

Effective Entry Guide

effie

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Scoring

Judges are asked to evaluate specific criteria in scoring a case's overall effectiveness, and to provide separate scores analyzing specific attributes on the following:

CHALLENGE, CONTEXT & OBJECTIVES	23.3%
INSIGHTS & STRATEGY	23.3%
BRINGING THE STRATEGY & IDEA TO LIFE	23.3%
RESULTS	30%



The judges' scores determine which entries become finalists and which finalists are awarded a Gold, Silver or Bronze Effie. Each level - Gold, Silver, Bronze, finalist has a minimum score required to be eligible for advancement. A category may produce several winners of any level or perhaps no winners at all.

NOTE: The Grand Effie trophy is awarded by a special jury that reviews the highest scoring gold winners of the year



Judging Process

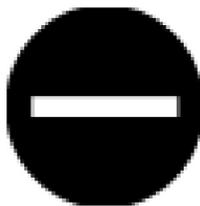


Because judges evaluate 6-10 cases, clear, concise, and cohesive entries stand out.

Be sure to tell a story, linking each section of the entry form to the next. As you write, think about how you can streamline your case into an easy read for the judges.



Judges will be looking at your case with a critical eye. Think through questions they may have and address them in your case.



Judges are matched with cases that do not prove to be conflicts of interest - judges cannot score cases from a brand they work on or a competitor of that brand. It is important to provide clear context for the brand's industry, as judges may not be aware of category nuances. Limit industry jargon & define any industry terms.

Two Phases of Judging

ROUND 1	ROUND 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each judge reviews 6-10 cases across all categories.• They review these cases without comparison to other entries within other categories. Most often, judges participate independently with limited options to participate in group discussion-based sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalists are reviewed against other finalists in the same category. Judges review 6-10 cases in a half day group judging session.• Judges discuss the merits of each finalist case.
BOTH ROUNDS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The written case is reviewed before the creative work.• Judges score each case individually.• Judges provide written feedback for each case. Entrants can access this feedback via the Insight Guide.	



Top Entry Tips

1 "Start with the executive summary before you try to write individual sections. Get your overall story really strong, crisp, clear, and inspiring."

2 "Be sure to provide context; most judges don't know your category or what success looks like."

3 "While all of the information is important, remember that this is read as one of many entries by judges. Go back and ensure that you are using the most impactful, focused information to help them make a decision."

4 "The entrants who build their cases from a place of honesty, authenticity, and simplicity vs. marketing jargon were really the strongest."

5 "Ensure that the 'insights' somehow tie to a human behavior. A data point is not an insight, it's what the data point means to your brand, target or audience that makes it an insight."

6 "Create a strong tie between the execution and the results."

7 "Make sure your creative reel doesn't just reiterate what you said in your entry. Use it to complement that information."

8 "Connect results to objectives very clearly. Don't try to fake it and write objectives to meet existing results. We can tell and will ding you for it."

9 "Advertising principles should apply to case studies too: write them in a way that engages judges, focus on how your campaign helped achieve your brand's objectives and don't over-complicate it. Less is more!"

10 "Check for grammar, typos, math, and inconsistencies."



Top Entry Tips

BEFORE SUBMITTING YOUR ENTRY

- 👉 Judges are scoring your case in the context of the Effie category definition. It should be clear to the judges why your work is award-worthy in your entry category.
- 👉 Review Process
 - 👉 Ask a strong writer or editor to proofread your case for spelling, grammar, logic flow errors, mathematical miscalculations, etc.
 - 👉 Share the case with someone who doesn't work on the brand, or even in the industry. Ask them what was unclear or where the case fell in interest.
 - 👉 Have senior team members on both the client and agency side review the case to ensure it is well-rounded in context and personality. Collaborate with partner agencies.
 - 👉 Look for past Effie judges within your company & ask them to review your entry.
- 👉 Think about what the judges may be skeptical of & address it.
- 👉 Review formatting requirements & reasons for disqualification.
- 👉 Ensure all data throughout the entry includes a specific, verifiable source.

JUDGE ADVICE: "Be extremely self-critical about the verbiage, story and length of your entry. The judges have limited time and are being asked to evaluate several different categories and cases. You must be succinct and draw the judge in, along with sharing the results you captured through the program."



Top Entry Tips

ENTERING MULTIPLE CATEGORIES

Review the definition of the category you are entering to ensure your case is eligible. Some categories require specific information to be included in your entry, and judges will deduct points if this information is not included. If you are unsure of your category, review past winning cases at [effie.org](https://www.effie.org) or reach out to the Effie team with your concerns.

