

TransUnion[®]



★ ★ ★ ★ ★
**RISING STAR
AWARDS**

Sponsored by
news24

RECOGNISING

Professionals

— MOST TALENTED YOUNG PROFESSIONALS UNDER 40 —

**08/10/2025
NH SANDTON**


BLACK BARK
PRODUCTIONS

TransUnion[®]


SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS

ZUTARI
IMPACT. ENGINEERED.



accenture

Sage




GAUTRAIN
the world on the move



Recognising Talent, Empowering Future Leaders

TransUnion and the 2025 Rising Star Awards

At TransUnion, we take pride in being a certified Top Employer in Africa, renowned for fostering inclusive environments where individuals thrive. Our sponsorship of the 2025 Rising Star Awards underscores our dedication to nurturing the next generation of leaders.

For the past five years, we have been celebrated for cultivating workplace cultures where diversity flourishes, talent grows, and associates are empowered to reach their full potential.

Our dynamic teams across South Africa, Kenya and the Global Capability Centre Africa exemplify how embracing diverse perspectives leads to success.

By sponsoring the Rising Star Awards, we acknowledge and honour individuals with the ambition, vision, and capability to make a significant impact. We are thrilled to celebrate the emerging leaders shaping Africa's future and to support them on their journeys.

Together, we're helping build a brighter tomorrow.



Lee Naik

CEO & Regional President, TransUnion

Welcome to the 2025 Rising Star Awards!

It is my privilege to congratulate you on being part of this remarkable group of **Rising Stars**. Each year, this platform reminds us that leadership is not defined by age or tenure, but by courage, creativity, and the conviction to make a difference.

At TransUnion Africa, our purpose is clear: Information for Good. But purpose only comes alive through people — through leaders like you who see challenges not as barriers, but as opportunities to shape something better.

Africa is standing at a pivotal moment. Technology is rewriting the rules of possibility. Data is unlocking new ways to include the excluded. And bold new thinking is needed to solve problems that matter — from financial inclusion and education to sustainable growth and healthcare access. That's where you come in.

The Rising Star Awards celebrate more than individual achievement. They celebrate the future we are building together. Your ideas, your energy, and your leadership are already helping to reshape businesses, industries, and communities. You are the generation proving that empathy and innovation go hand in hand, and that leadership in Africa must be as diverse, dynamic, and resilient as the continent itself.

As you reflect on this moment, remember: recognition is not the destination — it is the beginning. The real prize is the opportunity you hold to lead differently, to challenge the status quo, and to create an Africa that is more inclusive, more connected, and more brilliant than ever before. On behalf of TransUnion Africa, I celebrate you and the impact you are already making. I cannot wait to see how far your leadership will take us all.

Together, let us reimagine what's possible.

Lee Naik
CEO and Regional President
TransUnion Africa



Laura Barker

CEO, BlackBark Productions

Good evening everyone, and welcome to the 14th Annual TransUnion Rising Star Awards!

It's a pleasure to have you here as we celebrate 60 exceptional young professionals from across the country — five standout individuals in each of 12 industry sectors. These Rising Stars represent the future of our country and continent, and we're proud to honour your talent, drive, and passion. Congratulations — you've truly inspired us and the judges. Speaking of judges, we had over 70 this year — our largest panel ever! Thank you for your time, insights and dedication to this programme. You play a vital role, and it's wonderful to have so many of you here tonight.

A big thank you to our sponsors — TransUnion, Absa, Gautrain Management Agency, Accenture, Sage, SAA and Zutari. We're grateful for your support and look forward to continuing this journey together. To everyone else — thank you for being part of this special evening and helping us celebrate these future leaders.

Some of you may recall that a year ago, I stood here with only a vision — the **Rising Star Movement for Good**. I asked for your support, and you delivered. Thanks to your generosity, we've raised over R1.5 million to help combat food insecurity among tertiary students. We now have programmes running at Buffalo City and Capricorn TVET Colleges as well as at DUT — with more coming soon.

Once again, I ask for your support. Please consider pledging via the QR code below. Together, we can ensure no student has to learn on an empty stomach — and support their success beyond the classroom. Later tonight, we'll also recognise our top contributors from the past year.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to my amazing, hardworking team. Well done to all of you. Now, let's get this evening started — may it be a night to remember. Here's to a brilliant year ahead!

Laura Barker
Founder and CEO,
Rising Star and GradStar Programmes



Scan & Donate



The AI platform for people, money and agents

Together, we're moving business forever forward.

workday.com/en-za

© 2025 Workday, Inc. All rights reserved. WORKDAY and the Workday logos are trademarks of Workday, Inc.



www.hollardgrouprisk.com

Hollard Group Risk is an independent specialist insurer that offers group risk products to help employers protect employees and their families in case of long-term illness or death. **Key benefits include life insurance, accident coverage, disability, and critical illness cover, among others** — core components of employee benefits packages. Hollard Group Risk is recognised for innovative, flexible risk solutions tailored to your workforce's needs.

For more information contact: Dan Moeti: Executive Head: Business Development - 010 056 4484

Hollard.
group risk

Hollard Group Risk, a division of the Hollard Life Assurance Company Limited (Reg No. 1993/0014/05/06), is a Licensed Life Insurer and an Authorised Financial Services Provider (FSP 17697).



ALVI'S DRIFT

You're making waves every day just by being you.
We think that deserves a spontaneous toast.

ELEVATE

EVERY MOMENT

Alvi's Drift Sparkling Wines
DARE TO BE TRUE.



Everythings begins with a story, start yours with us.



Set along the historic Eerste River in Stellenbosch, the story of Seven Sisters Vineyards begins with the Celebration of Sisterhood. Experience authentic South African cuisine paired with quality-driven Seven Sisters wines.



Groups • Conferencing • Events • Weddings

Seven Sisters Vineyards, Off Annandale Road, Lynedoch, Stellenbosch
021 879 1996 • bookings@sevensisters.co.za • www.sevensisters.co.za

EVENT AGENDA

- Reception and networking in the ballroom
- Starters Served
- Introduction by MC, Nicholas Goliath
- Word of thanks by Laura Barker, CEO, BlackBark Productions
- Welcome by Lee Naik, CEO & Regional President, TransUnion Africa
- Entertainment: Jimmy Nevis
- Dinner served
- Presentation of the TransUnion Rising Star Awards
- Social Impact - Individual Award
- Social Impact - Corporate Award
- Inspirational Leader Award
- Legacy Award
- Dessert & Dancing

MENU

Starters

Quiche with microgreen salad

Mains

Sirloin with potato fondant, creamed spinach, broccoli, & rosemary jus

Vegetarian

Mushroom Gnocchi

Dessert

Vanilla panna cotta, black cherry compote, Chantilly cream



The calibre of **TransUnion Rising Star Award** winners reflects the rigorous, future-focused adjudication process. This year, candidates were measured against demanding criteria that highlight the competencies essential for success in today's evolving world.

VISION & ABILITY TO INNOVATE

Judges sought candidates who could envision a better future and turn ideas into meaningful solutions. Rising Stars stood out by questioning the status quo, showing initiative and embracing digital opportunities with courage, creativity, and intrapreneurial drive.

PASSION & IMPACT

True vision inspires action. Judges valued candidates who set clear goals, motivated others, and delivered results despite obstacles. Rising Stars demonstrated resilience, optimism and accountability, translating passion into impact that left lasting contributions in their industries and communities.

RESPONSIBLE ENGAGEMENT

Responsible Engagement meant leading with integrity, humility and accountability. Judges sought candidates who fostered trust, social concern, and inclusivity while empowering others to thrive. Rising Stars embodied ethical leadership, showing how principled action uplifts individuals, organisations and broader communities.

AGILITY IN UNCERTAINTY, ENCOMPASSING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Judges looked for resilience and adaptability in navigating uncertainty. Rising Stars embraced emerging technologies, made decisive yet informed choices and remained open to diverse perspectives. Their proactive approach to digital transformation highlighted leadership capable of thriving in complex, shifting environments.

SYSTEMS THINKING AND SENSE-MAKING

Judges assessed candidates on their ability to see the bigger picture, interpret complexity, and connect variables. Rising Stars demonstrated maturity, balanced decision-making and global awareness, guiding organisations and communities with clarity, foresight and adaptability in rapidly changing circumstances.

Judging Process

Phase 1: Self-Assessment

Each year, the judging process begins with an application where candidates provide evidence of the assessment criteria. They are adjudicated and ten semi-finalists are chosen in each category.

Phase 2: Video Submissions

The semi-finalists provide video responses to questions focused on the five criteria, and judges rate their answers to select five finalists.

Phase 3: Final Judging

During the final round, candidates presented a 15-minute case study addressing the global workplace crisis, where change, complexity, and conflict continue to escalate, leaving employees disengaged, stressed and disconnected.

Judges evaluated candidates on their ability to propose practical, innovative steps for creating healthier, more resilient workplaces. The 2025 Rising Stars impressed with their problem-solving, goal-driven focus and balanced risk-taking, particularly in demonstrating how technology, collaboration and empowerment could be harnessed to build environments where both people and organisations can thrive.

“Stars don’t compete, they shine where they stand and use their light to light the way for others”

**Nolwazi Tshikala, Senior Director HR
DHL Express SA**

LEADERS ARE FORGED, NOT BORN.

Enter **The Forge:**
Curated masterminds for
senior and emerging leaders.

Designed and facilitated
by *Rising Star* Founding
Judge, Janet du Preez.



Lead on Purpose.
Not on Autopilot.

www.engagementdynamics.com
janet@engagementdynamics.com

linkedin.com/in/janet-du-preez/
linkedin.com/company/engagementdynamics/



CRITERIA

BANKING & FINANCIAL SERVICES JUDGES

Supported by:  TransUnion



Avanthi Maharaj

**Head of HR- Africa,
Google**

Avanthi champions a people-centric, empathetic approach to HR that aligns with business purpose and strategy. With over 20 years' experience at global companies including Mastercard, Citibank, Absa and Google, she believes HR should drive meaningful impact beyond policy. She is passionate about building long-term relationships, supporting employee well-being and contributing to social change. In her free time, Avanthi enjoys sci-fi and crime series, following global news and spending time with her family and fur baby.



Malisha Awunor

**Founder,
Ikigai People Advisory Services**

Malisha is a purpose-driven HR leader and inclusion advocate. With a background in industrial psychology, she blends human-centred design and practical innovation with emerging tools like AI to help build inclusive, values-based workplaces. Passionate about youth development and mentorship, she believes in lifting others as she climbs. Her work is grounded in empathy and authenticity, supporting leaders to grow with courage.



Dr. Busi Tshabalala

**Group Executive: Human Resources,
ARM**

Dr Busi is a seasoned HR leader with over 25 years' experience. She holds a PhD in Commerce and Administration, an MBL, and qualifications in industrial psychology and labour relations. Passionate about transformation, talent development and women's advancement, she has led HR teams locally and internationally. Recognised for her thought leadership, Dr Busi actively contributes to national and global forums on skills, gender equity and organisational change.



Ntsako Baloyi

**Director,
NB Excellence**

Ntsako is a Chartered Environmentalist with over 12 years' experience across FMCG, mining, manufacturing, and energy. He has held leadership roles in national and international environmental bodies and has been recognised with several accolades, including the Mail & Guardian Top 200 Young South Africans and the Rising Star Award. Ntsako is passionate about sustainability, youth empowerment and environmental leadership. Outside of work, he's a self-taught chef who once appeared on the BBC's Come Dine With Me.



Themba Chakela

**Head of People, Culture & Change,
E-Motion Consulting**

Themba is a strategic human capital leader focused on reshaping organisations through innovative, people-first strategies. A trusted advisor to executives, he drives impact across culture, transformation, organisational design, and talent. With expertise from HR delivery to digital enablement, he consistently leads high-value change. His career reflects agility and a passion for using technology to drive performance, efficiency, and lasting value.



