

2026

REPORT

THE 22ND ANNUAL
DAVEY
AWARDS

UNDER / OVER



REPORT

An expert guide on launching standout creative work on a small budget, and what to do if more is on the table.

LOCK IN YOUR NUMBER



Every industry knows the same reality: you've got big ideas, but limited budgets to bring them to life. So we put that reality to the test.

We challenged the Academy of Interactive & Visual Arts (AIVA) Jury, the industry leaders and experts across media, marketing, design and communications who evaluate the Davey Awards, to prove it's possible. We handed each juror a project type (think: video podcast, website, AI tool, etc.) and asked them to set a target small budget and tell us exactly how they'd make it work. No wishful thinking, just real advice on where to start, what to prioritize, and what to cut without losing what makes the work good.

Then we upped the stakes: what would you add if that budget doubled?

The result is a guide made from their answers: real advice from real experts, featuring last year's Davey Award winners, for small teams and indie creators doing more with less every day.

Davey Awards
The Davey Awards Team



SOCIAL VIDEO SERIES



TARGET
BUDGET



14000



JUROR

SIRUI HUA

Head of Audience
and Analytics,
NowThis Media

UNDER THE TARGET BUDGET



WHERE TO START

Pick a format before you make anything. Choose one repeatable structure with the same hook style, length, visual signature, and soundtrack, so every episode builds recognition instead of starting from zero.



DECISIONS WITH THE BIGGEST IMPACT

Iterate in public. Your first format won't be your best one, and no amount of planning predicts audience reaction. Publishing is the research. Treat every episode as a test. The comments and retention curves are your focus group.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO PRIORITIZE

Your most powerful research tool is free: the TikTok FYP and Reels feed. Study what's earning attention in your niche, not to copy, but to get inspired.



WHAT TO CUT

Expensive production. People value authenticity far more than polish, so skip the high-end camera. Rough edges read as real, not cheap.

OVER THE BUDGET



WHAT TO ADD IF YOU HAVE MORE

Capacity and learning speed. Hire a talented editor to raise quality and cadence, and put real budget into faster experimentation, testing new formats weekly instead of monthly.



WHERE EXTRA BUDGET GOES THE FURTHEST

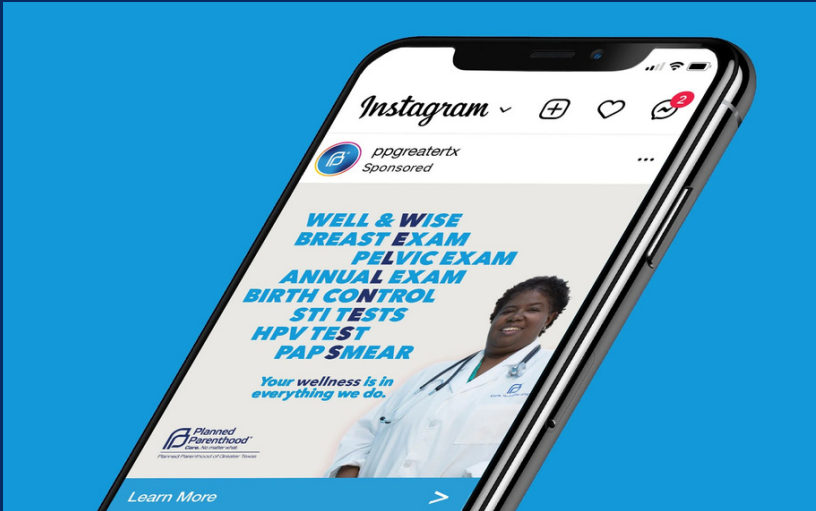
The editor. Editing is where retention is won or lost on social, and it's the most undervalued line item in small budgets. Everything else scales output. A great editor scales quality.

SOCIAL VIDEO SERIES WINNERS



2025 WINNERS

Big reach doesn't require a big spend. These Davey Award winners prove it with scroll-stopping social video.



WELLNESS WITHIN
by Sanders\Wingo Advertising



100% WHOLESOME
NUDIE SHOTS
by Circul8



#NOTALONECHALLENGE
by Inspiring Children
Foundation



DOM'S COMMS
by Eleven Peppers Studios



WEBSITES



TARGET
BUDGET



10000

UNDER THE TARGET BUDGET



WHERE TO START

First and foremost, stop trying to launch a perfect site. A website is never actually "done". Real value doesn't come from how polished it looks day one. It comes from being live and building on it over time with new content, steady traffic, and search/AI visibility. Lock down the structure first, give the site a clear job, and build the foundation that can support ongoing content. Then launch it small, correct, and fast.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO PRIORITIZE

Pick a modern AI-assisted builder (Framer, Webflow, Squarespace) over custom development. It's fast and cheap today. Spend what you save on copywriting and basic technical SEO. The platform matters less than whether you'll actually update it.



