

Meet young judge Makoma Maponya

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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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 Makoma Maponya, stakeholder liaison at Reputation Matters...

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

Being recognised as a Prism Young judge plays into my journey in the industry coming full circle. I say this because I have been following the Prism Awards for a long time and just over a year ago, I was writing my very own entry for the Student Campaign of the Year category. This year, sitting on the other side as a Young Judge is an opportunity to continue learning and have a say in the future of an industry that I am incredibly passionate about.

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

Before my current position in the reputation management space, I spent most of my time doing volunteer work and interning to gain experience. Now I am a master's student and full-time stakeholder liaison who works from home. This means that I am able to manage client research and communication across various platforms, study and work on Teach A Girl Foundation, which I founded in 2016. Each day comes with learning skills that have never come naturally to me as an extrovert who works remotely but I am confident that I am exactly where I need to be and I am putting in the work needed to get to where I want to be.

■ ***Comment on the judging process.***

The judging process is a great learning experience as we individually assess each entry against the set criteria before meeting the cluster judges to discuss the campaigns and reflect on our scores and comments. Reviewing the entries in a group environment has made me appreciate and respect the work that goes into creating the campaigns as well as the different views of every judge that is involved.

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

It is exciting to see how the awards continue to attract a large number of entries that showcase the amazing talent and constant growth within the industry.

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

The winning entries show total dedication to the craft and go above and ticking the boxes of traditional PR by having



Makoma Maponya

quantifiable objectives and that special 'X factor'.

❑ ***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 a recipient of a silver award in the Student Campaign of the Year in 2018, I can say that being acknowledged for applying the theory that we are taught as students makes way for endless opportunities as we enter the world of work.

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

Young minds bring a sense of knowledge of what's going on around us digitally and culturally. In addition to what we think we know, we are also aware that there is a lot that we don't know, so bring questions, which is very important because we are all learning as we go along.

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

What really sets the Prism Awards apart is the judging process, which is designed to create a positive learning environment for everyone involved. Working alongside judges who have years of experience has taught me that there is more than one way to look at almost everything that is in front of you.

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

PR is going digital but no matter how much the vehicles we use evolve, the messages will always be rooted in the idea of building mutually beneficial relationships between brands and their audience. The present and future state of PR is moving towards sustainability and purpose as many organisations are driven by younger generations who are breaking the mould and creating content that matters.

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

The title of Prisms Young Judge for the 2019 awards is a huge honour and it means that I am part of a network of highly-respected communication practitioners who I can easily connect with for many years to come.

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

Anyone that has come across my #PrismYoungJudge entry tweet knows that I couldn't attend the awards last year so I can hardly contain my excitement as we approach the gala event. The entire experience has been incredible but I am really looking forward to meeting the people who are leading the way in communication and PR.

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.

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