you must prove your case irrefutably."

To illustrate this Van der Haar quoted a submission of previous years which did not win because it left out one line: how many clients' switched. "That one line would have brought the whole submission together. Everything else was there and was brilliant but the results of primary objective were not given. It was Grand Prix material but that one very important omission made it impossible to award the campaign."

Leck added that submissions should not forget to show how the campaign happened. "Do not leave out the media used and the media activity." Van der Haar added to this, saying: "We have media specialists on the panel to help us to understand media and its activities and how the media connects everything. Media is how the message gets out there."

Communication must be excellent

Other Jury members were also present at the briefing. Fran Luckin, executive creative director, Quirk Johannesburg, who is the digital creative specialist on the Jury said that as with any other judging, it is important that the communication is excellent. "Insight, innovative and creative led to a solution that gives results. If you have to talk something up, then it is lacking."

Richard Stewart MD Millward Brown and new to the Jury said: "It is the most effective campaigns that are creative that will win." Another new Jury member, Jeremy Sampson, Group Executive Chairman, Interbrand Sampson added: "I will be looking for loyalty to the brand and growing the brand."

Ayanda Mbanga, Deputy CEO, Saatchi & Saatchi said "The APEX Awards showcases exciting work and the business results of this work. Too often advertising is seen as irrelevant in eyes of clients so the APEX Awards show the value of advertising."

Jarrard Cinman, MD, Native, said: "In the digital environment it is easy to be overwhelmed by data. The trick is to connect the numbers and show how they convey into something meaningful for the business."

Judges sign a tight confidentiality agreement. If there is a conflict of interest the judge is locked out of seeing the information on that campaign.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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