

Financial Mail AdFocus Awards winners to be announced

On 23 November 2016, the winners of the Financial Mail AdFocus Awards winners will be announced in Rivonia when the best of the best in the industry will be rewarded and industry can reflect upon itself.



“There are many challenges within the industry, hence the AdFocus cover theme,” says David Furlonger, co-editor of the AdFocus Awards. “Marketing, advertising and communications have never been straightforward in South Africa, with proposed regulatory changes around black ownership and a new industry ombudsman merely add to the complexity.”

“Existing challenges include new technology, skills shortages, shrinking budgets in a near-recessionary economic environment, and clients demanding more for less. Anyone who can successfully manage all of these deserves a medal.

“It is hard to say where all this is leading us to... but recent South African research suggests most clients want to deal with fewer agencies - preferably just one. By international standards, the average South African client deals with many agencies and they want to reduce the number. Interestingly, three-quarters would like their integrated agency to include media strategy - a reversal of what has happened in the past.”

AdFocus Awards co-editor, Jeremy Maggs, believes that this year’s AdFocus Awards come at a time when the communications industry has to reinvent itself constantly to meet the perpetually changing dynamics of the market and how consumers relate to brands. “It’s not an easy time and agencies who are able to adapt to these needs are the ones that shone in this year’s programme. Next year will be even tougher as the ad industry not only grapples with these ongoing challenges but will also have to up its game in terms of transformation.”

Quiet 2016

AdFocus Jury chairman, Craig Page-Lee, says that after the flurry of M&A activity in 2015 - the two biggest transactions being that of French multinational giant Publicis acquiring The Creative Counsel for R1bn and South Africa’s incuBeta merging with DQ&A from the Netherlands, valued at about R1,5bn, the advertising and media industry has been relatively quiet in this space during 2016.

“That said, the agency world was, however, awash with a number of substantial pitches the past year, including the likes of Pick n Pay, Edcon, ABSA, MTN and SA Tourism and various alcohol brands.” This resulted in a huge number of resources and priceless value (both in terms of IP and time value committed) being sucked from already stretched agencies across the country.

“The sad reality is that some of the clients seemed not to respect the principles of the pitch process and really exploited a number of agency groups unnecessarily.”

“What is important to note is that many clients have insisted on a total integrated approach to their communications needs, forcing a broad spectrum of agency disciplines to work together. Hopefully, this is the catalyst to driving genuine integration and inter-discipline collaboration across the industry.”

Furlonger adds that the AdFocus Awards see the picture from the agency side but here, too, there seems a growing trend to provide a more integrated service - though, as FCB Africa CEO Brett Morris observes, “Agencies must be careful to provide what clients need, not what agencies need them to need.” In other words, agencies must add only those disciplines that their clients demand.

This year the Awards introduced a new category, Public Relations, which replaces Branding & Design, whose agencies now compete for the Specialist award. Also new this year is the sponsorship of the Partnership of the Year Award of a R100,000 of client-agency performance measurement consultancy by new sponsor The Observatory International.

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