

BrandLine

Cannes PR be far behind?

Public relations made its debut at the annual ad fest, giving away 15 PR Lions for the first time.

PREMA SAGAR



Eight thousand people usually trek to Cannes every year to attend the Cannes International Advertising Festival. Although this 56th year saw fewer delegates for obvious reasons, the buzz remained high as the Lions continued to lure the creative genius.

The festival is still called the 'Advertising Festival', yet the awards recognise the changing dynamics in the industry, introducing the Design Lions last year and the PR Lions this time.

The judging process is a well-established template, the award ceremonies slick and the French Riviera gorgeous.

Delegates from varying disciplines come from across the world to listen to the experts and to learn about the latest things impacting the communications business, all in a gorgeous setting amid much bonhomie.

The buzz is all pervasive with more young and fewer middle-aged people, more creative and fewer client servicing, more ad persons and hardly any PR folk.

The world has changed and is changing further at an incredible pace. The judges, observers and delegates – all said the same thing: The idea can come from anywhere. Excellence in execution is the key to success.

At the all-new PR Lions, Australia's 'The Best Job in the World' won the Grand Prix. It also won the PR Lion for the travel, tourism and leisure sectors as well as the PR Lion for the Best use of the Internet, digital media and social media. And if that was not enough, it also bagged the Direct Grand Prix as well as the Cyber Lions Grand Prix in the Website and Interactive Campaigns category.

Of the 400 plus entries received, a shortlist of 30 was drawn up and the PR Lions were awarded to a total of 15 campaigns (not counting the three won by the Best Job in the World) across the various categories.

These included Australia's 'Earth Hour'; Japan's 'Yubari Resort' and 'Love Distance';

Lebanon's 'Khedde Kasra'; Portugal's 'World's First Ephemeral Museum' and 'Selling Hope'; Switzerland's 'Zurich's Being Sold'; Costa Rica's 'Bring Back Peace'; Brazil's 'One Thousand Casmurros'; UK's 'Beautiful Game' and 'Pig's are Worth It'; and USA's 'Honey, Let's Lick the Problem,' 'Guinness Rally,' 'The Great Schlep' and 'Protecting Futures'.

Lord Tim Bell from the UK was the President of the jury, which was drawn from 15 countries. Although none of the 10 entries from India could bag a PR Lion this year, I have no doubts that this will change in the coming years as the Lions not only recognise the importance of public relations in the communication mix, they also fulfil the aspirational need for a well recognised international award platform.

If you plan to submit an entry next year, please check the site for categories and how to enter.

Beyond the awards, the festival was one of learning with sessions featuring experts such as Steve Balmer of Microsoft, Eric Schmidt of Google, Biz Stone of Twitter, David Plouffe of Campaign Manager, Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, Fernando Vega Olmos, Creative Chairman at JWT who gave a delightful talk on 'Mother Crisis', and many, many more.

The one common element that emerged at the festival was that creativity does not spell complexity. A fact borne out by the winning campaigns that were all about a simple idea executed well to make a real difference. The other key learning: there is no hiding from the digital tidal wave any more.

If you would like to read more on the inside stuff from this Mecca of the creative world, and the exciting digital learnings, do check out Ashwani Singla's Postcards from Cannes on his blog at www.reputare.in.

I landed in Cannes as a member of a jury eager to lend my experience to selecting the best among the best for the inaugural PR Lions. I head back humbled by my learnings from the vast pool of creativity, enriched by the knowledge and thirsting for more.

(The writer is Principal & Founder, Genesis Burson-Marsteller, a PR consultancy.)