

Marketing Achievement Awards usher in the future of marketing

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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The Marketing Association of South Africa (Masa) announced the inaugural Marketing Achievement Awards earlier this year in recognising, rewarding and celebrating excellence in the science and art of marketing.

Anne Kirkpatrick, director of the Awards, tells us how the idea came about through a conversation she had with Nando's CEO Geoff Whyte and how this programme fits neatly between other industry-specific programmes...



New Marketing Achievement Award launches in South Africa

24 Aug 2017



How did the idea to launch the Marketing Achievement Awards come about?

For about 10 years there has been a need for South African marketing awards of this scale and calibre. It was through a conversation that I had with Geoff Whyte, CEO of Nando's, that the concept of the Marketing Achievement Awards was crystalised.

Kirkpatrick & Associates (K&A) has been actively involved in the marketing industry for more than 27 years and with marketing-driven initiatives, such as the Marketing Person of the Year Awards for the Institute of Marketing Management (IMM) and the Marketing Excellence Awards initiative under the banner of the Marketing Federation of Southern Africa (MFSA). We ran the *Sunday Times Business Times* Marketing Excellence Awards council from 2006 to 2008.

With the dissolution of the Marketing Excellence Awards in 2008, the future of marketing awards in South Africa was at risk. K&A with the support of Nando's stepped into the breach. I met with Geoff Whyte, who was voted South African Marketing Person of the Year by the *Sunday Times* when he was group marketing director for Cadbury Schweppes in South Africa. We discussed the valuable role that marketing awards play in recognising marketing excellence in South Africa and in raising the standards of professionalism among marketers and how there was a gap in the industry.

We spoke about the clear lack of innovative thought and the need to lift standards within the industry, to create energy and the importance of giving back to the industry. Geoff gave his buy-in with a handshake at that meeting, and two years later Nando's provided the underwriting funding for the MAA. We put the main council board and the Brand Trust together, with Geoff at the helm.



Anne Kirkpatrick

K&A Productions, a separate, dedicated awards business with specialist organisational skills, was launched in 2014 and became the home of South Africa's new Marketing Achievement Awards (MAA), endorsed by Masa. The MAA programme was launched in 2015 and the creation of the council of marketing advisors, nominated under the chairmanship of Yvonne Johnston to assist in reviewing judging processes and nominations.

Through collaborative workshoping, the main MAA council board created the awards criteria to make sure we were spot on in the niche position that these awards occupy and that we were meeting the industry's needs. Key players in the industry were asked for their input into what criteria would be used for selecting South Africa's best marketers. We started with 45 odd categories, which we whittled down to 13 core categories, with legs to expand when the industry expands.

■ ***Why do you believe there's a need for such awards or that it's important to celebrate excellence in the science and art of marketing specifically?***

There is a clear lack of celebration and the elevation of the strategic thinking that lies behind the marketing campaigns in our industry. We need to put strategy back on the map and get conversations about marketing back into the C-Suite. Marketing drives innovation, the economy and the sustainability of our brands.

Years of experience and knowledge in the industry will be shared as we acknowledge an industry that has changed significantly over the last decade. We want to award those who have made strides in improving marketing standards in this country.

In future, the MAA will include a fully-fledged business marketing programme, an ambassadors' programme and regular newsletters. We will share winners' case studies and a narrative about what constitutes excellence in marketing. The awards will create the impetus to elevate individuals, companies and brands.

■ ***What sets these awards apart from other marketing awards?***

There is no other fully-fledged festival of marketing of this quality and magnitude in South Africa. The MAA programme is not stepping on any toes, it fits neatly in between the Apex Awards, the Loeries, the Prisms, the New Generation Awards, the Bookmarks and the Most Awards.

The MAA is the only awards that celebrate the brand owners and there are no other awards directly in this space and leads the way for a cohesive, innovative marketing community that can only benefit the programmes that are already established.

■ ***Comment on the modern marketing profession – what it means to be a marketer in 2019.***

We are living in an age of intelligent marketing which will undoubtedly see new imperatives for the industry. The industry is transforming and strategic thinking, in what is becoming an increasingly channel-agnostic marketing landscape, is essential to cut through the clutter and for a brand to stand out.

“ There needs to be a shift towards future-thinking marketing, not just in the digital space, but in terms of organisational change, engaging tomorrow, today. We are creating the marketing leaders of tomorrow today and it is important to start meaningful conversations that will future-proof marketing in South Africa. ”

The MAA programme has been conceived to usher in the future of South African marketing, underpinned by the fourth industrial revolution – we are committed to creating the marketing reality of tomorrow, today.

■ ***What do you think these awards will mean for the profession/industry going forward?***

With a clear need to both elevate the profile of marketing and to reward the performance of effective, strategic and measurable marketing initiatives in South Africa, K&A, in discussion with industry, rose to the challenge and embarked on the roll-out strategy to implement an entirely new, re-energised South African marketing programme to fulfil a unique and much-needed role within the communications industry.

We devised an awards system that will create a shift in thinking, highlighting those South African organisations who – through strategic innovative thought and excellence – establish themselves as globally competitive, enabling investment, while ensuring that corporate responsibility remains prominent.

Given the rapidly changing landscape of marketing worldwide, there is a definite need to highlight the importance of marketing to business in South Africa, most notably the following:

- Providing a high-profile opportunity for applauding excellence, creating significant publicity for the winners as role models, and promoting the importance of marketing within business.
- Setting the benchmark for industry performance in order to establish new standards for the industry.
- Honouring those who demonstrate excellence in creating and delivering value that drives brand sustainability.
- Encouraging true blue marketers to become ambassadors for the industry – marketing innovation trailblazers, and to share their secrets of success.
- Overall, the MAA program constitutes a major catalyst for marketing business excellence – thus encouraging the development of South Africa's engine room for economic growth.



Entries open for the inaugural Marketing Achievement Awards

25 Jan 2019



■ **Entries have closed, but why would you encourage marketers to enter next year?**

It is critical to create an element of competition and measure how you have placed against your peers. This provides the impetus to stay motivated, keep going and to recognise excellence.

Our commitment to the MAA programme is to ensure that this initiative actively adds value to all participants of the programme by:

- Uncovering, encouraging and rewarding excellence and innovation in the field of marketing.
- Securing partnerships with industry to facilitate the creation of training and development initiatives.
- Fostering extensive business networking opportunities.
- Giving back through a variety of research and knowledge dissemination activities.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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