Phumzile Hlatshwayo

**Executive: Human Capital,
Netstar**

Phumzile has extensive experience across mining, manufacturing, telecoms, insurance, and technology. She specialises in implementing Target Operating Models, leading M&A and HR due diligence, and driving workforce planning for new businesses. Her work includes cost containment, enhancing HR business acumen, shaping organisational culture with CEOs, and developing HR systems, process mapping and wellness strategies.



Ogotlhe Sathekge

**General Manager: Human Capital,
JHB Property**

Ogotlhe is a seasoned HR executive and entrepreneur with over 25 years' experience. She has deep expertise in organisational development, talent management, performance, DEI, and employee engagement. Passionate about youth development, Ogotlhe is a forward-thinking leader focused on building leadership pipelines, strengthening employer brands, and aligning people strategies with sustainable growth.



Janet du Preez

**Managing Director,
Engagement Dynamics**

Janet is a leadership strategist, entropy antagonist and ecosystem architect who helps leaders and systems thrive amid complexity, conflict, and change. Janet is the creator of the Astute Leader Development Ecosystem and Leader Forge team game, both designed to catalyse transformative leadership. Her work combines strategy, design, creativity, coaching, systemic insight and powerful facilitation to unlock strategic clarity, ethical action and collective impact.



Kal Narotham

**Group Head: Performance Management,
Absa Group**

Kal has over 16 years' experience in management consulting and performance enablement, driving high-performance teams and championing a growth mindset and workplace neuroscience. She holds a degree in Computer Science and Business Information Systems, which supports her unique blend of technology, business and people expertise. A trained brain-based coach, Kal mentors emerging leaders and fosters development through innovation, coaching and insight, delivering transformative impact across organisations.



Mampai Motsau

**Gneral Manager: Change Management – ERP
Transformation, Exxaro**

Mampai is an Industrial Psychologist, certified coach and facilitator with over 20 years' experience in Human Resources across multiple sectors. Her consulting work spans Southern, East, and West Africa, as well as the UAE, focusing on talent management, leadership development and psychometric assessments. A sought-after speaker, she has presented at numerous events across the continent. Mampai is passionate about driving meaningful transformation through people and purpose-led change.



Misiwe Xolo

**Business Development Manager,
Telkom**

With over a decade's experience in business development, marketing, and sales, Misiwe has driven brand visibility, market growth and product adoption across telecommunications, technology and consumer industries. She holds an MBA from the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), where she serves on the Alumni Speakers Network. Passionate about writing, her work has been published on various platforms. Notably, she is a 2024 Odgers South Africa CEOx1Day awardee and 2020 Accenture Rising Star finalist.



ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT JUDGES 2025

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT JUDGES

Supported by:  absa



Teboho Mokoena

**Director,
BOMANTSIKA**

Teboho is a results-driven human capital professional with extensive experience across the full HR value chain, including strategy, business planning and operating model execution. Recognised for his impact in the field, he holds the Executive Professional designation (IPMEP) from the Institute of Personnel Managers - its second-highest honour. Teboho is passionate about aligning people strategies with organisational performance and sustainable growth.



Siyamthanda Ndlakuse

**Executive Manager: Commercial & Contract
Management, Gautrain Management Agency**

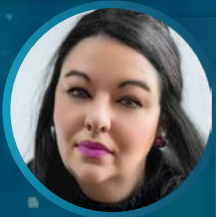
Siyamthanda brings extensive expertise in infrastructure planning, strategic leadership and concession management within South Africa's transport sector. Recognised as a 2023 Rising Star in Transport, Logistics & Security, she is passionate about sustainable development and youth empowerment. Committed to nurturing future leaders, Siyamthanda champions innovation and excellence in her field and now serves as a 2025 judge for the TransUnion Rising Star Awards.



PJ Bishop

**Vice President: Partners, Alliances and
Accountants – Africa and Middle East, Sage**

PJ is a seasoned business leader with deep experience in consulting, partner enablement and customer success within the tech and SaaS landscape. With a BCom (Hons), he has held key leadership roles focused on building strategic alliances and developing high-performing teams. Starting his career at Sage, PJ rose through the ranks with a passion for collaboration, growth and delivering solutions that help businesses scale and succeed.



Cindy de Barros

**Talent Acquisition Lead: Africa,
Europe & Middle East, Hatch**

Cindy has over 15 years' experience in strategic recruitment across global markets, specialising in engineering and technical talent. She has led talent acquisition initiatives across Africa, India, the Middle East and Europe, including early career programmes that build future-ready talent pipelines. Passionate about diversity and high-performance teams, Cindy is committed to connecting exceptional people with meaningful opportunities that drive innovation, growth and sustainability in complex environments.

ENTREPRENEUR JUDGES

Supported by:  Sage



Sisi Mahobe

**Head of HR,
Glencore**

Sisi has over 30 years' experience in the mining sector and holds a Master's in Diversity Studies from the University of the Witwatersrand. She is passionate about youth and women development, with recent achievements including driving 30% women representation in a leading mining firm, receiving the World 50 Impact Award for gender parity and securing EDGE Plus Certification for Intersectional Equity. Sisi is committed to inclusive, values-driven leadership that delivers lasting impact.



Akhram Mohamed

**CEO,
The Blank Canvas**

Akhram is a seasoned technology professional, entrepreneur and content creator with over 20 years' experience in the consumer tech space. He leads strategic marketing and media ventures, including a consultancy, digital platforms and editorial work. Passionate about simplifying complex ideas, he uses storytelling to empower others and spark purposeful growth. Akhram blends creativity, strategy and digital insight to drive innovation and impact in the ever-evolving tech landscape.



Venessa Dewing

**Vice President: Sales,
DHL Express**

Venessa has held several senior leadership roles at DHL Express Sub-Saharan Africa, including Vice President: Customer Service, she also serves on the African Management Board. Known for her resilience and people-focused leadership, she connects regional and global markets with growth opportunities. Passionate about talent development, she leads with communication, collaboration and an unwavering commitment to results.



Phase 2

Bridget Makhura

**Chief People Officer,
The Clicks Group**

Bridget is an accomplished leader with over 17 years' experience spanning human resources, operations and executive leadership. She has held senior roles at AB InBev Africa, served on multiple boards, and driven strategic growth across African markets. Recently nominated for the 2025 CHRO Awards, Bridget is recognised for her inclusive leadership and impactful people strategies. Passionate about transformation and leadership development, she is dedicated to creating cultures where individuals thrive and organisations achieve sustainable success.

ICT (TELECOMS & TECHNOLOGY) JUDGES



Londiwe Mncube

**Chief Human Resource Officer,
Competition Commission South Africa**

Londiwe has over 15 years' experience in human resources across both public and private sectors, with board experience and recognition as HR Leader of the Year by the Institute of People Management. She holds a master's degree in Human Resources Management and is passionate about driving inclusive, transformative people practices. Londiwe is deeply committed to South Africa's development goals and actively fosters mentorship and growth for young professionals in the workplace.



Justice Nkosi

**Vice President: HR,
Sasol Mining**

Justice has over 24 years' experience across the full HR spectrum, with roles in forestry, manufacturing, banking, FMCG, and mining. He holds qualifications from TUT, Unisa and an MBA in HR from GMU, Italy. Passionate about workforce planning, transformation and youth development, he actively mentors talent and supports community upliftment. Justice is a long-standing member of HR bodies including IPM, SACHRA and SABPP, and contributes as an academic advisor and Rising Star Awards judge.



Tshamani Mathebula

**Head: Sasol Foundation,
Sasol South Africa**

Tshamani is a dedicated mother, coach, mentor, facilitator, speaker and author with 27 years' experience in human resource development, change management and leadership. She has worked across sectors including petrochemicals, aviation, banking and FMCG. She holds a Master's in industrial psychology and an MPhil in corporate strategy. Passionate about transformation, talent, and lifelong learning, she empowers others to reach their full potential. She is the author of Tshamy's Musings, Unmasking, and The Smell of Your Relationship.



Kiveshen Moodley

**Country Managing Director,
Workday**

Kiv has nearly 25 years' experience in the global technology sector, driving innovation, transformation, and meaningful impact. A bold thinker and growth mindset champion, he is passionate about using technology to unlock individual and business potential. As a mentor and leader, Kiv empowers others to navigate change and embrace emerging tools like AI. His work reflects a deep commitment to purposeful progress and shaping a future-ready world through tech.

☆☆☆☆
RISING STAR
MOVEMENT FOR GOOD

SOLVING *FOOD INSECURITY* AMONGST TERTIARY STUDENTS



30% of tertiary students in South Africa experience *food insecurity* which severely impacts their ability to *focus* on studies, complete their coursework, and *perform* to their full academic potential.

Sponsor *a meal a week* for a student
in need for as little as **R250/month**
movementforgood.org.za



laura@blackbark.co.za

**"To build a great nation, we must nurture our youth,
for a life devoted to others is a life well lived."**

Tshepo Kgobe, Gautrain Management Agency CEO



Tyrin Naidoo

**Group Head: SPMO,
City of JHB**

Tyrin is an award-winning executive and public infrastructure professional with over 14 years' experience addressing complex public and private transformation challenges. A former TransUnion Rising Star Award winner, he currently heads strategic portfolio management at the City of Johannesburg. Tyrin brings deep expertise in governance, digital systems, and programme delivery. As a 2025 Rising Star Awards judge for the ICT and Telecoms category, he is passionate about recognising emerging talent shaping the future of innovation and connectivity.



ICT (TELECOMS & TECHNOLOGY) JUDGES 2025

INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING JUDGES



Jacques Greeff

**Chief Operations Officer - Optix Group,
Optix Africa**

Jacques is a transformational leader recognised for driving operational excellence in supply chain and technology. An international speaker and industry thought leader, he is passionate about high-performance teams, breakthrough innovation, and nurturing emerging talent. Guided by a philosophy of empowerment, Jacques encourages organisations to challenge boundaries, break down silos and exceed expectations. His work reflects a commitment to building resilient, future-ready businesses that thrive in dynamic and competitive environments.



Percy Moleke

**CEO,
GCRA**

Percy is a leader in economics and development, with academic credentials including a Master's in Economics from Georgia State University and degrees from Wits and Vista. She has held key leadership roles in government, including Programme Manager for the National Planning Commission Secretariat, and drives South Africa's domestication of the SDGs. Percy also contributes her expertise to higher education as a council member and donor board chair at North West University.



Dr. Abdullah Varachia

**Global Strategist,
GIBS**

Dr Abdullah is a globally recognised strategist, he has advised governments, Fortune 500 firms, and leading multinationals across five continents. Abdullah has co-founded four ventures, sits on several boards, and directs Harvard's Senior Executive Programme for Africa. With a PhD in foresight as a dynamic capability, he is a sought-after keynote speaker and thought leader on strategy, innovation, and navigating disruption.



Phase 2 Mmabatho Tlale

**Chief Human Capital Officer,
Zeda Limited**

Mmabatho has over 20 years' experience in human capital management. She holds multiple degrees, including a BCom Law and an LLB, and is currently pursuing a Master's in Labour Law. Known for her empathetic leadership, she is deeply committed to fostering a positive work environment, serving others and leading by example. Her approach to leadership emphasises nurturing people, enabling growth and driving sustainable business success.



Phase 2 Tshepo Kgobe

**Chief Executive Officer,
Gautrain Management Agency**

Tshepo is a multidisciplinary engineer with over 24 years' experience leading complex infrastructure, energy and mining projects, with deep expertise in the railway sector. His career spans senior engineering management, project delivery and board-level leadership, where he has driven transformation, technology integration and commercial growth. With international exposure and a reputation for strategic foresight, he is committed to building resilient transport systems and unlocking long-term public value.



