

Q&A with Michael O'Rourke, president, International Awards Group/NYF

NEW YORK, US: In this interview with Michael O'Rourke president of International Awards Group/New York Festivals, he talks about the awards, jury composition, what makes winning campaigns, and much more.



1. It's been four years since you took the helm as President of International Awards Group /New York Festivals, what are the accomplishments that you are most proud of and why?

Developing a team of talented, dedicated and knowledgeable staff members who all have a tremendous amount of respect for the industry in which we serve. Any agency is only as good as the team it assembles and NYF believes in this same ideal. Over the last four years, we have made significant strides on many fronts, from the structure of our competition, the process and pool of jury members that have joined us, our efforts to promote our winners and the education of the future of the advertising industry. Collectively, we have continued to adapt alongside an ever changing landscape and because of this, the winners from the New York Festivals provide a true representation of the world's most creative forms of communication.

2. This is the 56th year that New York Festivals International Advertising Awards honouring The World's Best Advertising has opened for entries, to what do you attribute the competition's longevity, and what makes NYFA unique from other awards shows? How has the competition evolved over the years?

The fact that NYF has been around for almost 56 years speaks volumes about the organisation and our dedication to awarding great work. We pride ourselves on many things, one of which is evolving and adapting. As a service provider to the industry at large, we focus on continuously learning and acting on the valuable feedback that our entrants and jury members provide. As a result of this, we were able to create an entirely unique entry process and judging procedure unique from any other show. With the creation of the Executive Jury featuring over 30 chief creative officers from around the globe, we felt it was important that we allow them to evaluate all entries across all mediums. This culminates in a true

representation of the work being awarded within our industry, across all platforms.

3. Consumers are expecting branded entertainment such as video and other free online content from brands, can you elaborate on NYF's new category "Branded Entertainment " and why this competition was added to NYF's roster?

What began with product placement has since evolved into various forms of what the industry calls branded entertainment. The idea of branded entertainment has taken on new life for brands with the advent of original online content such as YouTube, where brand communication meets entertainment. In addition to this, there are projects that are often the result of a [content partnership](#) between brands, broadcasters, and cross platform media integration deals. In evaluating what our competition previously offered, we realised that the demand is there for such a competition within the NYF Advertising Awards and have created a more accurate platform for this type of work to be received.

4. Big ideas across several platforms seem like the norm for a brand's campaign, agencies are creating what the consumer wants to achieve the goals of the brand. Has the creative mix changed dramatically over the past few years, what approach are you seeing in entries that you achieve top awards? What percentage of the creative mix is marketing based, digital platform based, or based systematic applications? I know it varies from brand to brand, however can you give a few examples?

While the amount of channels to target the consumer has increased, it has also fractured the consumer in terms of your opportunity to reach them. Consumer habits have change significantly. But, any successful campaign today has achieved what any successful campaign 20 years ago did. And it has done so through the key fundamental of any piece of communication, the idea. Simply utilising multiple channels doesn't mean it's going to work. The key difference today is measurability, allowing agencies to adapt a campaign based on consumer feedback and response. But at the end of the day, the idea reigns supreme and without it, you haven't reached that message's potential no matter how many channels you use.

5. 2013 marks the third year for NYF's Executive Jury, how do you continually secure global CCOs, that are some of the industry's the top thought leaders, to spend four days sequestered judging NYFA's entries?

The jury members we invite realise they have a responsibility to serve not only their agencies but the industry at large. They take pride in what they do and do a tremendous job with respect to awarding great work and ultimately raising the bar in terms of what's considered great advertising. For us, we're given the great honour of assembling such a talented and respected group of industry thought leaders from countries all over the world. To anyone outside the industry, sitting in a room for four full days of intense evaluation and deliberation sounds painful. To the NYF Executive Jury, it's the complete opposite. You find yourself having to kick them out of the room at the end of the day. Their passion and dedication is what allows us to award the world's best advertising.

6. How does New York Festivals International Advertising Awards engage future generations of advertising creatives and why is it important to invest in the next generation of advertising stars?

Showcasing the award winning work is the ultimate goal. Providing young creatives with an opportunity to engage with the NYF winners is a crucial part of what we do in terms of educating the future of the advertising industry. In 2010, New York Festivals began the NYF Media Centre program at various universities around the world. These centres showcase the World's Best Advertising across all 14 competitions, providing university students studying marketing and advertising the unique opportunity to experience the award winning work from the New York Festivals International Advertising Awards. Featuring screening rooms, print galleries, interactive work stations and a library of Advertising Annuals, the NYF Media Centres provide the future of advertising with a source of education, entertainment and inspiration.

Content is provided annually, allowing the university students to witness the evolution of award winning ideas each year. To be able to provide the future of advertising with unprecedented access to the most creative form of communications is something we've dedicated a tremendous amount of time too.

7. Who initiated The World's Best Idea Award and what qualities does a campaign need to earn that title?

Every award show presents an award by medium which is considered to be the best of the best within that context. We are no different. We present Grand awards to the best presentation of a campaign across any given medium.

But the reality is, each year there is a campaign that truly differentiates itself from anything else that's been done. It's a message; it's a campaign that captivates the attention of both the jury and the average consumer unequivocally. The World's Best Idea represents a campaign that people won't forget for a long, long time, it's a message that people pay attention to and engages people in a way that keeps their attention and changes their way of thinking. And in the world of advertising, changing consumer behaviour and their way of life is something that never really played into the original brief. It used to be about selling product, but now consumers are knowledgeable and well informed, educated and provided power, so what can you do to effectively change human behaviour.

The World's Best Idea represents those efforts.

8. Recently NYF announced a partnership with the Berlin School of Creative Leadership, to offer an exclusive scholarship for New York Festivals Executive and Grand Jury Members, the Helga and Michael Conrad Scholarship for New York Festivals Jury Members. Can you elaborate on this exciting opportunity for NYF's juries to receive a scholarship to attend the Berlin School's part-time global Executive MBA Creative Leadership Program?

Today, effective leadership is critical to great work in all creative industries. The Berlin School's mission is to turn great creatives into great creative leaders. And having a creative CEO in every creative business is the Berlin School's vision. After all, being a creative person doesn't default to one being a creative leader. Huge difference. The industry of creative communications evolves at such a rapid pace, requiring the need to continue to learn and adapt. Berlin School's Helga and Michael Conrad Scholarship for New York Festivals Jury Members speaks volumes in terms of its dedication to improving the industry standard and establishing stronger creative leadership as a result. We are and continue to be honoured to be part of this initiative, and share this excellent opportunity with our Executive and Grand Jury members.

Our jury members play such an integral part in terms of what we stand for, and together with the Berlin School, this is just another opportunity to show our appreciation for those who dedicate their time to improving the industry at large.

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