

**advice from
the jury**



**effie
awards**
north america

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This document was created to help entrants submit an effective entry.

The insights presented comes directly from the North American Effie Juries from 2013-2015. These statements do not represent the opinions of The Effie® Awards organization, board of directors, steering committee, or staff – all comments and data presented – except for the specified Effie advice – are straight from the industry executives who dedicated their time to serve on an Effie Jury.

We hope you find the information useful as you prepare your cases for the 2016 competition.

In addition to this document, please take note of the following Effie Resources:

- **Effie North America Website**
- **Entry Kit & Materials**
- **Eligibility, Deadlines & Fees**
- **Case Study Database** (read past winning Effie submissions)
- **North American Case Study Samples**
- **Health Case Study Samples**
- **Media Case Study Samples**
- **Shopper Marketing Competition**
- **Global Competition**
- **Judge Application**
- **Twitter**
- **Email List**
- **Effie Effectiveness Index**

judging & scoring

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Judging Process

Effie entries are judged by some of the brightest and most experienced business leaders. Entries are judged in two phases. Round One judges evaluate entries on a stand-alone basis, **without comparison to other entries in their category**. Each judge reviews a unique set of entries, across many categories. During Final Round judging, finalists in each category are judged against other finalists in the same category. Final round judging involves a discussion among the judges in the room about the finalists in the category. In both rounds, all elements of an entry – written case and creative elements – are judged.

Judges are not allowed to review submissions from the category they work in – for example, an automotive judge would not score submissions in the Automotive category. For this reason, **it is crucial to provide category context and limit the use of industry jargon** in your entry.

Additionally, judges are reviewing between 7-15 entries in a given session. Because of the volume of entries being reviewed, clear, concise and honest entries stand out.

Judges are asked to evaluate specific criteria in scoring a case's overall effectiveness and provide four separate scores analyzing specific attributes of the work. The breakdown is as follows:

Scoring System

Strategic Communications	23.3%
Challenge & Objectives	
Idea	23.3%
Bringing the Idea to Life	23.3%
Results	30%

The judges' scores determine which entries are awarded a gold, silver or bronze Effie trophy. Each winning level – gold, silver, bronze – has a minimum score required in order for a finalist to be eligible for an award. Effie Trophies are awarded in each category at the discretion of the judges. It is possible that a category may produce one, two, three or four winners of any level or perhaps no winners at all.

2015 Scoring Trends

In the 2015 Effie Competition, the **Results** and **Bringing the Idea to Life** sections scored highest on average, while the **Strategic Communications Challenge & Objectives** and **Idea** sections scored the lowest on average across all entrants.

Effie Finalist & Winner Case Studies

We encourage entrants to visit the **Case Study Database**, hosted on www.effie.org, to read past-winning cases and to view the accompanying creative assets. Complimentary sample cases will also be shared in the **Entry Resources**.

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Be Clear. Be Concise. Be Honest.

- “Keep it simple and focused. We are marketers and can see past marketing clichés and BS. Make sure cases are reviewed by management at your agency.”
- “Build a clear, simple narrative. Remember that the judges are industry experts so don't “jazz hands” your way through anything — but also remember they're humans, so tell them an interesting story.”
- “Concise written entries stand out. They are not only refreshing — they encourage high marks. Remember that The Effies are about effective communication. Entries that are long on words and light on substance or impact will leave a juror with the impression that the campaign was, too.”
- **“Storytelling is important.** The person with the most heart for the campaign needs to be involved in the writing of the case study. Case studies that are too dry kill great results.”
- “The case itself should be presented as a stand-alone narrative. If I didn't see the work, would I understand your full case, from challenge to results, on the study alone? There should be a flow from challenge to insight to idea. Be specific with your goals and targets. Competitive benchmarks provide context, and ROI is key. Without specificity, the metrics come off as vague, and suggest that goals have been retrofitted to the final result.”

“Present the case in a clear and concise manner. Don't be afraid to use visuals to highlight the data you are presenting versus typing it all out - it can be more impactful when seen in a chart.”



effie insight: You can't write your way to an Effie, but you can certainly write your way out of an Effie.

