

# How to Win a CASSIES Checklist

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## 1. SMART Business Objectives

- Specific – Increase what by how much.
- Measurable – State how results will be measured.
- Ambitious – Highlight the scale of the task.
- Relevant – Business results, not advertising results.
- Timeframe – By when will success be measured.

## 2. New Learnings/Insights.

- What facts did you uncover?
- How did you uncover them?
- What was your insight?
- Why is this relevant to the challenge?

## 3. Quality and Originality of Creative.

- Highlight the original aspects of the work – showcase the creativity.
- Attach no more than six pieces of creative that are reflective of the breadth of the campaign.
- Include relevant visuals of creative within the narrative.
- Media plan blocking chart.

## 4. Business Results.

- Results cover the whole Business Results Period.
- Results tie back to the stated business objective(s).
- Results in context of category and competition.
- Charts, tables, graphs
  - Show trends for as long as possible before the campaign in addition to during and after.
  - Ensure axes are scaled and labelled.
- Some measure of ROI.
- Only include key Social Media stats – those that feed directly into the business results.

## 5. Proof of Campaign Effectiveness.

- Factual evidence – not assertion – that spend, momentum, pricing, distribution, promotion, activity timing did not drive the results.
- Never put N/A.

# Writing the Case

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Key to success in writing a CASSIES case are **simplicity, clarity, completeness** and **logical flow**.

## Points to Note:

- Gather the hard data early and prepare a first draft as early as you can. This will help you see any weaknesses in your argument.
- Use straightforward English and a readable layout.
  - Quote evidence over opinion.
  - Use credible and identified sources.
  - Be business-like in describing growth; judges are not impressed by exaggerations like "stupendous", "incredible", "eye-popping" and "staggering".
  - Avoid acronyms or "insider" terms that judges may not understand.
  - If you mention awards, include only prestigious events.
  - If the campaign has been exported, state this prominently.
- Use clear, simple charts and tables in the body of the document. Complicated information - if needed - can be attached as exhibits, but do not bury key information at the back. It substantially hurts your case if charts, tables and exhibits are inaccurate, confusing, hard-to-read, or incomplete.
  - Give all charts accurate titles, with sequential numbering.
  - Clearly identify the geography (Canada, English Canada, Quebec etc.) the chart refers to.
  - Clearly identify the sources for all quoted data, charts, graphs etc. (e.g. AC Nielsen Past 12 mo. through June 2016).
  - Make sure the dates/timing are clear; judges want to relate results to when the effort ran.
  - Consider using layout and colour to increase the impact and clarity of charts/graphs/tables.
  - Ensure all data included in charts/graphs/tables are identical to those in the narrative; you lose credibility if there is one number in the text and a different one in the table.
- Find out if anyone in the company has written a winning case, and get them to review your early drafts.
- Leave good time for the sign-offs by Client/Agency Management.

## What Do Losing Cases Have in Common?

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1. **They weren't a case study.** A winning CASSIES case is not a press release, part of your credentials pack or how you would like the case summary to read in strategy magazine. Short cuts in writing the case are usually short cuts to not winning an award.
2. **They weren't a CASSIES case.** Don't enter the case you wrote for the Effies, Bessies, Creative Effectiveness Lions or something else; they are different entities with different rules, judges' expectations and scoring criteria. While much of the material you use will be the same, read the CASSIES rules, ponder the category definitions, read some past winning CASSIES cases, follow the CASSIES template and apply the hints in this document.

3. **They didn't follow and leverage the case format.** The CASSIES entry form has a prescribed format to help you structure your case and focus on where points are gained/lost. The more you deviate from the format or skip sections, the worse your case will score.
4. **They weren't persuasive.** The CASSIES attracts many entries each year, usually well over 100, of which the majority end up not winning despite all having positive business results. The field is crowded and the standards are extremely high, so, as with the advertising you carefully crafted to drive the sales, a winning CASSIES case must take into account WHO you are talking to (the make-up of the judges), WHAT they are looking for (their remit), and their decision-making process. A CASSIES case study is a targeted document of persuasion and should be written as such (see next section).

## Understanding the Judging Process

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All CASSIES cases go through two rigorous stages of judging: Benchmarking and Final Judging.

### The Benchmarking Panel.

The remit of Benchmarking is two-fold:

- Only send forward to Final Judging cases that have a reasonable chance of winning an award.
- Ensure there is no incremental degradation over time of winning standards.

**Benchmarking is the biggest hurdle as it is at this stage that most of the cases which do not win an award fall out of the running.**

Members of the Benchmarking panel are mostly past CASSIES Final judges, and many are long-term Benchmarkers who have a vast amount of experience in reading and evaluating business cases. Many are also regular judges at Effies and Cannes.

- They are a VERY senior group of industry professionals taken from Agency, Client, Research and Academia backgrounds. For example, the 2017 CASSIES Benchmarking panel included nine members who were either Agency Presidents/CEO's or Client Marketing VPs, i.e. a very senior, experienced, challenging, demanding and sceptical group.

**Imagine the time, effort and care you would put into a live presentation to this audience – you need to do the same for your case.**

Benchmarkers are split into several teams, each in isolation reading and scoring 40+ cases. This means your case has to stand up and stand out in a 15-20 minute read.

While Benchmarkers use exactly the same decision criteria as at Final Judging stage, they evaluate each case as either: A – “Should win”, B – “Might win”, C – “Shouldn't win”.

- All cases scoring mostly A's automatically go ahead into Final judging – a feat achieved on average by less than 25% of cases – to do so requires a case that is compelling.
- All cases scoring no A's are rejected at this stage.

- All other “split vote” cases are discussed in depth at Benchmarkers’ team meetings where, on average, another 15% of cases pass through to Final Judging.

### **The Final Judging Panel.**

The remit of Final Judging is to review all cases passed through Benchmarking and then decide the award level from:

- Gold: Exceptional thinking and communications proven to deliver exceptional business results.
- Silver: Campaign with exceptional elements of thinking/communication proven to deliver exceptional business results
- Bronze: Campaign proven to deliver clearly superior business results
- No Award

The panel then also awards the Grand Prix for the “best in show”.