

The Car Design News People Awards celebrate excellence in design, shining a light on the creative talent of automotive designers, raising their profile and celebrating their craft.

The Car Design News People Awards are open to all designers working in the global automotive industry. There are categories for every aspect of the design process.

The Car Design News People Awards will return this year to place a spotlight on the industry's brightest talents. Traditional awards tend to focus on the product, but Car Design News wanted to celebrate the design teams behind the cars – the people. And not just the design directors, but creative talent at all levels of the design process: from the CMF team to the UX designers and everyone in-between.

The Car Design News People Awards champion not only the craft of automotive design but the cross-disciplinary teamwork that produces mould-breaking cars.

This is not your typical awards show. The biggest names in car design have helped to shape which aspects of design are recognised, and so alongside established disciplines like exterior and interior design, sketching and clay modelling, you will find awards for user experience, lighting and leadership. Our expert judging panel will naturally reflect the multi-disciplinary nature of these categories too.

We are tremendously excited to return for the third Car Design News People Awards and we hope to see you at the gala dinner in London, in December.

KEY DATES:

Entries open

6 December 2024

Entries close

25 July 2025

Shortlist announced

September 2025

Award ceremony

4 December 2025

WHO SHOULD ENTER?

The CDN People Awards are open to those working in the global automotive industry. Specific category criteria can be seen below in category descriptions.

HOW TO ENTER

- Entries must be made on our website via the dedicated entry form between 6 December 2024 and 23:59 on 25 July 2025. All entry fields must be complete before submitting.
- To enter, you must create an account with a username and password. Please note that you can edit your entry up until 23:59 on 25 July 2025.
- You must upload 4 images to support your application.
- You may provide one video (90 sec max) to support your application (optional).
- Entries should be specific to the category - no blanket submissions across multiple categories. Please tailor your submission accordingly - it must be relevant.
- Team applications must provide names and job titles of the individuals that were involved in the project.



Categories and judging criteria

Undiscovered Talent Award

A designer with a standout portfolio, exterior / interior / UX/UI / CMF or material designer, on the cusp of entering the professional ranks or a talented student taking the first steps in their design education.

What the judges are looking for:

1. Demonstrable ability to create original, unique designs that are innovative and thought-provoking
2. Demonstrable skill with traditional and/or emerging design tools
3. A grasp of the storytelling of design, understanding of how to design for a brand

Most Supportive Design Leader Award

A senior designer who leads by example to inspire their team to push the boundaries of automotive design by creating a supportive, diverse and inclusive working culture that encourages people to grow and feel heard.

What the judges are looking for:

1. Evidenced track record of being an excellent role model in terms of quick and sound decision-making
2. Proven record of inspiring others to work collaboratively and creatively
3. Testimonial evidence of promoting an inclusive and diverse work culture

Most Sustainable Brand Team Award

The brand who connects across multiple departments: sustainability, engineering, strategy, interior, exterior, CMF to deliver scalable real-world sustainable solutions and processes to meet the challenges of the new automotive landscape.

What the judges are looking for

1. How rigorous teams were in terms of material selection, showing why decisions were taken and how they contributed to a more sustainable product
2. How the teams worked within the wider company structure to push forward sustainable targets
3. Quantitative and qualitative data to justify decisions

Beyond Automotive Design Award

Holistic, big picture thinking that goes beyond the established considerations of automotive design to tackle issues such as MAAS, infrastructure, design sustainability, circularity, to affect positive cultural impact within vehicle design and beyond.

What the judges are looking for

1. Evidenced understanding and execution of how transport design is engaging with real world challenges beyond the design of the car. For example, urban planning, design of charging infrastructure, MaaS.
2. How the vehicle interacts and communicates with the world around it
3. Show innovative approaches to mobility design that push the boundaries of vehicle design



Categories and judging criteria

Best Lighting Design Team Award

The lighting design team that can show how light can convey modes of driving, interior ambience, enhance the UX, brand identity and communicate with the world outside the car.