Phase 3 Innocentia Hloshe

**Acting Senior Manager: Employee
Wellness, Gautrain Management Agency**

Innocentia is a seasoned human capital professional with 17 years' experience spanning employee wellness, organisational development, performance management and talent acquisition. She has successfully implemented large-scale culture transformation projects and graduate pipelines while integrating employee wellbeing into business strategy. Passionate about people and culture, she advocates for workplaces where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

MANUFACTURING FMCG JUDGES



Gontse Madumo

**Group Head: Talent Acquisition,
PG Group**

Gontse is a seasoned Industrial and Organisational Psychologist with over 16 years' experience in talent acquisition across industries including insurance, chemicals, energy and FMCG. Passionate about the evolving nature of the field, she thrives on using data and employer branding to shape organisational success. Known for her entrepreneurial, passionate and creative approach, Gontse drives future-ready HR and talent practices. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking, travelling, and exploring food experiences that enrich her personal growth.



Nokuthula Selamolela

**Chief Executive Officer,
FoodBev Manufacturing SETA**

Nokuthula is a respected leader with 20 years' experience spanning finance, telecoms regulation, and education. She holds a Master of Commerce in Development Finance, along with multiple accounting and leadership qualifications from UCT, UKZN, and Harvard. Her accolades include the Standard Bank Top Business Women in Public Sector Award, Swiftnet's CEO Award, and the African Leadership Person of the Year Award.



Bedelia Theunissen

**HR Executive,
Mintek**

Bedelia is an accomplished industrial psychologist with over 24 years' experience driving people strategies and cultural transformation across diverse industries. Recognised among the Top 100 Most Influential Global HR Professionals, she is a lifelong learner with multiple degrees in psychology and a Master's in Industrial Psychology, and is currently pursuing her PhD. Known for purpose-driven leadership, she inspires organisations to unlock potential, foster resilience and achieve sustainable impact through people.



Vanessa Goonahsylin

**Chief Human Resources Director,
Accenture**

Vanessa is a dynamic HR leader with over 20 years' experience driving talent strategies and transformation. She holds degrees in industrial psychology and management, which support her expertise in talent acquisition, performance management and employee relations. Passionate about fostering a culture of care and innovation, she is inspired by her faith, family, teaching, giving back and embracing diverse cultures and cuisines.



Aphindile Bokleni

**CEO,
IG Markets South Africa**

Aphindile is an accomplished executive with extensive experience in financial services, business growth, and operational excellence. He has successfully led large-scale initiatives, including establishing international operations and building high-performing teams across diverse sectors. He holds a BCom from Wits University and is a Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst (CAIA). With strong commercial acumen, strategic insight and a people-first leadership style, Aphindile is driven to create value through innovation, performance and exceptional client experiences.



Phase 2 Mqokeleli Gomba

**Chief Operating Officer,
Rio Tinto: Richards Bay Minerals**

Mqokeleli is a seasoned executive with nearly 20 years' experience across mining, engineering, asset management, processing and FMCG. He has held senior roles at organisations including South African Breweries, Anglo American and De Beers. A strong advocate for lifelong learning, he holds a BSc in Engineering, a Master of Engineering and an MBA. Mqokeleli brings a versatile skill set and a values-driven approach to leadership and transformation.

MEDIA & ADVERTISING JUDGES



Dr. Antoinette Roberts

**Chief Executive Officer,
Bridging the Gap and Associates**

Dr Antoinette is a dynamic and purpose-driven strategist with deep expertise in organisational design, leadership development and business transformation. She has led impactful initiatives across industries, enabling customer-centric, sustainable growth. Holding a PhD in Philosophy, she excels in aligning strategy with systems and capability. Passionate about the social economy, future-focused HR and women in leadership, Dr Antoinette is also a sought-after speaker and coach.



MEDIA & ADVERTISING JUDGES 2025

RISING STARS GO FURTHER WITH SAA VOYAGER



At **South African Airways**, we believe every rising star deserves to go further. With **SAA Voyager**, every flight and every purchase brings you closer to extraordinary rewards.

Join Voyager today and start earning and spending miles with over **25 airline partners** in the **Star Alliance** global network, reaching 1,200 destinations in 186 countries.

Beyond flights, redeem Miles for Uber rides, Uber Eats, shopping, car rentals, and more, making everyday life as rewarding as your travels.

Take your journey further with the **SAA Voyager Credit Card**, helping you earn Miles faster and unlock unforgettable experiences.

Go to www.flysaa.com/voyager and join today



RISING STAR ALUMNI

Thandiwe Nhlapo

**Non-Executive Director,
Youth Health Africa**

Thandiwe is a qualified attorney. She has worked at top-tier law firms and in corporate finance, specialising in M&A and corporate transactions. In 2022, Thandiwe was selected for a prestigious secondment programme in London, as one of the emerging prominent lawyers from across the African continent. She won the Rising Star SA Award in 2023 and is recognised as one of the Mail & Guardian Top 200 Young South Africans. Thandiwe also serves as a non-executive director on various boards.



Dr. Laura Dunstan-Smith

**Managing Director,
CoSauce**

Dr Laura has always been fascinated by people and what makes organisations thrive. From her early academic journey to her career leading large-scale transformations, she has combined curiosity with courage to help businesses navigate change. Laura has guided companies through cultural shifts, built strategies that stick and empowered leaders. Passionate about bringing clarity, warmth and energy to complex challenges, she thrives on unlocking potential in people, creating spaces where they can grow, connect and lead.



RISING STAR ALUMNI

Gillian Cloete

**Regional Director: Southern Africa,
Golden Key International Honour Society**

Gillian is an influential leader with over 10 years' experience empowering young professionals through mentorship, recognition and development. She holds a Master's in Labour Relations along with multiple qualifications in leadership and business. A dynamic speaker and strategist, Gillian is passionate about youth empowerment, stakeholder engagement and driving meaningful change. With expertise spanning sales, marketing and human capital, she combines vision and collaboration to deliver impact across both corporate and community spaces.



Bahle Goba-Matsho

**Organisational Effectiveness and Talent Lead,
Sanlam Corporate**

Bahle is a seasoned leader with over 25 years' experience in business leadership, human capital and transformation, having delivered impactful solutions for blue-chip and public sector organisations. She holds an MBA from Hood College, USA, and a BSc from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. A passionate patron of BlackBark Productions, Bahle is dedicated to nurturing and recognising young talent, championing initiatives like the Rising Star Awards that empower future leaders and strengthen South Africa's talent pipeline.



MAG MEMBER

Geraldine Welby-Cooke

**Executive: People & Sustainability,
RTT**

Geraldine has nearly a decade of executive experience, specialising in human capital, sustainability and organisational development. She holds a Master's in human resource management and has led strategic initiatives in change management, leadership coaching and talent development. Passionate about shaping culture and advancing sustainable practices, Geraldine combines people-focused leadership with business strategy to drive growth, resilience and impact across organisations.



Phase 2

Refilwe Ditodi

**Director: People Experience,
Tiger Brands**

Refilwe brings over 15 years' experience in corporate communications, brand management, and marketing. She holds an MBA and an Honours in Communications and Marketing. With a strong track record in driving impactful campaigns, building stakeholder relationships, and enhancing brand reputation, she is recognised for aligning communication strategies with business objectives to deliver sustainable growth.

MINING & MINERALS JUDGES



MAG MEMBER

Ziphindiwe Ngcobo

**Department Executive: Marketing,
Isuzu**

Ziphindiwe has a strong background in insights and brand strategy, having led award-winning campaigns and repositioned iconic brands. She was recently assessed as competent for the Chartered Marketer (SA) designation and is preparing for the board exam. Passionate about mentorship, cultural storytelling and impactful marketing, she believes in driving measurable business value through insight-led strategy. Ziphindiwe brings creativity, depth and purpose to every brand she touches.



Elaine Brass

**CFO,
Mining Qualifications Authority**

Elaine is a Chartered Accountant with more than 20 years' leadership experience across auditing, financial management and executive leadership. She has previously served as CFO and CEO of HWSETA, where she built a strong reputation for governance, accountability and people development. Passionate about skills development and transformation, Elaine is committed to driving sustainable growth and creating opportunities that uplift individuals and communities across South Africa.



Mashudu Ndou

Group Executive Head: Foundations & Partnerships, Vodacom

Mashudu is a respected leader in corporate affairs, sustainability and community development, with a strong focus on ESG, social impact and stakeholder engagement. Recognised among Africa's Top 100 Career Women, she has received the Africa and Middle East Gender Mainstream award and is a proud Rising Star. Passionate about education, skills development and local economic growth, Mashudu champions initiatives that uplift disadvantaged communities. She is also celebrated for her mentorship and her role as an Ambassador of Impactful Change.



Keshnie Martin

Global HR, Omnia Agriculture

Keshnie brings over 23 years' experience spanning the full HR value chain, with expertise in strategy development, transformation and digitisation. She is recognised for her authentic leadership, passion for developing people, and ability to cultivate high-performing teams. Known as an innovator in the HR space, she enhances employee experience while aligning people strategies with business goals. Outside of work, Keshnie enjoys music, travel, reading, and lively debates with her teenage daughter.



Thabo Mogobe

Head of Talent - Africa, Eurasian Resource Group

Thabo is an experienced HR leader known for his strategic clarity and emotionally intelligent leadership. He has served in senior global roles at Anglo American and Sasol, including Global Head of People Planning and Sourcing. A long-serving judge for the Rising Star Awards, he was recently appointed to the board of Movement for Good. Passionate about purposeful impact, he focuses on talent development that drives both business and social transformation.



Giovanni Abrahams

Executive: Operations, Massmart

Giovanni is an award-winning e-commerce executive with 15 years' experience in logistics and retail, working with leading global brands. He is passionate about people-first leadership, transparency, and accountability, driving high-performance teams in ethical and socially responsible ways. A mentor with the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, he actively supports the next generation of leaders.



Jo Blake

Group Head: Talent, Woolworths

Jo is a distinguished talent specialist with over 15 years' experience in talent acquisition, executive search, technical recruitment and employer branding. She holds an Honours in Psychology from Stellenbosch University and a Master's from UKZN and was a 2022 Rising Star finalist. Passionate about youth upliftment, Jo leverages storytelling to drive organisational success and collaboration. A lifelong learner and dedicated mother of two, she is committed to making a meaningful impact across Africa.



Dr. Jerry Gule

Director, Gule Executive Coaching

Dr Jerry is a seasoned executive coach with over 30 years' experience in leadership, HR and organisational transformation. Holding a Doctor of Education from Harvard, he is passionate about people development, transformation and disability inclusion. He has led strategic initiatives across sectors, served as board chairperson for multiple entities and contributed extensively to early childhood development through charitable work. Respected for his leadership coaching expertise, Dr Gule continues to shape modern HR practices and empower leaders.



Zani Mashinini

Human Resources Executive, BSP Financial Group Limited

Zani is a dynamic leader with expertise in talent management, culture transformation, and organisational development. She has a proven record of driving strategic workforce initiatives, fostering resilience, and building high-performance teams. With deep experience in omni-channel retail, Zani excels in shaping culture, optimising engagement, and leading change. Passionate about leadership development, she designs impactful programmes that align talent with strategy, creating inclusive environments where people thrive and businesses achieve sustainable success.



Rizwana Butler

Group Executive: HR, Capitec

Rizwana has over 20 years' experience in HR across Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the UK, including senior roles in leadership development and global HR transformation. Holding degrees in Economics, Labour Studies and Industrial Relations, she is passionate about talent, culture, and transformation. Guided by African optimism, Rizwana challenges boundaries and creates opportunities through unconventional paths. She enjoys travel, sport and nurturing balance through spirituality and personal wellness.

RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY JUDGES



MINING & MINERALS JUDGES 2025



Tshiamo Molanda

Head Youth and Mass Market Clients, Personal & Private Banking South Africa, Standard Bank

Tshiamo is a passionate leader with extensive experience in banking, specialising in youth and mass market clients. Since joining Standard Bank in 2012, she has driven innovation and client-focused growth, including award-winning youth banking products and loyalty initiatives. Dedicated to understanding youth financial behaviour, Tshiamo champions solutions that empower young South Africans to make intentional financial decisions. Her work reflects a commitment to inclusion, client satisfaction and shaping the future of banking.



Insaaf Daniels

Human Capital Director and Board Member, RedPanda Software

Insaaf is a dynamic HR leader with experience in the retail and IT sectors, specialising in talent growth, well-being and employee relations. She holds qualifications in Human Resources Development and Financial Management and is passionate about fostering positive workplace cultures. As the founder of Your Next Level, she empowers women through events on leadership, goal setting and mindfulness. Insaaf is committed to shaping the future of work while advancing women's personal and professional growth.



Olwethu Gobeni

Area Planning Manager: Africa - South, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Olwethu is a strategic leader with expertise in organisational development, leadership, change management, and human resources. A Prosci® Certified Change Practitioner, he has a strong track record in workforce strategy and industrial relations. Passionate about optimising processes and empowering teams, Olwethu is committed to driving innovation, inclusion, and meaningful transformation across organisations, with experience leading initiatives across multiple African countries.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES JUDGES

Supported by: **accenture**



Suzan Zungu

Communications & External Affairs Manager, bp Southern Africa

Suzan is a communications professional with over 20 years' experience in strategic communications, reputation management and stakeholder engagement. She has worked with leading global brands across industries, holding senior roles in corporate and agency environments. Recognised for her work with a PRISA Prism Award, Suzan is passionate about building strong narratives that inspire trust and connection.



Dr. Philip Tshikotshi

Vice President & Country Head, Startek

Dr Phil is an award-winning HR professional with over 15 years' experience developing impactful HR strategies. A mentor and advocate for succession planning, he has contributed to several industry initiatives and advisory boards. He holds a PhD in Human Resources and continues his research into frameworks for employee wellbeing, combining academic rigour with practical expertise to shape future HR leadership.



Shalin Ledwaba

Head of Talent Acquisition, Bowmans

With over 18 years in Talent Acquisition, Shalin leads with authenticity and purpose, shaping people strategies at Bowmans. She is known for mentoring young talent, serving as a "Momager" to emerging leaders while amplifying high-potential professionals across industries. A board member of the South African Graduate Employers Association, Shalin balances career and motherhood with a passion for travel and youth empowerment.



Dr. Wongiwe Ludidi

Senior Manager: Talent, Learning & Culture, CHEP

Dr Wongiwe is a people sustainability leader with over 20 years' experience across higher education, energy, petrochemicals, manufacturing, construction, mining and supply chain. She leverages learning, development, and talent management to drive authentic change and inclusion, creating meaningful transformation across organisations. With core strengths in communication, strategic thinking and leadership development, Dr Wongiwe views people functions as an integrated ecosystem, enabling her to design initiatives that deliver lasting impact and foster sustainable growth.



Elsie Pule

**Director: Special Projects,
Rosatom Central and Southern Africa**

Elsie is a distinguished HR professional with over 40 years' experience in the energy sector, specialising in shared services, talent management, leadership development and gender mainstreaming. She holds degrees from the University of the North, University of Pretoria, and Warwick University. A pioneer in nuclear capacity building, she became the first African woman to preside over the IAEA Knowledge Management and HRD Conference in 2024. A multiple award winner, Elsie continues to champion inclusivity and transformative leadership.



RISEING STAR ALUMNI

Phase 2

Thato Matlala

**Chief Talent & Strategy Officer,
Pink Onion**

Thato has over 15 years' experience in human capital leadership, specialising in strategy, organisational design and performance improvement. An award-winning leader, she is recognised for developing transformative strategies that enhance leadership capability, organisational effectiveness, and inclusive, high-performance cultures. Passionate about shaping Africa's future talent landscape, Thato drives initiatives that empower people and organisations to thrive, leaving a lasting impact across key sectors of the economy.



Phase 2

Tshidi Dabula

**Founder, Managing Director & Professional
Business Coach, DABS Professional Services**

Tshidi is an accomplished HR leader with over 20 years' experience. She holds an MCom in Business Management, a BCom Honours in Employment Relations, and professional coaching certification. As founder of DABS Professional Services, she provides HR consulting and business coaching. Passionate about unlocking talent, Tshidi mentors women and youth across sectors. She is also an experienced board member, committed to governance, strategy and results-driven leadership.



Phase 3

Refilwe Mphane

**Senior Manager: Reputation,
Gautrain Management Agency**

Refilwe brings over 15 years' experience in corporate communications, brand management, and marketing. She holds an MBA and an Honours in Communications and Marketing. With a strong track record in driving impactful campaigns, building stakeholder relationships, and enhancing brand reputation, she is recognised for aligning communication strategies with business objectives to deliver sustainable growth.

SERVICES: PUBLIC & PRIVATE JUDGES

Supported by: **ZUTARI**
IMPACT ENGINEERS



Dr. Mamello Masia

**Chief People Officer,
McDonald's South Africa**

Dr Mamello is a dynamic HR leader with a PhD in Human Resources, specialising in HR analytics and HRIS. With over 20 years' experience across Africa, she has driven transformative HR strategies in diverse industries and cultures. Deeply rooted in faith and values, she brings authenticity and cultural intelligence to her work. Passionate about talent development, Dr Mamello is dedicated to unlocking potential, empowering leaders, and advancing education, career development and employability initiatives across the continent.



Sesi Nxesi

**Chief Executive Officer,
ETDP SETA**

Sesi has extensive experience in education and development, having held leadership roles as a teacher, lecturer and education specialist before heading national initiatives. She holds an MBL, two honours degrees, a BEd, a BSc in mathematics and chemistry and an HED. Passionate about lifelong learning, she actively promotes skills development and transformation. Sesi is also a committed supporter of the Rising Star Awards, mentoring and uplifting young professionals across both public and private sectors.



Tshepo Yvonne Mosadi

**Chief People Officer,
Daybreak Foods**

Tshepo is a seasoned HR executive with over 22 years' experience in strategic HR, leadership and talent management. She holds an MBA and serves as Chairperson of the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP), while contributing to advisory boards at Unisa. Recognised among Inspiring Workplaces' Top 101 influential thought leaders, Tshepo is dedicated to advancing the HR profession and shaping the future of work through inclusive leadership, talent growth and purpose-driven transformation.



Diane Myers

**Head: Talent Management,
Zutari**

Diane brings over 15 years' experience in human capital leadership, with expertise across engineering, consulting, financial services and retail. Known for her strategic vision and empathetic leadership, she has successfully driven talent and performance strategies that align people agendas with business goals. Diane is passionate about nurturing high-performance cultures, mentoring emerging leaders and promoting diversity. Her innovative approach continues to shape inclusive, future-ready workplaces and strengthen organisational resilience.



Shobana Maikoo

**Head: Global Capability Centre - Africa,
TransUnion**

Shobana is passionate about making a lasting difference through people-focused leadership. In 2023, she won the BPESA CEO's Top Women in GBS Leadership Award and was a 2024 Gender Mainstreaming Inclusive Leader finalist. Throughout her career, she has built cross-functional teams and driven innovation. Currently pursuing an MBA, Shobana combines professional growth with a strong commitment to inclusion, empowerment and creating opportunities that inspire sustainable change.



RISEING STAR ALUMNI

Phase 2

Jared Gray

**Executive Manager: Business Planning,
Gautrain Management Agency**

Jared is a strategic business leader responsible for driving multi-million Rand portfolios in advisory services, property and retail investment. A former Rising Star, he holds degrees in Economics, an MBA and a Master's in Digital Business. He is also a YALI Fellow, committed to values-based leadership and social change across Africa. Jared's expertise lies in blending commercial acumen with innovation, ensuring growth, impact and sustainable development in both business and society.

TRANSPORT, LOGISTICS AND SECURITY JUDGES

Supported by: **GAUTRAIN**
MANAGEMENT AGENCY



MAG MEMBER

Emelda Tladi

**Executive Head: People,
Hollard Group Risk**

Emelda is a seasoned HR professional and registered industrial psychologist with over 20 years' experience across the full HR value chain. Holding a Master's in industrial psychology, she has led diverse HR teams across multiple industries, driving strategy, organisational change and talent development. Known for execution diligence, authenticity and client service excellence, Emelda is passionate about learning, nurturing HR teams and fostering growth.



MAG MEMBER

Dr. Thokozile Lewanika

**Founder,
DML45 Consulting**

Dr Thokozile began her career as a Biology researcher before spending 16 years as a Human Capital Executive. She later founded DML45 Consulting specialising in strategy, performance transformation, leadership and culture. An executive coach, speaker and strategic facilitator, she also serves on the executive education faculty at Henley Business School. Dr Thokozile is passionate about driving impactful change through leadership development and organisational transformation.



Brenda Talazo

**Vice President & Head: HR & Business
Enablement, SAAB Grintek Defence**

Brenda has over 20 years' experience in human capital management and leadership development, with a strong focus on operational efficiency and aligning people strategies to business goals. She holds an MBA and has completed several global leadership programmes. Brenda's leadership fosters positive workplace culture and drives organisational success through strategic, people-first initiatives.



MAG MEMBER

Terance Nkosi

**Chief Technical and Sustainability Officer,
Rand Refinery**

Terance is an accomplished engineer and sustainability leader with over twenty years' experience in the mining and refining sector. He holds multiple qualifications, including a BEng in Chemical Engineering, an MBA, an MPhil and is currently pursuing a PhD. Recognised as a Rising Star in 2012 and Pay It Forward Award recipient in 2022 and 2024, Terance is passionate about ethical leadership, ESG and delivering sustainable impact through innovation, technical excellence and transformation.



RISEING STAR ALUMNI

Dr. Sane Ngidi

**President 2025/2026,
SIOPSA**

Dr Sane is an internationally recognised HR leader and Industrial Psychologist with 20 years' experience across leading global and local organisations. She holds a PhD, MA, BA Honours and a BCom, and is a certified coach, lecturer and advocate for inclusive growth. Founder of NGISAMILA, a platform for authentic leadership, Dr Sane is passionate about empowering people and driving transformation. She currently serves as President of the Society of Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA).



Mpho Letlape

**HR Executive,
SAA**

Mpho is a values-driven leader with extensive experience in human capital and governance. She holds a BSc. from Fort Hare, with postgraduate and executive studies at UCT, Wits, and Harvard Business School. She also serves as Chair of the Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation and as a Board Member at Food Forward South Africa. Guided by values of integrity, transparency and empathy, Mpho is passionate about developing women and youth while contributing to building a stronger South Africa.

Phase 2 Judges:

Participated in semi-final video submission judging only.

Phase 3 Judges:

Participated in final in-person judging only.

ALL OTHER JUDGES PARTICIPATED IN BOTH ROUNDS OF ASSESSMENT

Proud Headline Sponsor of the 2025 Rising Star Awards

Supporting Africa's Future Leaders

As a certified Top Employer in Africa, we're proud of the values that drive both our organisation and our support of the Rising Star Awards:

- We are committed to driving continuous innovation and growth by investing in cutting-edge solutions and forward-thinking initiatives that shape the future of our industry.
- We prioritise work-life integration by promoting wellness days and a hybrid-first workplace, supporting the balance of personal and professional excellence.
- Through our Workforce For Good pillars – Career Opportunities, Personal Growth;
- Flexible Experience, Welcoming Culture; and Good Works, Real Impact – we have created an environment where people feel valued and empowered to deliver and be themselves.
- The career growth, tenures and developmental paths our people have taken demonstrate our commitment to investing in our people and promoting opportunities to learn, build, advance, and lead

Together with the Rising Star Awards, we're helping build a brighter future by empowering those with the vision and drive to lead.

