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All the many glittering prizes – James Cryer

Tuesday, 27 September 2011

By Print21

Alison Stieven-Taylor, in her comments about the recently held Printovations Awards, has correctly identified an issue, which tantalises and beguiles us at least once every year. Are there too many print awards?

Well, it depends how you count them, but a quick roll-call of all the States' PICA's awards reveals an average of 40 different award categories per state, with Tassie winning the Grand Slam with 58! The Printovations awards consisted of only half-a-dozen awards but even so, Alison reported a "clinking of glasses" and impatient "chatter." We're a hard mob to please! But her question is a valid one.

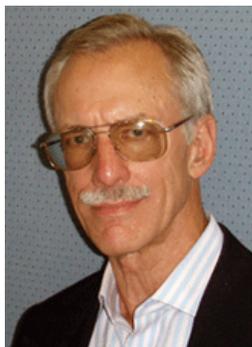
May I be permitted to re-phrase the question, to, "are there too many quality-based awards?" In that case the answer is unequivocally, yes! Putting aside our nationalistic fervour, let us turn to the British print industry and their peak-body, the BPIF to see how they wrestle with the same problems, i.e., the optimal number of awards and how to reward other aspects than just quality. It can be argued that an awards programme is like a mineshaft that drills down through the surface layers of an industry revealing its core values.

The Brits have in fact done a worthy job in identifying those areas of endeavour they regard as vital to future success and which should be rewarded.

Part of this process has involved weaning themselves off the bloated carcass of 'quality', the rich nutrients of which have sustained our industry for decades, if not centuries. It's a hard habit to toss, particularly when, as tradespeople from birth, we are taught that quality is next to godliness, and anything else is heresy. Counter-intuitively, the British printing industry appears to defy logic by not officially acknowledging 'quality' per se, in their awards, favouring instead other measures of corporate good business practice.

Their awards philosophy is to become a celebration of business excellence, where, in tough economic times a printing company should be encouraged to focus on the quality of all its business practices. Their awards reflect that, including marketing, health and safety, training, technical innovation and environmental responsibility. Furthermore, they have recognised that different dynamics exist within large and small companies, and have split many of the categories according to the number of employees.

We could do worse than investigate the British response to the problem, where they've recognised four categories – 'Good Employer', 'Good Business Manager', 'Good Manufacturer' and 'Overall Winner(s)'. Exclusive reliance on 'quality' is like feeding a sumo wrestler a diet of Smarties. It's seductive but not sustaining. Quality has become a chimera, a distraction, a seductive feel-good remedy that imparts a temporary feeling of well being. But the rest of the world has moved on. An adaptable, responsive industry needs to ingest the multi-vitamins contained in a broad-spectrum diet as demonstrated by the British Excellence Awards – a diet that addresses a whole range of muscle-building programs including innovation, health and safety, the environment and staff morale. These are the drivers of long-term viability and the dimensions by which a successful company should be measured.



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So, to get back to Alison's question: "Are there too many awards?" It depends. With over 200 awards given out nationally through the PICA's program, predominately rewarding quality, compared with the Brit's 13-odd awards – none of them based on quality – the answer is YES. If, however, innovation is regarded as one of the proteins that any vibrant industry needs flowing through its veins – to have only six categories, the answer is NO. Hope that helps.

James Cryer,
JDA Print Recruitment

The industry can't afford to lose talent such as Joan Grace
[.http://t.co/DuGDpXtwbC](http://t.co/DuGDpXtwbC)

Colin Longbottom heads towards the exit Good man Colin, hope your saddlebags are well loaded for the sunset ride.<http://t.co/d5oamorf2X>

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