

Exclusive: Society Awards Founder Created The World's Most Prestigious Award Factory

 therichest.com/pop-culture/david-moritz-society-awards-interview

June 19, 2018

- by [Krissie Mick](#)
- – on Jun 19th
- in [Pop Culture](#)

Recently, *TheRichest* had the chance to speak with David Moritz, the founder and CEO of [Society Awards](#), known as the world's most prestigious award and trophy manufacturer. During our exclusive interview, we asked several questions about Moritz's entrepreneurial spirit, business drive, and A-list clientele.

We had high expectations for interesting answers and we were not disappointed in the least! Read on and find out why Moritz's company is called the world's only luxury custom award designer and manufacturer.

TheRichest: You're the founder and CEO of Society Awards, a fast-growing premiere company that manufactures awards such as the MTV Moonman Award, MTV Movie Award, Koons National Arts Award, CFDA Fashion Award, Billboard Music Award, and the CMT Award. You started Society Awards after searching for a "niche industry where you could make a big impact" and find a creative outlet as well. How did you discover the niche of the award industry?

David Moritz: Thank you for the intro. It's now called the MTV VMA Moon Person... you don't know who could be in that suit. It could be a female astronaut.

TR: Oh, thank you for correcting that.

DM: It's OK, I have to make sure to do that myself. So how did I discover the niche? I was looking to do something creative. At the time, I was in entertainment law and I wanted to do something that was more entrepreneurial and had an element of glamour and creativity to it. One of my friends who also went to N.Y.U. had started a business in the promotional products category. We were talking about business and starting our own companies and he mentioned to me that when he would go to trade shows, all of the companies that made awards that were at the promotional trade shows were not luxury companies in the way that you would think. Maybe as a consumer, a viewer, a fan, you see these award shows and you think that the trophies must come from some glamorous, luxurious place, but at that time, they didn't. They just came from factories and trophy shops. So there was an opportunity there for me to make a different kind of company that was at the higher end of the market.

TR: Can you tell us a bit about the process of designing awards? Does the client bring a vision to you or typically, do clients request your input? Have you ever had free rein over a design?

DM: We do custom work. We do have a point of view in terms of wanting the product to be modern, sleek and beautiful. We have a little bit of a mid-century aesthetic, a little bit of a minimalist aesthetic. It's quite difficult to make a design both simple and strikingly beautiful and artists throughout recent history have commented on that. It's about taking away, not adding to. Although we can do anything and every style... we've done very complicated things. That being said, it's not that you come to Society Awards and it's this cookie cutter thing where all of our products look the same and you get what we want you to have. It's a combination of everything. Sometimes people come to us with complete CAD (computer-aided design) renderings that a design firm had created for them and we need to manufacture it with the best possible quality or to address other issues that they are looking for, so that would be kind of straightforward. If we do have free rein, we will have self-proposed limits of practical consideration.

TR: Can you walk us through the process of designing an award from the time a client seeks your services?

DM: We have a process of getting information from the client. So even if they don't have an idea or design in mind, the thing is that everyone does have proclivities and preferences actually. So rather than wasting a lot of time making custom designs to show people things that they ultimately might not actually like, we start off by showing them examples in different styles to get a sense of what they might like... If we get down to any kind of specific direction, we'll show them that. And if not, we'll show them a few different concepts. They have to pick one of the concepts and then we move through a few rounds of refinement. If it's going to be more design work than that, then there are additional fees. After that, we move into estimates to make sure that the budget works and see if we need to refine the design again to fit into a budget and then we move forward to the manufacturing process.

TR: All of the awards on your site look spectacular! But do you have a personal favorite or one award design that is particularly sentimental or special to you?

DM: Thank you for that. There's a lot of considerations from our perspective that might not be present if you're just looking at what the designs look like. If a design was difficult to do and we achieved in a high-end way, we might feel proud of that even if aesthetically, it wouldn't have otherwise been our favorite design— so that's definitely a factor. There's the Cartoon Network GAME Award that is full of lights and it's also 24-karat gold plated. Literally, the word "game" is lit up. Basketball players hold it on stage and it's lit up and it's crazy, but it's also gold-plated. I'm really proud of that one because it's incredibly difficult to do at high quality. I don't think that there are a lot of other companies that would have been able to execute that the way we were and not for a fortune. If you did have an unlimited budget, then maybe there are a lot of places you could go. And it looks classy. It's not your typical sign. The materials are all very high

quality, it works very well. We're really proud of that one. We designed the GLAAD Media Award as our own design and we're very proud of that. It has a beautiful style to it that we really like.

TR: You were working in a law firm when you said you noticed yourself "getting a bit too creative" creating custom suits and elaborate Halloween costume designs when you got the idea to pour your creativity into your own money-making venture. What advice would you give to someone who might be in the same position (working a job that doesn't satisfy their creative needs) but is hesitant to leave their steady job? What gave you the courage to do so?

DM: That's a good question. I would really caution people against running away from something that works for you to pursue something that you think will be more creative or make you happy in some other way because, at the end of the day, work is work. Even when you're starting your own company, you have no boss but there are so many things that you have to do that are not creative.

You really should not do it because you think that primarily it will be better, or easier, or different. You do it because you catch an entrepreneurial bug and you have to build something. And keep in mind that it's going to be hard— harder than your job by far. And you're going to have to do things that you didn't have to do at your other company that was already built. You're going to have work more, not less. You're going to have to work harder, and you're going to have to work at a lot of other things. So, I would say you should do it if you feel like you need to do it. And some people do. Some people feel like they *need* to build something. If you need to build something, go ahead and do it. If you're just kind of dabbling, it just wouldn't work for you. Very rarely is something on the side, that you don't put your heart into, successful.