Explore tailored opportunities
www.transunion.co.za/careers/careers-at-tu



Christine Odendaal

Head: Strategic Pricing and Product, Hollard Group Risk

Christine has 17 years' experience in the insurance industry, specialising in corporate group insurance and employee benefits. Her expertise spans strategic pricing initiatives, product development, reinsurance, and both internal and external reporting. Known for her exceptional technical and analytical abilities, she is equally recognised for her leadership style, mentoring, developing and motivating others to achieve their best. Christine stands out as a non-actuary thriving in actuarial responsibilities, bringing a unique perspective to her work. Passionate about excellence and innovation, she approaches challenges with confidence and precision, and has earned a reputation for her love of spreadsheets and ability to turn data into actionable insights.



Michelle Fillis

Group Specialist: Employee Experience & Lifecycle Solutions, Standard Bank

Michelle has more than 13 years' experience in human resources, building on an early career in finance and retail. She is deeply skilled in HRIS, where she has led system implementations, configurations and lifecycle improvements that enhance employee experience and deliver business impact. With additional expertise in project management and change, Michelle thrives in supporting transformation while ensuring technology meets both people and organisational needs. Recognised for her curiosity, empathy and resilience, she brings a can-do spirit to every challenge. Her leadership potential has been acknowledged through nominations to prestigious programmes such as Legacy of Leaders and People & Culture Odyssey. Passionate about continuous improvement and purpose-driven impact, Michelle continues to grow as a forward-thinking HR leader.



Mothathe Sewelo

Head: Trades & International Banking Sales, Absa CIB

Mothathe is a visionary leader in banking, with expertise in trade finance, governance and innovation across multiple African markets. A Chartered Accountant with global experience, she combines technical excellence with a passion for financial inclusion and ethical leadership. She is the founder and Chairperson of A Seat At The Table (SATT), a global platform that empowers women and youth through leadership and strategic partnerships. Her influence extends to governance, serving on the Audit and Risk Committee of the GBVF Fund. Recognised as a SAICA 35-under-35 Transformative Leader Finalist and a 2025 One Young World Ambassador, Mothathe is committed to reshaping Africa's financial sector. Through her leadership, she champions inclusion, empowerment and the development of future leaders across the continent.



Nombuso Nyathi

Senior Product Manager, Nedbank

Nombuso is a dynamic leader whose career bridges engineering, strategy and financial services. Trained as a Chemical Engineer, she transitioned into financial product management, where she designs inclusive solutions that address the needs of underserved communities. Her achievements include winning a Solution Innovation Award and pursuing further studies in management practice, reflecting her drive for excellence. Beyond her professional success, Nombuso is committed to mentoring young professionals, empowering women through faith-based initiatives and building digital products that create meaningful impact. She is known for her people-first approach, blending empathy, systems thinking and innovation. A mother and community builder, she embodies purposeful leadership, striving not just for personal success, but to light the way for others to rise.



Paul Ssali

Business Solutions Lead, Rand Merchant Bank

Paul is an accomplished transformation leader in trade finance, where he specialises in system replacements, data migration and process optimisation. Skilled at simplifying complexity, he unites cross-functional teams to deliver sustainable change. With a hands-on leadership style, Paul plays a pivotal role in modernising legacy systems and building scalable business solutions. His influence extends beyond the corporate world: he is developing a platform to support South African engineers in professional registration, breaking down barriers to progress. He also serves as a board member of Engineers Without Borders South Africa, contributing to community-focused engineering initiatives. A lifelong learner and AI enthusiast, Paul is driven by curiosity and a clear sense of purpose, striving to create impact across finance, technology and social development.

Your Story, Our Journey: Growing and Belonging Together at Absa



At Absa, your story is integral to our shared adventure, defining who we are and guiding our collective future. We embrace you for who you are and support you as you grow into your full potential. Each individual's unique contribution helps shape our identity. Together, we cultivate a workplace where you feel valued, nurtured, and respected—a place where your story is celebrated, encouraging true belonging and inclusion.

As Africa's leading digitally-driven bank, we're committed to success. Our achievements are driven by empowering each team member to learn, grow, and innovate, contributing to our collective narrative of excellence—an excellence built on the diverse stories of our colleagues.

Stories hold immense power. They foster understanding, inspire, motivate, bridge gaps, and transcend barriers, deepening our connections and sense of belonging. Through stories, we have the power to shape our future together.

@Absa your story Matters

Your story matters



ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT FINALISTS

Supported by: 



Brenda Matsie

**SHEQS MANAGER,
ESKOM**

Brenda is a seasoned leader with more than 15 years' experience in the energy sector. She has played a vital role in translating strategic objectives into operational success, strengthening safety culture and ensuring compliance in high-risk environments. Known for her intelligence, charisma and approachable nature, Brenda is respected for her ability to foster collaboration while driving performance. She holds an Honours Degree and a Postgraduate Diploma in Risk Management and is currently pursuing an MSc in the Built Environment. Passionate about mentoring and innovation, she is committed to making a meaningful impact.



John Phala

**Area Manager: Control and Instrumentation,
NATREF**

John brings 18 years' expertise in power generation, petrochemicals, oil refining and energy consulting, specialising in control systems, instrumentation, automation and reliability management. His career spans roles at Sasol, Siemens and NATREF, as well as leadership within the Society for Automation, Instrumentation, Mechatronics and Computer Engineering (SAIMC). A senior member of SAIMC and registered with the Engineering Council of South Africa, John holds a BTech in Control and Instrumentation and is pursuing a Master's in Engineering Management. Beyond his technical achievements, he is a passionate advocate for youth development and knowledge sharing, regularly engaging with schools, universities and science expos.



Mamusa Mabodi

**Acting General Manager: Energy Projects Division,
CEF Group**

Mamusa is a Mechanical Engineer with more than 13 years' experience across power generation, management consulting and corporate strategy. She began her career as a Boiler Plant Engineer and Risk Engineer, later refining her expertise in strategic advisory and complex problem-solving. Her professional journey has been defined by a focus on innovation, sustainability and transformation in the energy sector. Known for her ability to merge engineering acumen with strategic leadership, Mamusa has led initiatives that promote emerging technologies and support South Africa's energy transition. She is passionate about energy access, inclusivity and building a future-ready energy landscape.



Nomawethu Ndondo

**Planning and Performance Management Analyst,
bp Southern Africa**

Nomawethu, also known as Noma, is a finance professional with strong expertise in financial planning, performance management and strategic analysis. She has held roles at Diageo, Walmart and BP, where she has delivered value through data-driven insights and collaboration. She holds a BA Honours in Development Economics from Wits and is currently pursuing an MBA in Finance and Supply Chain. Noma is also the founder of Love, Sese - a vegan, African-inspired children's hair care brand. Passionate about innovation, sustainability and women empowerment, she is driven by a bold vision for inclusive growth and economic development.



Pitso Sekhoto

**Middle Manager,
National Transmission Company South Africa**

Pitso is an accomplished Electrical Engineer and award-winning leader in South Africa's energy sector. Since starting his career at Eskom in 2012, he has contributed to major infrastructure and digitalisation projects, particularly in control systems, automation and cybersecurity. Recognised for his commitment to professional development, he serves as Chairperson of the AFSEC Young Professionals and is a member of the Engineering Council of South Africa. His contributions have earned him accolades such as the 2024 SAIEE Young Achiever's Award. Dedicated to youth inclusion and engineering excellence, Pitso continues to shape Africa's energy and technology landscape.



Revolutionise your business with cloud-based finance, accounting, payroll, and HR software - designed for businesses of all sizes.

That's Sage.

Visit sage.com to find out more

Sage

ENTREPRENEUR FINALISTS

Supported by: **Sage**



Bulelani Balabala

**Founder & CEO,
TEA: Township Entrepreneurs Agency**

Bulelani is an award-winning entrepreneur, author and township economy developer with over 20 years' experience. Recognised locally and globally, he has represented South Africa at platforms such as the G20 Startup20 Taskforce and serves as both a Brand South Africa and NDP 2030 Youth Ambassador. As founder of the Township Entrepreneurs Alliance (TEA), he has directly supported more than 100,000 township entrepreneurs through mentorship, development programmes and market access initiatives. He also hosts the Kasi Business Podcast, sharing the journeys of business leaders while unlocking opportunities for SMMEs. His #GetThingsDone philosophy has positioned him as a leading voice for grassroots enterprise development and inclusive economic growth.



Darren Meltz

**Founder & Events Director,
SecretEATS**

Darren is a visionary entrepreneur who has redefined fine dining through SecretEATS, an exclusive and award-winning culinary experience hosted in secret locations across South Africa and abroad. Over more than a decade, he has created unforgettable events by connecting celebrated chefs with food enthusiasts. His work has earned international recognition, including the Forty Under 40 awards in South Africa, Africa and globally. Darren is also Editor in Chief of More Than Food Magazine, where he champions the food and tourism sectors. Known for his creativity and pursuit of excellence, he continues to push boundaries in hospitality while fostering community through unique dining experiences.



Dumisani Mahlangu

**Founder & CEO,
Chepa Afrika**

Dumisani, known as Dumi, is the driving force behind Chepa Afrika, a growing leader in South Africa's apparel industry. From humble beginnings in a bedroom, he has built a fully integrated business spanning streetwear, corporate services, design, and production, with the capacity to manufacture thousands of garments monthly. Chepa Afrika now counts major corporates like Vodacom, Isuzu and Standard Bank among its clients. Dumi is passionate about youth empowerment, job creation and skills development, using his business as a platform for social and economic change. His long-term vision is to expand Chepa Afrika across Africa, setting a benchmark for quality African manufacturing.



Jermaine Johnson

**Founder & Director,
African Uncle**

Jermaine is the founder of African Uncle, a proudly South African fashion and corporate gifting brand. With nearly a decade of experience in the gifting industry and a personal motto of PUSHING PASSION, he has built a business centred on sustainability, skills development and community upliftment. African Uncle's Back-to-School initiative provides repurposed backpacks, stationery, food hampers and safety resources to schools in need, reflecting Jermaine's deep commitment to education and social responsibility. A former semi-pro hockey player, he brings discipline and vision to his work, with the goal of positioning African Uncle as South Africa's leading corporate gifting company.



Makungu Valoyi

**Founder & CEO,
Makungu Valoyi Occupational Therapy Inc.**

Makungu is an award-winning Occupational Therapist and mental health activist from Phalaborwa. With degrees from Stellenbosch University and the University of Pretoria, where she was recognised for academic excellence, she has worked across public, private and corporate wellness settings. She co-founded the Body & Mind Therapy Centre in Phalaborwa and Fourways, offering holistic services for all ages. A powerful advocate, she uses social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok to raise awareness around mental health. Named among News24's Top 100 Young Mandelas and a Mail & Guardian Power of Women honouree, she continues to drive change as a champion for well-being and resilience.



BMW Financial Services. All in. Simply smart.

BMW YOUNG PROFESSIONALS.

A SMART FINANCE PRODUCT FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WHO DRIVE THE FUTURE.

BMW Young Professionals is a finance product that offers the leaders of tomorrow, access to an exclusive finance solution to get them behind the wheel of a BMW that matches their ambition and potential.



Scan the QR code to learn more.

BMW Financial Services (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd is an Authorised Financial Services Provider (FSP 4623) and Registered Credit Provider (NCRCP2341). Terms and conditions apply.



