

Meet young judge Carel Scheepers

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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In the run-up to the 22nd Prism Awards taking place on Sunday, 14 April, we chatted to this year's cohort of young judges about their fresh approach to the judging process.

In this series of interviews, we find out what they've learnt working alongside the cluster judges and what their young minds bring to the table.

"This year's young judges' entries far exceeded expectation. The selected group is proof that there's an array of diverse and young talent in this industry and that they have a lot to offer," says co-convenor and founder of the Prisms Young Judges initiative, Palesa Madumo, executive director of strategy at Vuma Reputation Management.

Here, our interview with Carel Scheepers, senior strategist at Havas Media...

■ ***What does this recognition and opportunity mean to you?***

It is an opportunity to connect with the industry in a unique way. It is always easy to ask advice from agencies and agency personnel, however, when it comes to submissions and judging it is interesting to see what agencies deem as an award-winning entry. The opportunity brings learning to not only the newbies but those who have been a part of the industry for years.

■ ***Briefly tell us about your experience in the industry.***

I am a strategist and creative. I use the term 'creative' loosely, as everyone is creative at their craft. But when strategy and creativity meet – it means business. I briefly worked in PR, but my time there gave me an opportunity to strategise and conceptualise campaigns that will benefit PR too. Often we neglect the value of PR for a brand. Being back in a creative and media space, I am confident to say that the lessons PR has taught me is to ensure that you secure your own reputation before you work on a brand's reputation.



Carel Scheepers

■ ***Comment on the judging process.***

Judging is a daunting task. At first, it is all the excitement of being able to contribute to the industry, however, knowing that a handful of people are responsible for awards is challenging. You constantly have to stop and ask yourself if you and the other judges are being fair. This requires one to re-read the entries and ask, "Has this been done before?" If so, then one must be fair and look at innovation. Innovation is what makes an execution worthy of an award and the elements that lead to this innovation: research, insights and strategy.

■ ***What has the response been to this year's entries?***

Overall it is a space where people are encouraged to speak up and drive a conversation that sparks progress. Progress for the industry and society, which is exciting in the communication institutions, as so many people take what communication practitioners say to heart.

■ ***What makes the winning work stand out?***

I stick to what I said previously: innovation and what leads to it. Research. Insights. Strategy.

■ ***Prisa also introduced the Student Campaign of the Year in 2016. Why do you think it's important that PR students***

are included in such initiatives?

“ Students are overlooked. We always think that magic comes from years of experience and a fat pay cheque. I disagree. Students are the ones who have great ideas and especially when it comes to working on a budget. They are not concerned with the politics of communication, they are concerned about delivering quality work with purpose. ”

■ **What do you think young minds bring to the table?**

They are not afraid of criticising work. They are even less afraid of big ideas. A shift in the communications industry is starting to unfold, where we see countless creative people being the custodians of progressive conversations. Also, they do not stick to the traditional mediums of communication. If one avenue did not work, they change the channel, not the topic.

■ **What have you learnt working alongside the cluster judges?**

Their experience in the industry and their fair comments. I think in the age of the fourth industrial revolution where we have access to a lot of messages, people from all walks of life are able to criticise communication. What separates the judges from society? They are able to validate their judging views and if you have an opinion, back it. The judges challenge one another and debate whether the work is good or great. Just like everybody else, we as humans expect great communication.

■ **Comment on the past, present and future state of PR.**

PR is at an interesting turn in 2019. I think PR is necessary more than ever before in an age of digital, where there are digital touchpoints everywhere we turn. We have lost the essence of relationships. We see followers, shares and retweets as relationships. PR is able to build a community and set the scene. I appreciate that when things go wrong PR steps in and deal with it, they do not shy away from a challenge.

■ **What would the title of Prisms Young Judge for the 2019 awards mean to you?**

I think an award is an incredible achievement, but at the same time winning an award is the scariest thing to happen. Once you have an award you have to keep on improving yourself; winning an award is a reminder to raise your standards on a daily basis. This implicates the entire system, as you then need to influence the people you work for and with. It is that reminder that enough is never enough.

■ **What are you most looking forward to in terms of this year's Awards?**

To see what agencies do next. Each year the standards are raised and what agencies and personnel do for their clients to raise the bar. To go beyond the brief. To keep on crafting. To see how we all learn from the winning campaigns, but also those that did not make it.

Lastly, if everyone agrees whether the awarded campaigns were judged fairly. That reflects that we, as judges, did our jobs and are able to criticise fairly and help to raise the bar in a progressive society.

As mentioned, the Awards take place this Sunday, 14 April. Follow us on [Twitter](#) for live updates on the night and visit our [Prism Awards special section](#) for other related content and of course all the winners following the announcement. Here's the link to our other [social media](#) pages, as well as the Prism Awards' [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts.

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