Entrants can submit an effort into a maximum of 4 categories, with no more than 1 Industry category or 2 Commerce & Shopper categories.

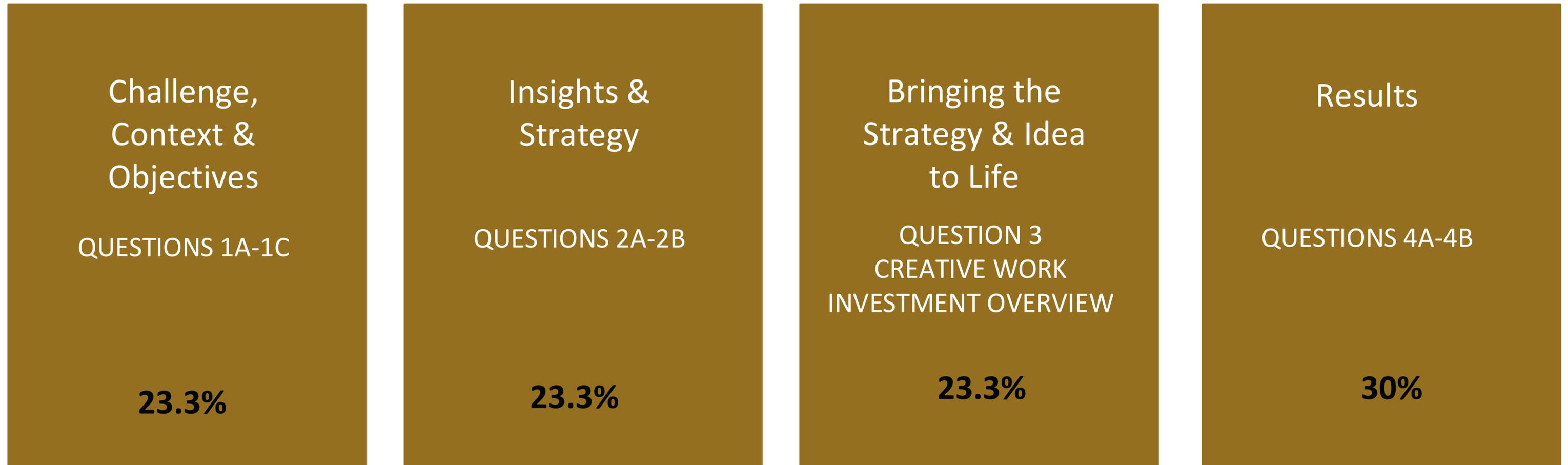
When entering multiple categories, ensure each submission speaks to the entered category. Judges evaluate effectiveness within the context of the category definition, so it is important that you clearly articulate your effectiveness in that category.

JUDGE ADVICE: "Craft your entry per category, instead of creating one case that fits all."



Entry Guidance

Effie entries, across all rounds of judging, are judged against the below framework for marketing effectiveness. Review the following pages for advice on each of Effie's four scoring sections.



Scoring Section 1: Challenge, Context, & Objectives

QUESTIONS 1A-1B

This scoring section is the glue that shapes the other elements of the case. Elements are assessed for both suitability and ambitiousness within the framework of the strategic challenge.

Keep in mind that judges are looking for:

- 👉 Context that clearly frames the situation and the category, especially what success looks like in that particular topic.
- 👉 The challenges of the marketing goal(s) in relation to the category, competitors, the brand's history, and/or marketplace issues or trends.
- 👉 Clear objectives & KPIs that relate to the business challenge and are not retrofitted to match the results of the case.
- 👉 Explanation of the significance of the objectives to the brand/business/cause.

Judges often say that if this section is weak, the entire entry weakens because the context is needed to understand how big the idea was and how profound the results were. Judges may not be familiar with your brand or category, so use this space to provide them with this background.



Scoring Section 1: Challenge, Context, & Objectives

QUESTIONS 1A-1B

JUDGE ADVICE

“The best cases clearly articulated the challenge for the brand, the category and competitive landscape, and what the overall goals were. They also had KPIs that aligned well to that challenge that were clearly not retro-fitted to the resulting outcome”

“Make sure the objectives are clearly defined. If awareness is the goal, what lift were you looking for and from where to where? Leaving the goal broad makes it hard to give credit for the difficulty of the challenge”

“Share the context completely so judges understand the situation fully. Ensure that the difficulty in achieving the goal is clear and mitigate the impact of activity outside of the campaign”

“Be SPECIFIC and measurable with your objectives. Help the judges understand the context of that goal/objective”

“Set measurable objectives to help evaluate if the results were actually good, great or just okay.”



