MTN opens up Business App of the Year entries, launches app academy

The MTN Business App of the Year Awards, now in its 9th year, has opened entries for aspiring entrepreneurs and digital innovators across the country. This year's edition comes with a number of relevant and exciting additions, including the launch of a dedicated app development and coding initiative, the MTN Business App Academy.

The aim of the MTN Business App Academy is to mentor and upskill aspiring talent for a career in app development. This will be done through a six-week online coding programme which feeds into a new category for the app awards, specifically for the developers who went through the academy.

"The MTN Business App of the Year Awards eco-system continues to evolve and expand. It is now truly a year-long initiative focused on producing the highest calibre of cutting edge and market-ready solutions. At the same time, we are building and deepening a future pipeline of digital brilliance to ensure South Africa, its people, communities and the economy can harness the full benefits of the digital economy and the fourth industrial revolution," says Kholo Magagane, head of Marketing, MTN Business.

As part of the drive to grow an inclusive digital eco-system, the top three apps from the MTN Business App Academy will be assisted to develop their apps into fully-fledged solutions. A go-to-market strategy will then be devised to implement the solutions, with MTN assisting them to identify a customer, or customers, that are faced with problems that the market-ready solutions can solve.

Upskilling youth in ICT

At its core, the MTN Business App Academy is really about upskilling South Africans, particularly the youth, for a future in ICT, software and mobile app development. The plan is for the academy to develop into a fully-fledged development hub that MTN Business will run with regional partners, academic institutions and enterprise clients for many years to come.

"We are very excited to be extending the reach and duration of the MTN Business App of the Year platform in 2020 – leading into 2021, and beyond. It is encouraging that we will be reaching new audiences and laying the foundations for more people in South Africa to benefit. As a champion of app development talent in South Africa, the MTN Business App of the Year Awards will continue to uncover and celebrate local impact-makers, and out-of-the-box tech thinking that drives disruption and change," says Magagane.

The number of submissions has increased year-on-year since inception, with over 600 entries received in 2019, and Magagane says even more undiscovered and untapped tech talent in the country will be given an opportunity to flourish.

The icing on the cake for the overall MTN Business App of the Year winner (or winning team) is a trip to a tech-related destination to the value of R200,000, while the top three 'Best Youth App' entrants will each receive a share of R100,000. The prize for the 'Best Youth App' award will be split - R50,000 for the first-place winner, R30,000 for the second-place winner and R20,000 for the third-place winner.

Categories

The full App of the Year Awards category list is:

- Best Consumer Solution
- Best Women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)
- Best Enterprise Solution
- Best Incubated Solution
- Most Innovative Solution
- Best Health Solution
- Best Gaming Solution
- Best Agricultural Solution
- Best Educational Solution
- Best Financial Solution
- Best 'South African' App
- The People's Choice Award
- Best Breakthrough Developer (from the MTN Business App Academy)
- Best Youth App (18 – 26 years of age, from the MTN Business App Academy)
- (Overall) App of the Year winner

"All eligible developers selected for the Academy will participate in a six-week online coding programme, with the objective being to solve a common social challenge facing South Africa. These are access to education, safety, and access to health," says Magagane.

They will then move on to take part in a 72-hour "hackathon". Participants will use their new knowledge and skills to develop their solution, and a team of tutors will be on hand to help.

The solutions coming out of the hackathon will be entered into the 'Best Breakthrough Developer' and 'Best Youth App' categories and will be part of the overall awards judging process.

It is anticipated that this year's awards event will once again bring together a combination of more than 1,000 techies, leading app developers and key industry stakeholders – albeit via digital/virtual platforms.

"We are looking forward to one of our best years yet as we broaden the ICT eco-system well beyond Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. I encourage all aspiring innovators and techies from across the country to enter and showcase their talent as we, together, expand and develop the ICT industry in a meaningful way," concludes Magagane.

To enter, app developers can submit their entries **before 29 September 2020** by going to [[https://www.appoftheyear.co.za/ appoftheyear.co.za. The awards ceremony will be stream lived on 29 October 2020.

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com