

In the front row: Motshidisi Mokoena

 By Jessica Tennant

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Following the announcement of the inaugural IAB SA Front Row winners, announced online during this year's Bookmarks, we interviewed them on what the initiative means to them and what they hope to get out of it.

The aim of the initiative is to create access in terms of events and mentors, as well as career-building opportunities for South Africa's creative youth.

Veli Ngubane, IAB Transformation Council Head explains the initiative: "We have taken a pragmatic approach to support transformation in the industry this year, concentrating on access as the key focus to this end. Front Row forms part of this approach, in giving free access and support to the front row for IAB events and workshops to black students, entrepreneurs and agency interns between the ages of 18-24, and going forward 18-28."



"[SA's advertising industry] is not transformed" - Veli Ngubane

12 Mar 2020



"The IAB South Africa serves to empower the media and marketing industry to thrive in a digital economy. We do this through our connected culture and access to experts and expertise. It is vital that we are always increasing our engagement with the future leaders of our industry while bringing in a fresh, and different, perspective to the IAB SA as a whole," adds Paula Hulley, CEO of the IAB SA. "Platforms like the IAB SA Front Row and IAB SA Youth Action Council, aim to provide easier access to information and platforms of engagement while creating valuable collaborative spaces and the opportunity to 'sit at the table' with seasoned industry leaders at the highest level."



IAB invites young, black and gifted creatives to take up space in the Front Row

IAB South Africa 10 Mar 2020



In addition to being given access to some of our country's most brilliant digital media and marketing minds, each of the five winners received a R15,000, non-transferable, online-course voucher from The Red & Yellow Creative School of Business to further their digital creative and business studies, as well as a R3,000 voucher from Bookmarks 2020 event partner, G-Star and access to the front row at the [IAB SA Insight events](#).



Front Row winner Mtshidisi Mokoena

Here, our interview with Mokoena:

■ ***Congratulations on being announced a Front Row winner! What does this recognition and opportunity mean to you?***

Thank you so much. It is truly an honour to be a part of the Front Row. This recognition is the key to unlocking so many other opportunities for me as I build my career. Having been given the privilege of having access to IAB events means I have an opportunity to connect with industry giants, and for me that means a lot because a huge part of where I am has been because of networking.

■ ***What are you currently studying and/or where do you work?***

I am currently looking for work opportunities as my internship at Edits Communications (an agency run by Nomndeni Mdakhi, who is also the founder of Agenda Women) will be coming to an end on 31 March. I currently do strategy, social media management and copywriting for Agenda Women, and I am now in search of a new home.

■ ***What course are you thinking of studying at the Red & Yellow Creative School of Business and why?***

I am thinking of studying graphic design and this is because I am quite a good writer, however, my design skills are not that great and I have realised that for some organisations or brands, design skills come in handy. So, this is a strategic move in creating value for myself.

■ ***Tell us a bit about your experience. Why the creative industry and your field of interest?***

Strategic communication was not at all my first choice, but when I could not get space to study what I wanted to, I opted for strategic communication. I was looking for something without mathematics or physics, so strategic communication was perfect.

I never would have imagined myself here, but I fell in love with the course, so much that I started this thing of dissecting adverts to understand the insight and concept behind the communication.

From the first day I received a brief, I knew that this is where I wanted to be because my personality and character get to shine in such a space. I am also grateful that I got to be taught by the likes of Dayle Ruff and Roela Hattingh. Not only did they feed my curiosity about the ins and outs of this industry, they made the learning process such fun that I yearned for more.

■ ***Comment on the challenges facing the industry.***

The nature of communications continues to be altered by our surroundings or environments. There is so much noise around us that it sometimes becomes difficult for organisations to keep the numbers up (depending on their objectives) and still stay relevant to their audience. Another challenge is the evolution of technology and elements to communications, and sometimes that makes it a bit difficult to keep our skills list up to date.

■ ***Comment on the current state of the industry/the impact of the pandemic and current lockdown on the industry.***

Due to unemployment, most people are now opting for freelancing, and as a result of the outbreak more and more people have to come up with strategies to not just keep making money but to also collect their money from clients.

