



Winning at Cannes Lions Is Not a Mystery. It Is a Mindset.

Each year, India shows up at Cannes Lions.

And over the years, we have brought home only a handful of Lions.

The talent is there. The intent is strong.

So what is missing?

The issue is not creativity.

It is creative ambition, fuelled by time, planning and purpose.

Winning at Cannes Lions is never a fluke. It is the result of deliberate, insight-led, emotionally intelligent and globally resonant storytelling.

Mindset, method and investment make it possible.

Insights from the Jury Room

These insights were shared during *PRCAI Engage: How to Win at Cannes*, a Cannes Playback session hosted by the Public Relations Consultants Association of India (PRCAI). The session featured:

- **Archana Jain**, CEO, PR Pundit Havas Red and Jury Member, Cannes Lions 2024
- **Nitin Mantri**, President (APAC), WE Communications and Group CEO, Avian WE
- **Aditya Vasan Singla**, Principal, Astrum and first-time Cannes delegate
- **Girish Balachandran**, Founder and Managing Director, ON PURPOSE

Their shared goal was to demystify what it takes to win at Cannes Lions and equip India's communications industry to show up stronger, earlier and with more intention by 2026.

Great Work Reflects the Times and Then Reframes Them

The best campaigns are not the loudest. They often represent the zeitgeist.

They reflect the world we live in and then reimagine it.

- [Daisy vs. Scammers](#) used AI to tie up scammers' time. No preaching, just impact.
- [Vaseline Verified](#) debunked viral TikTok hacks through lab testing. It merged pop culture with science.
- [ACKO's Tailor Test](#) used waist-to-hip ratios recorded by local tailors to raise awareness about heart disease. It was hyper-local, behaviour-led, and data-backed.

These were not just big ideas.

They were simple, precise and culturally timely.

That is what the jury remembered.

We Must Raise the Bar on PR Lions

Only 3 percent of over 1,500 PR entries won in 2024. The difference was not always in the idea. Often, it came down to execution.

- **Start early.** Cannes winners are created 9 to 12 months in advance, not retrofitted at the last minute.
- **Craft the case.** A strong narrative, crisp insight and a world-class case video are essential.
- **Avoid common traps.** Dated ideas, poor strategic fit and lack of proof consistently hold Indian entries back.



You cannot improvise your way into a Lion.

PR Must Move Upstream

PR sits closest to culture, but it is rarely positioned as the starting point for creative ideation. That needs to change.

- Clients need to engage PR at the concept stage, not after the brief is set.
- PR teams must move upstream, from responding to shaping.
- Agencies should invest in Chief Creative Officers and strategic planners.
- Clients should expect insight-driven creativity, not just media outcomes.

This is not a cosmetic shift. It is a commercial and reputational advantage, proven on the global stage.

What Indian Agencies and Brands Must Do Now For Agencies

- Appoint a creative or imagination lead with a clear Cannes mandate.
- Build a Cannes calendar beginning in Q3 of the previous year, with brainstorming, idea filtration, and packaging milestones.
- Budget for craft. An excellent case film is not a luxury. It is a requirement.

For Clients

- Treat Cannes as a platform for global reputation building, not as a vanity metric.
- Involve your PR agency at the ideation stage, not just during execution.
- Support bold, culturally rooted ideas that move people and spark conversation.

Cannes is not about prestige for its own sake.

It is about showing the world what happens when intelligence meets empathy and purpose.

The work that wins does not just say something.

It does something. And it proves that it mattered.

It reflects the world, but more importantly, it reshapes it.

If we want more PR Lions for India, we must design for them together.

Start earlier. Think bigger. Work across the table, not down the chain.

A collaborative creative ecosystem is an ecosystem that wins.