

M&C Saatchi Abel reigns supreme as Agency of the Year

After years of near-misses, M&C Saatchi Abel was named Agency of the Year at the 2015 Annual AdFocus Awards. The awards event took place on Wednesday night 25 November at RoomFive, Rivonia.

The Agency of the Year Award is the only one chosen jointly by the Annual AdFocus jury and by agencies themselves. The winner can come from any agency category. M&C Saatchi Abel was rewarded for its business growth, client retention, awards and industry recognition.

In the final vote, it narrowly beat out the King James Group, which was earlier named Large Advertising Agency of the Year. Medium Advertising Agency of the Year was Y&R Cape Town and Small Agency of the Year was OpenCo, part of the TBWA group.



Media veteran Tony Koenderman received the Lifetime Achievement Award for 35 years of contribution to the marketing and advertising industry. The award was sponsored by The Strategy Department, whose general manager, Jen Stevenson, says: "We are thrilled to pay tribute to someone who has contributed so much to our industry's progress and success. His personal brand is the epitome of strength and the ability to evolve - having always stayed true to who he is as a person."

Gil Oved and Ran Neu-Ner, co-founders of the The Creative Counsel - SA's biggest-turnover agency - were recognised as Industry Leaders of the Year.

Grid Worldwide Branding and Design scooped the Branding and Design Agency of the Year award for the fifth time in 10 years.

Public relations specialist Burson-Marsteller Africa ended Ogilvy & Mather Africa's six-year winning streak by taking home the African Agency Network of the Year award. Gloo@Ogilvy was Digital Agency of the Year - having won four times previously when it was simply Gloo. Sports sponsorship agency Playmakers SA was presented with the Specialist Agency of the Year award. Vizeum SA became Media Agency of the Year.

Partnership of the Year - sponsored by the Independent Agency Search and Selection Co (IAS) - went jointly to HDI Youth Marketeers and Pick n Pay. IAS founder and MD Johanna McDowell says: "We are very committed to the Annual AdFocus Awards programme as we regard it as the most influential business awards in the marketing community. Our sponsorship of the client-agency partnership award is in its third year and resonates with our own growth in the area of client agency management."

Sarah Mitchell, a student from the Vega School of Brand Leadership in Durban, won the Student of the Year award and a R35,000 cheque from sponsor Nedbank.

"The student award creates a platform for excellent students to be identified and celebrated, and then given some financial support to further their studies. As a bank that is committed to education and assisting people to achieve their goals, this was a perfect opportunity for us to contribute," says Thulani Sibeko, Nedbank's group executive responsible for marketing, communications and corporate affairs.

The New Broom award for groundbreaking young talent went to I See A Different You, a collective started by brothers Justice Mukheli and Innocent Mukheli and childhood friend Vuyo Mpantsha. It started as a photographic project dedicated to changing the way the world perceives Soweto, but is now in demand by advertising and communications agencies for its unique outlook on SA. Andrew Shuttleworth, MD of award sponsor House of Brave, says: "We believe that to be successful in the advertising and communications world, young entrepreneurs have to be brave. This is the philosophy that underpins us as an agency and we want to encourage and grow more young people to be brave in their thinking and in their endeavours."

The full list of 14 winners was:

- Agency of the Year: M&C Saatchi Abel
- Small Advertising Agency of the Year: OpenCo
- Medium Advertising Agency of the Year: Y&R Cape Town
- Large Advertising Agency of the Year: King James
- Media Agency of the Year: Vizeum SA
- Branding and Design Agency of the Year: Grid Worldwide Branding and Design
- Digital Agency of the Year: Gloo@Ogilvy
- Specialist Agency of the Year: Playmakers SA
- African Agency Network of the Year: Burson-Marsteller Africa
- Partnership of the Year: HDI Youth Marketeers and Pick n Pay
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Tony Koenderman
- Industry Leaders of the Year: Gil Oved and Ran Neu-Ner
- New Broom: I See A Different You
- Student of the Year: Sarah Mitchell