

Burson-Marsteller Africa



By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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The Public Relations Institute of South Africa's (Prisa) Prism Awards is Southern Africa's premier awards for public relations excellence. The Awards are presented to public relations and communication professionals who have successfully incorporated strategy, creativity and professionalism into public relations and communication programmes and strategies that showcase successful public relations campaigns.

I chatted to some of the gold winners following the 2017 awards ceremony...



All the 2017 Prisa Prism Award winners!

6 May 2017



This year Burson-Marsteller won the Gold Award for 'African Network of the Year' for a second year in a row. Ruth Kolevsohn, chief operating officer at Burson-Marsteller Africa tells us what winning the award means for the firm and what they plan to do going forward to keep winning these types of prestigious awards.

■ Congratulations on scooping gold at the 2017 Prism Awards! Tell us more about this year's win for the company.

We are thrilled to have received the Gold Prism Award for 'African Network of the Year' for the second year in a row. Our commitment to growing partnerships has underpinned Burson-Marsteller's activities across Africa and this award is a tribute to our partners and to every member of our African team, in all 53 countries we cover on the continent.

Each one of our partners is individually respected in its own country and collectively we are recognised as the pre-eminent African communications network. In the case of Burson-Marsteller Africa, the African proverb: 'if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together' is absolutely true. Partnership is everything to us. Some background: In 2014, Burson-Marsteller rebranded the network it acquired in 2011 to Burson-Marsteller Africa and simultaneously announced branded partner offices in 27 countries. Later that year, that number increased to 29 with the signing of two additional affiliate partnership contracts, both of which had been long-standing exclusive affiliates. In October 2016, the number increased to 36 countries with the launch of Blast Burson-Marsteller in the Indian Ocean Islands, Marketing On Burson-Marsteller in Angola, and the extension of its existing partnership with Icon Burson-Marsteller in Cameroon into two new territories – Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon.



Ruth Kolevsohn, chief operating officer at Burson-Marsteller Africa

■ This isn't the first time you've received recognition at the Awards. Tell us about your company's previous Prism Award wins.

As a communications network, we are proud to have been nominated for and to have won a number of Prism awards in recent years, in recognition of the work we do for our clients.

'African Network of the Year':

- 2017 - Gold Award winner in the 'African Network of the Year' category

- 2016 - Gold Award winner in the 'African Network of the Year' category
- 2015 - Special mention in the 'Africa Consultancy of the Year' category

Other Prism awards:

- In 2017, we won a bronze Prism award in the 'Business-to-Business' category for our work with SES, across 15 markets in Africa
- In 2015, we won the gold and bronze awards in the 'Media Relations' category:
- We won a gold Prism Award in the 'Media Relations' category for successfully launching the Paramount Group Anti-Poaching Skills and K9 Training Academy
- We were awarded a bronze Prism Award in the 'Media Relations' category for the inauguration of the First Automotive Works (FAW) production plant in Port Elizabeth
- In 2013, we were awarded a bronze Prism Award for *Ben10* in the 'Launch of a New Product' category

■ **What's your winning recipe?**

One of our greatest achievements was realising many years ago that Africa was a large, untapped and underserved market with a young and growing population, and having the foresight then to begin developing partnerships with local communications agencies.

Burson-Marsteller Africa is the pre-eminent African public relations network. Through our network of partners in 53 of the 55 African countries – 36 of them branded Burson-Marsteller – we offer an unequalled footprint and a tailored for Africa approach tested over 25+ years that combines local agency insight and connectivity with seamless project delivery driven out of the Burson-Marsteller Africa hub in South Africa. Our hub-and-spoke model of working across multiple markets allows us to think globally but act locally, and delivers unparalleled results. It ensures consistent communications, allows us to leverage customer and supplier partnerships and the established media relationships of our partners, and enables the transference of key learnings across multiple geographies. Our model also allows our clients to spend less time, effort and fewer resources on co-ordinating and generating results than they would were they using a multi-agency model to implement their African communications activities.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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