Group of Companies

www.cefgroup.co.za



ICT (TELECOMS & TECHNOLOGY) FINALISTS



Deon Wolmarans

**VP of Engineering,
SMCS**

Deon is a dynamic technology leader with over 12 years of full-stack development experience and a strong background in solutions architecture. Known for driving innovation and building high-performing teams, he specialises in delivering scalable software that balances business impact with technical excellence. He holds two diplomas and a management certificate, blending deep technical skills with strategic vision. Passionate about mentorship and digital transformation, Deon champions systems thinking and people-first innovation, ensuring that technology serves real-world needs. His career reflects a commitment to efficiency, sustainability and inspiring the next generation of developers.



Kaylin Phillips

**Senior Product Manager,
Netstar**

Kaylin is a visionary digital product leader with more than a decade of experience in digital transformation and customer experience. His Master's studies focused on personalisation and loyalty, shaping his approach to customer-centric innovation. He successfully led the rebuild of the award-winning MyNetstar 2.0 App and spearheaded Netstar's strategic entry into the Australian market. Earlier in his career, Kaylin made a mark in the mining sector by rolling out critical safety solutions that earned a prestigious Safety Award. Known for analytical insight, adaptability and collaborative leadership, he thrives on challenging the status quo and delivering measurable impact.



Lubabalo Tybosch

**Managing Director,
Uniqova**

Lubabalo is an award-winning visionary leader celebrated for his transformative impact in technology and society. He was named South Africa's Most Visionary CEO 2024 and under his leadership, Uniqova received the 2025 Business Excellence Award for Best Emerging IT Solutions. A recognised NFT expert, he created a pioneering collection celebrating African Queens. His accolades include the Sunday World Unsung Hero Award and recognition as a daring innovator by Vessels of Virtue. With over a decade of leadership at Toastmasters International, Lubabalo is also an NDP Youth Ambassador, advancing the National Development Plan and UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Mpho Zim

**Senior Manager: Revenue Management,
MTN**

Mpho is a digital strategist with expertise in telecoms, revenue management, and business transformation across African markets. With qualifications in Marketing, Information Systems and a Master's degree from the University of Pretoria, she blends academic depth with practical leadership. Her career began in management consulting, where she became known for problem-solving through systems thinking and human-centred design. Beyond her corporate work, she founded Siphesihle Clothing, a social enterprise funding education for underprivileged learners. Passionate about inclusive innovation and purpose-driven leadership, Mpho is committed to combining business success with social impact.



Stuart Blackbeard

**IT Delivery Manager,
BMW Group South Africa**

Stuart is an accomplished technology leader whose career has been defined by delivering excellence, driving efficiency, and embracing emerging technologies such as AI. He has led large, diverse teams in creating innovative software solutions that support global operations, earning a reputation for reliability and vision. Beyond technical delivery, Stuart is passionate about people development - mentoring, inspiring, and enabling future leaders to achieve their full potential. Believing that leadership is a responsibility, not just a role, he is dedicated to igniting talent, achieving great things, and making a meaningful difference within his organisation and beyond.

A local company with global expertise



Saab Grintek Defence (SGD), a subsidiary of Saab, is a leading South African defence company specialising in electronic warfare systems, sensor technology, and avionics for air, land, and sea. Its advanced solutions, from self-protection suites to signals intelligence, safeguard aircraft, helicopters, vehicles, naval vessels, and submarines, giving customers a decisive edge.

Beyond technology, SGD fosters collaboration and inclusion, blending its values of drive, trust, and expertise through its Ubuntu-Together As One philosophy to fuel innovation and shared success. By investing in skills development, supporting communities, and empowering local businesses, SGD extends its impact beyond the defence industry.

With sustainability embedded in its strategy, SGD recently achieved second place in the Sustainable Future category at the 2025 Airbus Helicopters Supplier Conference, highlighting its commitment to sustainability, local procurement, and eco-friendly innovation.

Driven by over 450 professionals, SGD continues to contribute to keeping people and society safe.

www.saab.com



INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING FINALISTS



Koketso Ranaka

Specialist: Sustainability, BMW Group South Africa

Koketso is a passionate sustainability leader driving integrated environmental initiatives in the automotive manufacturing sector. Her expertise spans renewable energy adoption, circular economy projects and stakeholder engagement to advance eco-efficient operations. She has played a pivotal role in water conservation, renewable energy, and carbon-reduction programmes across manufacturing and supply chains. Known for her strategic mindset and collaborative approach, Koketso mentors others while leading impactful projects that align with global ESG standards. Her purpose is rooted in creating lasting change, building sustainable businesses that positively influence communities and contribute to South Africa's transition towards a greener future.



Nadia Anjapan

Procurement Manager, Fieldbar

Nadia is an experienced supply chain and manufacturing professional with a strong background in procurement and warehousing. She excels in sourcing, supplier management, inventory control, and aligning operations with production needs and customer demand. Known for her meticulous attention to detail and calm problem-solving under pressure, she thrives in fast-paced environments. Her career in the automotive and manufacturing sectors has shaped her versatility and operational expertise. Passionate about driving efficiency, Nadia is committed to building strong supplier relationships, streamlining warehouse operations and contributing to the growth of locally made, premium-quality products.



Nikita Achadinha

Customer Journey Manager, BMW Group South Africa

Nikita is a dynamic leader and problem-solver known for her ability to transform ideas into impactful projects. With a career spanning digital strategy, brand management, performance improvement and change leadership, she has consistently delivered innovation and results. She is recognised for her talent in bringing diverse stakeholders together to achieve shared objectives and inspire teams. Beyond her professional success, Nikita is a mother of three young children, one with special needs, an experience that has strengthened her resilience, resourcefulness and determination. She embodies the belief that with the right mindset, anything is possible, both in business and in life.



Nkululeko Mthembu

Head of Operations, Mondi – Richards Bay Mill

Nkululeko is an operations leader with extensive experience across pulp, paper and energy industries. He is known for value-driven and people-centred leadership, building high-performance teams through servant leadership and visible, hands-on engagement. Over the years, he has successfully guided organisations through volatile and uncertain environments, consistently achieving results while driving innovation, transformation and efficiency. A strong advocate for continuous improvement, Nkululeko aligns operational excellence with organisational ethos, mission and goals. His leadership philosophy centres on developing people, fostering resilience and creating a culture where teams thrive in pursuit of long-term success.



Refuwe Makhubo

Specialist: Corporate Communication, SAAB Grintek Defence

Refuwe is a communications professional with more than eight years' experience across defence, energy and technology sectors. Skilled in corporate communication, stakeholder engagement and media relations, she is adept at transforming complex ideas into clear, compelling narratives that inspire action. Her collaborative style has earned her recognition as a trusted advisor to leadership teams. In 2021, she contributed to Tomorrow's Grid, Today, a campaign that won Silver at the PRISM Awards for promoting sustainable energy awareness. With a degree in Communications Science and a strong focus on continuous growth, Refuwe uses the power of storytelling to build reputation, drive impact and inspire change.

LOCAL ▴ PROUDLY LOCAL ▴ PROUDLY LOCAL ▴ PROUDLY LOCAL ▴ PROUDLY LOCAL

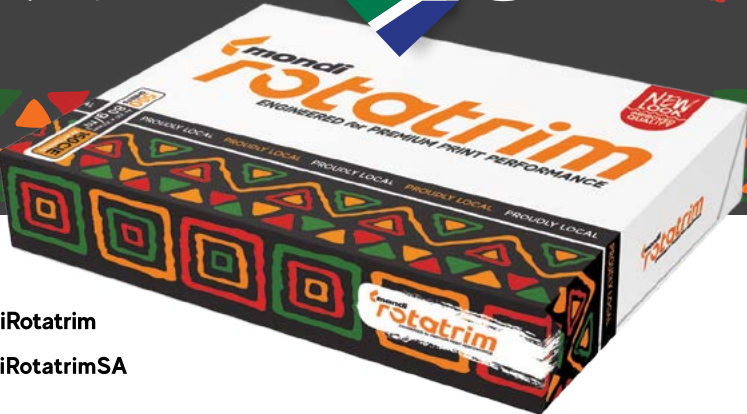
INTRODUCING ...

NEW
LOOK
IMPROVED
QUALITY

Mondi Rotatrim is a premium A4 multifunctional office paper made in South Africa.

By choosing local, you support jobs, communities and the environment, without compromising on world-class quality.

#ChooseLocal



@MondiRotatrim
@MondiRotatrimSA

Lerato said “HelloCoach”

and grew into the leader her team **chose** to follow



A movement of
Independent Thinking Partners
on a mission to help individuals,
staff and leaders reach

**Mental & Emotional
Mastery**



Download the app

AFFORDABLE EXPERT

- Workplace coaches
- Lifestyle coaches
- Health coaches
- Relationship coaches

JUST CONNECT.

www.hellocoach.co.za

MANUFACTURING FMCG FINALISTS



Katlego Mosenogi

**People Director: Culinary,
Tiger Brands**

Katlego is a dynamic leader with a proven ability to reposition the HR function and deliver people strategies that elevate business performance. Recognised as an award-winning professional, she has built high-performing teams and driven impactful initiatives that foster inclusivity and engagement. Known for her humility, creativity and calm leadership style, Katlego excels at connecting with people at all levels while designing innovative solutions that inspire. Her passion for building leadership capability and creating thriving workplaces continues to set her apart as a people-focused trailblazer.



Laura Somwe

**Group Lead: Executive Talent Acquisition,
Coca-Cola Beverages Africa**

Laura is a seasoned HR professional with extensive experience across talent acquisition, branding, and engagement. With a reputation for driving innovation and continuous improvement, she thrives in fast-paced environments while fostering collaboration and cohesion. Her work has consistently empowered organisations to become more agile and sustainable. Laura's commitment to transformation extends beyond the workplace, where she champions initiatives that make a meaningful difference in communities. Passionate about purposeful leadership, she brings structure, creativity and vision to everything she does.



Michael Baxter

**IT Change, Comms & PMO Manager,
Unilever**

Michael is a systems thinker and changemaker passionate about aligning people, purpose and processes. With a career spanning HR, IT and sustainability, he has successfully led transformation projects at both local and global levels. Known for his ability to create inclusive spaces that unlock human potential, Michael blends creativity and care to inspire growth and connection. Beyond his corporate career, he serves as a One Young World Ambassador, mentor and community leader, driven by his belief in people's power to shape meaningful change.



Sandisiwe Thisani

**Plant Manager,
Tiger Brands**

Sandi is a multi-disciplinary leader with expertise across engineering, manufacturing, consulting, and sustainability. Guided by curiosity and a passion for continuous learning, he has developed a robust foundation in operational excellence, people development and business management. His leadership style emphasises innovation, empowerment, and long-term impact. Dedicated to advancing South African industry, Sandi is committed to optimising processes, unlocking team potential and championing growth that strengthens local brands and drives meaningful transformation.



Siphathisiwe Sibanda

**Operations Management Consultant,
Global Management Consultant Firm**

Siphathisiwe is a chemical engineer and operations specialist with more than a decade of experience in FMCG manufacturing. She has led teams at global companies including AB InBev and Unilever, and now applies her expertise to advising clients on operational excellence. Passionate about inclusive leadership, she mentors and advocates for women in STEM through platforms such as TechWomen, WomEng and Brightest Young Minds. With her MBA from GIBS and a strong track record of delivering results, she exemplifies purposeful leadership and sustainable impact in manufacturing.

Shape Your Future with **news24**

Trusted News. First



Try us FREE for 14 days

Cancel any time. If you choose not to cancel, you will continue for R89/m. T&Cs apply.



