

## Making the Most Out of an Award Win

By Allison J. Waldman

Winning an Emmy, a Peabody, a Murrow or a duPont is the ultimate accomplishment for many news organizations and professionals, but in these ever-challenging economic times, what is the value and marketability of these distinguished accolades — and is it possible for a savvy broadcaster to monetize a win?

“I think if you don’t make use of an award in your marketing you will miss a number of opportunities,” said Richard Goedkoop, a professor of communication at La Salle University in Philadelphia and author of the book “Inside Local TV News.” “Mainly to tell your customers, clients and end users, see how good we are, that’s why you should consume our content. And that can translate into increased sales in the long run, if the marketing itself is effective.”

The marketing of an award is not something that can be done without careful consideration. In some instances there are rules about how an award can be advertised. “You need to know what those rules are first, but you can use it to point the finger at yourself and say, ‘Look, we’ve been recognized for excellence in this field by our peers and that’s why you should pay attention to us,’” said Frank J. Radice, a former promotion executive for NBC as well as a past president of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, which hands out the News and Documentary Emmys, among others.

News organizations and TV stations that win Emmys can use the image of the statuette in a variety of media, including print, on-air, online, outdoor, newsletters and magazines. Radice also mentioned a new way to announce a victory that’s perhaps the most significant new development in award marketing — social networking. “It will be the most important way to use awards right now because, quite honestly, it’s all about word of mouth. If you can use it in a Facebook page or in Twitter, then you’re going to get more bang for your buck,” said Radice.

Snagging a major award can carry clout in the short term, but if a station or news outlet isn’t delivering on a consistent basis, the award designation won’t matter much.

Paul Conti, assistant professor of communications at The College of Saint Rose was news director at Albany’s NBC affiliate WNYT-TV before he joined the faculty. Under his leadership, WNYT’s news operation was No. 1 in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy market (DMA rank 57) for years, and he was a regional Emmy winner.

“Winning awards can help build credibility with viewers, but it is not of singular importance,” Conti said. “It is one element of creating a TV journalism persona. A successful news operation that employs people who win such awards can use that as a marketing advantage. But in my experience, a third-rated station that is not successful by any measure you wish to assign that word will not become successful just because staff members were given that kind of distinguished credit. Organizations used to sink big dollars into entering some of these contests. It does not happen with much regularity now.”

Doug Spero, professor of mass communication at Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C., took the opposing view. “I used to be a news director and never once hired or didn’t hire someone based on them having or not having a specific award. I don’t mean to dismiss the value, but, professionally speaking, I don’t put much weight in them.”

Spero recognized the value of an Emmy or a Peabody for promotional purposes, but questioned how rare it is to win an award like that today. “Years ago they were worth a bit more, but now they are green stamps. If you really want an award somewhere, you can go out and find one. Now that being said, I do think it is good for the industry. It encourages competition and ownership in the product. But I don’t think they hold a lot of weight.”

Having been on both sides, Radice has a unique point of view. When asked what tips he would give to a promotion or sales department to market a winning show or personality, he said, “First thing, if you’re nominated for an award as important as a duPont, a Murrow, a Peabody, an Emmy you have to get the message out — in advertising. If you’re television, you do it on-air. If you’re in print, put it in the publication. You advertise. You promote the fact that you’ve been nominated and you use that to extend your brand. That’s step one.”

The second step would be campaigning for the award, he said, such as through “For Your Consideration” advertising that reaches award voters.

For the third step, he said, “You have to take advantage of secondary platforms, that is, not just the platform that you’re on. If you’re a television channel, you want to tell people on the secondary platform, ‘Look at us, watch us.’ You do that on multiple platforms. Everything right now is 360; you need to be advertising and promoting in a 360-degree way. That’s on air, on cable, online, social networking, even on the radio and outdoor.”

An example of a campaign that succeeded in the kind of saturation exposure using an Emmy win to drive awareness was the promotion for Showtime’s “Inside the NFL.” In the on-air commercials, the different stars from the show all coveted taking the Emmy award home with them, like it was the Stanley Cup. Radice recalled that Showtime called him before filming the ads to be sure that it was all right with NATAS.

“I said absolutely, and I was blown away by the final execution. It was the most effective use of an Emmy award win by any group I’ve ever seen,” said Radice.

For a PBS program like ITV's "Independent Lens," the marketing of award wins is essential, according to series producer Lois Vossen.

"Industry awards are important because they help establish careers and can help the producers secure funding for new projects. Winning one of the major journalism and news and documentary awards such as a Peabody, Emmy or duPont Award adds cache to the work and validates the filmmaker," Vossen said.

"When 'Independent Lens' won the Best Documentary Emmy Award our first and again our second season on the air, it validated the series and sent a clear message that we were presenting programs of the highest caliber and the additional Emmy, Peabody, duPont and other awards and nominations our films have received since then add to that message," she said.

The idea that award marketing will generate sales revenue, however, remains a specious claim.

"I don't think that the promotion guys are going to look at promoting their nominees with an eye toward having it generate revenue," said Radice. "But I do believe that you can influence sales by showing the sales community that you're the organization that is deserving of the awards, that's why you've gotten nominations and awards, and those are the people you should be putting your money behind. It's not an out and out, go get money because you won an award, but there's certainly some of that at play."

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