

2019 Entrepreneur of the Year winners announced

Following a rigorous judging process of 15 inspiring finalists, South Africa's premier annual entrepreneurial competition, the Entrepreneur of the Year competition, sponsored by Sanlam and Business/Partners, announced this year's overall victor, as well as the category winners.



L to R Wynand Geldenhuys, Carmen Stevens, Andrew Weinberg, Uzair Essack and Theo Baloyi

This year's event saw Andrew Weinberg, managing director of Retail Engage, walk away with the coveted title of 2019 Entrepreneur of the Year.

The spokesperson for the competition, Gugu Mjadu says that while this was by no means an easy decision, the judges were all in agreement that Weinberg stood out in terms of his entrepreneurial spirit and the scalability of his business.

“Given the exceptionally high calibre of this year's finalists, choosing one overall winner required lengthy deliberation among our esteemed judging panel. However, there was no denying that Weinberg's customer engagement and incentives solutions business, Retail Engage, was a notch above the rest because of its innovative approach to providing retailers with insight into purchasing behaviour.”

The 2019 category winners are:

- **2019 Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year:** Theo Baloyi, founder and owner of Bathu Swag.

With a bold vision to build an African-centric footwear brand that can compete with big names on a global scale, Theo Baloyi is the entrepreneur behind the inspiring township success story of Bathu Swag.

- **2019 Small Business Entrepreneur of the Year:** Carmen Stevens, founder and owner of Carmen Stevens Wines.

Carmen Stevens Wines is an independent, award-winning small-batch winery and the only black-owned brand in South Africa. Ninety-five percent of the wines are exported under the Catoria label and marketed via online wine retailer, Naked Wines.

- **2019 Medium Business Entrepreneur of the Year:** Uzair Essack, founder and owner of Cape Crops.

Cape Crops is a fruit and vegetable export company based in Cape Town, which has turned the traditional fruit and veg sales model on its head by taking a tech-sawy approach and utilising innovative marketing strategies.

- **2019 Innovator of the Year:** Wynand Geldenhuys, founder and owner of Vectra. Vectra is a modern-day information technology consultancy that specialises in creating integrated e-commerce solutions through a unique data-driven design approach.

Now in its 31st year, the Entrepreneur of the Year competition sponsored by Sanlam and Business/Partners provides prizes worth R2 million.

Each of the five category winners received R70, 000, and the overall winner received R200,000, towards further growing their businesses.

Beyond these monetary prizes, Mjadu adds that each of this year's winners will also receive invaluable technical assistance and mentorship support, networking opportunities and associated marketing and national media exposure to further drive their business' success.

“Based on feedback from our past winners, this support and exposure have often proven to be just as valuable as any capital injection,” concludes Mjadu.

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