What the judges are looking for

1. How well the lighting accounts for safety, communication, ambience
2. How innovative/original technology has been used
3. How lighting creates or underlines a readily identifiable brand identity

Best Exterior Design Team Award

Dynamic, innovative design that pushes the boundaries of exterior design and captures the spirit of the car brand, moving it forward into new territory and experiment with new forms and silhouettes.

What the judges are looking for

1. How original the exterior design is
2. How it captures and defines the DNA of the brand
3. How well the exterior design contributes to the performance and efficiency of the vehicle (aerodynamics, range)

Challenging the Industry Award

This award recognises individuals or teams within design, who show courage to question and challenge the status quo, through innovation, visionary thinking and leadership.

What the judges are looking for

1. Design innovations that push past accepted industry norms; e.g. new levels of safety, efficiency etc.
2. Design leadership that has shaken up working culture – e.g. diversity, cross-collaboration
3. Revolutionised working practices – pushing the use of new tools and processes

Best Studio Engineering Team Award

For the team that bridges the design and engineering departments to make challenging projects a reality. This studio engineering team demonstrates how it has made the difference between a good design and a great one, advocating for design to push the boundaries of what is possible. The team should outline how they have played a pivotal role in the success of a project.

What the judges are looking for

1. Demonstration of how the studio engineering team advocated on behalf of the design team to improve the product
2. An outline of the main points of contention/ engineering challenges and how were they resolved

Categories and judging criteria

Best CMF Team Award

Innovative / sustainable use of materials and colour to create a strong, clear and sustainable aesthetic that unifies exterior and interior design and manufacturing and user experience.

What the judges are looking for

1. How harmonious are the exterior and interior colour, materials and finishes
2. How much attention has been paid to sustainability
3. How well the team worked with manufacturing to overcome the challenges presented by the brief

Best Interior Design Team Award

The team that delivers design solutions, from form to ergonomics to usability and manufacturing to create class-leading interiors.

What the judges are looking for:

1. Evidence of pushing benchmarks of ergonomics and manufacturing
2. Demonstrable innovative approaches to interior layouts from storage to the integration of technology

Best Clay Modelling Team Award

The team with a world-class ability to render sketches in clay at ¼ and full-scale at speed, with maximum accuracy to the design intent. A team or individual who showcases the continued importance of clay modelling to the overall design as well as demonstrates an excellent collaborative spirit.

What the judges are looking for

1. How accurately a sketch/digital model is translated into clay
2. Skill at scale & full-size models
3. How clay refined and improved digital designs

Best Digital Modelling Team Award

The team that can take the sketch and the package – proportions, dimensions and lines – and bring those parts to life in the virtual space through astute analyses of data, a willingness to experiment, and exceptional creative thinking. The design must have been approved by an OEM - no independent projects.

What the judges are looking for

1. Evidenced ability to accurately translate 2D drawings into 3D models
2. How different tech is leveraged during the model's creation
3. How data is used to inform the work

Best UX Design Team Award

The UX team that understands what it is to create an intuitive, technology-led and user-friendly experience with a coherent and memorable aesthetic that strengthens the connection between the car and the customer: from in-car UX to apps, instore digital experiences and configurators.

What the judges are looking for

1. Ease of use, considering ergonomics, safety and intuitiveness
2. Coherent aesthetic that compliments CMF/interior design
3. How well the technology is integrated with the overall design

Judging process

Using the judging criteria listed for each category the CDN team will carefully evaluate all entries to create a shortlist of contenders. The shortlist will be announced by CDN and those shortlisted will be contacted to let them know they are through to the final round of judging. The shortlist will then be judged by three groups of judges who will assess the entries, offer critique and then vote for their preferred winner over the course of an afternoon. Each judge gets one vote and will rely on the criteria laid out in the supporting document.

Every effort will be made to formulate the judging groups to avoid conflicts of interest but where this is not possible the judge will recuse themselves from the process.

In the unlikely event of a deadlock, Car Design News will cast the deciding vote.

In the interests of transparency, the judges' votes will also be published on CDN following the awards show itself.

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