

Remembering a champion

For Terri DeRose, awards were nice, but results were better

BY SCOTT BULLOCK

Judgment. Being judicious. Judgment Day. These are things very much on my mind today, as I ponder yet another awards season that has come and gone. And as I mourn the passing of a great circulator, and a great person, Terri DeRose, vice-president of consumer marketing for Transcontinental Media.

As circulators, we are often asked to make judgment calls. Will this insert card pull more orders than that insert card? Will this price respond more favourably than that price? Will this list out-pull that list?

Our favourite response isn't net response, or gross response, or direct response, it's "let's test it." This is our way of distancing ourselves from rendering judgement. It's a way of avoiding the consequences of being judged. It's a convenient way to let science, the hard cold facts of data, determine consequences in our professional lives. We circulators worship numbers, because they give us a sense of security.

But of course there is no security.

They say that numbers do not lie—but they can be cruel and ruthless. Terri was only 56 years old when cancer claimed her on June 7. I'm told that Terri knew the numbers were stacked against her, and she used the time allotted to her wisely.

Bad numbers can cost us our jobs. Good numbers can earn us a bonus. Or maybe even win us an award. Terri's work earned her (or as she would say, "my team") lots of awards. But I know that Terri only cared inasmuch as it validated the work, because it was the work, and the teamwork, that Terri really valued.

I know this because I'd often call her up to remind her to send in submissions for the ACE Awards. She'd sigh, and tell me what a pain it was to fill out the application forms, and how much time it took to rustle up samples for the judges. She'd make suggestions on how to streamline the process. I'd try to cajole her, but she'd have none of it. "I've got budgets due, Christmas creative to get produced, and three direct mail campaigns to get out the door," she'd protest as I pressed her to make it a priority. I could sense my appeal was simply not working. It was as though I could feel her heart

rate rising through the phone receiver. Work, real work, important work, was beckoning. I was losing her.

So I'd have to do the one thing I knew I had to do to get those ACE Award applications sent in. "Don't do it for me, Terri. And don't do it for

certificate. She'd smile, and thank me. But then she'd say, "So, what have you done for me lately?" It was her way of reminding me that awards were nice, but results were better. Terri never hung the awards in her office. Instead, they'd be given to her staff, or hung in the hallway for the entire team to enjoy.

In 2002, I was one of three judges for the Magazine Marketer of the Year Award, presented by the Circulation Management Association of Canada. (Terri was a founder of the CMC, by the way. She never tooted her own horn about this, but I know it was something of which she was proud.) I wish I'd saved the written application that Terri's team at Avid wrote nominating her for the profession's highest honour. It was astonishing.

Most applications I've read as a judge revolve around accomplishments that can be measured, laden with numbers, and percentages to prove the merit and to make the case. And Terri's list was impressive, very impressive.

But this particular application was like no other I'd ever read. Terri's team was not nominating her for her victories on the circulation battlefield. They were nominating her for what she'd done for them, as their leader, their mentor, their colleague. It was intimate, personal, respect-filled. When the award was announced at the CMC luncheon that June, the industry gave her a standing ovation. I can't help wondering what she did with the award. **M**



Terri DeRose at Masthead's 2005 Circulation Round Table

yourself. Do it for your team." And there it was, I'd hear her sigh, a great big sigh it was, and then she'd say it. "Oh, OK Scott. Consider it done."

But please don't misunderstand. Terri was very competitive.

I was Terri's point person at national distributor Coast to Coast for the Avid Media line of magazines: *Outdoor Canada*, *Outdoor Canada Specials*, *Canadian Home & Country*, *Canadian Gardening*, and *Canadian Home Workshop*. At the time I was working for Terri, I had no idea that she had an equity stake at Avid, something very few circulators in Canada have ever earned. When Transcontinental Media purchased Avid in 2004, Terri could have retired early, but she chose to carry on, because she still loved the action.

Terri was relentless in seeking circulation growth, and I could barely keep up with her requests. Whenever a new sales record was attained, I'd drive across town to present her (and her team) with a framed Record Breaker



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