



TURNING YOUR
DBA DESIGN EFFECTIVENESS AWARD
INTO MEDIA COVERAGE

BY ALEX BLYTH, JOINT MD, RED SETTER



DBA Design Effectiveness Award.



Winning a DBA Design Effectiveness Award can transform an agency. Internally it can inspire the team and attract new talent. Externally it can strengthen client relationships and encourage new clients to pick up the phone to you – or at least answer the phone when you call. Simply winning one of these prestigious awards begins that process, but turning that win into media coverage vastly accelerates the process, generating the sort of buzz that can truly transform an agency.

*All photos at DBA
Design
Effectiveness
Award.*

But how to create that media coverage?

Anyone who has tried it will know that it is not as simple as sending a news release to the media and waiting for them to publish it. Editorial space in the leading publications is at a premium, and editors in these titles receive as many as 1000 news releases each week. Furthermore, many of these publications also run their own award programmes, so are reluctant to give any of their precious column inches to rival awards.

For agencies this can be frustrating. They have spent many hours completing their entry form. They spent many months producing award-winning, commercially-effective work. And this work has emerged from a team of highly skilled, qualified and experienced professionals. It is worthy of attention beyond the award ceremony itself.

Gaining this is possible. It is not easy, but it can be done. We have helped previous winners such as Lewis Moberly with its 2015 Gold for the Johnnie Walker Collection achieve a steady stream of high profile coverage in the days, weeks, and months after the event itself. Here are seven steps you can follow to turn your award into media coverage, and even into new business.



STEP 01 | Look beyond a news release

The first step is to recognise that your news release will not generate coverage in publications your potential clients are likely to read. You may get some news coverage from the event:

the DBA will issue a release covering all the winners to a fairly lengthy list of publications (this list is available on request), and most of our own industry media will run a news story on the event, mentioning several, if not all, of the winners.

This is not to say that you should not write a news release. Getting the facts of the win and the project down on page is a useful place to start your PR campaign, and it can be a helpful vehicle for gaining all necessary client approvals. You might want to email your news to your existing clients, as well as to dormant ones, companies you have a relationship with, and other friends of your agency.

"You might want to email your news to your existing clients, as well as to dormant ones..."

You can post it on your website and push it out to your network through social media. On Twitter you can hashtag to take it to a wider audience, and on

LinkedIn make use of groups and possibly even sponsored posts if budget allows. But if you want to take it to a wider audience of people you don't

know and who, crucially, don't already know your agency, you need to get smarter than a news release.

STEP 02 | It's not about you, or your win

A far more effective tactic for generating media coverage from your award win is to craft some thought leadership around it. This should look more closely at the project and highlight what your agency did that merited the award. The fact of the award remains critically important, simply because it helps your pitch to an editor stand out from the many others they will receive that day. It is though the work, and the thinking behind it that matters most.

This sort of thought leadership is difficult to create, but do it well and it will have a powerful impact. It will be relevant not only to editors, but also to potential clients. The fact of your award win might draw them to read your article, but it is the quality of the thinking and ideas that led to the win that might persuade them to pick up the phone to you. It is this type of article that sees our clients regularly appear in leading trade titles and national newspapers and which has led to many major new client wins for them.

So how to produce effective thought leadership? Begin with the reader, and keep them in mind throughout. Who do you want to speak to with this article? So if you have won for your work on the

Johnnie Walker Collection you might want to speak to Brand Directors at major spirit brands. If you've won with BT's Home Hub 5 you might want to reach CEOs of FTSE100 companies. Or if you've won with Heck you might be targeting entrepreneurs looking to gain supermarket listings.

Whoever it is you want to speak to, fix them clearly in your mind, and start thinking deeply about them. What issues concern them? What opportunities do they want to exploit? What problems do they have to solve? What is it that keeps them up at night? Armed with this insight into your reader, take another look at your award-winning work: what could they learn from your work here? Is it how careful



All photos at DBA Design Effectiveness Award.

evolution of structure can enhance gift sales in a crowded travel retail market? Or how the largest companies can use design to reduce environmental impact, cut costs and grow sales? Or how to become a £3.5m brand in 12 months with no PR or marketing support?

Whatever it is, find something in your work that will make potential clients sit up and want to read your article. Find that, and chances are the editors will want to publish it.