DECISIONS WITH THE BIGGEST IMPACT

Build your site for growth, not your (likely delayed) launch. Put budget into content and a calendar you can sustain. That pays off every month the site stays live. ROI on a polished homepage doesn't matter if nobody finds it.



WHAT TO CUT

Cut one-time customizations like animations, elaborate photography, and pages that don't drive conversions. Don't cut content structure or information architecture. That has to be right from day one, since everything you add later builds on it.

OVER THE BUDGET



WHAT TO ADD IF YOU HAVE MORE

Invest in original content like real interviews, case studies, and insights only you can offer. Focus on earning trust. A website only works as long as it's relevant and growing.



WHERE EXTRA BUDGET GOES THE FURTHEST

Any extra budget goes furthest by creating consistent original content and building subject-matter expertise on a schedule. A website is a living tool, not a one-time build, and it only grows if someone keeps investing.



JUROR

JOEL ROTTIER

Senior Vice President,
Creative Services,
Love Advertising

WEBSITE WINNERS



2025 WINNERS

These Davey Award winners show that a small budget can still build a stand-out website.



VISIT RENO TAHOE
by KPS3



BIG RED JELLY:
POLO GOURMET SAUCE
by Big Red Jelly



MUSEUM OF DISCOVERY
by Few – Digital Product
Agency



ORTHOFX
by ANML



VIDEO PODCASTS



TARGET
BUDGET



10000

UNDER THE TARGET BUDGET



WHERE TO START

Before you buy a single piece of gear, take time to roadmap your content — define your target audience, understand your podcast's unique value, and decide if video and/or audio best serves its storytelling mission. Once that's sorted, find a reliable microphone and headset and free editing software, and get to work!



TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO PRIORITIZE

The Podglomerate's [Ultimate Guide to Podcast Production](#) is a free, no-fluff starting point.



DECISIONS WITH THE BIGGEST IMPACT

Lock in a consistent episode structure and release schedule. Listeners reward predictability far more than production polish.



WHAT TO CUT

Wait to upgrade your equipment and room set-up until you have recorded and released a few episodes. You'll then have a better sense of your show (structure, hosting style, etc.) in relation to audience feedback and where to invest more time and money to help it succeed.

OVER THE BUDGET



WHAT TO ADD IF YOU HAVE MORE

Consider bringing in a dedicated editor who can help free up your time for podcast hosting, guest bookings, and strategic audience development.



WHERE EXTRA BUDGET GOES THE FURTHEST

Video packaging is critical in the era of YouTube podcasts. Optimized titles, strong thumbnails, and a compelling first 60 seconds drive video podcast retention and algorithmic growth. Repurposing one episode into short-form clips multiplies your reach without multiplying your recording workload.



JUROR

JONI DEUTSCH

SVP of Marketing &
Audience Development,
The Podglomerate

VIDEO PODCAST WINNERS



2025 WINNERS

Big listenership, lean resources. Check out these Davey Award winners who made it happen.



THE HEALING HEROES
by The Healing Heroes, LLC



LEGENDS OF SPORT
PODCAST PRESENTED
BY FUJIFILM
by Legends of Sport



HINES ON AIR
by Santisteban Media



AND THAT'S WHY
WE DRINK
by ATWWD LLC



AI TOOLS



TARGET
BUDGET



UNDER THE TARGET BUDGET



WHERE TO START

Start by selecting one high-friction, repeatable workflow where errors are visible and costly. Define success as a measurable task outcome, not model performance. Build the smallest end-to-end system that completes that workflow reliably using a hosted model and minimal orchestration. Invest early in evaluation and failure analysis, not features. Foundation models will keep improving; your advantage comes from choosing the right problem and building a system that makes success measurable and repeatable.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO PRIORITIZE

Choose managed infrastructure, built-in observability, and evaluation tooling that measures quality against real-world tasks. Design your architecture so models can be swapped as capabilities evolve, without rewriting your application.



DECISIONS WITH THE BIGGEST IMPACT

Invest in evaluation from day one. Measure task success, accuracy, latency, and user feedback before adding features. The fastest way to improve an AI product is knowing precisely where it fails.



WHAT TO CUT

Cut complexity before capability. Most AI products don't fail because they're too simple; they fail because they're difficult to evaluate, maintain, and trust.

OVER THE BUDGET



WHAT TO ADD IF YOU HAVE MORE

Invest in observability, automated evaluations, and deeper workflow integrations. Scaling AI is about improving correctness and embedding into user systems, not expanding surface area.



