

continued from page 55

of the magazine/article/column/design will engage judges, especially if a relatively arcane event or field is involved.

FOLIO's Editorial Excellence Awards and other contests also evaluate or judge against a title's mission statement. A lack of clear purpose, uniqueness, or even challenge may hurt a contestant's chances.

Trophy-hunting. So what makes a winner? Entertaining journalism that has a deep impact, narrative flair, consummate usefulness, and visual excellence are just some attributes of success. For example, if your Editor's Letter merely restates the contents page, it won't connote leadership or inspiration. And while an advertorial-dominated softball title may (or may not) be rewarded in the marketplace, it's unlikely to earn the plaudits of its creative-side

peers. Size, by the way, isn't everything. Scale-breaking pieces still must master packaging, continuity, and flow, or judges will dismiss them as overstuffed. ASME explicitly asks that packages be judged "on the strength of the entire entry"

Judge not, lest ... A tip for those hosting a contest: Screeners and judges should be asked to identify potential conflicts beforehand. Contest as large as the National Magazine Awards, which have 1,500 entries, build in ongoing safeguards. As an inert-but-listed contributing editor for *Rolling Stone*, I once recused myself after finding the magazine in my ASME screening category. This past year, an editor's story advanced while he was screening in its category-until the eagle-eyed judge gave him the rest of the day off. His article made the

finals-on merit.

Comments also can reveal conflicts. Not long ago I asked a judge to refile more objectively. He knew his field, but snide comments and unusually low scoring suggested competitive bias. The judge was impeached so the contest wouldn't be.

Despite the best efforts of hundreds and hundreds of impartial judges, contests are imperfect. Stories are examined in isolation. Categories can pit apples against chainsaws. Today's mainstream can best tomorrows great new idea. But one thing remains constant: "Incompetent" judges become so much wiser once they select your entry for an award. *

Abe Peck is Sills Professor at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism

NETWORKING NO-NOS

With some of the industry's best networking events just days away, we offer some proven tips on how to work the room without ruining your rep.

CAREERS | By Liz Lash

Networking is a year-round, all-season activity, but in the magazine biz the biggest industry galas and conferences are scheduled for the fall. The American Magazine Conference and the FOLIO:Show are just two of the must-attend events this month. Hobnobbing opportunities abound, but the onslaught of open bars and small talk require critical

navigating skills. To help you steer clear of career-ending faux pas, here's a collection of tips from the pros.

- Don't make a beeline for the VIPs. Talk to everyone. You may be missing your next job opportunity by focusing only on "the important people" in the room. Be mindful of business card etiquette: Don't hand out

your card as if you're a blackjack dealer. Cards are appropriate only at the end of the conversation, not at the beginning. And above all, watch what you drink. A business event is not the time to demonstrate your ability to hold your liquor. -Susan RoAne author of *How to Work a Room*

- No stalkers allowed. Be persistent but don't hound people. You want to allow the person some control of their schedule. -Scherri Roberts, director of Human Resources, Hearst Magazines

- Forget the buddy system. If you go with a friend, split up once you get there. -Annette Richmond, Career Intelligence

- Silence the cell phones. Don't take a call in the middle of a conversation. Turn the phone off or set it on vibrate. -Sreenath Sreenivasan, professor of journalism at Columbia University and freelance writer

- Keep it at eye level. Don't be one of those people who stares at a name tag rather than looking a person in the eye. How obvious do you want it to be that you have no idea who you're talking to? - Susan Ollinick director of public affairs at *People* and co-chair of MPA conferences