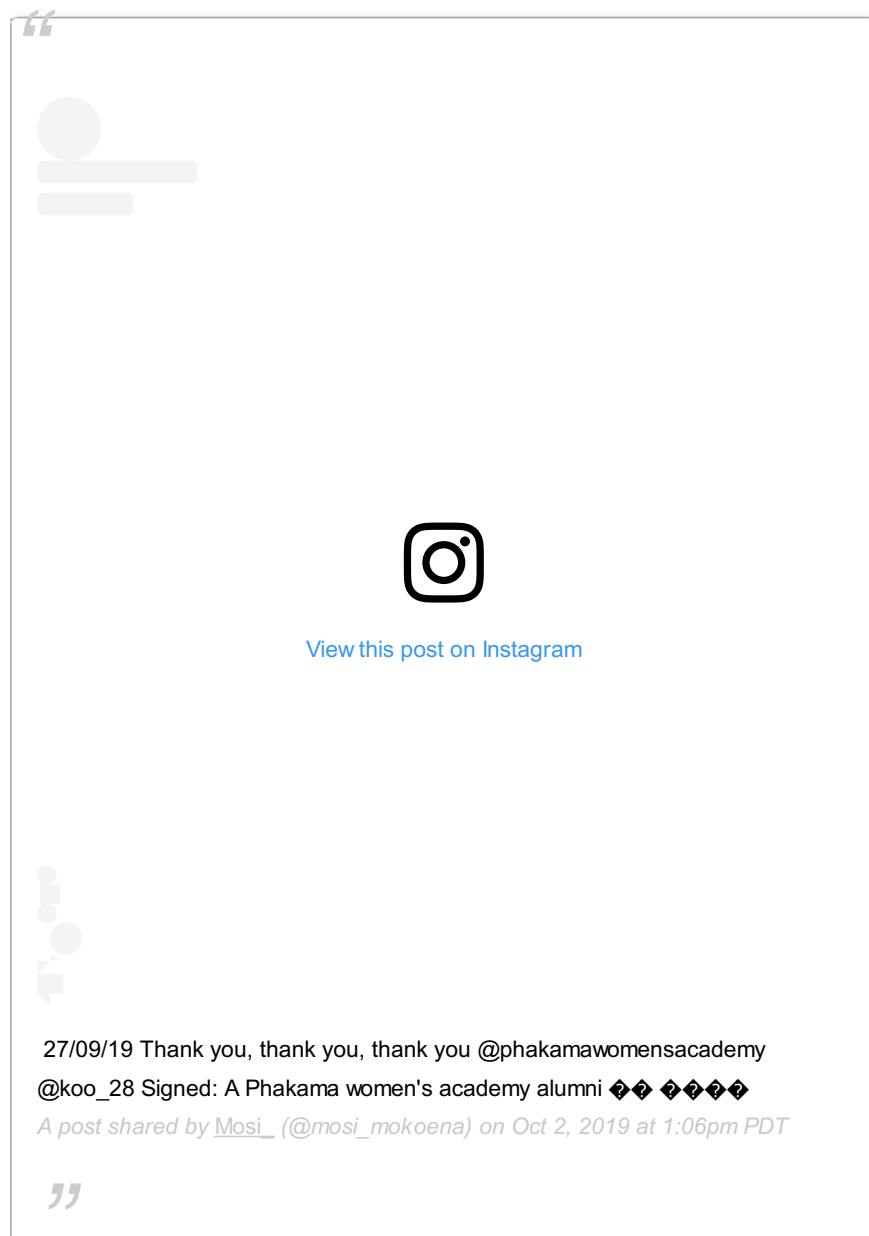
Freelancers have it really hard as they continue to be faced with having to do a lot of work at negotiated rates, and then having to struggle getting paid. Perhaps organisations should look at how they can bring some freelancers on board for projects that are still on during this time.

■ ***Comment on the power of access, mentorship and collaboration in transforming the industry?***

As a graduate, or rather someone who is still at the very beginning of building their career, I have a lot of questions about how the industry works. I may even be uncertain about what I really want to do, and that is why having access to useful information can help a great deal.

Before becoming part of the Phakama Women's Academy, I underestimated the power of having a mentor, but now I

realise that I actually should have started seeking mentorship earlier.



someone who has made the mistakes you are making and having the privilege to have them guide you so that you avoid making those mistakes. You basically have someone who will give you shorter ways of getting around certain things in your career among other things, based on your relationship with your mentor.

It really helps me to have people who believe in me, push me, guide me, help me navigate my way to building a name, people who I can look up to and have hope that I stand a chance at making it, no matter how hard it seems.

■ ***What does the future of the industry look like to you?***

The future of the industry is uncertain. As strategic communication practitioners, we need to be extremely flexible. Communications is becoming more about the ability to think on your feet and come up with emergent strategies than just being about putting out messages and content.

■ ***What are you most looking forward to?***

I am looking forward to meeting other creatives and learning something new about the industry, and creating my place in the industry.

I cannot wait to see what the future of the industry has in store for us and what challenges the future will bring.

I am also looking forward to starting my course at R&Y, at the end of the national lockdown so that I can go shopping and attend events.

I honestly love attending events where I will be able to network and meet new people.

A big, big shout out to the IAB SA for such an amazing initiative and opportunity, and to also thank my mentors, Nomndeni Mdakhi and Sunshine Shibambo for all their guidance and for believing in me. These are the people I look up to and they always push me to do great things – they set very high standards.

Find out more about the IAB SA's Front Row initiative [here](#). Follow Mokoena on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), and the [IAB SA](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for updates.

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