

Senzo Ndlangamandla comes out on top at SAICA's Top-35-Under-35 decennium award ceremony

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Senzo Ndlangamandla CA(SA), RA, head of department for accounting sciences at Walter Sisulu University and managing director at SnB Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors, has been announced as the overall winner of the highly coveted 2023 Top 35-under-35 chartered accountants [CA(SA)] competition.



This initiative was started by the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) in 2014 and celebrates its 10th edition this year. This year, as all other precluding years, the initiative delivered some of South Africa's greatest young leaders, building an incredibly talented alumnus. The Top-35-Under-35 competition recognises young CAs(SA) achievers who are not only excelling in their professional capacity, but have demonstrated leadership potential, and a commitment to ethical conduct; propelling the accounting profession to heights that were unimaginable.

More on the winners

The winners are selected by a diverse, multi-disciplinary [judging panel](#) to consider the cream of the crop among this year's Top-35-under-35 CAs(SA), who have gone the extra mile to achieve their career aspirations. Indeed, all 35 [finalists](#) are individuals who have not only successfully pursued their career dreams but have also excelled and moved swiftly through the ranks to lead operations within notable organisations.

The **overall winner**, Senzo Ndlangamandla, is an accomplished education and leadership professional, having served as the JSE Investment Challenge Coordinator in the Mthatha region from 2015 to 2018, introducing students and learners (predominately from rural communities) to stock exchange dynamics. He has climbed the ranks in the academic world to being formally appointed as head of department in 2022.

Since stepping into the role of head of department, there are many initiatives that Ndlangamandla has successfully introduced and formalised, not only those aimed at transforming the department's approach to student support and development, but also aimed at supporting and developing staff.

In 2022, he proactively put together an improvement and implementation plan which has led to an improvement of their SAICA rating from the danger zone (rating of 3) to a rating of 2. As part of this exercise, he set up a special task team comprising of senior academics from the department, WSU senior staff and some external experienced academics and educationalists from various universities.

In June 2023, he initiated the setting up and launching of a Facebook page for the department – currently the only academic department within the university with an official and university-approved presence on social media (Accounting Sciences WSU).

He recently played a lead role in organising an academic excellence awards ceremony to recognise students who excelled academically. The event, which will be hosted annually going forward, is meant to motivate students and create a culture of excellence among students. This event was a game-changer, as other departments and faculties within the university were inspired and will most likely follow suit in 2024.

On the side, he runs an audit practice, SnB Chartered Accountants and Auditors, with a staff complement of 11, all youth – thus playing his part in addressing the all-time-high youth unemployment rate in South Africa.

The **Develop** category award winner is Andrew Portmann CA(SA), Managing Partner at Alpha BPO. Portmann completed his articles at BDO in Umhlanga where he was exposed to a multitude of SMEs and large corporations and learnt the intricacies of starting and building companies from a variety of inspirational business leaders.

He has demonstrated a track record of effective strategic leadership that has delivered target-driven bottom line results and shareholder value for clients and investors alike. Andrew has led globally diverse teams and operations across the UK and South Africa through an inclusive management approach, having provided business process outsourcing services and SaaS products to large firms in the UK to South Africa's largest retail credit providers. He strives to be an impactful leader, using his business interests to uplift the communities in which he works.

Portmann's commitment to South Africa is exemplified through his charitable initiative, the Sprout Foundation, which he co-founded in 2020. The Sprout Foundation focuses on youth empowerment and combating unemployment. The foundation's projects encompass workplace readiness and job expos, feeding programmes for children in need, and improvement initiatives for less-privileged schools.

The **Influence** category winner is Craig Wallington CA(SA), co-founder and chief operating officer of MotherTree, and chief financial officer of Paragon Impact.

Wallington is an entrepreneur dedicated to addressing climate and biodiversity emergencies. He believes many of the solutions to these crises already exist and we need to focus our collective efforts on rolling these out at speed and scale. Key to this roll-out will be funding – they need money invested to mitigate their negative impacts on the planet and divested from activities that continue to cause harm. In line with this, Wallington co-founded MotherTree to make it easy for businesses and consumers to align their finances to their values. Its aim is to move £1 billion into the green economy by 2025, in the process spurring banks, pension funds and other allocators of capital to prioritise nature-positive investments over fossil fuels and other damaging activities.

