

# Women in Technology Dare To Dream bigger for SA small business sector

Issued by [The Innovator Trust](#)

12 Nov 2021

The Innovator Trust 2021 Women In Tech Appreciation Experience was hosted on Thursday, 4 November 2021, with a bold call to action to South African women to Dare To Dream.

The one-day event, hosted as a hybrid event with both a physical and virtual audience, is an annual celebration on the [Innovator Trust](#) calendar which seeks to recognise and award the outstanding achievements of female small business owners within the technology sector.



*Leigh Anne Williams*

Hosted by TV and radio personality, Leigh Anne Williams, #WIT2021 offered a captivating line-up of keynote addresses and panel discussions featuring renowned women in leadership, government and the private sector including the likes of Minister of Small Business Development Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, former Public Protector of South Africa, Professor Thuli Madonsela, and Chancellor of the Nelson Mandela Bay University, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi.

Award recipients included female small business owners who are beneficiaries of the Innovator Trust [Enterprise Development](#), [Supplier Development](#) and [Young Entrepreneurs](#) (YEP) incubation programmes. Coupled with the award, was also a cash injection for each recipient to be utilised towards their businesses. Among the award categories were awards for Overall Top Achiever in Enterprise Development, awarded to Jennifer Classen, CEO of Ngaphaya Y2K10 based in the Western Cape, and recognition for the business who created the most employment opportunities in 2020/21, awarded to Akhona Mlilo, owner of Ululo Empowerment Technologies from the Eastern Cape. The top prize Pinnacle Awards went to three Gauteng-based winners, Constance Mokgabudi representing in the youth segment, Abigail Thompson, owner of Pro-Networks, announced as the Supplier Development winner and Sihle Hlophe, owner of Passion Seed Communications, and also a 2021 SAFTA award winner, who walked away with the Enterprise Development Pinnacle award.



Left to right: Prof. Thuli Madonsela, Jennifer Classen, Lerato Rampana, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Ruby Moodley, Irene Charnley, Tashline Jooste

The Women In Tech 2021 programme tabled pertinent topics relating to the role of entrepreneurs in building the future society and economy of South Africa, the effects on SMMEs of the rapid technological transformation to digital business over the 2020/21 period, as well as an authentic look inside the world of female small business owners, presenting an opportunity for speakers and attendees alike, to share and reflect collectively, on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and unemployment.

“For small business owners in South Africa, digital transformation is seen as a critical business driver for economic growth. The digital tsunami has overtaken us. Where doing business digitally was something to work towards previously, it is now a vital tool for doing any business at all. The key take-away is that small businesses must be more informed and in future, more prepared to deal with the only constant we can count on – more change,” said [Tashline Jooste](#), CEO of the Innovator Trust, during her keynote address.



Tashline Jooste

Acknowledging the unique challenges experienced by women over the last two years, [#DareToDream](#) was a fitting theme for this year’s Women In Tech Appreciation Experience. For many, this message resonated as women shared their stories of hardship in running a small business during the pandemic, the pressure of the changing roles of mother, teacher, business owner, housekeeper, etc., which was thrust upon women under hard lockdowns, and the issue of [gender-based violence](#), declared as the second pandemic which many women had to contend with during this period.

A highlight from #WIT2021 included a robust panel discussion moderated by TV presenter and radio personality, Pabi Molo, on the influence of technology on various industries and how that has caused an evolution within the realm of entrepreneurship. Another was the riveting keynote address followed by an exclusive one-on-one interview with former trade unionist and businesswoman, Irene Charnley. In addressing the gender equality topic, “What Does Equal Look Like”, Charnley encouraged women to “take up space and walk like you belong”, calling for a “50% Women” future with 50% representation of women reflected in business structures, economic remuneration and general society.



Irene Charnley



Other dynamic and inspiring female voices that featured in this year's Women In Tech Appreciation Experience included CEO of AB4IR (SEDA) Kelebogile Malopyane, the Head of the Naspers Lab, Mapule Ncanywa, the Executive Head of Vodacom Business KwaZulu-Natal, Eleni Kwinana, Consultant for Innovation and Technology at SEDA, Kgaladi Thema, SAFTA Award-winning film-maker, Sihle Hlophe, and Innovator Trust SMME alumni, Ruby Moodley, CEO and founder of IT Networks, Jennifer Classen, CEO of Ngaphaya Y2K10 and Lerato Rampana, founder of Kathabo Trading.



Left to right: Kelebogile Malopyane, Mapule Ncanywa, Eleni Kwinana, Kgaladi Thema, Sihle Hlophe, Pabi Moloi

For highlights and content from the 2021 Women In Tech Appreciation Experience, visit the Innovator Trust website, [www.innovatortrust.co.za](http://www.innovatortrust.co.za), subscribe to the [YouTube](#) channel or follow the Innovator Trust on social media.

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The Innovator Trust was created to support the growth of small black-owned Information and Communications Technology (ICT) businesses in South Africa. Our programmes facilitate training that develops their skills as business owners.

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