

Top 35 under 35: More than just a CA

By [Gareth Olivier](#), issued by [Milpark Education](#)

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As a co-founder of CA Connect and a CA myself, I have been involved with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica) [Top 35 under 35 Awards](#) (T35U35) since its inception in 2014, when I was the runner-up in the competition. This year I am particularly privileged to be a T35U35 judge and pleased that Milpark is a contributor and sponsor for this inspiring initiative that celebrates the exceptional.



The Saica Top 35 Under 35 competition is about broadening CAs' horizons beyond just the accounting profession and appreciating young people who make 'a meaningful contribution to society'. South Africa is home to amazing people and the more we expose ourselves to positive and authentic change-makers, the deeper our empathy and gratitude for each other – and, hopefully, out of that we grow into less self-centred people. As somebody who seeks to do this in my own career – to help empower communities – I'm very proud to be part of this. And, of course, Milpark is delighted to support this initiative.

The Top 35 is more a community than a competition and I'm grateful for the people I've met along the way. I've been involved since the very first 2014 event, as I believe it represents everything that is right about our sector: committed and responsible leaders who strive to go above and beyond their (day) job by putting their skills to work in many more domains than just

business. And learning from these people is always a treat.

People ask how we as Top 35 judges assess what 'meaningful contribution to society' is in this context. My answer is that the 35 young people selected as finalists are the kind of people who have systematically moved the needle on important societal projects – to the benefit of others – in a way that may not have inevitably happened otherwise. Their involvements range from support for the arts, entrepreneurs and tech start-ups to leadership development, the empowerment of women and the education of youth. They excel in all kinds of ways and display the sort of grit and care that is needed to succeed in today's world.

At Milpark we are synthesising this grit and care into our educational DNA. There is always a need to test, reflect, adapt and redo, if we want to succeed. If there is a space for both teachers and learners to do this and bring their whole passionate selves to work, we will all be in a far better position to contribute – not only to our learning, but to ourselves, our families, our communities, our sector and our economy.

Watch video: [Saica Top 35 Under 35 Panel Discussion: Leading with Empathy](#). Milpark Education's chief student experience officer, Gareth Olivier CA(SA).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gareth Olivier is Milpark Education's chief student experience officer.

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