Aalia Saib

**Research and Insights Lead,
Ogilvy Social Lab**

Aalia discovered her passion for data storytelling while studying brand communication, where her team won top honours for a strategy challenge. She has since built a career transforming complex analytics into actionable insights, supporting campaigns across Africa and Europe. For Coca-Cola, she has helped drive strategy across more than 30 markets, including leading real-time social analysis at the 2024 Olympic Games in France. With a sharp eye for trends and a flair for simplifying data, Aalia is now exploring how AI can streamline analytics to unlock even deeper brand storytelling.



Keagile Makgoba

**Communications - Sub-Saharan Africa,
TikTok**

Keagile is an accomplished communications leader with over a decade of experience spanning corporate communications, investor relations and digital marketing. At TikTok, she has been instrumental in driving initiatives that grow Africa's creator economy and strengthen the platform's global presence. Her career journey includes consulting for top executives at Instinctif Partners and honing her expertise at MultiChoice South Africa. Keagile's passion extends beyond the corporate world as she actively mentors and supports youth development through programmes such as YLED and GIBS PDBA.



Mamello Mofokeng

**Senior Client Success Manager,
Media North**

Mamello's career journey spans real estate, account management, and AI-driven ad tech, a reflection of her adaptability and people-first approach. She leads with strong relationship-building, problem-solving and crisis management skills, ensuring brands connect meaningfully with their audiences. Mamello is also deeply committed to mentorship and youth empowerment, believing in the power of community, guidance and support to help young people realise their purpose.



Precious Zondi

**Account Director,
Publicis Groupe Africa**

Precious is a skilled account director known for leading integrated campaigns across FMCG, pharmaceutical and automotive sectors. With a foundation in digital marketing, copywriting and project management, she balances creativity with operational rigour, ensuring projects run smoothly from concept to execution. Holding an Honours degree in Media and Cultural Studies, she combines critical thinking with hands-on expertise. Outside of work, Precious is an avid reader who draws inspiration from fiction, adding depth to her approach to storytelling and client partnerships.



Skhumbuzo Tuswa

**Creative Partner,
Slikouronlife**

Skhumbuzo, also known as SK, is a creative visionary who has spent more than a decade shaping brands with authenticity and cultural insight. His work spans advertising, music and media, where he brings a grounded, street-level perspective to storytelling. As a partner at Slikouronlife, he champions narratives that build trust and community, believing the future of branding lies in creativity rooted in access and connection. His mission is to rewrite the branding playbook for Africa, one where brands earn their place at the table through genuine impact.

WHERE POTENTIAL, MEETS POSSIBILITY.

Our people are at the heart of everything we do. We believe that nurturing talent is not just about building careers- its unlocking potential, shaping futures and powering every possibility.

**Exxaro Is Us. We Are Exxaro.
Together We Make It Work.**



www.exxaro.com

exxaro
POWERING POSSIBILITY

Strategy | Talent | Performance | Technology

Pink Onion Africa is a Consulting & Growth Enablement company that partners with organisations, MSMEs, and society to solve critical challenges that matter to Africa's Human Resources Development and Innovation needs.

We aim to build employer-employee-community **TRUST** by unleashing individual **Potential**, elevating collective **Performance** and strategically shaping **What's Next**.

Services & Solutions:

1. Human Resources Management, Consulting and Retainer Services.
2. Programme Design, Project and Change Management.
3. Leadership, Talent and Entrepreneur Development: Coaching, Mentoring, Training and Facilitation.
4. Talent Recruitment and Concierge Services.
5. Corporate Gifting and Social Learning Experiences.



**UNLEASHING POTENTIAL,
ELEVATING PERFORMANCE,
SHAPING WHAT'S NEXT!**



info@pinkonion africa.com



Pink Onion Africa Talent and Technology Solutions

MINING & MINERALS FINALISTS

Lungile Malinga-Qangule

**Principle: Growth (Mergers & Acquisitions),
Exxaro Resources**

Lungile has developed extensive expertise in mergers, acquisitions, and investment strategy, with a focus on creating value while driving sustainable impact. Over her career, she has honed skills in deal-making, financial modelling, valuations, negotiations, due diligence, and structuring across multiple investment instruments. Lungile believes that business growth and shareholder returns can coexist with responsible and ethical practices that benefit communities. Her academic foundation includes degrees in Economics, Finance, and a Master's in Finance and Investments. Known for her analytical acumen, strategic thinking, and ability to navigate complex transactions, Lungile is a transformative leader who demonstrates how financial expertise can be leveraged to create both economic and societal value.

Mpho Nyiko Nyarela

**Superintendent: Project Procurement,
Palabora Mining Company**

Mpho is recognised for her multidisciplinary expertise in mining, law, and project management, applying her knowledge to optimise processes, improve safety, and foster transformation in the sector. She has successfully led projects that achieved international recognition, including initiatives that enhanced copper ore recovery and established value improvement practices across operations. A passionate advocate for women in mining, Mpho has implemented mentoring programmes and chairs forums that empower female professionals. Her leadership emphasises collaborative decision-making, employee safety, and community development. Through active engagement in committees focused on standards, transformation, and wellbeing, Mpho demonstrates a commitment to building inclusive, safe, and high-performing mining environments while promoting responsible investment in the communities surrounding operations.

Oupa Moagi

**Head: Health, Safety & Environment,
Rio Tinto Richards Bay Minerals**

Oupa is a versatile mining professional with a strong record of leadership across technical, operational, and strategic functions. His experience spans electrical engineering, maintenance management, and mine leadership, where he has driven improvements in production, safety, and team engagement. Known for a people-first approach, Oupa emphasises collaboration, resilience, and operational excellence, enabling teams to meet and exceed performance targets. He has a track record of influencing business strategy from a safety, health, and environmental perspective, contributing to long-term sustainability and operational efficiency. Oupa combines technical proficiency with strategic insight, mentoring teams and shaping processes that enhance both human and organisational potential within the mining sector.

Tiaan Nkuna

**Manager: Mining MPD & MPE,
Rio Tinto Richards Bay Minerals**

Tiaan has cultivated extensive expertise in mining and process operations, progressing through leadership roles that include metallurgist, superintendent, and mine manager. He is recognised for his commitment to people development, mentoring numerous professionals who have advanced to senior roles under his guidance. Tiaan blends technical expertise with strategic leadership, consistently driving operational efficiency, safety, and productivity. Beyond day-to-day management, he is passionate about coaching students and graduates, fostering the next generation of mining talent. With a focus on dedication, lifelong learning, and ethical leadership, Tiaan demonstrates how technical excellence, mentorship, and strategic vision can collectively drive industry impact and sustainable growth.

Xoliswa Mphakati

**Production Manager,
Glencore**

Xoliswa is a highly regarded mining professional with a proven track record in operational leadership and team development. She has consistently delivered results by optimising safety, production, and equipment utilisation while managing complex operational plans. Her leadership philosophy prioritises mentorship, collaboration, and creating a positive, high-performing work culture. Xoliswa has successfully implemented business improvement initiatives that boosted productivity and strengthened stakeholder engagement. Committed to continuous professional growth, she has completed advanced leadership programmes and demonstrates a dedication to fostering talent in the sector. Known for her servant-leadership approach and strategic insight, Xoliswa inspires teams to achieve excellence while promoting innovation, efficiency, and sustainable practices in mining operations.

Reinvent the industry and build safer, smarter and sustainable mining businesses

Transform mining operations by
extracting value through innovation,
technology, and diverse talent



Istiaan Lubbe

**Principal Mechanical Engineer,
Zutari**

Istiaan is a professional mechanical engineer with over nine years' experience, known for his project management, technical expertise and leadership skills. He has led sustainability-focused projects, advocating for greener solutions as a standard practice in consulting engineering. Guided by Peter Drucker's words, "It is more important to do the right thing, than to do things right," Istiaan strives to align his work and leadership with integrity and impact. His calm humility, optimism and technical excellence have already left a significant mark on the profession.



Kiara Rampaul

**Professional Town & Regional Planner,
Zimanga Urban and Rural Design**

Kiara is a professional planner with a Bachelor in Housing, a Master's and a PhD in Town and Regional Planning. She leads statutory planning across urban and rural projects, with a focus on inclusivity, gender mainstreaming and spatial justice. Passionate about community engagement, she also researches resilience-building, including municipal responses to the 2022 KZN floods. Her work bridges academia and practice, shaping planning for equity and sustainability.



Masetuka Ntsoereng

**Senior Business Development Manager,
DLA Piper**

Masetuka has two decades of experience across legal, financial and professional services, combining business development expertise with academic leadership. In addition to her work, she also lectures Strategic Information Management at the University of Johannesburg, where she is also pursuing a PhD. She sits on the Industry Advisory Board for Information and Knowledge Management at UJ and serves on the board of Uitkoms Home for Girls. Masetuka is passionate about strategic growth, education, and social impact.



Tamlynn Anne Caelers-Avis

**Senior Associate,
WMN Attorneys Inc**

Tamlynn is a construction law specialist with over a decade of experience advising on infrastructure and natural resources projects. A published author and lecturer at Wits, she has facilitated construction law programmes and spoken at international conferences. Passionate about mentoring, she uplifts junior legal professionals while providing strategic, hands-on legal guidance. Her work reflects a commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and excellence in construction law.



Vivienne Mseka

**Associate Manager,
Accenture**

Vivienne is a senior project manager with over 15 years' experience in consulting, specialising in digital transformation, system integrations, and procurement processes. She has led Point of Sale implementations and enterprise-wide procurement solutions across diverse markets, bridging business needs with technology. Skilled in Agile methodologies, she ensures scalable and efficient project delivery. Beyond her core expertise, Vivienne is dedicated to driving culture and engagement initiatives that support inclusive workplaces.

STAND UP STAND OUT STAND TOGETHER

JOIN GOLDEN KEY INTERNATIONAL HONOUR
SOCIETY



Derek Kleynhans

**Operations and Marketing Manager,
Seven Sisters Vineyards**

Derek leads marketing and operations for a pioneering family-owned vineyard in Stellenbosch. Passionate about sharing his family heritage, he tells South Africa's story through wine, food, service and culture. With a Master's in Architecture, he approaches operations strategically, streamlining systems to deliver exceptional service and client experiences. Derek's responsibilities extend to export logistics, account management and financial oversight, reflecting his dedication to purpose, discipline and long-term impact. Grounded in faith and values, he believes that making a difference starts with self-leadership and striving for excellence in everything he does.



Mbulelo Mashilo

**Brand Manager,
JDE Peets**

Mbulelo is a seasoned Brand Manager at JDE Peets, the world's largest pure-play coffee company. With over eight years of experience in brand management and advertising, he has successfully led campaigns for iconic brands like Douwe Egberts and L'OR Espresso, driving product innovation, digital initiatives and strong brand engagement. Mbulelo has a track record of achieving high brand salience, managing budgets, and executing marketing strategies that deliver measurable results. Through his career, he gained experience at Famous Brands and Pizza Hut Africa. A firm believer in people-first leadership, Mbulelo values partnerships, stakeholder collaboration and empowering individuals to own their growth while fostering creativity, innovation and sustainable business impact.



Promise Kwena Mantome

**Human Resources Development Manager,
SPAR Group**

Promise has established herself as a leader in human capital development, driving impactful learning and skills programmes across the retail and hospitality sectors. She has designed initiatives that improve workforce capability, empower emerging talent and embed values-driven leadership within organisations. Promise is recognised for fostering collaboration, mentoring future leaders and implementing strategies that enhance organisational performance and sustainability. Her work has transformed employee engagement, strengthened talent pipelines and delivered measurable improvements in operational and cultural outcomes. With a focus on ethical and inclusive practices, Promise continues to shape resilient teams and contribute to the long-term growth and development of South Africa's retail and hospitality industries.



