

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards 2019

Opening Speech delivered 12/06/19 at Royal Horticultural Halls, London, by Deborah Dawton, Chief Executive, Design Business Association.

Welcome to the 2019 DBA Design Effectiveness Awards

We're celebrating 30 years of the Design Effectiveness Awards this evening, and when a big birthday looms, quite often we'll stand back and take stock of where we've got to and what we've achieved. It's also prudent to make sure that your setting the right course for the future, and not simply going where the wind takes you.

So, we carried out a review last year, aimed at making sure that the DBA Design Effectiveness Awards were fit for purpose for the next 30 years, and thank you to those of you who took part in those discussions and interviews. A number of changes were implemented this year and there will be more to follow, but so far, we're delighted with the impact of those changes, and confident that these awards will remain the benchmark for design effectiveness globally, for years to come.

I thought you should know that every penny that you invest in entering and in being here tonight, only covers the costs we incur against the awards - this is **not** a money-making exercise for the DBA. This **is** an evidence-unearthing exercise for the DBA. This **is** a case-study making exercise for the DBA. This **is** a story-telling exercise for the DBA.

As your champion, we're always looking for the best way of shouting about what your capable of achieving, into every sector of industry and society. So that was one of our aims this year – to grow the breadth of what was entered and then to tell the stories of what you do more powerfully. I'll let you be the judges of the quality of our story-telling - **I'm** excited about what you're about to experience.

We've hit both those targets and set the foundations in place to grow the breadth of entries yet further. Why is this important? Just one of the reasons is that the Creative Industries are the calling card for Britain abroad. Yesterday, the Creative Industries Trade and Investment Board, on which I sit as your representative, launched a three-year strategy to grow the exports of the creative industries by 50% by 2023. For design, this starts with a major export mission to Hong Kong in December this year, so speak to the DBA team to register your interest in that.

If we want to continue to export our skills and to attract the inward investment of businesses wanting to buy design, then we need to be able to showcase to the World, the breadth and depth of what we're capable of creating, and the change that follows – how we change the fortunes of big and tiny businesses, how we change the behaviours of their customers, how we change the strategic direction of service providers to better meet customer needs, how we change the attitudes of society towards an issue, how we change the understanding of different people groups to complex legislative change, how we change the way we think about manufacturing to bring new products to market....you'll see all of this evidenced this evening. It's not just about design; it's about the difference design makes.

In 2022, the Government has committed to a nationwide festival showcasing the UK's unique strengths in creativity and innovation, and I see this as a major opportunity to significantly ramp up an appreciation for the creative industries in the UK, and engagement into British businesses. But I can see this going further; if ever there was the need for a tonic for the nation, the idea behind the Festival of Britain in 1951, it'll be then – let's give our country something to be proud of – I need your support in the work towards that, and let's see if we can't win hearts and minds globally.

The breadth of what I need to work with, to champion you effectively, needs to cover every industry sector, every discipline of design, every aspect of collaboration, every area of enterprise and every continent in the world. I know you're sitting on this evidence, and that businesses and design firms you know are sitting on this evidence too. So, my call to action this evening is that you submit these entries to the awards in October, so that we can launch ourselves onto a world stage in 2020 with maximum impact.

And because we want to see more of our sector perform at this level, because we want to grow the ever-increasing impact that design can exercise, and because every business deserves this level of return, as a result of our review, we're now offering **feedback** to everyone who enters the awards, and consultations to everyone who's thinking of entering, and that's just the start of some of the programme changes we're making at the DBA.

This **feedback** is made possible for the simple reason that year on year, we're able to pull together an impressive cohort of international judges, business leaders in their own rights, who painstakingly read through every word that is written in the entries. Entered jointly by client and design team, and judged on their own individual merits, design knows no boundaries in our awards, so no categories, no groupings. No comparison is drawn one entry against the other. The ensuing debate is rigorous, sometimes lengthy but always skilfully brought to a conclusion, this year by our new awards chairman, Clive Grinyer. So, can I please ask you to show your appreciation for Clive and our judges who are themselves so invested in this award scheme, that we benefit from their expertise and generosity every year.

Our judges aren't the only people invested in making the case for design. I'd like to thank MTA Digital who make that point every day in the beautiful print fulfilment they provide. And I'd like to thank our friends at Red Setter, our official PR Partner, whom I'm guessing have had a frantic few weeks so far, and which will continue into next week, given how many of their clients are here this evening, winning awards, and for whom promotion of that win is so important. Why is it important? Because as a previous winner once called to tell me, having announced their win the previous night, they'd just had a call from another FTSE 100 company to "do the same to us" from a branding perspective. I've also seen the case made for a larger share of budget by those who champion design within their organisations. Most FDs understand that £5 back for every £1 invested is a good return – these awards speak the language of business. So, make sure you maximise your success this evening and leverage every possible return to you and your business. Thank you MTA Digital and Red Setter.

Our review also confirmed that the DBA **is** the world authority on design effectiveness. This means that the design sector we represent should also be the world authority on design effectiveness. And I can think of no more powerful a message to business, to government, to the world than that. It's the partnership between design and business that leads to an improved quality in people's lives through the work that we come together on to deliver on.

And if I can do anything to keep you in the front line of change, I will, whether that's about sustainable change, societal change and international change. I have to admit that political change has got the better of me, probably most of us at the moment, so I've deployed a

keep calm and bulldozer on approach that seems to be working! Driving up of standards and the impact of our sector remains core to the DBA so tell us what you need to compete in the front line.

So, 1. Broadening the evidence base that we can use to make the case for design effectiveness. 2. Growing the capabilities of designers to deliver at this level. 3. Continuing to take advantage of world-class judges.

And 4th. Perhaps the biggest change in the 30 years of the awards has been the trajectory of design from an afterthought in the business process, the icing-on-the-cake, to its position as the starting blocks for business and enterprise. Picture if you will the elite runner getting themselves in ready for the best possible start out of their starting blocks at the gun. The race is won and lost in the first three seconds.

Our job is to make sure that design delivers the best, the most appropriate, the most impactful start to any business, to any project, to any charity campaign, to any social movement, to any government initiative.... so firmly embedding design from **start to finish** is critical. No one wants to find themselves half way down the running track still in their tracky bottoms when others, more appropriately dressed, have just finished the race!

Differentiation, speed to market, innovative disruption, environmental impact, staff well-being, are just some of change drivers in business today, and designers need to be at the heart of that change. I've said this before: namely that these awards demonstrate what's possible when the best business brains and the best design brains come together to bring about the right conditions for transformation to occur, because it takes creative genius on one hand, and business genius on the other, to drive change into the market in a way that delights customers, the ultimate judges of our products and services.

So, remember, I'm as invested in proving the impact of design as you are. My job's easy when I can rely on world-class design performances like the ones seen in every project we're here to celebrate tonight. My congratulations to you all in your success. Enjoy your evening, your moment in the spotlight, and be reassured that we are doing everything in our power to amplify your win nationally and internationally. And remember it's not just about design; it's about the difference design makes. And I expect to see you all here again next year.

Thank you.