- “Keep it simple. Demonstrate how medium and message integrate and work hand in hand to deliver against the stated challenge and objectives. Results MUST relate back to your stated KPIs.”
- “Be a storyteller. **Entertain me with the submission.** I want to hear your voice.”
- “Consider the fact that the person reading it may be a creative mind, a media mind, or an analytical mind. Try to appeal to all by making it a very easy, enjoyable, and entertaining read. Don't focus too much on creative strategy and leave media strategy out. Really give a full picture of what all the different departments contributed.”
- “I'm more likely to believe your campaign was effective if you **acknowledge what other factors might have driven results** and give me some reasons to believe they weren't responsible in this case.”

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How Judges Described Entries They Liked

"The best cases were simple, powerful, and were based on a powerful insight."

"Clear and succinctly articulated insight. Clear, specific and measureable goals in the KPIs."

"Strong connection to results."

"A brilliant insight that inspires a unique and truly ENGAGING idea."

"Each section builds to the next one and connects."

"Impressive, verifiable metrics."

"If results are weak, the whole case is weak."

"Clearly identified KPIs, met them, and exceeded them."

"Keep it simple, logical."

**"Business-oriented results.
Visual display of results.
Minimized hyperbole."**

"A great case tells a story. It draws you in and makes you want to read more."

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How to Improve an Entry

- "The entrants should ensure that the results tie to the objectives, that they include **performance against benchmarks**, and that they seem **real** and **not manufactured** to make the case seem better."
- "Make sure the case tells a full story that is connected throughout, rather than a bunch of individual answers to questions. Your objectives should prove you overcame the challenge, and be specific and measurable. Your results should tie directly back to the stated objectives. Overall, the case should be clear and concise."
- "Don't write a case, tell a story. Make the insight and idea seem like a revelation - take us on your journey of creative problem solving. Don't just list facts for results, set up the context again and make us care about those numbers."
- "I was very disappointed that many people did not enter their work properly or take the time for more **customization** in the entry form for the category entered."
- "More charts and graphs vs. words. It's easier to see results visually than in a narrative form."
- "Think about what judges are likely to be most skeptical about and address it."
- "Check for grammar, typos, math, and inconsistencies."

"Advertising principles should apply to case studies too: write them in a way that engages judges, focus on how your campaign helped achieve your brand's objectives and don't over-complicate it - less is more!"

Context is Key

- "Do not underestimate the importance of benchmarks - and providing reason for those benchmarks. For instance, a 4 week period out of a year is not helpful unless you explain why you used that 4 week period - it just looks like you are manipulating results."
- "More context around the challenge; more specific, quantifiable results. Without these two components, it is incredibly difficult to judge the case's effectiveness."
- "**Lots of what, not enough why.** Why do you want to increase awareness X%? What would that mean to your company/client in real-world terms? Context was missing on many of the results."
- "Entrants need to provide benchmarks and more than just percentage growth. Without the context for those percentages, it's hard to tell what is truly great."
- "Where possible, show how your results compare to the relative success of your competition. Just competing against yourself and past results doesn't seem as compelling."

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Review Internally Before Submitting

- "Write your entry not for a member of your team but for someone who knows absolutely nothing about your category, client, or client's business problems. Take special care to answer all questions (and sub-bullets therein), as they were designed to be answered in that manner for a reason."
- "Have someone outside the team read your case. **Too often category specific knowledge was assumed and broad context not given.**"
- "Think the case through all the way before writing it. Be clear, edit, and don't feel every fact relating to what really happened has to be in the case. Sometimes those facts are less relevant and come out of left field, and thus are distracting and make one feel there's a question in the quality of the case even by the writer."
- "Start early. **Engage your client!** It's a team effort and they can provide valuable insight, direction, and support that the agency might not be asking for."
- "To all agencies, please have a senior person and a proofreader read your cases before submitting them. Typos and logic flow errors create a bad impression."
- "Make the context clear enough for someone who doesn't sit in your office every day and may be reading their 10th case. **Have more than one writer look at it; preferably someone from outside your group.** Same for results. With the creative reel, be clear about what elements are actual marketing pieces vs. context."
- "If you're junior, give it to seniors to review. If you're senior, give it to someone not involved on the project to review to make sure it's clear, complete, and compelling."
- "The entrants who build their cases from a place of **honesty, authenticity, and simplicity** vs. "marketing jargon" were really the strongest. I'd recommend that all entrants have someone who doesn't work in marketing read their entry to see if they can understand it. If they can, then it's probably good."
- "Have people who are unfamiliar with your brand review your case; proof and rewrite as much as needed. **Don't leave this to the last minute - it shows.**"