MotherTree has to date supported clients in moving £2 million to greener products and has worked with large organisations such as a leading UK fintech and a large global health charity to evaluate the impact of their finances. Finally, Wallington works as an advisor to other sustainability start-ups on their fundraising and strategy, and most recently became a coach in the Grindstone Accelerator Programme.

The **Lead** category winner is Boitumelo Loate CA(SA), portfolio manager – Multi Asset, and investment analyst at 36ONE Asset Management. Loate oversees the multi-asset portfolios and is skilled in constructing portfolios that span a diverse range of asset classes offering a well-balanced and diversified investment approach. Furthermore, she takes on the critical role of managing the fixed income portion within all 36ONE portfolios, employing credit analysis, yield curve positioning and interest rate mitigation in creating resilient fixed income portfolios.

As a catalyst for positive change within 36ONE, Loate played a pivotal role in the establishment of two committees; the Sustainable Responsible Investing Committee and the Transformation and Social Responsibility Committee. As a founding member, she played an instrumental role in shaping the company's approach to responsible and sustainable investment practices and being a driving force behind initiatives that promote diversity and inclusivity. By actively participating in these efforts, she is working to ensure that 36ONE not only meets its financial goals but also serves as a socially responsible corporate citizen.

Loate's academic involvement extended to Cambridge University (Oxbridge Programme), where she lectured on behavioural economics. This opportunity allowed her to engage with a diverse and international student body, sharing insights into the fascinating intersection of psychology and economics. Her dedication to education, coupled with strategic vision, leadership skills, and an unwavering commitment to Business SA emboldens her to make a meaningful difference in financial services.

The **Gamechanger** award winner, Jodilee Manuel CA(SA), is the Head of Education and Implementation at Syft Analytics.

Manuel built Syft Campus, an online education platform that helps accountants make better data-driven decisions and grow their businesses. Syft Campus also bridges the gap between what accounting students learn at university and what they need in the industry, especially in terms of a practical understanding of accounting and digital skills. Jodilee has collaborated with universities and schools across the country, providing practical lectures and projects for free. Through these collaborations, students are empowered to apply the theory they have learned, while digitally up-skilling.

Syft Campus is just over a year old, yet it already features more than 30 courses and 12 certifications which accountants can use for CPD or CPE points, depending on the region. There are over 3,000 users enrolled in Syft Campus and more than 100,000 lectures have been completed since its launch. Syft Certified Pro Advisor is the most popular certification, taking ±13 hours to complete.

Manuel also leads Implementation at Syft, helping businesses find technological solutions to grow their businesses and improve efficiency. She recently helped an internationally listed games company, Atari, prepare their multi-currency consolidation using Syft in preparation for an audit, updating their system, and automating processes to improve the efficiency and accuracy of their consolidated reporting.

SAICA's chief executive officer, Freeman Nomvalo, lauded the nominees for being Difference Makers who contribute to the professions national value. "As we face the challenges we face as a country and need to generate an economic activity that creates employment, we as an institute are saying 'here are the young South African's who have dedicated their lives to making a difference'". He said that these awards started ten years ago when SAICA realised that the narrative that tends to gain traction in the public is the narrative that seeks to paint the majority of its members with a brush of the few who have been found on the wrong side of the ethical line. "This profession has been the anchor of development and progress in our country, and it can therefore not be disparaged by a few when even to this day, the DNA of this profession is still with us."

Gerinda Engelbrecht, SAICA's project director for digital content and publishing, says that this year's finalists are true difference makers who are actively building a better South Africa for all. And SAICA will continue to celebrate and recognise the great work that our young members are making.

SAICA extends its gratitude to its sponsors, including Standard Bank, Makosi, Xero, Mercedes-Benz, BDO, Milpark Education, CAMAF media aid scheme, the National Youth Development Agency, Heavy Chef, Finnovo, and Thamani, for their support in making this recognition event a resounding success.

Find out more information on the Top 35 under 35 CAs(SA) competition [here](#).

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