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Young Achievers Award – James Cryer’s clarion call to the future

Saturday, 01 December 2012

By Print21

A proposed new awards system to recognise the winning qualities in young professionals across our industry will not even mention the term – apprenticeship.

Imagine a gala event held at one of our capital city’s lavish hotels with TV cameras and the press jostling as glamorous young things strut the stage to the acclaim of an audience of thousands. Next day the media exposure is overwhelming with press and TV coverage.

Hollywood? The final episode of Celebrity Detox? Australia’s Next Top Model? No – this is the grand final of the Printing Industries National Young Achiever of the Year Award! Fanciful? Maybe. Impossible? Possibly, but all it needs is vision, something the visual arts industries has in spades!

Parents would be lining up outside printing companies demanding their offspring be given a job!

Back to reality. Full marks to Bill Healey for appointing Joan Grace to head-up the new printing industry training initiative. Out of the RMIT train wreck may arise a better programme more suited to the needs of our industry.

The printing industry is a collection of fiercely independent tribes with multiple training-streams and therein lies our strength and weakness when it comes to inducting new entrants. I’m not suggesting all these tribes should get crunched-up into one over-arching, supra-organisation – it’ll never happen! I am suggesting that there is an opportunity, bigger than the differences and it is the need to attract and retain new entrants. (Note my avoidance of the word, apprentices.)

Joan’s arrival, and her focus on building exciting new training pathways, creates the perfect opportunity for us, as a multi-sector industry, to come together and work towards creating an industry-wide programme to recognise, reward and retain the best and the brightest. This would extend across all sectors; signage, labels, packaging, mailing, etc – not just offset. It would recognise all functional roles such as customer-service, production admin and sales, not just apprentices.

It would be a fully integrated system of states’ awards leading to a national awards structure not dissimilar to the current National Print Awards. By bringing all the associations together to cooperate, it would also raise the profile of print, which would in turn, help attract new entrants!

Where to start? The good news is we’ve already begun!

I refer to the existing event known as the *NSW LIA/Heidelberg Graduates Awards*, which has been a great showcase of the best and brightest apprentices mainly from the offset sector. It contains the organisational expertise to enable an expansion. It could easily be re-defined to include all the other segments that go to comprise the greater printing church; labels, flexible, packaging, mailing, signage – reminding us that we are a collection of diverse tribes.

Heidelberg has been a stalwart sponsor from the start. Nevertheless, with the need to broaden the award’s ambit and to present it as a true mirror of the industry, it would be more appropriate to re-brand it as the *Printing Industries* awards scheme. Individual suppliers could still sponsor a particular award category.

The changing mix in training pathways. We have a unique opportunity to re-think the calibre and type of

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Joan Grace quits Printing Industries & Future Print –

individuals we wish to attract and reward. Sadly, the need for factory-floor based apprentices is dwindling as other more exciting roles emerge. This is the story of our industry right now, not doom and gloom but readjustment. The contemporary industry is based on more capital, less labour, keeping the dream alive but with fewer bodies.

Apprenticeships have zero resonance within the design or digital printing fields. The obvious response is to widen the definition of who can enter a new-look awards scheme and include all vocations within the broad visual-communications industry. Young Achievers can be any outstanding employee, according to certain agreed-upon standards of excellence.

Taking ownership. This new, broad-based awards program should fall under the aegis of the Printing Industries (plural) Association of Australia, the body that purports, by its very name, to represent all the colourful tribes. Actual implementation would be via a body set up comprising all the participating sectors.

Printing Industries' Young Achievers Awards has a natural flavour to it and it's agnostic; it doesn't align itself with any sector, process, technology or commercial interest. This is vital; it must be free of commercial bias, like the ABC.

A multi-sector approach like this also meshes perfectly with *Printing Industries'* recent success in gaining federal funding to promote the attraction and retention of trainees. What better way to justify such a grant than to invest in a high-profile event, which showcases the best of the best across all sectors of our industry, not just the dwindling offset base?

To quote from Worldskills Australia's own website, the Young Achiever Awards would be:

... committed to the development ... of vocational education ... and to build a skills culture by inspiring young people, celebrating skills excellence and providing them with an opportunity to showcase their talent.

There is nothing there about apprentices but everything about achievement. That's the printing industry of tomorrow!

James Cryer
JDA Print Recruitment

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

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

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2 Responses to "Young Achievers Award – James Cryer's clarion call to the future"

1. December 04, 2012 at 8:21 pm, [Andy McCourt](#) said:

Spot on Jim. I'd like to put my name down but perhaps you can assist me with a more precise definition of 'Young' ?

2. December 05, 2012 at 9:33 am, [Mark](#) said:

James, the LIA/Heidelberg Graduate of the Year Award is presented in each state/Territory each year and every 2 years a National winner is announced. The winner of this awards is presented by GAMAA a \$15,000 grant to further their career. Along with this prize there is also a future leaders award, this allows the reciprocates to travel to a major trade show, usually DRUPA or IPEX. These awards have been in progress for many years now and has produced some excellent results with many winners moving into management roles. The LIA is very proud to be involved with this program, they recieve great support from Heidelberg, GAMAA and the Collie Print Trust whom collectively keep the program alive for the well being of our industry.

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