

Nominations now open for 2021/2 Marketing Achievement Awards' Rising Star and Marketer of the Year

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Between now and 17 December 2021, marketing professionals across the country are invited to nominate young, rising stars from within their organisations or partner companies for the Marketing Achievement Awards' Rising Star of the Year, and fellow peers from within the broader sector for the Marketer of the Year.



The Rising Star award celebrates up-and-coming marketers who think differently, who disrupt the status quo and who challenge conventional thinking. They are under the age of 35 and demonstrate outstanding leadership, innovation and the ability to strategise for maximum business impact and growth.

The Marketer of the Year Award recognises individuals who understand the art and science of marketing; have the business, brand and category interest at heart; and leverage their skills to grow all three. They combine data, strategy, creativity and technology to deliver innovative marketing and to positively impact business results in their organisation, and use their influence to drive the industry forward.

Brian Yuyi, CEO of the Marketing Association of South Africa (Masa), says both the Rising Star and Marketer of the Year entries will be assessed against this year's MAA theme, 'marketing that means business'.

“This theme speaks to the potential of strategic marketing – as a critical tool anchored in business strategy – to positively contribute to business success. In a world where immediacy is the order of the day, marketing has to deliver on its promises. There are no second chances. You have to get it right the first time, and then evolve to continually deliver against what your customers want. When marketing is done correctly and used as a strategic tool, it closes the loop on the customer experience, ensuring brand loyalty and repeat purchases, which ultimately escalate your bottom line,” Yuyi explains.

The 2021 MAA Rising Star of the Year Award winner, Serisha Pillay, says this year’s theme solidifies the importance of the marketing profession.

“Marketing is at the heart of every organisation, and pivotal to its success. Behind the clever adverts and campaigns that you see, lies a very specific art and science, which is often overlooked. As a marketer, you need to strike the perfect balance between doing the right thing for the customer and doing the right thing for the business. That requires an integrated strategy based on data-driven insights, excellent communication, collaboration and brilliant execution, all the while remaining authentic,” adds Pillay.

She started out at Discovery Limited as a marketing intern in 2016, and in five years climbed the ranks to senior marketing manager, the position she held at the time of winning the MAA Rising Star of the Year Award.

Pillay is best known for launching the inaugural Discovery Vitality Running World Cup (2020), inaugural Discovery Vitality Run Series (2017) and introducing Snapchat national and geo-themed filters as part of the Discovery Card Katy Perry (Witness: The Tour) campaign (2018).

The 2021 MAA Marketer of the Year Award winner and MTN Group Executive: Marketing, Bernice Samuels, believes that when marketing is recognised as the lifeblood of a business, it is a powerful tool for generating sustainable value and creating long-term connections with consumers.

“Businesses typically prioritise innovation over marketing, relegating the latter to the lowly position of a cost-centre. This has been exaggerated in recent years, with the development of artificial intelligence that uses analytics to link information, products and services to consumers – all of which suggests that marketing will have less influence on their choices. But innovation can't sustain a firm by itself. You will never be able to out-innovate your competitors. It must be paired with marketing to be viable,” she says.

Samuels adds: “This isn't to say that marketing has always been an equal component in a company's success, but it is true that for struggling brands, the issue will almost never be one of lack of innovation, but rather a failure to invest enough into marketing (and I don't mean advertising). The demise of marketing is largely due to a deep misunderstanding of its role in the organisation due to the shift away from marketing strategy to a focus on marketing tactics, more specifically advertising and promotion.

Marketing's purpose is to know the customer so well that the product or service perfectly fits them and sells itself. However, for this you need a deep understanding of your customers and what they value, why they behave in a certain way, and what makes them tick. For instance, understanding what gets them up in the morning and what keeps them awake at night. Understanding what you can do that will give them more opportunities to get everything they want from your product or service. That's marketing.”

With more than 20 years' experience in brand development and strategic marketing, Samuels is a firm believer in the transformative role of brands in generating customer and company value. She has used this passion to help companies achieve brand leadership, customer advocacy, and commercial returns.

Marketers can nominate their rising stars at <https://marketingawards.co.za/rising-star-of-the-year-award/> and nominate their peers at <https://marketingawards.co.za/marketer-of-the-year-award/> before 17 December 2021.

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