TR: If you had a time machine, what is the best business advice that your current self could give to your younger (2007) self?

DM: That's a crazy thing to think about. Things have turned out OK now, so I don't know that I would really want to change that much... So I think that I'm happy with the way things went. I don't know that I would use the time machine.

TR: Same question as before... for best personal advice?

DM: (*laughs*) There are certain people that I would have possibly told myself to avoid encountering, but then again, all things happen for a reason and all's well that ends well. You know, it's funny, when I was younger, I almost considered that my future self would come back and tell my younger self what to do. And I decided to live every day to the fullest and I think that I did that and I survived and it worked out OK. I would say don't live like today's your last day quite so much. Ease up a little bit.

TR: Deal gifts, deal toys, lucite tombstone, and financial tombstones are all terms that describe customized mementos given out to mark and commemorate the closing of a business deal in finance or investment banking. It seems like it would be a lot of fun (though hard work) to design deal gifts. Does your team have fun with the design process?

DM: The people that typically order deal gifts and deal toys are the analysts at the investment banks. Sometimes, it's more senior people— but often it's the analysts. And the analysts are going to be one, two, three years out of college. So they're young twenties, and they're really hard-working. It's their first job. They're making some money or they have the opportunity to make some money, so talking to these guys about something that is not their typical everyday work, doing financial analysis on transactions, but rather making like a little gift after the deal is over is inherently interesting because the type of client that it is. They're usually pretty fun to work with and talk to and get along with. And also, those designs have to be made and the project finished very quickly. So it's totally different from our typical awards project where we have like a year to design and manufacture it or at least six months and there's very often not a lot of time pressure... But because they do it after the deal is closed and usually present it at a dinner that they have after the closing to congratulate everyone, it happens within a few weeks. So there's a sense that everyone understands what the deal is and that you need to design and manufacture this within a few weeks and so I think that things are not taken too seriously as you can tell by the name "deal toy."

TR: That's a very tight timeline to work with.

DM: Super tight, yeah. It's very fast. But they're not individually personalized so that allows it to go faster. They all get the same thing with the same copy on it.

TR: Looking at the examples of deal toys on your site seems like they would be a lot of fun to design, but we're guessing it wouldn't be with the level of stress due to the quick turnaround?

DM: No, you can't be stressed at something that you do all day, every day. That would be stressful for someone else, but if you do that all day, every day, you know how to do it. It is fun to do it and you know how to do it in a way that it will get done without it being stressful. I wouldn't want to be in a business where every day has nail-biting stress. That, to me, isn't fun. I like to make things reliable and consistent. So it's fun... but whatever fun you're going to have with the design, you do it very quickly.

TR: Can you tell us more about the kinds of clients who seek your services?

DM: Traditionally, we did high-end, entertainment-related awards primarily and almost exclusively. And that would be everything that you've seen on television from MTV to Billboard to the Golden Globes, the Emmys. That is our core business and it's where we developed all of our techniques and capabilities. With event-related things on TV, they absolutely can't be late, they need to be perfect quality, they need to be done exactly right... As we continue to grow, there are only so many award shows, so we move on and offer the exact same thing to corporations that want to have a really nice trophy. And they end up getting the same process.

And if they want the design to be extravagant, we can do it. And if they want it to be simple and minimal and safe, we can do that too. The whole process is the same in terms of the seriousness of deadlines and events and how all of that comes together. Now, some of our clients include the Kennedy Center and The Recording Academy, and Microsoft, and Facebook, and everybody. But also it could be California Pizza Kitchen and corporations like that. Whoever wants a really nice trophy, we can do it.

TR: 3D printing is a huge trend right now. In other interviews, we've heard you say that right now, the result of 3D printed material is too (paraphrasing here) flimsy to compare to sturdy crystal, lucite, etc. Do you predict/believe that it's possible for the technology to improve enough in recent years to create award-worthy material?

DM: So anyone who thinks that at some point in the future there will never be an application for 3D printed awards, well, first of all, that's literally wrong. Because there is an application just not in the way you might think about it. I still believe that one day we might have 3D printed good-looking awards. But technology isn't there and we're not really close right now and I can explain why. Ten years ago, if you're talking about 3D printing for an award or 3D printing for anything, you're really talking about a piece of garbage plastic. It deteriorates over time, it's messy, it's flimsy,... it's cheap material, and it's extremely expensive to do at the same time. Now today, 3D printed material is the same thing. It's garbage *but* it's getting better and you can use it for other things. You can use it to make a model that you can then use to make a mold that you can then use to cast a product in nice zinc, pewter, bronze, then you then finish by hand and you then electroplate so that at the end of the day you would have a beautiful statue that looks the same except the model used to make it was 3D printed instead of hand carved by clay.

TR: What is your favorite material to work with?

DM: So we're known for die-cast zinc which is our special innovation where we take an automotive manufacturing process to create an extremely hard and durable part that we then hand finish and electroplate resulting in the most beautiful awards with the best quality to them and the best finish. They are much shinier and more beautiful-looking because of that process — and that's a process that we really specialize in... and that we do a lot so if we can have the opportunity to do zinc die-cast, it's going to give the best results with the most beautiful product.

TR: Thank you so much. You were very interesting to speak to and I think our readers will really appreciate this interview, so I thank you so much for your time.

DM: Of course. Thank you.