A copy of last year's judging instructions will be made available on the entry materials section of effie.org.

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effie insight: When writing your entry, carefully read and answer the detailed instructions under each question on the form. Often judges complain they felt the entrant did not provide full information.

Strategic Communications Challenge & Objectives

Questions 5A-5D

Elements are assessed for both suitability and ambitiousness within the framework of the Strategic Communications Challenge.

How did each area relate to the stated objectives and were the objectives fully explained? Entrants should detail what objectives they had and why they are significant in the context of their situation. If the entrant did not have objectives upfront or they were open objectives, they should explain this. Judges consistently state that they can tell when objectives have been retrofitted and down score entries because of this.

Many entrants ask how the judges score the Strategic Communications Challenge & Objectives. For additional insight on this, we've provided part of the judging instructions here.

Judge Instructions

How do I judge the Strategic Communications Challenge & Objectives?

Entrants should detail what objectives they had & why they are significant in the context of their situation.

The definition of the Strategic Communications Challenge is the glue that shapes the other elements of the case. Please ensure that the Strategic Communications Challenge is clearly understood, both as described in the case and from any other knowledge you may have of the particular category. Assess the remaining elements of the case for both suitability and ambitiousness within the framework of the Strategic Communications Challenge.

Weight should be given both to the degree of difficulty and to whether the entrant has provided enough context to evaluate the case's effectiveness in this section.

- Entrants are advised to provide judges with an understanding of the category, competitive and other context as well as to outline the goals they had for the case or to indicate why they may not have had upfront goals but why what they have achieved is significant. If context regarding the category situation is missing and/or understanding of why the goals (or results achieved) were challenging this would be a reason to score lower.

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Judge Advice on the Strategic Communications Challenge & Objectives

- "The best cases clearly articulated the **challenge** for the brand, the **category** and **competitive landscape**, and what the overall **goals** were. They also had KPIs that aligned well to that challenge that were clearly not retrofitted to the resulting outcome."
- "A large number of entrants seemed to omit critical information around the challenge. Why is it important? Why is it an issue for their consumers / brand / business? Who is the strategic target and why?"
- "Provide ample **context** on the competitive setting to help judges understand the challenges being faced by your brand. Clearly identify your KPIs and then prove how your program met or exceeded those KPIs."
- "Be careful your KPIs don't look like they were retrofitted. Help me understand why they were important and why they were set at that level."
- "Make sure to give enough background on state of category and business. In defining KPIs and goals and results give benchmarks using competitive or past campaigns to help judges contextualize what is truly successful and substantiate why these are the right measures."
- "Make it clearer if these are challenging or typical objectives. Every marketing goal is to grow share/sales but what makes it particularly challenging? Also, be clearer on expectations and how you set those benchmarks **so it doesn't look like you sandbagged results.**"
- "Telling me what your objectives were, and more importantly telling me **why** those objectives matter is the difference between passing through Round One and not."
- "Those that communicated their **target audience** clearly made it easier to put the case into context and made it much more compelling in understanding how they brought the idea to life."
- "Why is your challenge a challenge? If you can articulate that, then your objective should be easy to state."
- "You shouldn't have 10+ objectives just because you have 10+ data points you want to share in the results section. It's clear when cases are trying to share every positive number they have, rather than focusing on what's most important to the campaign goals."

"If the Strategic Challenge section was weak, it weakened the entire entry because the context wasn't there to understand how big the idea was, or how profound the results were. After reviewing these entries today, it's apparent that this section is key to a strong entry."

