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The secret to writing a great Media Week Award entry – ease

By Ketan Lad

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Let's first address the elephant in the (writing) room, awards entries can be tricky.

Finding un-interrupted focus time, getting writer's block, moments of self-doubt, chasing approvals, chasing data and chasing colleagues.

We've all been there, we're there right now.

Over the years I've lost endless hours to writer's rigor mortis, paper paralysis and over complicating the process, but I think there's a different way...

... Thinking of the most prolific papers I've read as a Media Week judge, there's something they all have in common...

1. Case building over creative writing

The thought of creative writing works for some but not for all, but we're all comfortable with the concept of case building and pitching.

So if creative writing doesn't float your boat, approach your paper like a business case builder, create a pitch on a page filled with clear and compelling selling points, insights and evidence, with an easy-to-follow narrative.

...they make awards judging easy and are a joy to judge.

So, I'd like to share a slice of what I've learned from my time writing papers and serving on the judging panel.

The Media Week Awards spread the best ideas from our industry, therefore act as an incubator for future invention, making media creativity more contagious.

So here's my five favourite tips based on the principle making your paper more effective by making them easier to judge:

2. Don't bury your treasure, less is more

Paradoxically, pithy storytelling is harder than writing at length. The issue with the latter is that entries often hide what's truly special under layers of unnecessary detail.

With every sentence ask yourself – what point am I making? What point am I scoring with the category criteria? Be a ruthless editor. Less is more, limiting yourself to 600-700 words max.



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3. Polish your gold

Likewise make the treasure within your paper shine, make it easy for judges to pitch your work for you in rounds of debates.

How can you make your key selling points sparkle? How can you contextualise or creatively sell your best insights and evidence? Or perhaps your gold isn't just in the copy...

5. Set goals in your control

I like to think of this as Stephen Covey's Circle of Control meets James Clear's Atomic Habits for awards writing. Getting gold isn't in our control, but crafting a gold standard entry is.

All award judging processes are subjective. Whilst there's trends amongst the winning work, I don't believe there is a repeatable winning formula, which is a good thing.

Clear selling points, neatly written (proofed) copy, beautiful design, strong supporting media – are all gold standard goals we can control.

Best of luck for this year's awards.

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4. Show as well as tell

... Make it easy to see, hear, watch or play with the work.

For most cases it's essential to witness the work, yet I've seen so many papers that make this difficult.

Don't relegate supporting media to playing a supporting role, or let paper design be an afterthought, add some imagination to use of images, video, live links and sound files.

Finally, I'd like to end with sneaking in a sixth principle for making your Media Week entries easier, one I've learned the hard way – **take it easy on yourself**.

Give yourself what you need to do your best work, and it won't just be a joy to judge your paper, but also to a joy to write one too.