Thobile Sukazi

**Strategic Project Manager,
AB InBev**

Thobile is known for her strategic leadership in operations and project management, delivering transformative initiatives across retail, supply chain, and hospitality sectors. She applies analytical rigour and process optimisation to enhance efficiency, drive digital transformation and achieve measurable business outcomes. Thobile has led cross-functional teams, implemented innovative operational strategies and improved performance metrics across multiple projects. Her leadership prioritises collaboration, resilience and long-term impact, ensuring that initiatives create sustainable value for organisations and stakeholders. Recognised for her ability to combine technical expertise with people-focused leadership, Thobile continues to influence operational excellence and innovation within South Africa's retail and hospitality landscape.



Yamkela Koti

**Group Reporting Manager,
Spur Corporation**

Yamkela has distinguished herself in finance and reporting within South Africa's retail and hospitality industries. She is a qualified Chartered Accountant with extensive experience in group reporting, auditing and compliance. Yamkela has successfully overseen internal and external financial processes, improving efficiency, accuracy and transparency. She demonstrates strong leadership in managing teams, developing talent and implementing governance frameworks that strengthen organisational performance. Known for her analytical precision and strategic thinking, Yamkela ensures that financial practices support sustainable growth and long-term business success. Her work contributes to operational integrity, risk management and value creation, positioning her as an influential and respected professional within the sector.

WE ARE ZUTARI. WE ARE ENGINEERING IMPACT.

We are not defined by ideas alone, but by the vibrant communities we connect, the thriving economies we empower, and the sustainable futures we create.

Zutari is a leading infrastructure engineering and advisory practice with legacy of over 90 years across Africa and the Middle East. Partnering with clients across the infrastructure lifecycle, we deliver innovative, digitally driven solutions, from schools to stadiums, dams to bridges. We maximise value through data-

driven insights, advanced engineering principles, and a commitment to sustainability, co-creating locally relevant, globally eminent, fit-for-purpose and people solutions. At Zutari, we don't just design structures; we design possibilities. We don't just manage projects; we unlock futures. We don't just create infrastructure; we shape living legacies.



ENGINEERING IMPACT



Bonginkosi Thango

**Professor,
University of Johannesburg**

Bonginkosi is an interdisciplinary researcher and innovator whose work spans AI, IoT, predictive maintenance and sustainable energy. He holds a Doctor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering, a Master of Engineering and an MBA and is pursuing a PhD in Business Science at Wits. His projects include a real-time IoT water-quality monitoring system developed with chemical scientists. A Y2 NRF-rated scholar and 2025 NRF Research Excellence Award recipient, he has published more than 40 peer-reviewed journal articles and 38 conference papers and supervised two PhD and twelve Master's graduates. Named as a Mail & Guardian Top 200 Young South African, he champions African-led innovation that is rigorous, socially conscious and globally competitive, with a focus on solutions that uplift communities and build sustainable industries.



Dimakatso Masiteng

**Chief Information Officer,
National Youth Development Agency**

Dimakatso is an award-winning ICT leader advancing digital transformation and inclusion in the public sector. Recognised as Tech Champion of the Year 2024 at the CIO Africa Awards and a finalist in the Afrika Tech Women in Tech Awards, she brings deep expertise in IT governance, systems development and delivery. A Chartered CIO (C-CIO SA), she is completing an MBA at Johannesburg Business School, researching skills pathways to tackle youth unemployment. Raised in a rural village, she uses her platform to open doors for women and young people in technology, mentoring future leaders and advocating ethical, human-centred innovation. Her track record blends resilience and strategic execution with a passion for nation-building, using technology to create opportunity, improve services and drive measurable impact.



Kgotatso Khunou

**Chief Pilot,
South African Police Service**

Kgotatso is a pioneering aviator and mentor with more than twelve years' experience in commercial helicopter operations and remotely piloted aircraft systems. She holds national diplomas in Biotechnology and in Aviation Management, reflecting a blend of scientific rigour and operational leadership. Answering a call to public service, she applies scarce aviation skills to safeguard communities while championing access to the sector for young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through school outreach, mentoring and advocacy, she demystifies flight paths into piloting and aviation technology, encouraging learners to pursue STEM subjects and persevere against the odds. Her philosophy centres on inclusivity, knowledge-sharing and disciplined excellence, pivoting that with guidance, grit and belief, new generations can soar.



Dr. Martha van Straaten

**Social Worker,
Giving Hope Johanna/Die Pikkwytjie**

Dr Martha is a social worker and forensic practitioner committed to vulnerable children and resilient communities. She holds a B.Soc.Sc. in Social Work, a Master's in Forensic Social Work, and a PhD in Disaster Management from DIMTEC (UFS). She began working in forensic social work in 2012 and by 2015 transitioned into full-time practice, focusing on Child and Youth Care Centres, often pro bono or at reduced rates. She advocates equal access to mental-health and psycho-social services, guided by ethics, honesty and impartiality. As a lecturer and mentor, she models diligence and integrity, showing students that passion, discipline and hard work overcome adversity. A champion of collaboration over competition, she mobilises scarce resources to deliver practical, community-centred support.



Walter Matli

**Associate Professor in Digital Transformation,
University of South Africa**

Walter is a digital-transformation scholar and Y2 NRF-rated researcher advancing innovation in higher education and industry. With visiting professorships at Romania-America University and Burgus Free University, he brings a global lens to African priorities. Since joining Unisa in 2021, he has led curriculum transformation and community engagement, contributed to the Senate Language Committee and CHE Institutional Audit Improvement Plan, and participated in the TAU programme. His experience spans university management, strategy and policy, with a focus on teamwork that bridges academia, councils and business. Walter's work champions technology's role in broadening access, strengthening capability and delivering inclusive growth, shaping systems that serve students, practitioners and society.

The Golden Thread that connects the People of eGoli.



With 10 stations and more than 10 supporting bus routes, step off Gautrain relaxed, into a city of progress and promise.

Gautrain is your golden link to explore the endless opportunities of Gauteng



www.gautrain.co.za



Amanda Shivamba

Director Data Privacy and Compliance Programs - Sub Saharan Africa, DHL Express

Amanda has extensive expertise in law, data protection and compliance, with a focus on advancing ethical governance and human rights across complex regulatory environments. Her career spans practice in multiple jurisdictions, specialising in labour law, human rights and privacy legislation. Amanda has designed and implemented compliance frameworks across diverse sectors, including finance, retail, NGO and transportation, ensuring both organisational integrity and operational efficiency. She is passionate about leveraging legal expertise to navigate Africa's evolving regulatory landscape, driving digitisation and AI adoption responsibly. Recognised for her strategic insight and thought leadership, Amanda combines technical proficiency with a commitment to mentorship, community impact and shaping a culture of ethical compliance and digital responsibility across the continent.



Jason Mann

Project Manager, DHL Express

Jason is a strategic thinker and problem solver with a track record of delivering results in complex operational environments. He has led integrated projects that enhanced business capability, profitability and long-term value, always balancing efficiency with respect and sustainability. Known for his collaborative mindset, he drives growth by fostering partnerships, mentoring colleagues and promoting continuous learning. Jason blends technical and operational expertise with creativity, ensuring innovative solutions are implemented while teams remain motivated and supported. His personal values of family, balance and resilience underpin his professional approach, allowing him to inspire teams to achieve excellence. He demonstrates how leadership, integrity and adaptability create measurable impact in dynamic logistics and transport systems.



Kgosimang Chotetsi

Senior Manager: Rolling Stock & Electro-Mechanical, Gautrain Management Agency

Kgosimang brings deep expertise in rail systems, mechanical engineering and fleet management, specialising in efficient and sustainable transportation solutions. His experience spans technical operations, public-private partnerships and the integration of emerging technologies such as drones. He is passionate about advancing rail sustainability and operational safety, applying analytical insight and collaborative leadership to optimise processes and drive innovation. Known for mentoring colleagues and sharing technical knowledge, Kgosimang promotes growth and learning within teams. He balances technical acumen with creativity and personal interests, demonstrating how passion, strategic thinking and attention to detail can contribute meaningfully to South Africa's mobility landscape and long-term infrastructure development.



Kutloano Modise

Senior HSSE Manager, DP World

Kutloano is a highly motivated leader with extensive experience in logistics, risk management and HSSE. He is passionate about unlocking individual potential, building high-performance teams and fostering ethical, socially responsible workplaces. His achievements include implementing safety and environmental initiatives that delivered measurable results, such as zero lost time injuries and zero-to-landfill projects. Kutloano combines innovation with a disciplined approach to leadership, valuing collaboration, relationship building and continuous self-development. He is recognised for his strategic thinking, results-driven mindset and commitment to creating inclusive environments that promote growth, resilience and operational excellence. Kutloano demonstrates how dedication, ethical leadership, and mentorship can transform both individuals and organisations in the transport and logistics sector.



Tashwell Joseph

Senior Manager: System Capacity and Planning, Gautrain Management Agency

Tashwell has built a distinguished career in transportation, operations and infrastructure planning, leading complex projects that shaped urban transport systems. His expertise spans operational planning, rail engineering and enterprise-wide improvement initiatives, with a strong focus on strategic vision, efficiency and long-term impact. Known for inspiring leadership, integrity and ethical decision-making, Tashwell mentors colleagues, contributes to professional communities, and advocates for continuous learning and innovation. His technical knowledge is complemented by a commitment to education, safety and sustainable practices, enabling teams to perform at their best. Tashwell exemplifies how leadership, strategic insight and collaboration can advance South Africa's transport and logistics landscape while nurturing the next generation of professionals.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS & PARTNERS

HEADLINE SPONSOR



INDUSTRY CATEGORY PARTNER



VIP PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS



BRONZE PARTNERS



TRAVEL PARTNER



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



AFFILIATE PARTNER



MEDIA PARTNERS



GIFT SPONSORS



VENUE PARTNER



**CREATING
ENVIRONMENTS
WHERE PEOPLE
THRIVE — AND
BUSINESSES GROW**

LET'S CO-CREATE YOUR PEOPLE STRATEGY | DISCOVER HOW WE HELP TEAMS THRIVE

At the intersection of strategy, heart, and healing stands Elin Agodi — Strategic HR Consultant, Executive Coach, and Founder of The Human Element.

With nearly two decades of experience across the public, private, and non-profit sectors, Elin helps leaders unlock the full potential of their people while facilitating personal transformation through integrative coaching and hypnotherapy.

Her mission is simple yet powerful: to create workplaces where people thrive. Through HR strategy, talent management, leadership development, and subconscious reprogramming, she equips individuals and organisations to break limiting patterns, retain top talent, reduce employment risk, and build performance-aligned teams.

People. Purpose. Performance. That's The Human Element.

OUR EXPERTISE



RECRUITMENT | HR STRATEGY | LEADERSHIP COACHING | TEAM DEVELOPMENT | EARLY-CAREER PROGRAMS

WWW.HUMANELEMENT.CO.ZA | +27 84 854 2422 | INFO@HUMANELEMENT.CO.ZA

RISING STAR MOVEMENT FOR GOOD

SOLVING FOOD INSECURITY AMONGST TERTIARY STUDENTS

EMPOWER FUTURE STARS



YOU ARE VALUED
AND RECOGNIZED

BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY



YOU CAN SPEAK OUT

FUEL FULL PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC LIFE



YOU CAN THRIVE IN SCHOOL

PROTECT MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



YOU ARE SUPPORTED

NOURISHING THE FUTURE
ONE STUDENT, ONE MEAL, ONE DONATION AT A TIME



SCAN TO DONATE

TransUnion[®] 

☆☆☆
RISING STAR
AWARDS

Sponsored by
news24



The TransUnion Rising Star Awards are proudly
produced by **BlackBark Productions cc**

Harry Goemans Centre
151 Main Road, Heathfield, Cape Town, 7945
021 788 2470 - www.risingstar.co.za

 @RisingStarSA

 @Rising Star South Africa

 @RisingStar_SA

 @RisingStarSA