

Justin Wright talks on the direct judging process at Cannes Lions

 By [Ann Nurock](#)

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Justin Wright, Group Creative Director from TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris, was part of this year's Direct judging panel at this year's Cannes Lions, and explains the process and criteria used to choose the top entries...

Our media correspondent on the ground, Ann Nurock, interviewed Wright to find out more about the Direct category and the way forward for South Africa. He talks on the difference between Cannes and other international awards he's judged, as well as how SA is faring in the industry.

Nurock: What stood out for you in the judging process, what did you find most interesting?



Wright: Being my first time judging Cannes and having judged other international awards, I think the most interesting thing was the judging process itself, it's very meticulous. They broke us up into groups of five, and we got to see quite a large portion of the work, we didn't discuss any of it, we each rated it from 1-9, and from that we got our long list.

In the second process we also didn't discuss anything, but got to our shortlist, then we got the opportunity to discuss whether you wanted to bring work back into shortlist or throw work out, and for what reason. What was interesting up until that point is that there was repetitive discussions happening about what is the definition of Direct, and I feel like it happens every year. It's very easy if you're sitting on a radio or press jury, it's very clear

what you're judging, but with Direct there are certain criteria, so we had to first establish what that criteria was.

What I enjoyed about this process was that it was quite regimented, it allowed for the best work to come through naturally. And I think at the end of the day, the work that is converted is actually the best work, because of this process. It's very easy to keep things in order, and Cannes haven't changed that routine for quite a few years, because it works.

Nurock: What do you feel about the fact that so many Golds and Grands Prix went to brands that have a higher purpose?

Wright: You know a higher purpose was the second thing I was looking for, I was looking for "what is the idea?" I would tell the idea back to myself while I was judging and go "wow, that's a really good idea, that's amazing." Then I would ask myself, why did I feel that way about the idea, and it was generally because of a higher purpose or insanely clever, and I wish I'd thought of that. There's that famous phrase in advertising "I wish I'd done that" and it hasn't changed in terms of what we're looking for and creativity.

Nurock: How do you think South Africa is comparing to the rest of the world in terms of Direct?

Wright: I reckon we're a little behind at the moment. I think we only had three in the shortlist and only one converted to Bronze. Direct purpose is to target a particular audience and creating a response, a dialogue. So I felt that what we had didn't really wrap up, I'm not going to say it's not the ability to do great case study work, because agencies invest money not just in the idea and executing it, they spend a lot of money packaging the idea.

I question why we're not spending enough time and effort in the packaging of our ideas, because at the end of the day, we have 25 judges from around the world who have not seen your work, they're going to watch a 2-minute case study video.

The idea needs to come through in the first 30 seconds, so don't hide the idea, keep it simple.

The old tricks are using the media to tell the idea back to you and why is it working? Because it gives it scale, it gives it authenticity that this reached the media and created talkability. We can't just put any voice over on it and hope it works, which we fall into the trap doing. So our case study videos need to be addressed properly.

Nurock: Do you think South Africa can do anything better in terms of the actual Direct work?

Wright: I think our ideas are generally solid, but I just question sometimes we think maybe Direct is that other category I'm going to try and win, and we just enter it without a real understanding about what it is. Do we have great B2B ideas, true one-on-one marketing in our country? I don't see enough of that.

I think we're a little trapped in our traditional media, and if you look at the Cyber category, we're very thin, and it's a fantastic channel for Direct Marketing. I question how fresh our ideas are within the mobile, cyber and digital environment, because I'm not seeing the results. If we see the results here, you will see the results in Direct, because there's a correlation between the two.

Nurock: In Africa, our mobile penetration one of the biggest in the world percentage-wise, yet there wasn't one shortlist for mobile. If you look at a country like China, they are investing billions of dollars in innovation to improve the lives of their consumers...

Wright: We often have this discussion about our broader target market that aren't on smartphones, they're on feature phones, so you have to use USSD, but how do you use it in a way that's never been done before? We can't keep making technology excuses, because there are other ways of creating technology to get around that, so we're sometimes self-limiting.

If I look at mobile and cyber, and I look at Direct, there is use of mobile and digital, use of new technology for direct marketing, and use of a social audience (social media), so it's a digital world. Those are four of our sub-categories in Direct, there's a clear correlation. If we were doing cleverer things in cyber, mobile and social media, the results would be showing in Direct as well.

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ABOUT ANN NUROCK

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