Scoring Section 2: Insights & Strategy

QUESTIONS 2A-2C

Judges evaluate how inventive and effective the Idea & Strategy were in meeting the challenge.

Keep in mind that judges are looking for:

- 👉 Insights - not just facts or observations, but what came out from the data points/research. State your insights and explain how you came to them.
- 👉 An understanding of why these insights are unique to the brand and are positioned to address the brand's particular challenge and business situation.
- 👉 An explanation on how the insight links with the strategy, informed the strategic idea, brought to life the creative execution and ultimately, the results.
- 👉 A clear definition of your audience, including demographics, culture, behaviors, etc. Why is this audience important to the brand and the growth of the brand's business?
- 👉 The core idea or strategic build that drove the effort and led to a solution.



Scoring Section 2: Insights & Strategy

QUESTIONS 2A-2B

JUDGE ADVICE

"Insights need to feel new and different, with a sense of tension and actionability. The idea needs to take the insight and activate it in an interesting, compelling and useful way. And, most importantly, in a way that helps achieve your stated objectives."

"The idea needs to tie directly back to the insight and not be the tactical execution that was deployed. The idea needs to be crisp, but also tell the judge enough detail so that it is easy to understand how the team arrived at this idea and why it is meaningful to the brand and campaign."

"Find a real insight, not an audience observation or category convention. It should be a deep human truth that not only drives emotions and behavior but enables the strategic idea and creative execution to be effective and successful."

"Ensure the strategic idea maps back to the brand."

"Make sure that the strategy and the idea really connect to the overall concept."



Scoring Section 3: Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life

QUESTIONS 3A-3C + CREATIVE WORK + INVESTMENT OVERVIEW

In this section, entrants should articulate the creative and media strategies (not just tactics) and how the idea and strategy were brought to life. Ensure your response details the 'why' behind your choices.

Keep in mind that judges are looking for:

- 👉 An understanding of how you activated your strategy (e.g., CRM programs, pricing changes, promotions) & the main marketing vehicles for your creative executions (e.g., end line, call-to-actions, format choices).
- 👉 The direct connection between the creative/media strategies and the objectives and insights.
- 👉 The importance of each channel used for the case, and how each was used - why were your creative output(s) and channel choices right for your specific audience and idea? Why did you choose these over others?
- 👉 A clear depiction of how the campaign was executed in the public marketplace. Was there a 'path' consumers were meant to go on, and what was it?
- 👉 The evolution and optimization of your marketing and communications over time.

Investment Overview:

- 👉 Details on budget, owned/earned/paid media, sponsorships, and all touchpoints used.
- 👉 Use the Media Budget Elaboration field to provide additional context for judges.



Scoring Section 3: Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life

QUESTIONS 3A-3C + CREATIVE WORK + INVESTMENT OVERVIEW

The creative reel is your place to show examples of your work - not repeat the written case.

Judges are required to review the written case before watching the creative reel - use the creative reel to showcase your creative work & complement your responses to Questions 3A-3C.

New in 2026: Entrants now have the option to include results in the creative reel.

Keep in mind that judges are looking for:

- 👉 At least one complete example of each integral touchpoint.
- 👉 The strategic idea in action - how it was brought to life.
- 👉 More creative work versus a focus on reexplaining the full written case.

JUDGE ADVICE: "The creative reel should showcase all of the work that I've just read about and want to see. I would rather clearly see the different executions over hearing setup." 



Scoring Section 3: Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life

QUESTIONS 3A-3C + CREATIVE WORK + INVESTMENT OVERVIEW

JUDGE ADVICE

“Integrate the media strategy and show how it links to the full extension and influences the creative strategy and explain how it evolved with the campaign”

“Give rationale for why these specific channels were selected. Why are they meaningful to the audience and the challenge? How and why did you place importance on some channels over others?”

“Find a real insight, not an audience observation or category convention. It should be a deep human truth that not only drives emotions and behavior but enables the strategic idea and creative execution to be effective and successful.”

“Keep the storytelling and results out of the creative reel, and highlight the creative, especially the different executions. The more different types of creative shown, the better. I took the judging seriously and read through the written case carefully, so there was no need to duplicate the story – what I was missing was how everything was brought to life.”

“Be sure the written case and video compliment each other and do not repeat each other. It isn’t about the quality of the video itself but more about the content”



Scoring Section 4: Results

QUESTIONS 4A-4B

Judges are looking for **direct correlations between the objectives and the results** of a case.

