

Bookmarks Awards reflect a maturing industry

By  Danette Breitenbach

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Winning a Bookmarks Awards is important. It is meaningful for a number of reasons, of which the winning is the least important. The latest Bookmarks Awards winners explain this why this year also reflects the evolution of the Awards themselves as well as the growth and maturing of the industry.

Winning Agency of Year was the cherry on the cake for Gloo, drawing to close a calendar year that saw the agency win awards across the spectrum from Loeries to Assegais, to mention but a couple.

This Award is important, says Gloo founder Pete Case, because it means they are doing the right things. "The Award is determined by far more than the number of Awards you have won. It is determined by how we run our agency and how we give back and support the communities around us, through a number of charities, lecturing in colleges, and through an infrastructure-in-schools project."



Gloo

Case, who attended the first ever Bookmarks Awards, says it is in the judging of the Awards that one can see the industry moving forward. "The industry is maturing, and, at the same time, there are many new names popping up and start-ups winning. That is a fantastic sign of the industry's growth."

The fact that clients are also attending the Bookmarks Awards is another sign of its maturing. "There is always room for improvement. Nothing goes backward, and in the case of digital and the Bookmarks Awards, it is very much a case of going forward."

He recalls the first Bookmarks Awards. "The first Bookmarks Awards were in a tiny basement and we had to call people to please attend. "This year, the event was top class with an amazing venue, a well put together event overall that catered for everyone," he says.

Not good enough but improving

Mike Sharman, owner at Retroviral Digital Communications, which won two bronze awards, and also a judge in some of the categories, agrees with Case. "The fact that this year saw more entries than ever before reflects the growth and evolution of



Mike Sharman

The results-driven criteria of the Bookmarks Awards make them important, he adds: "Growth and sales count and the Awards factor this in and therefore I believe, while not perfect, the Awards are highly respected."

However, he says, we are still seeing a level that needs to be achieved in this country. "There are a handful of agencies doing top work and then a large group that is not good enough. We need to elevate them. I know there are constraints around budget and brief etc, but it is up to us to overcome these. We need to produce great work on an economical budget. Your ideas should not be limited by your spend."

Clients, he adds, also need to understand that they need to support what you put out there through strategic media spend.

Craig Rodney, Managing Director, Cerebra, says that the rate of improvement in the work being produced by the industry each year is inspiring. "The Bookmarks Awards have kept to up the criteria and made the measurement stricter to keep pace with the level of work." This he says is a sign of a healthy industry that gets immense pleasure from eclipsing all previous work. "The scale and impact of the winning campaigns not only reflects that improvement in delivery, but also the relevance and importance of online in consumers' lives."

Cerebra are proud to have been awarded a Silver Bookmarks Award in the editorial category. "Cerebra has been working hard to build a publishing model into our business, and this Award, especially given the other nominees, is the perfect acknowledgement for how much we've managed to accomplish in a very short time."

Their Head of Insights, Keenan Harduth, was also named Social Media Marketer of the Year, which Rodney says is "massively well deserved" and he believes "we've only just begun to see what Keenan is capable of".

Social campaigns

Winning at Bookmarks for the second year in a row is Hellocomputer's Emile Rohlandt, who won Best Creative/Designer/Copywriter/Content Writer.

"We're especially proud of our Hellocomputer team and their accomplishments at this year's Bookmarks," says Executive Creative Director, Simon Spreckley. "Emile's win for the second time reflects our commitment to the best creative talent in the industry."

The agency is also ecstatic with their two Silvers for Investec Asset Management. Spreckley explains that because *The Institute Journal* was a printed book, the challenge was to push the boundaries of how this publication could reach a broader audience in a digital format.



Hellocomputer

"The journal is designed to target, globally, the top tier of investors and financial thinkers, through diverse perspectives, forward thinking and a critical analysis of key trends and issues that shape the economic, political and investment landscape. It is the most premium of all the content that Investec Asset Management produces so how this was presented online was crucial."

They are also encouraged by the Bronze for Social Feed, an initiative, he says, that is only just starting to gain traction. "For Social Feed, a new media platform for good, we're putting the power into the users' hands. Essentially, it's an innovative way for brands to market themselves on social media while giving users a say in which brands advertise on their social feeds, all while feeding some very hungry school kids."

People first

Jarred Cinman MD of NATIVE VML, says they are delighted to have taken a Gold Pixel - one of only 13 handed out from over 800 entries - as well as a couple of other trophies.

"We are especially proud of Mike Jones, who won Best Digital Strategist on the night. For a digital agency, that prides itself on being strategically led, to have the acknowledged best strategist in SA on our team seems highly significant."

Mike Jones, NATIVE VML, told Bizcommunity he is "super thrilled" with the Award. "It was unexpected because I was up against some really great media strategists." This high level of entries, he believes, is evidence of a shift in the skills required in this environment and an indication of where the industry is going.



Mike Jones - Native VML

Here, he adds, is where we see the importance of the Bookmarks Awards. "It is important to have a body and an Awards that recognises great digital work in this country and I believe that the Bookmarks Awards stand up to the Loeries and APEX Awards. At the same time, we have a long way to go to not isolate digital as a channel.

NATIVE, he says, has focused on producing award-winning work. "Ultimately, this focus allows us to impact on peoples' lives. It is not about digital or mobile first; it is about people first and this links back to my point on digital not being isolated as a channel."

Cinman comes in here: "NATIVE is an extremely people-focused business that spends an inordinate amount of time creating a culture and environment in which people can thrive and excel. "We don't get any of that perfect - yet. But we believe by investing in great people, and helping them to do great things, ultimately we will be the greatest agency in the country and on the continent."

Encouraging recognition

Bookmarks Special Honours Awards for Best Journalist and Best Editor went to the *Daily Maverick*'s Richard Poplak and Branko Brkic respectively. "We're extremely proud of both awards, and of course the entire team. Richard has added a new dimension to political analysis with his unique style and Branko deserves every accolade for creating and supporting an environment for great long form writing to prosper," says Styli Charalambous, Publisher at *Daily Maverick*. He adds that it is also nice to get some recognition for long hours and the very challenging environment independent journalism now finds itself in.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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