



## **The Judging Process – a Word from the CEO of the MCA**

As members know the MCA is not involved in the decision-making process regarding the MCA Awards and is only involved in setting the categories, defining the judging criteria and recruiting the judges – then it's over to our specially selected judges to make their choices according to a strict code of conduct. I've been asked how this decision-making process works so here is the inside view! It's fairly lengthy and involves thousands of papers being marked and scored and then rankings made.

Each category, whether individual or project has three judges assigned to it. Two of these judges mark every entry that is submitted for the awards and a number of different scores are given to each entry. For example, there are scores for evidence of impact on the client community and quality of the written submission – each mark is out of 10 and a total is calculated for each entry. At this stage judges also decide if they want an entry to go through to the finalists or not as well. The MCA compiles the scores and comments from both judges and, if further discussion is required, judges meet to discuss their final scores and their final proposed shortlist.

At interview stage, a third judge joins the interview panel, reads every entry and scores each one. All three judges are given the scores they have submitted in advance. Judges mark all the entries with no knowledge of which company or individual is being put forward as the entries are unbranded with no names and they do not know if the projects are completed by small, medium or large firms. It is only at interview stage that judges know which firm you are from and your names.

Our judges all sign up to a strict code of conduct and a number of different promises. What does this include? For example, they have to declare any potential conflict of interest to the MCA. A conflict of interest is defined as a situation in which a person has a private or commercial interest sufficient to appear to influence the objective exercise of his or her duties. They also have to declare any attempt by participating organisations or individuals or the sponsors to contact them during the judging process. They evaluate each entry on the basis of the information provided in the entry and the interview.

So, what's the process at interview stage? At the start of the day the judges meet before the interviews to discuss the entries and their approach to the judging interviews. A chair judge is usually decided for each interview, and this can rotate throughout the day. At the start of the day the MCA reads out the rules to the judges as follows:

- Please do not consider any brands in your judgment or decision
- All decisions made should be based on the interviews which took place and there are no biased opinions or outside influences considered
- No props or slides should be used by finalists
- Sessions are led by the judges and any questions asked should be based on what you have read in the submission

Throughout the day judges get the opportunity to discuss the interviews together. At the end of each day there is a discussion session where judges decide on the winning entry and if there are to be any highly commended entries. They also discuss whether their nominated winning entry should be put forward for project or individual of the year.

Who decides Project or individual of the year?

Each judging panel decides whether they think their winning entry is worthy of being put forward for project or individual consultant of the year. If they support this, a representative from the judging panel agrees to join a larger meeting of all the relevant judges. Each judge invited to this meeting must read all the final winning entries that are being put forward for Project and Consultant of the Year. During the selection process the judge from each panel then makes a pitch of why they think their winning entry should be given Project or Consultant of the Year. There is an opportunity for Q and A's. All of the judges present then vote on the Project of the Year and Consultant of the Year.

MCA staff observe the judging process and are not involved in any decision making. They are present in meetings to ensure that all the interviews are being conducted fairly and according to the rules outlined to judges and participating firms. A governance structure is in place for the MCA Awards and a Chief Judging Panel is in place which can review any issues that arise during the course of the process.

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