Keep in mind that judges are looking for:

- 👉 Explain how the results impacted brand and the brand's business.
- 👉 Make a compelling argument to prove the marketing led to the results achieved.
- 👉 Provide context with historical brand data, industry benchmarks, competitors, etc.
- 👉 If you achieved additional results, explain what they were and why they are significant.
- 👉 Address other factors that could have contributed to your results, whether positively or negatively. Judges value thoughtful answers in Question 4B vs. indicating that no other factors could have impacted your case. Some entrants will use this space to prove the limited impact of these factors on the results to give the judges more confidence in the results presented.
- 👉 When key metrics are withheld without explanation, judges may assume it is because the results were weak.



Scoring Section 4: Results

QUESTIONS 4A-4B

Entries range from small cases in regional markets to nationwide blitzes. Judges consider the environment in which each case exists. It is important to include category/industry and year-over year context, as judges may not be knowledgeable of the nuances of your industry. For example, a small percentage move in a highly segmented, high-volume category may be more difficult to achieve than a large percentage change in another category. Explain your business situation to the judges.

Charts and graphs are useful tools to present your data clearly. If needed for confidential reasons, proof of performance may be indexed or provided as percentages. If you cannot provide certain business results, explain why you cannot or why they are less important. Think through creative & meaningful ways to present the significance of the results you cannot share. For example, the results achieved were the equivalent of opening a new 200,000 square foot store in the region.



Scoring Section 4: Results

QUESTIONS 4A-4B

JUDGE ADVICE

"Make sure you provide context. If you show results, help the judges understand if the results are good and why. Explain what the numbers mean."

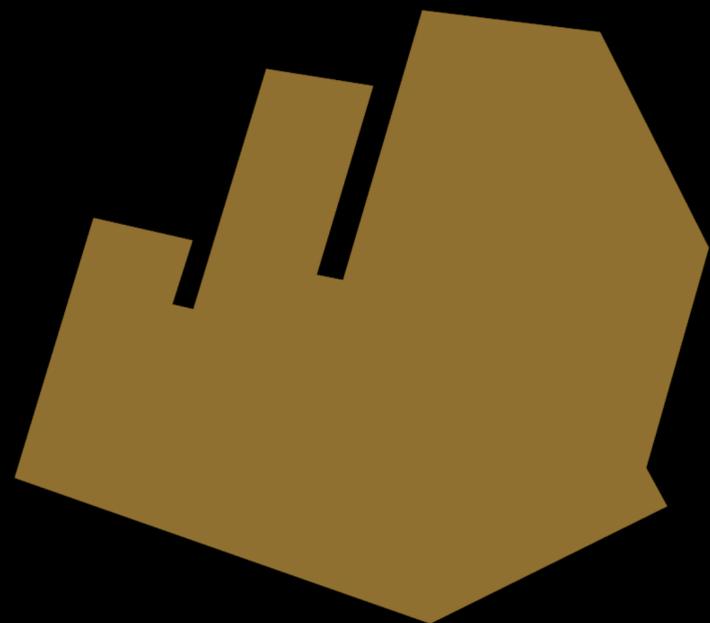
"Don't fudge the results. Your peers will know. Honesty is more effective. We have all had wins and we have all had fails. Every campaign does not need to be perfect."

"Be clear to articulate why the results are meaningful for longer-term impact (for the brand.)"

"Tie together the story of how your work drove the results - the best cases did this seamlessly, the worst cases just threw the results out there as somehow a self-evident proof of the value of the work without explaining why or how."

"Don't get caught lowballing or avoiding inconvenient other factors - judges are looking for it. Admit more and provide real-world context: give credit to things like economic trends in addition to your campaign. You'll gain credibility by being honest about all the factors that created success."





Specialty Jury Advice

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Specialty Jury Advice

COMMERCE & SHOPPER EFFIES

"It's very important to clearly lay out what's happening for the brand, the category and the retailer. The more specific the context on the situation and the shopper challenge, the better."

"When entering a commerce & shopper category, (is is important to) stretch beyond brand strategy and consumer insights to consider the shopper's unique needs and mindset."

"There should be a shopper insight that uncovers a need (perceived by shoppers or not) that can be solved for or a beneficial behavioral change that can be made. Get into the details of retail activation when applicable."

"Connect the activations from across all the path to purchase for solving a shopper campaign."

"It takes more than simply being a retailer or having retail components to qualify ideas for shopper marketing. Focus your entry on the detailed integration of how you drove trips and conversion."

