

Assegai Awards: Saluting direct marketing success

 By Leigh Andrews

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The DMASA Assegai Awards 2015 gala evening takes place on Thursday, 12 November. David Dickens, Executive Director of the DMASA explains their evolution over the years.

The direct marketing industry stands out from the general 'marketing and advertising hubbub' as it skips the middleman of selling through retailers, making the products or services directly available to the public. Of course the rise and rise of technology means most of this communication takes place through digital methods like SMSes, emails and website communications over the traditional mail order and phone calls of old.

That doesn't mean the more established channels have fallen away though, as the direct marketing spectrum is more diverse than ever before.



Last year's Glee prize winner with Alastair Tempest from DMASA and Ben Evans of Ogilvy. Photographer: Wayne Hanscombe

One thing that's the same though is the need for a strong call-to-action to make this form of interaction effective. Dickens shares how the Direct Marketing Association of South Africa (DMASA) awards local direct marketing work that ticks all the boxes for campaign success...

1. Give us an overview of the Assegais' history and how they've been finessed over the years.

Dickens: The journey of the Assegai began in 1998, not long after the dawn of democracy. The DMASA recognised a need in the market for a high-profile event that would serve not only as an acknowledgement of excellent work done, but also as a networking forum for players in the direct marketing field.

The first order of business was naming the award, and, following industry submissions and a vote, the overwhelming majority of members selected the "Assegai" as the symbol of direct marketing excellence as this symbol speaks of the ability to aim at and find your target - of "spearing a specific niche". The DMASA Assegai Committee then exhaustively studied best-of-breed international programmes and structured the Assegai Awards to suit all direct media and meet all criteria.

In its early years, the Assegais proved highly successful, attracting hundreds of entries and full attendance at the gala evenings. Through experience and by adopting a "learning" approach, the architecture and judging criteria were refined. However, in 2004, under the MFSA, the Assegais were integrated into the Loerie Awards. This ultimately proved unsuccessful, with one award focusing mainly on the creative component and the Assegais purely on ROI. 2005: The year the DMA was re-established, saw no awards and, in 2006, the DMA created a "direct" section within the newly established 'Marketing Excellence Awards'.

The market wanted their Assegais back, though, and these were successfully re-launched in 2007, independent of other awards. Since then, the Assegais have moved from strength to strength, adding and revising categories in line with market trends and developments, as well as significantly increasing the number of entries year-on-year, bearing testimony to the growing impact of direct marketing in South Africa.

■ **2. A truly interesting story. There are so many industry awards, local and global, what makes the Assegais stand out?**

Dickens: A DMASA Assegai Award is a mark of victory in direct marketing excellence.

The Assegai Awards acknowledge and awards those whose direct marketing campaigns deliver exceptional results. Since their inception, the Assegai Awards have striven to benchmark the South African direct marketing industry, to highlight best-in-class examples and encourage all players in the industry to work towards achieving greatness in their campaigns. The ultimate goal remains to keep raising the bar for the whole industry.

The DMASA and our partners on the brand, agency and support fronts see new and clearer trends emerging with each awards cycle. We want to capture these. The Assegai Awards is also a platform for shared experience and fast-tracking learnings about the latest trends. Through showcasing and sharing in each other's' work, we're able to make sure everyone in the industry is connected to the latest happenings, so that future campaigns drive towards one goal - successful, interesting, exceptional marketing.

An Assegai Award does not give honours for extravagant production values, enormous budgets or big-name companies. Rather, it recognises breakthrough strategy, creative brilliance and outstanding results in all direct marketing media, from mail and print to digital, from mobile to broadcast.

■ **3. What can we expect from the Gala night later this week?**

Dickens: This year, the awards promise to be a truly memorable night hosted at Room 5 in Rivonia. The black and gold cinema-style evening will be a night to remember, with the "diversity in direct" theme serving as a call to celebrate the unique South African perspective and our distinct way of doing things.

The Nkosi Award is also a highlight, as the overall top award for that year, it's a very prestigious award. It's hard to predict who will win big this year as there has been so much incredible work done. Since expanding our categories last year we have seen smaller agencies come out and do unbelievably well in the Assegais.

Lots to look forward to, it seems. [Click here](#) for the full list of finalists, with the 2015 Assegai Awards Individual and

Company finalists recently [announced here](#), and you can find out the latest Assegai Awards news by tracking their [Twitter timeline](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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