

Meet young judge Fezeka Hadebe

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

11 Apr 2019

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 Fezeka Hadebe, third-year public relations student at the University of Johannesburg...

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

It means exposure. I have been given an opportunity to learn more about the PR industry. This is going to be a great addition to my 'Working Integrated Learning' module and I doubt I will have any struggles getting an internship next semester. I had the privilege to meet a lot of experienced individuals who inspire and motivate me before I even graduate.

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

I don't have much experience in the industry as yet because I'm still a student but I've had the opportunity to have a glimpse of the industry through the SPRA (Students Public Relations Association). The Prisms has been a great experience for me. I worked alongside people who have more experience in the industry and I learnt a lot from them. This gave me a picture of what the industry holds and I'm very excited about the future.

■ **Comment on the judging process.**

Wow! The judging was not easy but exciting at the same time. The competition was very tight. There were a lot of good campaigns. It was so exciting to see students doing so many amazing campaigns and also thinking out of the box. Their creativity was out of this world. I enjoyed the part where I got to sit with the amazing judges and have a debate about which entries should be awarded, I am happier about the fact that I was given the opportunity to voice my opinion and say why I gave a certain campaign the score that I gave it. The judging brief really helped. It would have been so hard if I had to judge without it.

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

The response has been very positive especially in my cluster. I heard that the students did exceptionally well compared to last year. I feel like the Prism Awards are repositioning the industry.

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

For me, it has to be campaigns that understood their problem/opportunity statement and also creativity. Great planning and execution makes the work stand out. Not everyone was able to do that.



Fezeka Hadebe

■ ***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 I am a student myself I feel like Prisa did a great thing here. I mean how are we supposed to learn about the industry if we are not given the opportunity to apply what we have learnt at school. There is no way that practice and education can be brought together except for including students in the professional world. These kinds of initiatives allow us as students to stretch our minds, to be creative and also see things from a different perspective.

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

Young minds bring fresh, new ideas, perspective; they bring the energy. Many brands target the youth but they fail to understand how to communicate with them. As young people, we understand each other and most of the time we speak the same language. We understand the art of communicating through different platforms.

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

Wow! That the most exciting moment of my life. I learnt that my opinion matters and that I should voice it without any fear. The industry is ready for the youth who won't get consumed by the noise. After that final judging debate, I started to see things from a different perspective. I learnt a lot about what companies look at when doing campaigns. I feel like now is the time for the youth to make an immense change in the PR industry.

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

The future is very bright for PR. I say this because we're now at a time when you no longer need to explain what PR is to people; people now have a better understanding of what PR entails and organisations have a better understanding of their target audience. To me, it means that PR is being acknowledged and it has a great future.

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

This whole experience has been amazing and being chosen to be a Prism Young Judge is the best thing that has happened to me. This opportunity showed me what I am capable of and that I had a meaningful role to play amongst my peers. This title to me means that I now have a little bit of experience and now I'll be able to get an internship easily.

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

Last year I was there helping with the event and this year I'm going to be part of the event. This is still hard to believe. I still feel like I'm dreaming. I look forward to meeting some of the entrant representatives, engaging with other PR professionals and networking.

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.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. marketingnews@bizcommunity.com

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