

Celebrating women in tech while calling all women to #Powerup and challenge the status quo

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The Innovator Trust's 6th Annual Women In Tech Awards kicked off with red-carpet interviews that were second to none. Guests arrived, embodying the spirit of African glam and ready to embrace women creating powerful platforms for one another and "take up space."



With a hybrid event of over 150 people hosted at the prestigious Vodacom World Dome, exceptional speakers and panelists imparted wisdom and thought-provoking discussions that inspired attendees to move into action and #PowerUp.

Over the past few years, the Innovator Trust has successfully incubated over 190 Black small business owners in the technology space. The nexus of the Innovator Trust is to provide empowerment, representation, support, and spaces for connection for women entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs are women on the ground, driving change and making meaningful contributions using technology.

This year, the challenge to women who exist within the tech entrepreneurship space is to #PowerUp and challenge the status quo of women in tech. Known for her entrepreneurial flair, chief executive officer of the Innovator Trust, Tashline Jooste, acknowledges that "being a woman in tech in South Africa is no easy feat."

Jooste touched on the issues that women face, including under-representation, the devastation of Covid and exigent Gender-Based Violence. Yet, she encouraged those in attendance to find solutions despite the adversity. "Let's use our superpower as innovators using technology, and let's 'power up' a new dawn for us as women and entrepreneurs and 'flip the script' on what it means to be a woman." This was an exhilarating introduction ahead of a day of some of South Africa's most esteemed trailblazers, innovators, and captains of industry.

Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi's keynote address brought the gravitas of our responsibility to one another as women into the room. Continuing a thread that became apparent throughout the day, Dr Fraser-Moleketi delivered a weighty address about women's reality in South Africa. "People in entrepreneurship in the ICT sector can look at the tools to deal with the violence of women and children in South Africa," reiterating that "the world's war on women is a personal protest."



Co-host Iman Rapetti skillfully navigated the conversation about "The Power of Her Seat at the Table" in the first-panel discussion. Icon, Professor Thuli Madonsela demonstrated how awareness is key to some of our most significant challenges. "All the battles you were confronted with in your early journey were a blessing. They help you grow your psychological and social muscles to fight greater battles. It boils down to being aware of our own emotions."

Fellow panelist Heather Sonn noted, "there is no substitute for the inner work. Make really good friends with yourself."

In an exhilarating one-on-one, the executive head of BBBE and transformation for the Vodacom Group, Linda Marthinus, passionately alluded to the appalling stats on women-owned businesses in South Africa. As she concluded, she exited the stage to thundering applause, stating: "Never apologise for being female. That does not define who you are! You're a business owner, and being a woman is a bonus. Never apologise for being great and never for being you."



Co-host Pabi Moloi charmed the room while expertly steering the panel discussion on "The Power of the Collective Woman; A Conversation of Trust." Panelist Storme McDonald, COO of RMB commented, "Having women in key leadership positions will enforce those changes that make the corporate space more inclusive for women."



Vodacom managing executive for public enterprises, Poppy Tshabalala, reminded us that "Women can bring everyone together. It's a fact that most successful organisations and countries are woman-led. A wise woman builds a home. See the world as your home."

After excellent keynote addresses ranging from an address to ICT SMMEs delivered by acting director-general for the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, to a one-on-one discussion on 'Women's Mental Wellness' with clinical psychologist, Dr Lwanele Khasu, the day culminated in the grand awards ceremony and a congratulatory address by former UN Women Executive Director, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

In her congratulatory address, she remarked, "Technology has tremendous potential to make education more accessible and affordable for the girl child, no matter where they are."



Thereafter, attendees were directed to the nominees and winners of the Innovator Trust's Women In Tech Appreciation

Experience who each walked away with a cash prize towards their business.

Enterprise Development Top Female Achiever First Quarter 2022

- 1st: Wahseema Roberts & Nicole Miller - Temo Digital, Western Cape
- 2nd: Nomphumelelo Mahlangu - Synergy Trading and Projects, Gauteng
- 3rd: Yandisa Sokhanyile - Konecta

Enterprise Development Top Female Achiever Highest Percentage Growth 2021/2022

- 1st: Nomphumelelo Mahlangu - Synergy Trading and Projects, Gauteng
- 2nd: Wahseema Roberts & Nicole Miller - Temo Digital, Western Cape
- 3rd: Mamokete Thlola - Serumula Business Solutions, Gauteng

Enterprise Development Top Female Achiever Highest Turn-Over Figures 2021/2022

- Kim Palmer - On the Ball College, Western Cape

Enterprise Development Top Female Employment Creator 2021/2022

- Nomphumelelo Mahlangu - Synergy Trading and Projects, Gauteng

Youth Entrepreneurship Programme Top Female Achiever 2022

- Lerato Moisi, Western Cape

Supplier Development Pinnacle Award

- Lilian Kistan – Tekwecomm, KwaZulu-Natal

Enterprise Development Pinnacle Award Women In Tech 2022

- Nomphumelelo Mahlangu - Synergy Trading and Projects, Gauteng

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" Catalyst for success: Innovator Trust's R145k grants elevate 10 SMMEs " 19 Jan 2024

" Innovator Trust unveils 2023 SMME Women in Tech Award recipients " 7 Dec 2023

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" From small business to creating tech-powered impact: Glynn Mashonga's mission to transform communities " 18 Oct 2023

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The Innovator Trust was created to support the growth of small black-owned Information and Communications Technology (ICT) businesses in South Africa. Our programmes facilitate training that develops their skills as business owners.

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