

It's a celebration

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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A Prism Award is about the wow factor; not business as usual. This year the Awards, which recognise the public relations (PR) industry and its work, celebrate its 20th year. The aim is to get 300 entries - a far cry from the five in its inaugural year.

"It's been a journey, and this signals a coming of age not only of the Awards, but of the PR industry in South Africa," says Bridget von Holdt, convenor of the [Prism Awards 2017](#).

Von Holdt, who has been involved since the inception of the Awards, remembers how 20 years ago, she struggled to get just five entries. "I was phoning people at the 12th hour to enter and attend. Now I look at the number of entries and how they've grown over the past few years, and the quality of the entries, and I am delighted."

Not only have the entries grown, so has the number of judges. "Over 60 judges drawn from a diverse number of sectors and industries preside over the entries. This year the president of the International Communications Consultants Association will be joining us as an international judge."

The growth of the entries and judges has been in tandem with the rising levels of the entries. Von Holdt, who, over the years

has been privileged to judge numerous awards overseas, says the Prism Awards entries are of international calibre. "I can confidently say that our PR campaigns measure up to the best in the world. The Prism Awards have grown in reputation not only among PR agencies, but among advertising agencies and marketers."

The event, which has taken place on a Sunday in previous years, will take place on Saturday, 6 May this year. "It's a celebratory event and we want people to celebrate the coming of age of PR and the growth of the industry," she says.

"We are encouraging more corporates to enter and asking agencies to encourage their clients to participate. We talk about campaigns that given clients measurable results, so we want the clients to attend to see these campaigns and how they're rewarded, or be rewarded if these are their campaigns."

PR is also an industry that attracts many young people. To involve the youth in the Awards, at the end of last year the Prism Awards held a young gun think tank where young practitioners could give their input on the Awards. "It turns out that most were unaware of the Awards," she says.

The result is the Awards' young judge programme. "A young practitioner will shadow a judge to learn about what makes a good – or bad – PR campaign. While they can learn from the best, they can also provide valuable input."

Brands and companies have come to understand the importance of PR, as well as appreciate the strategic value of it offers. Therefore, we need to grow and mentor our young PR practitioners, she adds. "The PR practitioner plays a key role in taking care of a brand, its IP and reputation. Often attached to this is a huge budget."

Where agencies can play a role here is to pull the young practitioners in their agencies into the planning and preparation of the entry. "The writing of the PRISM Award entry is a senior-level responsibility; however, this doesn't mean that agencies cannot involve the youngsters in the agency. Apart from this, young people also need to attend the actual Awards event to rub shoulders with the industry and network."

The Awards will take place at The Park House of Events on Saturday 6 May 2017.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

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