

# Difference makers celebrated at inaugural award ceremony

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It is often said that actions speak louder than words. The true measure of leadership lies in the actions we take when inspired by noble causes, dreams and plans to make a difference. The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica) recognised 11 of its members at its inaugural Chairman's Difference Makers Awards Dinner. Among those honoured were: Professor Wiseman Lumkile Nkuhlu, the first black chartered accountant in South Africa; Ajen Sita, CEO of Ernst and Young (EY) Africa; and the late Thembekile "Kimi" Makwetu, South Africa's former Auditor-General.

When SAICA launched its Difference Makers organising concept in 2021, in alignment with Chartered Accountant Worldwide's global brand positioning strategy, the aim was to showcase real-life stories of members making a sustainable difference that yields positive business, social and economic returns for all – a difference that will elevate the noble accountancy profession, as well as South Africa to new heights.

The Chairman's Difference Makers Awards Dinner, sponsored by SAPRO, are a continuation of this project where the organisation hope to share the stories of its prestigious winners far and wide as part of its ongoing efforts to restore trust in the accounting profession.

Said Saica's Board Chairman, Vincent Motholo: "As we are all aware, our profession has come under an extreme amount of scrutiny due to the negative actions of a handful of high profile accountants that have come to light over the past few years. While these individuals represent a miniscule proportion of the total membership body of our esteemed profession, these high-profile cases unfortunately overshadow the excellent work the vast majority of our members and associates do to make a difference in their roles, the economy and broader society. But with these awards, we're changing that narrative in a significant way. We are ensuring that that our members' commitment to driving positive change in the world receives the attention it truly deserves."

Added Saica CEO Freeman Nomvalo in agreement: "At Saica, we believe that our members are the difference. Trained to uphold high ethical standards; our members and associates are equipped for the future and enabled to make an impact on business and in society and this is underpinned by a duty and responsibility to act in the public interest. By telling their stories, we are showing the world that the profession is made up of individuals who are purpose-driven to make the world a better place, that they are focused on remaining relevant and fit for the future, playing a valuable role in their organisations and communities, that they live and work with integrity, and are focused on making positive changes that are in the interest of all."

## 11 winners honoured

"There are over 750,000 CAs and more than a million CA students around the world – and they do so much more than look at the numbers. Today's accountants are business advisors and difference makers in a myriad of ways. It was with this in mind that when we began to brainstorm the categories of this event, that we knew that we had to find ways to honour as many of the avenues where our members and associates are making a difference as we could. And so, we came up with ten overarching themes that we thought fitted this purpose. From innovators and future thinkers, to those who lead business, sustainability, integrity, national interest and more, we reached out to all our members, associates and various committee structures to find the true difference maker among us," explained Motholo.

The winners of the categories are as follows:

### 1. Future Fit winner: Shabeer Khan, CFO of the Department of Trade, Industry & Competition



The Future Fit category honours the courageous, unconventional Saica member who doesn't believe in limits and who sees every day as an opportunity to be different. Someone who creates the change and opportunity they want to see in the world.

The winner of the award, Shabeer Khan, was honoured for the work he has done as the CFO of the Department of Trade, Industry & Competition (dtic). Prior to Khan joining the dtic, the department had never achieved clean audit status. However after implementing various internal controls and systems improvements, under his guidance and leadership, the department has achieved many clean audits. Khan was also lauded for creating a platform for an ethical, resilient and capable department

dedicated to driving continuous change and improvements and laying the foundation for a number of strategic achievements for the betterment of the country.

## **2. Innovator winner: Anri Coetzee, Global Process Owner, General Ledger at EY Global**



The Innovator Award category honours a Saica member who is known for exploring the boundaries of the possible, venturing beyond the improbable, imagining the way things could be and then finding the gaps by creating new and more effective ways to do traditional things.

Awarded to Anri Coetzee, Global Process Owner, General Ledger at EY Global, she was honoured for the work she has done in harmonising the global General Ledger processes and controls from end to end, ensuring adoption of changes and driving optimised quality and cost of delivery through process automation and standardisation. Most recently, Coetzee was responsible for the development of a new, integrated global journal posting solution aimed at creating operating efficiencies and cost

optimisation.

## **3. Sustainability winner: Belinda Carreira, Sustainability Director at Emergent Africa**



The most precious asset all businesses share is our Earth. The efforts individuals and businesses make to sustain this vital resource is not only necessary, but it also makes good business sense. The Sustainability Award honours a difference maker who has made sustainability an integral part of their business; someone who actively aims to help solve the United Nations (UN) 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The winner for this category is Belinda Carreira, Sustainability Director at Emergent Africa. Carreira receives this award for two key reasons. The first is for co-founding #SustainableSA in 2020, a project sponsored by Saica., that collaborates with strategic partners and experts to provide focused

monthly information on each of the UN 17 SDGs. The second reason is for setting up and establishing the Sustainability Advisory business at Emergent Africa, which seeks to ensure that all businesses incorporate Sustainability into their Strategies and that Boards and Shareholders receive the feedback and insights they need on this crucial topic.

## **4. Excellence in Education winner: Professor Benjamin Marx, head of the Accountancy Department at the University of Johannesburg**



The fourth award is for those in the profession who have made it their life's work to make a tangible impact on how we educate the future members of Saica. Exclusively for someone in Academia or in the accounting education space, the Excellence in Education award was handed over to Professor Benjamin Marx, head of the Accountancy Department at the University of Johannesburg.

Prof. Marx has been an academic for more than 32 years and has made significant contributions to the chartered accounting profession in addition to championing transformation as well as education on all levels.