"Make sure your results are commerce driven. Doesn't have to be all sales, store traffic and brand consideration are important as well. But without the results there is no award."



Specialty Jury Advice

HEALTH & WELLNESS EFFIES

"Show how your efforts have a positive effect on business or health outcomes."

"Focus on the real problem you're trying to solve, not just from a business standpoint but from a patient (human) standpoint, too."

"It is helpful to call out regulatory challenges and context."

"Given the challenges in healthcare with providing professional context, consumer competitors, market coverage, help frame how difficult it is to achieve results through creative DTC campaigns."

"Has it found a deep insight or customer audience truth? Has it successfully leveraged that insight? Has it produced provocative, surprising creative that will capture the attention of our customers and get them to engage in our experience?"

"Of course, if it moves market share, but more importantly how does what we do affect the individuals who need the treatment or those prescribing it. We gauge our creative output by seeing if it improves people's lives. If we can do this through information, tools, connection or other ways then we have all the items to be successful."



Specialty Jury Advice

MEDIA EFFIES

"Given these are media entries, the media strategy needs to breakthrough above the campaign idea. Detail a strong translation of the media strategy to execution."

"Clearly explain the media, data and/or partner selection."

"More directly emphasize the role of media as it is related to strategy development and creative execution. Given that the lines are often blurred, what was media's specific contribution in fueling the idea?" creative DTC campaigns."

"Make media the centerpiece of your entry. Utilize the creative reel to showcase media, not just creative. Thoughtfully visualizing how the media tactic contributed to bring the user experience/journey to life."

"Entries in the Media categories, specifically the Media Idea category, should present a media idea that is uniquely tied to the brand, with a unique use of media."

"If you are entering the Media Innovation category, be sure to be crystal clear in pointing out the innovation."



Specialty Jury Advice

POSTIVE CHANGE EFFIES

"Be sure to describe the social issue being addressed with some detail, and why it was a good fit for your brand and/or organization."

"The scope of the behavior change is very important to address. Help judges understand how wide the effect was and what that meant."

"Clearly link the marketing to the change achieved - the award recognizes the most effective marketing that drove behavior change of a sustainability goal. Make sure as part of this to articulate what the change in sustainable behavior meant for the brand and organization."

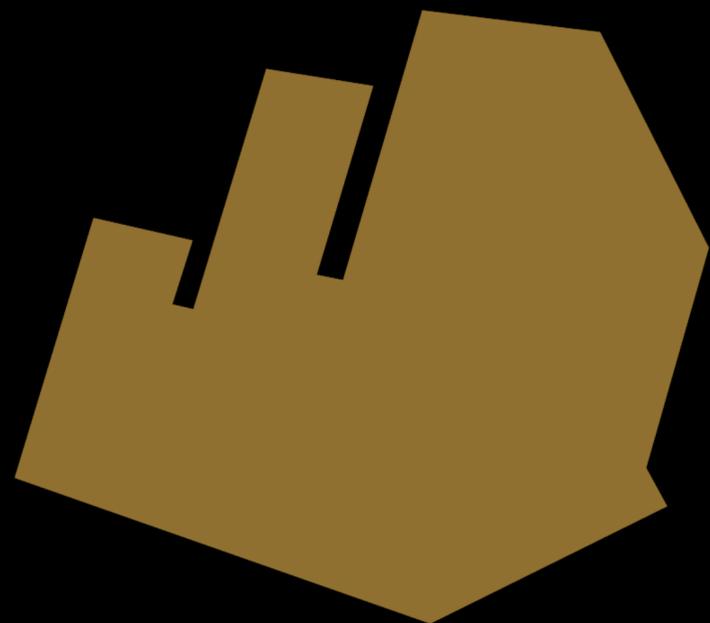
"What was it about this initiative that was sustainable? Tell us in a nutshell what the increase in sustainability is."

"Provide clear, true results - a clear sense of how the needle moved in terms of actual awareness of the issue and change."

"If you are submitting for a social impact award, you must be able to illustrate clearly in the results the real-world impact of that campaign; judges cannot be expected to take you at your word that this campaign had any positive impact whatsoever"

"Treat not-for-profit marketing case studies as specifically as you would for-profit, sharing measurable objectives results and detailing out what you did to make it happen."





Wishing you success in this
year's competition!

Entry questions? Email: usentries@effie.org

Disclaimer: The insights presented in this guide come directly from the jury. These statements do not represent the opinions of Effie organization, board of directors, steering committee, or staff - all comments and data presented - except for the specified Effie advice - are straight from the industry executives who dedicated their time to serve on an Effie Jury.

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