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Idea

Questions 6A-6B

Judges evaluate how inventive the Idea and the strategy behind it is in meeting the Strategic Communications Challenge and how closely the idea, strategy and results address the challenge.

Judge Advice on the Insight

- "The best cases were simple, powerful and were based on a powerful insight."
- "Describe fully the "ah-ha" consumer insight that made your idea unique and effective."
- "Clearly explain how you arrived at your insight and why it's relevant to your marketing challenge."
- "**Don't skimp on the insight** - give a lot of thought as to what you choose as your key insight. If it doesn't feel fresh and connected to the story you are telling and the creative you developed, you don't have a winning entry."
- "Did the entrant know the audience? Was the insight consistent with the audience's beliefs and did it actually drive an insightful notion from which a strategy could be developed? And did the work reflect the audience, insight, and strategy consistently?"
- "Really bring your insight to life. How did you find it? Why is it an insight and not just a piece of information about your target or your challenge? How does that insight relate to what else is happening in the category or what is happening with the consumer. **How is your brand uniquely positioned to take advantage of that insight?**"

Judge Advice on the Idea

- "Dig deeper into their consumers and draw links to their brand. A great idea is meaningless if it doesn't reflect on the brand."
- "The **idea** is the pivot which turns the smart analysis of the problem into a **unique solution** that none of our competitors could emulate. Too many idea statements were generic and displayed no deep consumer understanding."
- "The idea needs to tie directly back to the consumer insight and not be the tactical execution that was deployed. The idea needs to be **crisp**, but also tell the judge enough detail so that it is **easy to understand** how the team arrived at this idea and why it is **meaningful** to the brand and campaign."
- "The idea is **not** a recitation of the tagline!"
- "The thrust of the case should be how the idea led to the tactics that achieved the results."

**"If you can't
explain an idea
in one sentence,
then you don't
have an idea."**

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Bringing the Idea to Life

Questions 7A-7G + Creative Work

This section includes both the written entry form and the creative reel. In the written form, entrants are asked to explain how they brought the idea to life. Entrants must outline their media and communications strategy, providing rationale for your media and communications strategies. Judges are looking to know not only what you did, but why you did it. Why were the channels you selected right for your target audience?

The creative reel is your place to show examples of your work – not to repeat what you outlined in the written case. Judges review the written case before watching the creative reel, so it is important these elements are created with each other in mind.

Judge Advice on Explaining How you Brought the Idea to Life

- "Tie the **communication strategy directly back to objectives and insights**. Without that it's just a media plan, not a communications strategy."
- "Clearly depict how the campaign was executed in market. Was there a "path" you wanted consumers to go on and what was it?"
- "More focus on **media strategy**. Entrants mentioned TV and print ads, but didn't always mention where they ran and how they appealed to the target."
- "Please remember that communications strategies include both creative and medias strategies - **not just tactics**."
- "Regarding bringing idea to life, more needs to be said about brand media strategies and executions. Very little demo data, lifestyle data, medium strengths and weaknesses."
- "If you are using a media channel, how are you using it - what targeting is being leveraged, and why is your use of this media more effective than any other agency or brand?"
- "With so many channels available to marketers now, part of the challenge is conveying how you achieved reach across them. How did you place importance of some over others, etc."
- "Integrate the media strategy and show how it links to the full execution as well as, potentially, how it evolved with the campaign. Show how you were able to "test and learn" if digital was a key component. **Ensure that the creative reel is not redundant.**"

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Judge Advice on the Creative Reel

