

: PR is at centre of today's communication mix - Maggs

The 2014 PRISM Awards' guest speaker, and a judge this year, Jeremy Maggs, says 'PR is at the centre of the communication mix today and an effective part of the communication mix.'

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#) 7 Apr 2014

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon in Gauteng but the venue for the 17th Annual PRISM Awards, The Maslow Hotel Conference Centre in Sandton, was brimming with anticipation and excitement as the who's who of the country's public relations industry gathered.

Ashraf Garda, host of The Media Show on SAfm, was MC (and a judge) and kicked off proceedings *a la* Oscar style (The American version, not the local courtroom drama one) by encouraging everyone to take their own "selfie" *a la* Oscar style. Being the PR industry, most obeyed.

On a more serious note, in his welcome, Kevin Welman, Chair: PRISA Public Relations Consultants Chapter, and FleishmanHillard South Africa MD, said these were the biggest Award to date with 174 entries. This, he said, was testimony to the hard work of everyone involved in the awards and the PR agencies themselves as well as their clients.

Changes, but mobile stays

There were some changes to the Awards this year. Campaign of the Year replaced the Overall PRISM Award. Also included this year, for the first time, were agency awards. A category that did not respond well was the mobile category, but Welman said the category would not be removed, as this is where the future lies.

The guest speaker, and a judge this year, Jeremy Maggs, said: "PR is at the centre of the communication mix today and an effective part of the communication mix." He pointed out that three years ago only seven of the top advertising agencies had a PR offering; today 19 agencies do. "This shows the importance of PR."

38 judges judged the awards. They felt that this year's entries were of a higher quality than previously and that entries are following the guidelines. There was also more creativity in the entries and they said they were looking for the wow factor, innovation and asked themselves: "Are we doing locally what our counterparts are doing internationally?"

However, what they did say was that research was lacking. This was glaringly obvious, and needed to be more than just dipstick research. At times there were not enough details to help the judging process.

New this year

New to the Awards this year were the agency awards - Best Small Public Relations Consultancy (a complement fewer than 10), Best Mid-Sized Public Relations Consultancy (between 10-29) and Best Large Public Relations Consultancy (more than 30). Commenting on the agency category entries, Johanna McDowell said the entries in these categories were mostly from the mid-sized agencies, not the big agencies. "The number of small agencies that entered is exciting because they are doing new and different work and they will grow into mid-sized agencies."

The winner of the Campaign of the Year was Atmosphere, for their Burger King South Africa campaign. Nicola Nel, MD of Atmosphere, said it was out-of-the-box creativity and the delivery of business results that made the campaign the success was. "That success can still be seen as the public are still lining up outside Burger King."

Atmosphere also won Best Mid-Sized Public Relations Consultancy. Nel said the Award was an external acknowledgement of great work by a great team. "It motivates us to do even better work. In terms of the PRISM Awards, they are growing in stature, which can be seen by the number of entries. There is a good sense of competitiveness among the PR agencies and as a result we are all upping our work."

The best Small Public Relations Consultancy boasted eight finalists, with Positive Dialogue, a Cape Town-based PR agency the winner. Tracy Jones, MD, was almost speechless but overjoyed. "Nothing happens overnight. This is a culmination of a lot of hard work and consistently delivering meaningful business results."

'A culmination of so much good work'

FleishmanHillard South Africa won the Large Public Relations Consultancy. Welman was thrilled. "To me this is a culmination of so much good work; work that takes place every day. The Award validates to our clients that they are working with a world class agency."

PR Worx's Shannon Roscher was awarded Best Up and Coming Public Relations Professional, with the agency's Chantel Riley and Madelain Roscher being awarded Best Public Relations Professional and the Lifetime Achievement Award respectively.

"The awards are a testimony of the great work we do and it is wonderful to be recognised by our peers. For me the Awards prove that PR is no longer the stepsister of advertising. It is exciting to see PR developing and important that we are all on the same platform so that our voice can grow," says Roscher.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

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