

Meet young judge Courtney Jacobs

 By Jessica Tennant

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In the run-up to the 22nd Prism Awards taking place on Sunday, 14 April, we chatted to this year's cohort of young judges about their fresh approach to the judging process.

In this series of interviews, we find out what they've learnt working alongside the cluster judges and what their young minds bring to the table.

"This year's young judges' entries far exceeded expectation. The selected group is proof that there's an array of diverse and young talent in this industry and that they have a lot to offer," says co-convenor and founder of the Prisms Young Judges initiative, Palesa Madumo, executive director of strategy at Vuma Reputation Management.

Here, our interview with Courtney Jacobs, publicist at Courtney Chandré Communications...

■ ***What does this recognition and opportunity mean to you?***

This recognition truly means the world to me in that I am now more confident in my ability as a PR professional. Being a part of the judging process has also opened the gateway to broader networking possibilities within the industry more specifically during these very early stages of my career. More so, being selected as a Prism Young Judge has also blessed me with the opportunity to learn and pick at the minds of some of the country's most esteemed professionals; it doesn't get better than that!

■ ***Briefly tell us about your experience in the industry.***

In 2018, I completed my Diploma in Media Studies with a major in Public Relations at Boston Media House. While completing my studies I simultaneously started my very own, self-titled PR company: Courtney Chandré Communications. Focusing on lifestyle and entertainment PR, I have since been fortunate enough to offer an array of PR services and solutions to some of the most sort-after names within the South African entertainment sphere. In light of the fact that I am basically my own team, I get to dabble in many different fields, whether it be creating content and graphics for my company's social media pages (@_courtneycomms) or engaging in media relations and publicity strategies for my clients, I strongly believe that although in its infancy, my experience gained thus far has already moulded me into an all-round communications creative.

■ ***Comment on the judging process.***

The judging process was very intense but at the same time extremely eye-opening. In the beginning I didn't know whether or not my scoring technique was correct, however, when comparing score sheets with my senior judges, I was pleased to see that my scores were on par with that of my fellow judges. This made me realise that I was not only in sync with my seniors but it also filled me with a great sense of pride knowing that I am certainly aware of the standards held within the industry and exactly what it is that makes for award-winning work.

■ ***What has the response been to this year's entries?***

The response has been really positive with regards to this year's entries. Within my cluster specifically, there were many



Courtney Jacobs

times when my fellow judges and I had to re-judge entries in order to actually select a winner. The competition was tight and the general standard of work submitted was of a very high calibre and because of this, judging was anything but easy!

■ ***What makes the winning work stand out?***

Attention to detail is definitely key. An entry that has included all the necessary requirements and has gone over and above what is expected to showcase their work is without a doubt, deserving of an award. Additionally, if a submission is easy to read and the supporting documentation is easily accessible to the judges, it immediately stands out.

■ ***Prisa also introduced the Student Campaign of the Year in 2016. Why do you think it's important that PR students are included in such initiatives?***

As a recent graduate, I cannot even begin to find the words to explain how much the Student Campaign of the Year means for students when it comes to the development of experiential learning. Too often students are fed so much theory in the classroom and once they get into the working environment, they're completely lost. This award now means that the practical groundwork done at student level is also significant within the greater PR industry and that their hard work matters and that in itself is absolutely rewarding.

■ ***What do you think young minds bring to the table?***

I do believe that young minds definitely bring a fresh and extremely relevant outlook to the table. With the widespread use of social platforms by the youth these days, perceptions surrounding various issues are greatly shaped by the proverbial millennial era. For that reason, the youth has an understanding as to what makes for good content, what's trending and what makes society tick and because of this, it is imperative for organisations like Prisa to understand the value that the youth now adds to society at large. Listening to and recognising the voices of young people is vital for a thriving PR industry.

■ ***What have you learnt working alongside the cluster judges?***

The biggest thing I've learnt whilst working with the amazing cluster judges is that being lenient through the scoring process doesn't help our industry in the slightest. I generally have a 'soft' heart and I am quickly learning that tough love is the only way we can ultimately raise the bar. Also, I am learning that the presentation of work that one puts forward is everything! You can really tell a lot about someone's character just from the quality of work that they present; it speaks volumes.

■ ***Comment on the past, present and future state of PR.***

I would say that the biggest change in the state of PR has certainly been as a result of the major advances in technology. This has had a major effect not only on the PR industry but on the world at large. This change now means that the PR world as we know it is changing and with the instant availability and accessibility of and to news channels regardless of time is adjusting the world of PR from a purely reactive and news-based activity into a proactive and planned strategy that is definitely more campaign based with well thought through themes and a well-executed content driven generation. With that, the future state of PR is fast becoming extremely spontaneous and perhaps more organic in a sense that having time to plan and then fax your press releases to the media is slowly becoming a thing of the past.

■ ***What would the title of Prisms Young Judge for the 2019 awards mean to you?***

This title now justifies that I certainly have made the correct career choice. It also serves as an indication that the work that I do through my own company is at industry level. More specifically, having the title of Prism Young Judge 2019 means that the Public Relations Institute of South Africa believes that I am one of the most important young voices to look out for within the future of PR in Southern Africa, and that is absolutely priceless!

■ ***What are you most looking forward to in terms of this year's Awards?***

I'm looking forward to experiencing the actual awards ceremony itself and how an event of this magnitude gets organised from a behind-the-scenes perspective. I'm also really excited to witness all the winners and the work done that has propelled them to award-winning status. Lastly, it's going to be very interesting to see how the level has improved as compared to previous years and to further measure the growth and development of the industry over a one-year period.

This year's awards should definitely set a benchmark for future campaigns.

As mentioned, the Awards take place this Sunday, 14 April. Follow us on [Twitter](#) for live updates on the night and visit our [Prism Awards special section](#) for other related content and of course all the winners following the announcement. Here's the link to our other [social media](#) pages, as well as the Prism Awards' [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts.

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