## **5. National Interest winner: Chantyl Mulder, Executive of Marketplace Academy**

The National Interest category was put in place to honour a member of the profession who is purposely driven to change the lives of others for the better. This award is for a member who understands that we only rise higher when we uplift others in the process.



Given the nature of the award, it should be no surprise to the profession that the winner is Chantyl Mulder, Executive of Marketplace Academy.

With a career spanning just short of 40 years, Mulder— also known as Mother Thuthuka, thanks to her role in founding Saica's Thuthuka Education Upliftment Fund – is one of the profession's greatest champions of transformation and education. This year, the fund celebrates its 20th year in the existence and has been instrumental in opening up the profession for previously disadvantaged racial groups.

#### **6. Humanitarian winner: Ismael Lambat, General Manager at the Council For Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)**



The Humanitarian award goes to a member who has truly lived up to the words “servant of the people” and has dedicated his career to improving the welfare of mankind.

It was awarded to Ismael Lambat, General Manager at the Council For Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) for this involvement in Humanitarian Aid work. Lambat's impact as a business leader to lead and influence large-scale projects aimed at combatting poverty through food security is renowned. He has also been instrumental in leveraging professional networks to access CSI funds for the benefit of the most needy, directly leading projects on skills development for the underprivileged and also creating avenues for entrepreneurship.

#### **7. Ethical Leadership winner: Parmi Natesan, CEO of the Institute of Directors South Africa**



The Ethical Leadership award honours a member who daily chooses courage over comfort and stands up for what is right, regardless of the repercussions.

The well deserving winner of this award is Parmi Natesan, CEO of the Institute of Directors South Africa.

Natesan is a corporate governance specialist who has authored articles/papers and spoken at conferences/events. She serves on many committees, including the King Committee and the Anti-intimidation and Ethical Practices Forum and is an advocate for Saica's Unite for Mzansi™ movement. As part of these structures, Natesan is a champion for good corporate governance as well as ethical and effective leadership.

#### **8. Courageous Leadership winner: Ignatius Sehoole, CEO of KPMG SA**



The Courageous Leadership winner, like so many others tonight, needs no introduction. His story of taking on the role of rescuing a sinking ship has been told many times.

That individual is Ignatius Sehoole, CEO of KPMG SA.

Sehoole has always set himself apart as a voice of justice and reason in the business world. This has helped him become one of the most well respected voices in the South African audit profession and the man picked to rebuild a battered KPMG. He embodies ethical leadership through his belief that a leader ought to demonstrate conduct for common good in all situations – whether you find yourself in a business environment or so-called private capacity. He believes that leaders are forerunners and as such have a responsibility to set an example of ethical conduct even outside of the formal business arena.

## 9. Leader in Business winner: Ajen Sita, CEO of EY Africa



The Leader in Business award was by far the most entered category in this year's nomination process and honours a member who develops, influences and leads others to be great.

The winner of this category goes to Ajen Sita, CEO of EY Africa.

Throughout his career, whether it was as a young trainee, manager, early-stage partner, leadership roles, or CEO, Sita has been driven by a sense of purpose in the work that he does. He believes that when you are driven by a sense of purpose, you always look to make the circle bigger. As his entry put it so beautifully: "[As a leader,] you don't look at anything selfishly for yourself or what's in it for you, but rather how can this be better for the people around you, for the organisation, for the business community, for our country, for our continent. If you expand your own mindset, your own horizon, your own view, your perspective to something that's bigger and larger and set yourself ambitious goals."

## 10. Leader in Public Accountability winner: Thembekile Kimi Makwetu, the previous Auditor General of South Africa



The next award is a special award that, while not opened for entries or nominations, Saica's chairman believed that it would be remiss not to honour the invaluable contributions to the country this individual made during the course of his career.

Awarded post-humously, the Leader in Public Accountability award recognises the late Thembekile Kimi Makwetu, the previous Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA).

Makwetu sat at the helm of the AGSA for 13 years, first as deputy auditor-general to Terrence Nombembe and then taking over the office. The quintessential civil servant who took his job as South Africa's auditor-general seriously and threw every sinew of his being into it, Kimi passed away on 11 November having fought stage four lung cancer for two years.

## 11. Legacy winner: Professor Wiseman Lumkile Nkuhlu, chairperson of KPMG SA and the Chancellor of the University of Pretoria



And finally, the last award recognises someone who's legacy inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more. His is a story that gets shared by others and will be remembered for decades as he has left a last legacy in minds of the profession, and indeed the country, that will be etched into the history books for decades to come.

This award winner should also come as no surprise as not only is the winner a true icon and stalwart of the profession but indeed as one of its leading pioneers. This award was handed over to none other than Professor Wiseman Nkuhlu, chairperson of KPMG SA and the Chancellor of the University of Pretoria.

As the first Black Chartered Accountant he was a pioneer in the profession and during his over 40 years in the profession, Professor Nkuhlu has played key roles in academia, philanthropy, development, business and politics. From being a political prisoner on Robben Island at the age of nineteen to being the economic adviser to President Thabo Mbeki, he has been a leading light for inculcating a corporate culture of accountability, ethical business leadership and the advancement and development of South Africa.

"This year's winners represent the tip of this iceberg of distinction. On behalf of the profession, I thank every single person who entered as well as those who nominated someone for this year's awards, for reminding us of just how much of an impact one person can make in society when you make purpose, impact and difference making one of the cornerstones of your life and your career. To our winners and finalists, you are all exceptional and Saica acknowledges and thanks you for

the work you are doing,” concluded Motholo.

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