- "Please don't state the case study again in the video - provide a simple set up and **let the work speak for itself.** "
- "In many cases the creative failed to live up to the story. In others, the video totally obscured the ability to view creative. It became a rehash of the story/case and a lot of salesmanship vs. a true showcase of the work."
- "Be sure the written case and video **complement each other** and **do not repeat** each other. It isn't about the quality of the video itself but more about the content."
- "Make sure your creative reels **do not have results** spelled out in them. It could ruin an otherwise worthy submission."
- Creative reels often do not reflect all the tactics cited in the written case. Too TV-centric."
- "Most of the reels did a good job to demonstrating the work. The best cases told a cohesive story, but did not spend a lot of time on the set up given we had already reviewed the written material."
- "**Don't turn the reel into a pitch** – it reduces credibility."
- "My biggest issue was that the videos seemed to gloss over the creative rather than showcasing it. Don't give me a video version of an over dramatized case. Showcase the creative and tell a rich, compelling story via your writing."
- "Keep the storytelling and results out of the creative reel, and highlight the creative, especially the different executions. **The more different types of creative shown, the better.** I took the judging seriously and read through the pdf carefully, so there was no need to duplicate the story - what I was missing was how everything was brought to life."
- "The creative reel should showcase all of the work that I've just read about and want to see. **I'd rather clearly see the different executions over hearing setup.**"

"Don't completely repeat the case in video form. Use the video to bring to life the key elements of the campaign. We've read the written case."

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Results

Questions 8-9

Judges are looking for direct correlations between real objectives and results. For example, if the objective is to improve brand awareness, the proof cannot be an increase in sales. If you achieved additional results, explain what they were and why they are significant. If you did not achieve a particular objective, explain why. Do not leave judges with any unanswered questions or a sense that the situation you set up was not the actual situation you faced.

Entrants must demonstrate how they met or exceeded objectives using quantitative and behavioral metrics or other measurement tools.

Entrants should provide background – what is the industry norm? Entries range from small cases in regional markets to nationwide blitzes. Judges take into account the environment in which each case exists. It is important to include category context, as judges may not be aware of your particular category. For example, a small percentage move in a highly-segmented, high volume category is more difficult to achieve than a large percentage change in a small, less-competitive or non-competitive category.

Likewise, a large sales increase for a product that has never advertised before might be less impressive than a smaller sales increase for a product that has no budget increase but changed its marketing communications strategy.

“Anticipate objections/questions and address them. Exhaustively eliminate variables. Prove your work led to your results.”



effie insight: Entries that provide an explanation of why the results are significant to the business of the brand tend to perform better in the Effie competition.

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Judge Advice on Metrics

- "Some of the cases used very soft measurements for results like CTR, or visits to sites. These measures are a start but should not be the ultimate goal. There needs to be concrete business results."
- "In addition to marketing goals, I would love to see business metrics tied to those goals. In other words, how was a \$10mm spend with a \$4mm uplift in sales really a win? Yes perception changed, or awareness rose, but **how did it move the business?**"
- "Results need to be quantifiable and should be **from real sources that can be verified**. "Internal research" may or may not be real research (it could be no better than "because I said so")."

Judge Advice on Linking your Objectives and Results

- **"Results MUST relate back to your stated KPIs."**
- "Some results were just sloppy and did not align with the objectives established up front. If you set a sales goal, give some context as to why that goal is relevant; **don't just report a metric without some context.**"
- "Saying things like 'exceeded by 520%' just makes me think that the objectives were stupid rather than results being good."
- "Have the results relate to the objectives. And spell it out for the judge. Don't make them go back to the objective section to see if you accomplished it. Make it simple."
- "The strongest cases immediately and overtly **tied back to objectives.**"
- "While they all cite results, sometimes the results are not adequately tied to the stated objectives, or the KPIs aren't appropriate for the goals."
- "Clearly tie results back to your initial objectives. When the results presented felt vague or disconnected from the case objectives, I found myself assuming that this was due to an absence of truly convincing positive metrics to be shared."
- "I would **copy and paste your objectives/KPIs into the results section** - and without fanfare, call out exactly what the result was. I found I had to scroll up every time to see if the KPI reported on was the one they actually took."
- "Relate the results back to the objectives and do so in a storytelling manner, instead of a data dump."

