

Company news: Siemens Profile Awards unlocks potential impact of science and technology

Issued by [Redline](#) – a division of [DraftFCB \(SA\)](#)

3 Mar 2008

Emphasising the growing and widespread trend towards reporting on science and technology in Africa and the way in which it impacts the lives of the people, the 2007 Siemens Profile Awards has attracted a record number of entries from across the continent including South Africa, Egypt, Algeria, Ghana, Benin, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria and Rwanda.

Of the more than 260 entries received from 17 countries in English, Arabic, French and Portuguese, eight Category and six Merit Award winners were chosen, with the top honour of the Siemens Profile Awards Overall Winner going to Egypt's Abir Saady for his piece in the Mobility category.

Speaking at a ceremony held at Rosebank's Hyatt Regency on the 28 February 2008, Sigi Proebstl, CEO of Siemens Southern Africa, said the record number of entries from countries spanning the length and breadth of the continent reflect the growing importance of - and interest in - reporting on science and technology and the potential impact these applications have on the lives of ordinary people.

"Given the multilingual nature of the entries and the broad cross-continental representation, it is clear that the message that technology and technological advancement can be used to great effect for the benefit of Africa's people is getting increasing attention," said Proebstl. "It is also gratifying to note that since the Profile Awards were extended to journalists and broadcasters from all African countries, the number of entries has grown significantly, as have the number of prizes and merits awarded."

The South African Minister of Science and Technology, the Honourable Mosibudi Mangena, said science and technology can and should play a pivotal role in addressing some of the continent's poverty-related challenges, increasing economic growth and ensuring sustainable development, as well as improving the life expectancy and quality of the lives of Africa's citizens.

"Africa's stories and achievements in science and technology have never been given the publicity they deserve. The continent needs journalists to do its marketing and advocacy work, not only in the political arena, but even more importantly in promoting its science and technology agenda," he said. "Although we have not yet seen the media working with us to the required extent in the sharing of science information, we trust that an event like this will put the spotlight on the need for science writers and editors in all newsrooms to play their role more aggressively in this regard."

Minister Mangena said a matter of grave concern to the national system of innovation is the scarcity of science journalists and an absence of relevant and interesting subject-related stories in the media.

"As much as we are agonising to find innovative ways of making mathematics and science interesting and fun to the learners in our schools, we are equally concerned that the South African public is adequately lobbied and informed about the value of science and technology in society," he said. "In order to achieve these objectives, we need to recruit many more journalists to report on science and technology stories. There are many new discoveries in fields such as biotechnology, astronomy, indigenous knowledge, medicine, psychology, etc, that our citizens need to know about. It has, therefore, become imperative that we engage with media houses to find ways of increasing the number and quality of science journalists in our country."

Nhlanhla Nyide, General Manager: Science Communication at the Department of Science and Technology, said the Profile Awards are extremely important in highlighting the role of science and technology for Africa's development and that by recognising journalists, will go a long way in encouraging excellence in reporting as well as bring science journalism from

the periphery of the news agenda into the mainstream.

“Information and education allow people to make choices, and they can use these choices to improve their lives. In this regard the media has a particular responsibility in bridging the chasm between scientists and their work on the one hand and the public understanding of science on the other,” said Nyide. “This is an important responsibility, especially in Africa where science has the potential to impact massively on the lives of ordinary people.”

Kerry Swift, convener of the Judging Panel composed of senior journalists from English, French and Arabic media, technology writers, academics and technologists, said choosing the Overall Winner proved to be a difficult and was a “close-run thing” between three outstanding entries.

“However, the English language entry from Egypt written by Abir Saady for GAT Magazine stood out for several reasons, including the depth of research, the ability to contextualise the subject, the number of interviews carried out around the subject as well as the engagement with the political players around the issues,” said Swift. “Overall, it is a really good piece and a deserving winner.”

Category winners for the 2007 Profile Awards are Egypt's Mohamed Hassan of Stuur for Healthcare, Abir Saady of GAT magazine for Mobility, and Atef Abdel Sattar of Alam El Mal for Safety and Security; South Africa's Anthony Doman of Popular Mechanics for Industry, Barry Bredenkamp of Electricity and Control for Energy, Antonio Ruffini of WattNow for Research and Development, and Thabiso Mochiko of Business Report for Technology-related CSR; and Ghana's Godwin Nnanna of Business Day for Information Technology.

Merit winners are Egypt's Samir Mahmoud for Healthcare and Ashraf Ikram for Research and Development; Nigeria's Adetokubwo Abiola for Industry; South Africa's Charleen Clarke for Mobility and Rod Prior for Safety and Security; and Benin's Gerard Guedegbe for Research and Development.

According to Swift, this year's Profile Awards have witnessed a real quantum leap in the quality of entries, which he said are getting better all the time.

“Whereas in the past there was a big gap in quality between the top entries and the rest, what we're seeing now is a narrowing of this feature, with journalists getting more engaged with technology and tackling it in greater depth and with more understanding,” he said, adding that there is a visible impact on journalistic quality and that the engagement with technological issues is becoming more evident.

“While previously there was a reticence, most of the entries were very positive about the impact of technology and echo a belief that technology can uplift lives,” he concluded.

Editorial contact

Sithembile Mokaeanne
Siemens Corporate Communications
(011) 652-2000

Kerry Swift
(072) 273-8599