

Ad awards aren't necessary - they're imperative

 By [Odette van der Haar](#)

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Human beings love to celebrate excellence and success. Perhaps it stems from our innate competitive nature or, as Maslow would argue, perhaps it's due to our longing for recognition and appreciation.

Regardless of why, as a world population we have awards for just about everything, even stupidity - Oscars, Olympics, Grammy's, Emmy's, People's Choice, Teen's Choice, BAFTAs and, of course, the Darwin Awards - the list could go on forever.

Best of the best

As human beings, we want to identify the best of the best and the advertising, and communications profession is no different. In truth, however, awards are about more than just separating the cream from the whey.

Some may argue the necessity or futility of sector's awards programmes but let's look at three simple reasons why the profession's awards which recognise both creativity and effectiveness are not only necessary but imperative:

1. Promoting creativity

Perhaps the most important reason to spread the creative "wild fire" is because of the underestimation of the role of creativity in business and its contribution to business success. The lack of creativity is slowly killing business because it drives everything to a commodity price-driven market.

2. Promoting innovation

Award programmes showcase the most innovative thinking in the world and, as such, get people thinking out of their respective boxes, inspiring and motivating creatives across the globe to expand the playground of their minds to find the "next big idea".

Agencies and clients benefit in a myriad ways by being exposed to the world's best ideas - and, as such, a benchmark is set for great work that delivers.

Innovation to work smarter is the magic formula for building business during a recession. With economists increasingly warning that the world's most advanced economies are about to relapse into recession (again), innovation in engaging consumers and selling products through advertising and communications will build businesses

and assist businesses to survive what is and has been the worst recession the world has ever known.

3. Promoting accountability

By awarding advertising and communications campaigns that work and work hard, that are creative, innovative and have brought in a return on investment (ROI), agencies are challenged to be accountable. The profession's awards are the best and most direct measurement of that accountability.

During the worst recession of our time, clients demand ROI regardless of creative - but the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. In fact, there is much research to support the argument that, in general, creative communication campaigns are also effective and we have seen that ROI and creative are becoming progressively more interrelated. As British author Sir Ken Robinson stated at the Ogilvy Seminar during the 2011 Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity, "Real innovation and creativity often happen within tight constraints."

One should recognise that no advertising campaign is complete without its audience. We are seeing increased demand by the industry itself for recognition of efficacy, as well as for creativity. By measuring the client's ROI, a clear line is drawn between good and bad communication, ie that which is effective and that which is not.

Various awards programmes around the world showcase the contribution of advertising and communications to business success and positions winners as leaders in the field of business survival, success and sometimes even growth during tough economic times, from the [Apex Awards](#) here in South Africa to the IPA Effectiveness Awards, the AME Awards for the world's most effective advertising, the IAPI ADFX Awards and, of course, the Effie Awards.

Support the shift

While awards in the advertising and communications profession are necessary for many more reasons than the three stated above, I support the shift we are seeing whereby awards are increasingly taking into account the strategic solution that is creatively presented to achieve the client's ultimate goal, making efficacy - delivering results and making a valuable contribution to the bottom line - as important as the idea.

ABOUT ODETTE VAN DER HAAR

As the CEO of the ACA (www.acasa.co.za), Odette van der Haar ([odette_ropert](#)) is the CEO of the Apex Awards and is entirely responsible for the awards programme, from the back-end administration and the adjudication to the coordination of all activities, including the gala event. Apex recognises and rewards creativity, innovation and accountability in the advertising and communications profession, showcasing the contribution of advertising and communications to business success. It positions winners as leaders in the field of business survival, success and sometimes even growth during tough economic times. Go to www.acasa.co.za/apex.aspx for more information on how to enter the 2012 Apex Awards.

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