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Judge Advice on Presenting Results Successfully

- "There was a significant amount of obvious hyperbole and loose connection to strategic goals. Entrants should focus on using the results to tie up their story in a neat bow."
- "Too many entries failed to **quantify the true impact of their work**. Many could benefit from more extensive measurement before, during and after campaigns to show the net change in perceptions or behaviors. Too many squishy KPIs."
- "Talk about the scale of couponing, price cuts, marketplace activity, etc. - no information or context on these means a downscore."
- "Admit more and provide real-world context: give credit to things like economic trends in addition to your campaign. **You'll gain credibility by being honest about all the factors that created success.**"
- "It's all about the results, right? I felt that many cases could show that the work was somehow linked to a movement in sales, but they were weak in **being clear about specifically how the work was effective** in driving sales and/or what specifically the work affected in order to drive sales."
- "Provide benchmarks, provide rationale for goals, and illustrate how the work presented drove the results."
- "**Isolate their results by eliminating other variables.** And don't cook the results. Lots of misleading stats, charts, etc."
- "Don't fudge the results. Your peers will know. **Honesty is more effective.** We have all had wins and we have all had fails. Every campaign does not need to be perfect."
- "Make sure you provide **context**. If you show results, help the judges understand if the results are good and why. Explain what the numbers mean - don't just say 'engagement.' Define engagement."

"Tie together the story of how your work drove the results - the best cases did this seamlessly, the worst cases just threw the results out there as somehow a self-evident proof of the value of the work without explaining why or how."

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Additional Insight from the Health Jury

Overall, feedback from the Health Jury aligned closely with the critiques and advice shared by the overall Effie jury. The full Advice from the Jury document should be reviewed by Health Effie entrants; however, below is a brief outline specifically shared by the Health jury.

Qualities of an Effective Case

- "I want to see the big idea connected to the creative, and have the creative executed in new and effective ways. And we want to see real results... not just an increase in sales. It's more effective when they show changes in attitudes as well because there are always a ton of things that could actually impact sales."
- "Change behavior in a big way, not just for an individual, but for an extended community as well."
- "Rich understanding of the target audience. Smart leveraging of a customer insight. **A surprising or provocative creative solution that links back to the insight and would inspire action.** Strong, compelling results."
- "Clearly define challenges and relate the results directly to your actions addressing those challenges. Write simply and clearly. It's easy to detect embellishment. Cite all results. If you don't have a citation, then don't include the result."
- "The write-ups seemed to be disjointed sometimes and needed more cohesive pull-through and connection of Insights to KPIs to Results. I would also like to see the broader effect that they are trying to instill or change. A lot of these are too cut and dry and boring. It would be nice if there were some actual **feeling and meaning** behind what the results meant or lead to. A lot of the entries seem too corporate and stale."

"It can be helpful to call out regulatory challenges/context. Though a smart team will indicate that in their challenges, I didn't always see that kind of context when it should've been there."

Strategic Communications Challenge & Objectives

- "Framing the category appropriately is critical, as some judges may be unfamiliar with the **specific nuances of the category.**"
- "Provide background relevant to the category and explain why your challenge was so integral into providing an impact within that category."

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Idea

- "While the effective explanation of the idea is key, it also helps to "sell" the idea, why it is so original/creative/unique to the category."
- "The best cases did a good job of aligning the big idea with discrete target audiences and reaching them in a cost effective manner."
- "Really identify who your target is and what **unique insights** they have that the brand could address."

Bringing the Idea to Life

- "With the creative reel, be clear about what elements are actual marketing pieces vs. context."
- "Explain why they chose what they did in their final creative solution. Many times there was a significant disconnect between the strategic challenge and objectives and the idea brief with how it came to life. I often saw really rich insights work with generic and clichéd creative."
- "When communicating how you brought the idea to life - describe the conceptual nature of it but also the **rationale behind the tactics** you chose."

"Avoid over-complicating the messages or making it too technical in nature."

Results

- "If results are too proprietary, mention that as a reason that the results listed are vague."
- "Too many entrants relied on simply pointing to an increase in sales or market share as proof that their marketing campaign succeeded. They need to show real marketing metrics to prove that their efforts drove results."
- "Provide ROI - shifting behaviors and habits share increase."

