

## **TAKING THE YAWN OUT OF RESEARCH – PART I**

**Or, Keeping Research Lively and Relevant  
While Learning From the Best:**

**DECONSTRUCTING RESEARCH AND  
ACCOUNT PLANNING  
AWARD WINNERS**

Peg Murphy, Columbia College Chicago, 2014

**DECONSTRUCTING AWARD WINNERS**  
**Learning from the Best:**  
**Research & Account Planning**

**BACKGROUND:**

As many of us already know, there is no way to make undergraduates' eyes roll back in their head faster than saying the "R" word: research. To many students, it is perceived to be murky waters full of numbers, scary things like regression analysis, standard deviation and honestly, sometimes bad videotapes of old women sitting around a conference table eating candy and complaining about salad dressing lids. However, as I frequently state, consumer research should be honestly *very, very interesting*. It is digging into what makes the consumer buy, not buy, regret, reconsider, etc. It should be, in part, what drives new strategic directions for the brand and honestly, helps evaluate the effectiveness of a campaign. There are many different types of research consultancies now, frequently working side by side with agencies (e.g., Brainjuicer, Egg Strategy, etc). It is also exciting for students to learn about and see new directions in research (e.g., facial coding, biometrics, etc.).

Similarly, account planning is another frequently somewhat misunderstood discipline. Many students want to be "planners," but are not really sure what it entails or what makes for good strategic planning. Strong strategy work makes for the very best executions from all perspectives and frequently, more successful outcomes. Yet, many are not really sure what it involves and/or do not realize that account planning is NOT "renaming the research department."

Therefore, reviewing award winning work with accompanying case studies is a terrific way to not only learn from "the best of the best;" but, also, through small team or individual presentations to *teach* each other (and, therefore, one's self).

Additionally, reviewing best practices award winning work gives students an opportunity to build their repertoire of responses to that age-old advertising interview question: "So, what advertising work have you seen that you liked and why?" Armed with the information gathered and absorbed through this award winner deconstruction exercise, students can give their perspective employer a savvy, informed, supported, and engaging answer...demonstrating a knowledge and passion for the business.

And, it is an often overlooked area when students (and, some industry professionals) discuss award winners. There is a lot of excitement and buzz surrounding the creative awards: the ADCs, the One Club, the D&AD, the American Advertising Awards (formerly, the Addys), Cannes, Clios and even, occasionally, the Effies. But very, very little buzz or excitement surrounding seemingly (unless you are in research or account planning) "obscure" awards like the Advertising Research Foundation's *David Ogilvy Awards* or the *Jay Chiat Awards*, now housed with the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's).

\*\*\*\*\*

*NOTE: This assignment is also a good exercise to fill the end of class periods (just have a few students or teams go each class period to break up the class time) and/or possibly assign when a substitute must fill in. With a careful assignment note, a rubric, and links, students can set off to begin work on this project and have it ready for your return.*

**DECONSTRUCTING AWARD WINNERS:  
Learning from the Best --  
Research & Account Planning**

**Research & Account Planning Award Winner Assignment Objectives:**

- 1) Explore a real life successful client project, utilizing research and insights.
- 2) Learn about current research consultancies and best practices.
- 3) Develop a consensus POV about methodology, brand insights and what next.

**Recommended Approach:**

- 1) Begin by reviewing the project briefing (objectives, why study). As appropriate, have a discussion of what already know about new directions in research and / or overview of account planning (I have materials I can forward, if you would like).
- 2) Showcase how to approach the assignment by reviewing an award case study (show the video and perhaps handout/walk through the written case study). Go over key areas to cover in the award winner presentation in an open discussion format (or, perhaps have the future teams work through the following and have a group discussion thereafter):
  - \* Marketing issue/opportunity
  - \* Objective
  - \* Research approach
  - \* Research findings
  - \* Consumer Insights
  - \* Strategic approach (to include a variety of exhibits from campaign)
  - \* Effectiveness/results
  - \* Team POV/assessment: what liked/didn't and why, recommended next steps for brand (address two areas – target/segmentation, channels/platforms, alternative approaches, etc.)
- 3) Give students a list of award winner case studies (see sites following) that you feel are appropriate for your class and their experience.
- 4) Students (in teams or individually) then pick cases and begin work. (Access to computers, tablets, smart phones would be helpful at this point.) Students then collectively review the existing case and discuss.
- 5) Teams are to also investigate participating research consultancies, developing a quick overview of capabilities and role within this particular best practice case. (Almost all of the cases involve brands and agencies working with partnered research consultancies.)
- 6) Teams find visually based materials (e.g., videos, ads, charts, etc.) exemplifying case. Most cases include a short video. The students are clever digital scavengers. They can almost always find additional campaign material via YouTube, other award sites, agency websites, etc. The examples bring the research and strategic thinking “to life” and better inform class discussions.

# AAF FACULTY TOOL KIT

## Recommended Approach (cont.)

- 7) Teams prepare a 10-15 minute timed presentation, ensuring all have a role and that all areas are covered.
- 8) After teams present, the class discusses the case. To keep the classmates engaged (if doing more than 1-2 a day), sometimes have them “score” the teams and vote on various awards for the day (e.g., Best Research Overview, Strongest Understanding of Strategic Plan, Most Interesting Extra Campaign Exhibits, Best Presenter, Most Interesting Next Steps Recommendations, etc.).

### *PRESENTATION AND DELIVERABLES NOTES:*

*In my classes, this assignment requires a visually based presentation (powerpoint, keynote, prezi, etc). As in professional practice, I insist on a visually compelling presentation, NOT a lot of text & bullets. The students are also expected to have REHEARSED and do a nice job of hand-offs, etc. Any videos to be shown are to be embedded into the presentation.*

*ONE (1) copy of the powerpoint + individual bibliographies are due at presentation time. Ppt. deck will have initials on each pg., indicating who did what. Deck will be signed by all and considered the team's agreed upon position regarding workload and functions. A peer evaluation might be a helpful measurement tool as well, depending upon your class.*

## RESOURCES:

### Advertising Research Foundation – David Ogilvy Winners

2014 winners: <http://thearf.org/ogilvy-14.php>

2013 winners: <http://www.thearf.org/ogilvy-13.php>

2012 winners: <http://thearf.org/ogilvy-12.php>

2011 winners: <http://www.thearf.org/ogilvy-11-winners>

### Jay Chiat Award Winners

2013 winners: <http://4asstrategyfestival.com/2013-winners/> (cases and video)

2012 winners: <http://4asstrategyfestival.com/2012winners/> (cases and videos)  
<http://4asstrategyfestival.com/2012-jay-chiat-grand-prix/> (Grand Prix video)

2011 winners: <http://www.jaychiatawards.com/winners.html> (cases and videos)

2010 winners: <http://www.jaychiatawards.com/winners2010.html> (cases and videos)

*NOTE: I generally do not allow work more than 4-5 years old to be shown given that the students may be referencing this work during the upcoming interview process and want them to demonstrate current (relatively) knowledge.*

*Please reach out if you would like a reading list or other materials about new trends in research and/or account planning. [pmurphy@colum.edu](mailto:pmurphy@colum.edu)*