

Meet SA's top entrepreneurs

South Africa's top entrepreneurs were recognised on 4 September 2013, with the announcement of the winners of the 2013 Sanlam/Business Partners Entrepreneur of the Year competition.

Following an intense judging process and assessment of the 14 successful entrepreneur finalists, the overall winner is Tommy Makhatho, owner of BiBi Cash & Carry, a retail group situated in the rural area of Qwa Qwa in the Free State. Makhatho was also awarded the Job Creator of the Year title due to the significant contribution he has made in the local community by providing jobs to more than 680 employees.

According to Nimo Naidoo, project manager of the competition, Makhatho was awarded the overall title because of his ability to build and grow a sustainable business, despite facing strong competition from established supermarket chains in the area, as well his determination to continuously seek ways to increase his bottom line.

Category winners

- Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year: Jonathan Pepler of Silverline Group
- Small Business Entrepreneur of the Year: Andrew and Chris Brown, co-founders of The Daily Buzz
- Medium Business Entrepreneur of the Year: Anton Rossouw, founder and owner of Life Path Health
- Innovator of the Year: Dr. Conrad Smith and Mariaan du Plessis, founders and owners of Medical Nutritional Institute
- Lifetime Achiever Award: Margaret Hirsch, COO of national appliance store, Hirsch's

Naidoo says that the competition is committed to playing a crucial role in elevating the standard of entrepreneurial activity in the country, as well as fostering a national entrepreneurial spirit. "Our goal is to promote entrepreneurship as a viable and exciting career path."

Judges impressed with contribution to GDP, job creation

Xolani Meva, a member of the judging panel, says that while the quality of entrants improves each year, this year revealed a significant increase in the quality of businesses entering.

"If we were to compile graphs with statistics of the combined revenues, net profits and the number of jobs created by the entrants annually, this year would reflect a spike in the graphs. In spite of the economic climate they have had to trade in over the past couple of years, SMEs are continuing to make a serious contribution to the economy."

Meva says that it is vital that the country continues to celebrate these individuals. "Being an entrepreneur is no walk in the park, no matter how long someone has been an entrepreneur. These individuals wake up to a different kind of a challenge

every day and, with their never-say-die attitude, they soldier on and continue to make their businesses bigger and better and the spin-offs to the economy are invaluable. We need these individuals to keep going, so we need to continue celebrating their successes with them."

Naidoo says that not only do entrepreneurs generate much wealth, but they also provide a substantial number of jobs. "Entrepreneurial excellence should be promoted as the norm and not the exception. By promoting and supporting these entrepreneurs as role models we hope it will serve as an inspiration to others to succeed in the world of business," concludes Naidoo.

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