

## SA business Oscars call for rising stars!

The deadline is fast approaching for the African Access National Business Awards 2011, the 'Oscars' of South African business and the nation's top showcase of exceptional performance by commerce and industry.

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Final date for entries is May 25, but time is needed to develop succinct, impactful motivations for those hoping for recognition from the country's most keenly contested business awards, said Ralf Fletcher, CEO of Topco Media, publisher of *South Africa's Top Performing Companies*, driving force behind the awards programme.

The business 'Oscars', sponsored by investment company African Access Holdings, will be presented at a glittering banquet at Sandton Convention Centre on June 23 - a must-attend event for business leaders since Topco launched the prestige awards programme in 2002.

More than 500 captains of industry, senior executives and senior government figures are expected on the big night. Business Report and SAfm are the official media partners, attracting high-level press coverage and media attention to the winners, finalists, judges and sponsors.

"No other business awards have such laser-like focus on the special challenges of the South African market," noted Ralf Fletcher. "Our 'Oscars' offer a unique showcase of business developments and the key trends in our marketplace."

"The dynamism and relevance of the awards programme have been demonstrated once again by exciting innovations that reflect the changing character of our market."

For the first time, special recognition will be given to businesses that achieve the most impressive growth. This category is split into two sections. One award will go to the Fast Growth SMME while a separate accolade will be bestowed on the Fast Growth Company.

There are 20 categories in all, including awards for parastatals and those organisations that are driving workplace diversity.

Shaun Battleman, CEO of African Access, commented: "The business 'Oscars' are bigger and better than ever. These awards have special stature because entry criteria are so stringent and competition for honours so intense."

"Credibility is built in. Captains of industry, top academics, successful entrepreneurs and past winners who know what it takes, to outperform their peers, independently adjudicate these awards"

"An award win here puts you in very good company indeed - which is why African Access is so proud to be involved with this awards programme."

African Access is headline sponsor of the awards for the second successive year, joining Mutual & Federal, Kintetsu World Express and Airports Company South Africa as corporate backers of the event.

Entries are judged by a stellar line-up of business achievers, Ashantha Armogam (Managing Director, GRID WORLDWID Branding & Design, Dr Sunette Steyn (of the Institute for Corporate Citizenship: Collaborative Governance and Partnership Research Programme, UNISA), Lance Fanaroff (joint-CEO, Integr8 IT), Noah Greenhill (Marketing Director, JSE), Tyrone Naidoo (Director, BEE Online), Busi Skenjana (Managing Director, BSK - Marketing Agency), Trinity Ncala (CEO, T&T Appointments), Seth Phalatse (Chairman, African Access Holdings) and Dr Geoff Visser (Group Executive - Operational Excellence, SABS).

Credibility of the business 'Oscars' is underpinned by searching entry criteria.

Every entrant must produce financials for the last three years, demonstrating profit, business growth and healthy turnover. The entrant's policies and procedures are also scrutinised to ensure compliance with best practice. Appropriate levels of diversity are also demanded.

Once the entry hurdle has been successfully negotiated, 'Oscar nominees' can expect the judges to pay special attention to financial stability and any record of successful innovation.

Positive impacts on stakeholders and customers have to be apparent. Operational efficiency is a must.

The quality of the entry motivation is key and accounts for 50% of the points awarded by the judges. Another 35% of the points are awarded for financial performance.

Remaining points are bestowed for progress with broad-based black economic empowerment.

Said Shaun Battleman: "The highest standards of judging will again be applied. Business conditions are more challenging than ever. Therefore, it's only to be expected that vying for 'Oscar' recognition will be challenged as never before."

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