STEP 03 | Get pitching



Armed with your striking idea, you now need to approach those editors to find one or more who are willing to run it. Draw up a list of target titles. These should be the ones that are read by your target audience, and so typically will be verticals. For example, if your win is for a major spirit brand, you might want to approach Spirits Business. If it's for a multinational you might want to approach the FT. If it's for a challenger brand you might want to approach Real Business.

These vertical titles are the key ones, as they will be read by, and carry most weight with, your potential clients. However, don't ignore our own sector media. The likes of Design Week, The Drum, Brand Republic, Catalyst, Transform and so on all run high quality thought leadership from agencies, and coverage here can help to create industry buzz around your agency. You should be able to adapt your article to fit this audience.

Approach one publication in each sector at a time. Email the editor, outlining your idea, who it is aimed at, why they will be interested, what it will cover, and why you are

well qualified to write it. Make it clear that it has just won a DBA Design Effectiveness Award. These awards carry genuine weight and will make it far more likely the editor will accept your idea.

Pick up the phone to follow up. Editors receive so many e-mails that it is easy for even the most relevant to slip through the net, and very often a quick phone conversation can reveal common ground, and a placing for your article. If you do hit a brick wall move onto the next one, and keep going until you have found editors who have requested a certain number of words by a certain deadline.

STEP 04 | Release the inner writer

You now have a commission - you're a writer. How you write is at least as important as what you write. You have identified the angle that will show your work, your award, and your agency in the best possible light; now make sure your article conveys these points in a clear, compelling, and appealing way.

It is a skill that can take a whole career to master, and we employ the UK's best feature writers in each sector to write thought leadership articles for our clients, but below are the core fundamentals of editorial writing that anyone can follow.

Grab the readers' attention with a concise striking introduction. Tell them what this article will give them and build excitement. Introduce your work, pointing out early on that this is award-winning work, and showing how the thinking and craft behind

this work speaks to a broader issue.

Describe what happened, resisting the temptation to become mired in the details of the process. Focus on outcomes, as that is what potential clients care about, but make it clear what you did that was particularly innovative, interesting or successful.

Remember to edit your writing. Eliminate spelling mistakes, errors of punctuation or grammar, and factual inaccuracies. Avoid jargon and use clear, direct language.

Reduce unnecessary words. Finally, include high resolution, striking imagery, ideally of the work.



STEP 05 | Make it last all year

Creating truly outstanding thought leadership takes time and skill, but done well it is incredibly powerful, and durable. Not only will you see your work, ideas, and award win appear in print in a credible publication, but you can use this article as the basis for ongoing media coverage in the weeks and months ahead.

We use a range of techniques such as newsjacking to create a steady stream of high quality coverage which, crucially, reinforces again and again the core message about what your agency does well.

This is perhaps the most important aspect of gaining media coverage from your award win. The best PR is

not a one hit event: it is through this consistent, long-term repetition of a message that people truly start to believe the message, and reputations are formed.

STEP 06 | Cultivate these contacts



Alongside this, you can start engaging with your target media, finding out what they

are writing that you could comment on. There are always journalists who are on deadline and desperately hunting for interesting comments from credible spokespeople. Now you have your carefully crafted piece of thought leadership about your award-winning work you fit that bill; you just need to find the right journalists at the right time.

These conversations with journalists will also present other opportunities. You may find ways to get media coverage on even the projects where you don't win awards. You might be able to use your growing media profile as a springboard for speaker opportunities. Then when you win your next DBA Design Effectiveness Award in 2017 you will be even better placed to maximise the media exposure you achieve. You might even find they use your news release.

STEP 07 | Turn coverage into opportunities

Do all this PR work and you will generate inbound enquiries. However, there is still more you can do. We find that by helping our clients use all this media coverage as part of an outbound new business campaign, we are able to significantly accelerate the quantity and quality of new business that those agencies win.

So, make sure you email potential clients with the most high profile coverage you achieve. These budget-holders receive email after email from agencies talking about themselves, and they look at very few of them. They are far more likely to look at emails containing an article from a respected industry publication, and they may even agree to meet the agency described in that article.

There is much more that can be done to turn your award win and your media coverage into valuable new business tools, but do everything that we have described so far and you will have done far more than most of your competitors. You will probably also be very busy dealing with all the new business.