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Assessing Successful Healthcare Communications Efforts

- "Has it found a deep insight or customer audience truth? Has it successfully leveraged that insight? Has it produced provocative, surprising creative that will capture the attention of our customers and get them to engage in our experience?"
- "Drives equity for the brand and engagement with not just consumers, but dentists/hygienists/doctors."
- "Increased prescribing behavior, generating positive social media mentions, client ROI and increased marketing budgets."
- "We measure brand awareness and preference as well as track volume by following a patient throughout their continuum of care, not just by measuring ROI based on the particular service being promoted."
- "Changes in Rx behavior and HCP and/or consumer perceptions of the brand."
- "Of course if it moves market share, but more importantly how does what we do effect the individuals who need the treatment or those prescribing it. We gauge our creative output by seeing if it improves people's lives. If we can do this through information, tools, connection or other ways then we have been successful."

"Formulary decisions and cost overall is increasingly overriding traditional prescribing decisions. How the campaigns are impacting this aspect of the business would be helpful to know."

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Additional Insight from the Media Jury

We encourage Media Effie entrants to review the full Advice from the Jury document, as many of the critiques we see from the Media Jury fall in line with the critiques from the overall jury. Below we share additional feedback from the 2014 and 2015 Media Effie Jurors.

Thoroughly Review Category Definitions

- "When you are going to enter a specialty category, be sure your entry **speaks to that category.**"
- "If a submission is not the right fit for the category, it is much more difficult to gauge the true effectiveness."
- "If you are entering the Media Innovation category, be sure to be crystal clear in pointing out the innovation."
- "Entries in the Media Idea category should present a media idea that is **uniquely tied to the brand**, with a unique use of media."
- "Showcase the media specific innovations if you are submitting into the media innovation category."

Qualities of an Effective Case

- "With the ability to connect audience data to actual impact (short term and lifetime), brands and agencies need to work in a more collaborative manner to plan, execute and measure across all consumer touchpoints. Authenticity is also something that goes a long way and if that's still available in the DNA of the brand, take every opportunity to showcase it."
- "Clearly set up your challenge and what you are trying to achieve. Tell a story to engage the reader and help make your case clear. Too many cases were just a delivery of "facts". In many of the cases the media strategy wasn't really clearly articulated. What is the media strategy and how does it help bring the idea to life."
- "I look for strong context, significance, and specificity:

Context: Why are the chosen metrics important to the client or relevant within the competitive marketplace? What is current metric? Where are we looking to move it? How does that compare to brand history or category?

Significance: Why does a particular shift matter? How is it significant to the brand or the business?

Specificity: Is it specific to the audience that is most important? Is it specific in terms of relating back to the original objectives?"

judge advice

the media effies

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Strategic Communications Challenge & Objectives

- “Be clear in stating your goals and objectives. Saying ‘used unpaid and social media to generate buzz’ is much less effective than saying ‘increased social buzz by XX’.”

Idea

- “A strong idea should be born from a real business challenge.”
- “The Media Effies are about effectively pushing boundaries and carrying us all forward so innovation, creativity, and envelope-pushing are really important.”
- “Entrants continue to struggle with Insights. They need to get at the ‘why behind the what.’ Stating an observation like ‘Millennials prefer to communicate through social media’ is NOT a compelling insight.”

Bringing the Idea to Life

- “Entrants can do a better job by being more explicit about how the integrations met their goals - and also **give more detail** especially in the digital space. Just creating long form video or custom content is not bringing an idea to life - how did you promote it, seed it and integrate activities online and offline?”
- “Be specific in the areas of execution - we would love to see details on how things were activated, especially digitally and socially.”
- “Articulate how the idea was brought to life by communicating the unique role of each media channel included in the plan.”

“I want to see a narrative that brings the ‘idea’ to life in a simple and compelling way. I’m also looking to ensure that entrants leveraged multiple channels – even if the ‘idea’ was centered on a core partner.”

