

Firestarters igniting business creativity

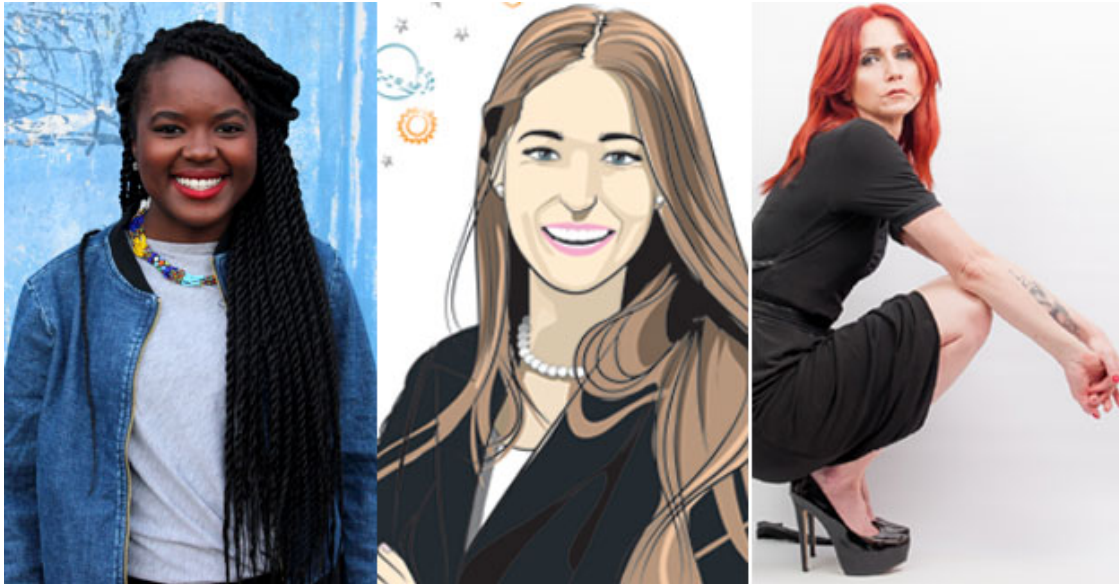
 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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Ignite! is a session of TED-style turbo-charged talks with an innovative twist, set to end off the 2016 SABC Education Innovation Summit with a definitive bang later today. Here's what you can expect from a few of this year's 'firestarters' (that's Ignite! lingo for speakers at the event)...

Ignite! will bring together corporate innovation thought leaders with a blend of entrepreneurs, artists and entertainers for short bursts of energy-packed innovation lessons, stories and ideas.

For example, you'll hear from Puno Seleshe, a student and social entrepreneur filled with creativity and spoken-word genius, on the topic 'the journey of a story'; Yolande Steyn, head of innovation at FNB, will share information on the creativity process and how to put the crazy back into corporate; while Nicola Cooper, senior trend researcher and analyst at Nicola Cooper & Associates will speak to the point of differentiation and the 'glocalisation' of trends as a pivotal business strategy.



Seleshe, Steyn and Cooper.

Below, all three share their views of business innovation, how local business can boost the power of innovation and benefit from doing things differently and their favourite examples of brands getting that sometimes risky form of creative thinking and implementation just right...

1. What does business innovation mean to you?

Seleshe: Business innovation, simply put, is the ability for companies to provide fresh new perspectives on existing issues. This goes beyond using the latest business jargon in boardrooms. There's an untapped well of creativity in each and every human being, which should be used and encouraged in existing and new businesses. We need more of a human approach to be able to create extraordinary products and services.

Steyn: Innovation is the ability to take original and creative ideas, and implement it to create meaningful and game-changing benefit aligned to our corporate strategy. Innovation is part of everything that defines FNB. It is one of our strategic pillars and comes to life in our corporate values. The FNB innovation culture is embedded in everything that we do and challenges our employees to constantly think differently and solve business needs innovatively. It enables employees to change the status quo by making our products and channels customer-focused, and mandated to be as customer-centric as possible.

Cooper: Business innovation means that businesses understand their current zeitgeist or signs of the time. A business should always gauge its relevance in providing products or services, as well as the realistic market and savvy consumers to stay on point and on a constant growth from both their existing and aspirational consumer typologies.

2. Tell us how local business can boost the power of innovation and benefit from doing things differently.

Seleshe: Local businesses need to retain their authenticity and turn their 'it' factor into something viable. Industries crave unique products and services which scream 'African!' So local businesses should never compromise on what they believe in and it all starts with the owners and starters of these businesses figuring out their own identities and translating that into their work.

Steyn: The way that FNB has embedded innovation into its core has been a powerful way to boost the power of innovation in everything we do. Innovation is addressed in a multi-tiered way and has the following key characteristics:

- Leadership is fully invested in a culture of innovation.
- The corporate strategy is embedded in disruptive innovation.
- A decentralised structure allows for agile development and continuous innovation.
- The innovation culture is consistently enabled through the internal staff engagement programme.
- Product development processes allow for rapid innovation where the business case holds true to building shareholder value.
- The FNB recruitment policies focus on attracting talent that fits in to a corporate culture of innovation.

The strategy for our Innovators Programme includes learning methodologies, helping employees to learn from internal subject matter experts as well as external speakers not related to the banking industry. We encourage staff to think differently. We focus on ideation and creativity and how ideas should be shared in an environment where they can grow. The programme in essence supports an idea incubation structure and then culminates in an innovation rewards programme. Across the organisation, innovation is celebrated and rewarded.

Cooper: Many businesses have outdated procedures and protocols, perspectives or a misunderstanding of new 'careers' such as trend analysis, social media marketing and many roles developed around the rise of technology. Businesses need to understand that over the past ten years we have seen such a tremendous shift due to technology, social media and an overload of information and they need to reevaluate their long-term goals, constantly reinvest into researching their consumers and build pliable and accurate strategies around an ever-changing and moving landscape.

3. What's your favourite example of brands getting that sometimes risky form of creative thinking and implementation just right?

Seleshe: Companies like Uber blow my mind! They took simple concepts like 'community' and 'sharing' and have turned it into a business! They've also hinged on the concept of self-empowerment and entrepreneurship by creating a platform for the drivers to be as successful as the amount of work that they put in. Basically, they've taken an incredibly human approach and have created a fantastic service.

Steyn: FNB has definitely done that many times with the launch of services such as eWallet, our app and the new FNB Connect MVNO offering. One brand that continuously inspires me is SpaceX. Every time Elon Musk is told something is impossible or unaffordable, he does it, at a fraction of the cost. His ability to think 'boundary-less' is an inspiration to innovators everywhere.

Cooper: There are many brands getting things right – Dove, Always, Bodyform and Pantene campaigns around the understanding that there is no longer an archetype for beauty and incorporating the new concept of #Femvertising in their campaigns.

That's just a small glowing ember of what to expect. Ignite! takes place at 3pm on Friday, 23 September, as the SABC Education Innovation Summit comes to a close. Tickets cost R295, but you can still [click here](#) for our 2-for-1 special offer if you've not already registered to attend...

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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