

Gold Quills for Africa

At the recent International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) 2014 Gold Quill Awards, held at its world conference in Toronto, nine African entrants received an African Gold Quill Award, with a further six receiving an African Award of Merit, a record for Africa.

This year's gold winners include Volkswagen of South Africa, Unplugged Communications, Jinja Communication Services, Development Communication Solutions, University of the Free State, Kumba Iron Ore, Woolworths Financial Services, Tshwane University of Technology and Anglo American.



Best of the Best - VW, Free State University

One of the winners of this year's prestigious international competition, received a 'Best of the Best' award for scoring the highest out of all the winners in the Africa Region - this was Margaret Loughhead with the Volkswagen internal communication team, who worked with Mari Lee, CEO of DevCom, on a research project to improve shop floor communication. This entry also scored the highest out of all the African entries submitted to the competition.

In addition to winner a Best of the Best Award, Lee was also the Africa convenor of the Awards. She says, "Coordinating this year's Africa Blue Ribbon panel to evaluate entries from all over the world also showed that our communicators are well respected globally and afford us the opportunity to review global case-studies. The total process is a profound professional development experience."

The Jake Wittmer Research Award was won by Lacea Loader from the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. Her entry, 'Measuring the Impact of Communication Strategy on University Reputation', won in the Communication and Research Management division.

Top accolades

Over 750 entries from across the world competed in the 2014 competition. Entries are scored by panels of trained evaluators, all of whom are IABC members and professional communicators, specially trained in the best practice evaluation model of the IABC. The panels met face-to-face in San Francisco, London, Toronto, Melbourne and Pretoria; and a virtual panel, including evaluators from Africa Region, scored online. The evaluators worked to a seven-point scale to ensure consistency across the board. Internationally, Merit Awards were assigned to entries that scored a minimum of 5.25; and Excellence Awards went to entries that scored higher than 5.75.

Lee adds, "The excellent performance of Africans on the global stage shows that our local communicators are some of the best in the world. For me, the most meaningful part of the Quills is the feedback you receive from global peers, allowing you to step up your game every year. The fact that the Quills are evaluated against global best practice standards, and not against the work of other entrants, is a key motivator of the peer review awards."

Top performers

South Africa-based Communication Consultant Dr Amanda Hamilton-Attwell, ABC, is the International Chairperson of the IABC Gold Quill Awards managed by IABC headquarters in San Francisco, as well as multiple award winner.

"Being recognised as a communication professional with an IABC Gold Quill Award, is more than just winning an award, it reflects the strategic contribution of a communication intervention to the business. The process to be followed to enter a project for a Gold Quill is often described as daunting because the question that must be answered is, 'What is the business

need that had to be addressed by this intervention and how did you measure that you addressed it effectively?' Answering this question is significantly more difficult than just showing how clever you can be with words and visuals."

Hamilton-Attwell emphasised that while the evaluation process takes communication outputs such as media and design into consideration, it focuses on the strategic impact the messages make to the sustained success of an organisation and the measurable business return delivered.

"The fact that in 2014, the Africa region's entries nearly doubled and the number of winners also nearly doubled reflects the quality of the work we do. Winning one Best of the Best for Research Management as well as the Jack Wittmer Award for the application of research in a communication project is something to be proud of, as one of the smallest regions in the IABC."

The African winners will be recognised at a celebratory function in Sandton on 24 July 2014. [View all the winners.](#)

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