



## Judging the DTC National Advertising Awards

An Interview with Fred Church, Vice President, Ipsos Insight Health

Ipsos' Fred Church is judging the DTC National Advertising Awards this year, which is linked to the DTC National Conference, the industry-leading annual event for the direct-to-consumer marketing industry, including pharma companies, agencies, and service suppliers. The gala presentation dinner for the awards happens April 11, 2007, in Washington, DC. Fred sat down recently to talk about his role in the judging process.

**Q:** *Fred, how did you get involved with the DTC National Advertising Awards, and how do you see your role?*

**Fred:** This is my sixth time judging the awards, so it feels quite familiar. In fact, I was a judge at the DTC Awards before I came to Ipsos. I've been working in the DTC arena for about 10 years, almost as long as it has been legal in the U.S.! Judging the awards is a great opportunity, both because it lets the marketplace know that Ipsos has expertise in DTC research – it's good for our profile – and because it's a chance to mingle with the rest of the market research community.

**Q:** *Over the time you've been judging, what's changed in the DTC landscape?*

**Fred:** When it comes to the overall business and political environment for DTC, you could argue that a lot has changed or that not much has changed. DTC advertising always has a bit of volatility and controversy about it, in terms of how various administrations and/or politically dominant groups react to it and also in terms of whether or not companies believe it produces meaningful ROI. Yet, it perseveres; I don't think there's much chance of it going away, regardless of ebbs and flows in the rumbles you hear about it.

So, I guess what's changed is that these days, more companies are breaking through with better advertising. DTC is tough: of course you strive for creativity, but you're also dealing with serious, sometimes depressing subjects (DTC, after all, is concerned with medical conditions), and

you have to really watch what tone you're striking. But there are some examples now of very good DTC advertising, which makes my role as a judge more interesting.

Finally, and probably as no surprise, the Internet is one of the channels for DTC now; and it occupies a judging category at this year's awards. Television is still dominant, but the Internet has emerged as a serious space for DTC.

**Q:** *What will you be looking for when you're going through dozens and dozens of DTC campaigns to come up with winners for this year's awards*

**Fred:** Creativity, definitely – just as you would were you evaluating other forms of advertising. But creativity that works for the brand, not just for itself. While we don't measure brand linkage as we're judging the awards as a group, of course we all come from organizations where we do, and we know this is important. So you do think about how much work the DTC is doing for the brand. Also important is a clear, compelling message. DTC often has to communicate a lot of information, so it's challenging to keep it as simple as possible. The best DTC ads do. I think we'll find the winners of the awards will have balanced creativity, simplicity, and tone.

**Q:** *How many ads will you be looking at, Fred, in your role as a judge?*

**Fred:** Up to 25 campaigns in each category, often with multiple ads in each campaign. But we do the judging as a group, so it's fun for the most part.

Fred Church is a vice president in a dual role with Ipsos Insight Health and Ipsos Vantis.

The DTC National Advertising Awards will be presented in Washington, DC, April 11, 2007.

For more on the awards, go to [www.dtcperspectives.com](http://www.dtcperspectives.com).

“ Creativity that works for the brand, not just for itself... and a clear, compelling message. ”



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