



## PPA Independent Publisher Awards: Lessons from the Class of 2019

On November 8, the proud winners of this year's PPA Independent Publisher Awards took to the stage to claim their trophies and enjoy their moment under the spotlight.

With the raucous cheers having since faded and the ear-to-ear beaming smiles having been replaced with more subtle, satisfied grins, we've taken the opportunity to reflect on our winners.

We've looked across all the winning entries as a collective, trying to pull out some of the common threads, key themes and examples of achievements that define the Class of 2019.

### Be bold and carry on innovating

This year's winners and highly commended entries underlined the importance of creativity and innovation in keeping brands relevant and engaging for today's changing audiences. Many found success from pursuing powerful ideas that were perfectly aligned with their audiences and executed well. This was equally evident in newer titles, such as *Happiful*, as it was for established brands, such as *Dentistry*, DJ Murphy's *PONY Magazine*, *London Review of Books*, *TTG* and *Wanderlust* – all of whom showed little signs of laurel-resting despite being ever-present in their respective markets for several decades.

### Reduce, reuse, recycle

The sustained groundswell of concern around environmental issues has ensured sustainability remains high on the public agenda, and publishers are meeting expectation for positive action. *PONY magazine*, for example, has moved to compostable wrapping and introduced more recyclable covermounts while *TTG* has switched to 100% recycled paper and biodegradable potato starch wrapping. Many have also made it a key editorial theme, including *Market Life*, produced by LSC Publishing, which champions awareness around sustainable production, food waste, environmental impact, animal welfare and social enterprise in the food industry.

### Know your audience to monetise your audience

Brand of the Year *Utility Week*, published by Faversham House, conducted detailed audience analysis to inform its digital content strategy. This insight was fed into the development of *myUtilityWeek*, the brand's proprietary subscription-based intelligence service, which provides tailored content to individual users. The result? Content engagement levels and subscription renewal rates are all up.

*Wanderlust* also conducted extensive audience research, resulting in the precise identification of a core market of 'super travellers' aged 45 and over. This insight ensures editorial content can be planned and delivered into an audience sweet spot to great effect.

And at Faversham House's *Utility Week*, revenues from sponsored events climbed on the back of an audience-led strategy that identified and nurtured key communities, and met their content needs through the award-winning UW-Wipro Technology and Innovation Council and the UW-WNS Customer Trust Council initiatives.

### If you build it, they will come

Awards, exhibitions, conferences – whatever the format, events continue their upwards trajectory as a vital and vibrant part of the mix for today's successful publishing brands.



## With great credibility comes great opportunity

Publishing titles know their audiences – that’s a given – but those who have invested in their own brands and possess a clear sense of their own identity, occupy a uniquely valuable position in their markets. A strong proposition can attract advertisers looking to align themselves with these values in the eyes of the audience (just ask TTG) or open the door to new commercial partnerships. Who better to produce and distribute the official guide to Record Store Day, for example, than Anthem Publishing’s Long Live Vinyl magazine?

## Adhere to editorial standards

*Utility Week’s* New Deal for Utilities campaign cementing the brand’s position at the centre of its market. *Dentistry* from Finlayson Media Communications’ commitment to timely, relevant editorial rather than simply rehashing press releases. Happiful’s authentic conversations and accessible, expert content around the subject of mental health. *Market Life’s* award-winning food writing. All examples of how high-quality editorial still sits at the heart of many brands, generating strong reader engagement and facilitating commercial success.

## All of the above

Across all entries, it is clear that success is not predicated on a single activity, model or direction. Fittingly, there is no better example of this than TTG Media, the 2019 Independent Publishing Company of the Year, which has reaped the rewards of investing across all areas of its business as part of a strategy underpinned by a laser-focus on its readership. From newsstand to subscriptions, digital to print, e-commerce to events, the independent publishing brands that particularly stand out and shine in today’s market are those whose bow has more than one golden string and whose magazine is equipped with much more than a single silver bullet.

