

Ask Afrika's Da Vinci Awards 2018 winners announced

Ask Afrika's inaugural Da Vinci Awards was held at Summer Place in Hyde Park, Sandton, on 21 November 2018, where some of South Africa's top companies were honoured.



MMI Holdings Limited won Ask Afrika's inaugural Da Vinci Awards for the innovative use of research about presenteeism to impact positively on workplace productivity.

"The Ask Afrika Da Vinci Awards are a new initiative and are our way of recognising what our clients' have achieved not only by commissioning unique research but on how they use this research innovatively to have a positive effect on society," said Andrea Gevers, CEO and founder of Ask Afrika.

Leading companies entered the awards by detailing how they had used research results to create innovation in their industry. The submissions were assessed by an independent panel of nine esteemed judges.

Finalists

- Shoprite
- The Financial Intermediaries Association of South Africa (FIA)
- The Out of Home Measurement Council (OMC)
- Routes to Results
- The Childhood Cancer Foundation (CHOC)
- Final Mile
- The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC)
- MMI Holdings Limited
- Ithala Development Finance Corporation
- Unjani Clinic

Top accolades

MMI Holdings Limited took top accolades for its innovative use of Ask Afrika's research on employee presenteeism.

Ask Afrika conducted fieldwork for MMI Holdings Limited centred on employee productivity between 2016 and 2017. The results were analysed and used to produce the Presenteeism Report in 2018. The research was used to quantify the problem of presenteeism for employers and track the impact of implemented interventions to determine the return on investment and improved employee engagement levels – leading to improved profits for the organisation over time.

“This research has quantified that South African businesses are losing up to a staggering R89bn per annum due to unproductive employees. This is costing local businesses as much as 5% of their gross operating profit,” said Sarina de Beer, director: client experience at Ask Afrika.

“Up until now, presenteeism has been very difficult to quantify as it is subjective. The research allows an organisation to tell what proportion of employees are distracted at work, as well as the time that employers lose. It provides an opportunity for employers to assist employees to improve their personal situation, which includes finances and health. This is for the greater good of all – the employees’ benefit, the employers’ benefit and ultimately the economic benefits,” said Elaine Wright, client engagement manager at MMI Holdings Limited.

The winner was presented with a sculpture, Voëlvry, created specifically for the awards by renowned artist Anton Smit.

Confidence, courage and creativity

Final Mile, an international organisation involved in research for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, came second for its use of research Ask Afrika conducted to improve understanding of adolescent girls’ and young women’s decisions and behaviours with regard to HIV testing, prevention and treatment, and how to speak to different generations in their language and requirements. The research assisted healthcare-focused organisations to improve adoption and adherence of healthcare products.

Shoprite secured third place for its use of Ask Afrika’s research on its Super Service Awards (SSA), which are an internal motivational programme that has proved to be a hugely successful incentive to ensure employee participation, increased morale, and ultimately the enhanced success of the Shoprite group of companies.

“It requires confidence, courage and creativity for business leaders and researchers to ask difficult questions and to be prepared to listen to unexpected answers. Using market research optimally is all about being prepared to listen and ultimately understand, even when the conversation is uncomfortable, and to be willing to alter your course of action or business strategy accordingly,” said Gevers.

“True business acumen does not always mean that you get it right the first time, but that you will learn, grow and innovate to create new models within your industry that will improve on the status quo. Our Da Vinci Awards celebrate companies who challenge assumptions and clarify business and political thinking for the greater good.”