

Pat Mahlangu, founder of Lerato Agency is IMM's emerging marketer of the year

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

23 Nov 2023

Pat Mahlangu, an adept entrepreneur and marketing expert, was recently named the emerging marketer of the year by The IMM Institute South Africa (IMM) at the IMM Marketing Excellence Awards.

He discovered his passion for brands during his university days at the University of Johannesburg where he co-founded Varsity TV, a campus television station. His entrepreneurial spirit led to the creation of Pat on Brands and the establishment of Lerato Agency in 2020.



Pat Mahlangu was named the emerging marketer of the year. Source: Supplied.

Under Mahlangu's leadership, Lerato Agency achieved significant milestones, including orchestrating the first-ever virtual launch for Brand Africa's Most Admired Brands. This groundbreaking campaign seamlessly integrated the stock exchanges of Nairobi, Lagos, and Johannesburg into the global launch experience.

How did your agency come about?

I have always dreamt of running my own agency with a purpose of crafting brands that people love. In 2020, when the

Covid-19 pandemic hit and we were on lockdown, it was the perfect time for me to start the agency because I didn't have to incur high start-up costs like having an office space and human resources. Also at that time clients were looking for agencies that were more cost effective (due to budget cuts) as well as agencies that were more agile.

■ **You were named the emerging marketer of the year by IMM, what does this win mean for you?**

It is definitely a huge pat on my back. I've always been a student of the industry and worked hard at building entities that made an impact on the back of nothing.



Chicken Licken's Chantal Sombonos-Van Tonder named marketer of the year at IMM Awards

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What makes this award so special is that IMM is a highly reputable institution and when one gets an accolade from an institution like it is reassuring. It is a testament that hard work and passion never goes unnoticed.

■ **What are the biggest challenges you face in your role?**

As an entrepreneur, there are countless challenges that one continues to face on a daily basis. Two challenges that stand out are finding and retaining the right clients that we can partner with to craft campaigns or produce work that will win the hearts of the consumers at a larger scale. Another challenge is finding and retaining good talent.

■ **Tell us about the Top 16 Youth Owned Brands Awards.**

The Top 16 Youth-Owned Brands Awards aka YOBAs is a platform that is aimed at recognising and celebrating youth excellence in brand building in 16 categories. The Top 16 YOBA acknowledges that young people are not only contributing to the economy of South Africa but to the overall image of the country.

I hope to challenge the negative narrative around the youth – that they are lazy, apathetic and entitled. I'd like to see more investments being made into youth-owned businesses. I believe it is youth-owned brands that are going to solve the high youth-unemployment however they need support from the government and corporate.

■ **What are your plans for the future?**

My plan is to continue to build on the trajectory that I am on of crafting brands that people love and expand my businesses beyond the borders of South Africa. I also plan on going back to the classroom to lecture as I love sharing my knowledge with those that are coming after me.

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

Karabo Ledwaba is a Marketing and Media Editor at Bizcommunity and award-winning journalist. Before joining the publication she worked at Sowetan as a content producer and reporter. She was also responsible for the leadership page at SIVag, Sowetan's lifestyle magazine. Contact her at karabo@bizcommunity.com

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