

Talking Points

eCommunique editor Ralph Chaump talks to Susan O'Neill, Vice President and Director, Awards and Recognition



Q. What are the benefits of participating in the annual IFCA awards competition?

A. There are several benefits to participating in our annual awards competition. The first is that all entries are judged by our members' peers, not only in the communications field, but also in the same industry as the entrant. (See more below on this.)

Second, in most cases, our entrants don't just receive a score from the judges, but valuable feedback and critique. I know with my own submissions, that the critique has been instrumental in making positive revisions to some of our marketing pieces.

Third, and perhaps the most relevant in today's economy, the cost to enter our competition is really low compared to others. The value of winning an award, however, is immeasurable. I have heard many people speak about how much their award (or awards) have helped them do more within their company.

Q. Can you discuss more about the benefits of the awards competition's peer review?

A. As mentioned above, our judges are mainly in the same field and industry as the entrants to the competition. Being judged by peers is significant because one's peers are more familiar with what it takes to get it done within your industry. For example, the regulations you may have had to stay within but still accomplish an objective while being creative. While a judge outside of our industry may see the communication materials as "ordinary," knowing the hoops through which we are forced to jump, our judges may see the piece as "extraordinary."

Q. Can you talk about the AIM Award and what it recognizes?

A. For awhile now, IFCA members have wanted a more wide-ranging award category. Thus, a few years ago, then Director of Awards and Recognition Josée Rheault led the development of the All-Inclusive Marketing (AIM) Award. Josée handed the development over to me when I took over as Director, and we launched the award in 2011. It was a great success and we're now in the middle of our second year of accepting submissions.

The AIM Award competition is intended to run parallel to our standard awards competition. The submission is more robust to encompass the multiple marketing pieces of a multi-faceted campaign. The submissions are judged on the three main criteria of marketing communications, distribution/ implementation, and measurable results.

While the cost is higher to enter the AIM Award competition, there is a grand prize offer that is more than worth it. The 2012 prize, for example, is \$20,000 toward services from Summit Business Media, and the winner will be featured in the April 2012 issue of *National Underwriter* magazine.