WHERE EXTRA BUDGET GOES THE FURTHEST

High-quality evaluation datasets, monitoring, and feedback pipelines. The biggest returns come from reducing uncertainty about system behavior in real-world usage.



JUROR

VYOMA GAJJAR

Senior Principal AI Architect,
ServiceNow

AI TOOLS WINNERS



2025 WINNERS

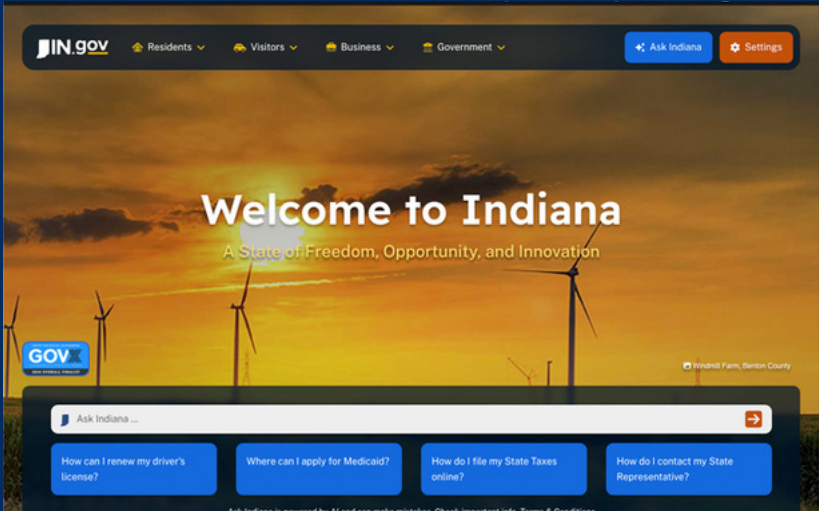
These Davey Award winners built something smart and effective, without a massive price tag.



HOLIDAY GREETING
by BrandAction Agency



GLOW UP YOUR MENU
by 270B



**ASK INDIANA -
AI RESIDENT ASSISTANT**
by Tyler Technologies



INTEGRATED CAMPAIGNS



TARGET
BUDGET



JUROR
JACOB HOLDER
Managing Director and CEO,
The Möbius Agency

UNDER THE TARGET BUDGET



OVER THE BUDGET



INTEGRATED CAMPAIGN WINNERS



2025 WINNERS

Tight budgets didn't stop these Davey Award winners from delivering big campaigns.



LAND OF THE BEEF,
HOME OF THE CRAVE
by Agency Creative



EVERYTHING WE DO,
WE DO FOR DOGS
by Leap Group Agency



WIND. WATER. WIN.
by MBLM



SFC GROUP |
MAMMO MONSTER
by SFC Group



WHAT'S YOUR BUDGET?

The expert Jurors laid out the plan.
Davey Award winners showed it in action.
Now it's your turn.

Whether you're a small shop, indie creator
|or in-house team crafting big ideas across
Websites, Design & Print, Video, Marketing &
Advertising, Branded Content, Social Media,
Podcasts, AI & Immersive, Mobile Apps and
more, this is your moment to prove there's
no limit to what you can create.

Enter your best work by the Final Entry
Deadline on **Friday, July 31st.**

ENTER NOW →

 **DAVEY
AWARDS**



CREDITS



JURY CREDITS

JONI DEUTSCH

SVP of Marketing &
Audience Development,
The Podglomerate

VYOMA GAJJAR

Senior Principal, AI Architect,
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The Möbius Agency

SIRUI HUA

Head of Audience and Analytics,
NowThis Media

JOEL ROTTIER

Senior Vice President,
Creative Services,
Love Advertising

WINNER CREDITS

270B

AGENCY CREATIVE

ANML

ATWWD LLC

BIG RED JELLY

BRANDACTION AGENCY

CIRCUL8

ELEVEN PEPPERS STUDIOS

FEW – DIGITAL PRODUCT AGENCY

INSPIRING CHILDREN FOUNDATION

KPS3

LEAP GROUP AGENCY

LEGENDS OF SPORT

MBLM

SANDERS\WINGO ADVERTISING

SANTISTEBAN MEDIA

SFC GROUP

THE HEALING HEROES, LLC

TYLER TECHNOLOGIES

AIVA TEAM CREDITS

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KARI GILLENWATER

Jury Producer

BRI KLAPROTH

Copywriter

ANIKA BJARNADOTTIR

Social Media Manager

AMY CHEN

Designer

VANESSA AZEN

Sr Project Manager, Web & Digital

EMMA LARSON

Managing Director, Production &
Experience Operations