Results

- “Focus on **quality over quantity**. Instead of listing everything you did and all the results - pick the highlights and expand on those.”
- “Provide **details on engagement**. For example: with digital tactics, how did the tactics lead people to engage with the brand (through views, clicks, shares, comments, etc.), and did that drive positive metrics?”
- “If you’re using social media metrics, be sure to **add context** so the results appear more robust and reliable.”

final tips

reasons cases receive lower scores

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What to Avoid:

- **Retrofitting Objectives.** Retrofitting objectives to results achieved or creating objectives after the fact, rather than explaining the situation you were faced with accurately.
- **Disconnect between Objectives & Results.** Not addressing all objectives and KPIs completely in the results section. Your objectives and results should align – do not list awareness in the objectives and solely provide sales numbers in the results. Provide evidence that it was the marketing communications that drove the results. If you did not meet one of your objectives, explain why. Judges value the honesty.
- **Too much backstory in the video.** Not including examples of key work on the video or not making it clear what the work is on the video versus “effects.” Judges consistently say that they want to see more examples of the work. Because judges read the case before watching the reel, spending too much time re-stating the written case cuts out valuable time that could have been spent showing creative elements. Do not include any **results or competitive work** in the video.
- **Missing media strategy.** Omitting a clear description of communications and media strategies.
- **Entering with no collaboration with partners.** Not reaching out to all partners, collaborating with and crediting them – thereby leaving missing data points or work in the case.
- **No context for data.** Not providing context for data vs. prior year, vs. competitors, vs. past year’s media spend, the difficulty of the challenge, etc.
- **Poor proofreading.** Math mistakes, spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes or typos.
- **Lack of a future focus/continuing story.** **Talk about learning** as a result and your future focus. What will you change going forward? What didn’t you achieve but are making a change to do going forward? Did you adapt your strategy as you went to market in response to new things learned? **Judges respect cases that are honest** and talk about the real marketing situation.
- **Unfamiliar terms.** No explanation of unfamiliar terms/jargon.
- **No explanation of the significance of the Objectives and Results.** Not providing context for and defending objectives and results – why were they significant and important? Simply stating results without this context leads to low marks from judges.
- **Lack of brevity.** A shorter video and brief are better than padded versions of either.
- **Not addressing the Insight.** Not explaining the insight and what led to it.
- **Leaving the judges with unanswered questions.** When judges notice unanswered questions, they usually assume a negative reason for why the information is missing. Thoroughly review the detailed instructions/questions on the entry form to make sure you are addressing all points.

final tips

reminders

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Don't Forget

- Review the **definition of the category** you are entering to ensure your case is truly eligible. If you are unsure, look at past winners in the category or reach out to Effie with your question. Some categories require specific information to be included in your entry and judges will deduct points if this information is not included.
- Do not assume judges are experts in your marketplace. Judges are specifically matched with categories where they will not have a conflict of interest. Hence, they may not know what equals strong success in your particular market.
- **Brevity** is essential. Judges are reviewing 10-15 cases in a judging session, so the easier it is for them to understand your case, the better. Judges often say they wish the entry form page limit was lower.
- Answer all questions. Carefully read the **detailed instructions** below each question.
- Review in detail the Reasons for Disqualification and Formatting Requirements.
- Make sure **all data** throughout the entry includes a **specific, verifiable source**.
- Do not cite **any** agency names anywhere in the entry form or creative materials – **Effie is an agency-blind competition**.
- Ensure the information entered in the online entry area matches your entry form.
- Do not include results (including any sort of social media metrics), in your creative reel.

"Make the context clear enough for someone who doesn't sit at your office every day and may be reading their 10th case. Have more than one writer look at it; preferably someone from outside your group."

Before Submitting Your Entry...

- Ask a strong writer or editor to review your case for spelling, grammar, logic flow errors, mathematical miscalculations, etc.
- Have senior team members on both the client and agency side review the case to ensure the case is well-rounded with context and personality.
- Hold a **mock judging** session with other individuals/teams at your company. Find out how they would score your case and request feedback on length and jargon. Ask them what questions they have after reading the case, what the weakest areas are, what holes they can poke in the argument, and what parts of the case were confusing. A copy of last year's judging instructions will be available on effie.org.

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Entering the Effies North America & Shopper Marketing

For any questions regarding the entry process, materials, categories, rules, etc., contact:

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Judging North America & Shopper Marketing

To apply to be an Effie Judge, please complete the **Judge Application Form**.

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Entering & Judging Global Effie Competition

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