Conscious Companies Awards: Finalists are a breed apart

Brenda Kali

THE CULMINATION of a four-month quest to uncover the top conscious companies in the country ends tonight when the finalists will be celebrated at the Conscious Companies Awards 2017. The leaders of the companies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-profit corporations (NPCs), who were selected as finalists, are a unique breed of men and women who displayed a strong sense of purpose, values, innovation and an intuitive understanding of people to create meaningful human relationships with their stakeholders.

A deeply rooted willingness and courage by the leaders of these organisations to create dissonance and bring about a fundamental shift in the way of doing business in the world of business—proves yet again that conscious leaders can change conscious companies.

The companies, whose realised that the nature and structure of relationships with its employees and stakeholders, and whose visionary leaders guide it to prosper, perform and pursue profits while placing a premium on people, community, culture and the environment beyond the bottom line are the ones that made it as finalists. They are: IQ Business, Turner & Townsend, Petco, Thomson Reuters, Belgotex Floor Coverings, Joe Public. In the NGO, NPC and NPO category they are: Invalua Empowerment Fund, Afrika Tikkun and the Smile Foundation and Petco.

IQ Business: Adam Craker

The chief executive officer of IQ Business, the largest independent management and IT consulting firm in Africa, stands tall in his robust presence of purpose, values, innovation and influence positive outcomes. He has unerringly steered the business towards sustainable and inclusive growth and profit while placing the two pillars of growth and purpose. Craker’s visionary leadership has created a platform for tackling inequality, unemployment and the lack of growth in the South African economy. He is on a mission to turn how to unify business, labour and government towards a common goal saw various initiatives towards economic transformation.

Strate: Monica Singer

The chief executive of Strate, a technology company that serves the financial markets, is a rare breed of individuals and leaders. She had shaped her to embody the conscious mind of creating business values through human value beyond the bottom line. “The world sometimes does not cope with transparency, honesty and love”, she says, displaying a unique personality in a male dominated environment. In 1996 she decided to work for mutual interests driven by her passion for people with the knowledge needed to address risks and reap rewards. Shah is passionate about Africa. She is committed to ensuring that the company contributes towards the continent’s economic empowerment with innovative technology and industry expertise.

Turner & Townsend: Turner & Townsend is an independent professional services company specialising in project management, cost management and consulting across the real estate, infrastructure and natural resources sectors. With 97 offices in 41 countries, the company uses extensive global and industry experience to manage risk, while maximising value. Under the collective leadership of chairperson and chief executive, Vincent Clancy, Ian Donaldson, MD for Africa, and their dedicated executive team, the company delivers sustainable value in sectors such as real estate, infrastructure, energy and mining, technology and manufacturing. “Despite challenges in the mining industry, we increased our African revenue and profits in line with expectations,” Donaldson says.

Belgotex Floor Coverings: Kevin Walsh

The chief operating officer of Belgotex is proud of the company’s achievements in the green space. The company has become a recognised world leader in sustainability practices in all aspects of their plant and carpet manufacturing operations.

“Our main goal is to operate a sustainable factory wherever economically and environmentally feasible,” explains Walsh. A green product manufactured in a green factory earned Belgotex six stars in South Africa’s first custom Green Star SA – Existing Building Performance rating for an industrial facility from the Green Building Council of South Africa. The comprehensive award was for implementing outstanding practical and measurable strategic solutions in the following areas: They also initiated a profit share system where a percentage of profits go to every worker in the company from the lowest level upwards.

In the NGO, NPC and NPO the finalists are: Invalua Empowerment Fund

Dr Teddy Bletcher, a pioneer of the free university education movement with the “Maharishi Institute”, is a visionary innovator who has created a unique holistic environment that goes beyond just education to support the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual growth of his students. Invalua Education Empowerment Fund as with the Branson School of Entrepreneurship provides a place where young people can access resources with financial, technological, and infrastructure assistance, thereby enabling the creation of a conscious culture among the 350 strong employees. This is daily demonstrated by five core leadership values of Creativity, Excellence, Integrity, Respect and Leadership.

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Afrika Tikkun: Marc Lubner

The chief executive of Afrika Tikkun and founder of the smile Foundation is the recipient of several awards that include the Distinguished Service to Society Award as well as several others. Lubner, the company has made a indelible difference in society and young people by breaking the cycle of poverty, crime and abuse. Afrika Tikkun Investment Trust ensures the company is well placed to enable the hundreds of learners in dire need of assistance. The number of programme beneficiaries dramatically increased from 2.600 to almost 30 000 with the annual spend increasing from R50 million to 500 million. ’I intend to live a life of purpose,” Lubner says. “We have a responsibility to live out Nelson Mandela’s values in our everyday lives. The Smile Foundation treats children with facial abnormalities and offers a comprehensive health care solution for children with facial conditions. Partnering with key academic hospitals in the country makes it possible for children who would otherwise be deprived of the gift of a smile.

Petco: Cherl Scholtz, Petco’s chief executive, maintains that incremental change has cut the key strategy for the organisation since the outset in 2004. The core of Scholtz’s efforts is to represent the country’s plastics industry’s efforts to self-regulate. “We help facilitate the collection of the proceeds from the recycling fund to enable the fund have sufficient capacity to repurpose it,” Scholtz says. Despite progress, we few challenges to improve on Petco’s achievements. In 2015, 17 billion Pet bottles were collected across South Africa and up-cycled daily. “We’ve not only worked with collectors and recyclers (and campaigned to increase consumer awareness), we’ve also liaised with branded owners and designers to help them manufacture products that is compatible with recycling,” Scholtz says.

The winner and runner-up of the Conscious Companies Awards 2017 will be announced at a gala dinner event on April 28, 2017, hosted by Coca-Cola. The prize for the winning company and runner-up is a commitment to provide 1000 cracked steel and copper sculpture by renowned artist and blacksmith Paul Warden and a trip for 10 to the leader of the organisational to spend at a consciousness, Mindfulness Meditation course in an ashram in Bangalore.

Brenda Kali is the MD of Conscious Companies, a communication strategist and a transformation coach. She is the author of Beyond Corporate Sludge: Insight into an innovative and conscious business. She sees the role of the leader in the corporate world. The gala event will be held tonight in partnership with Coca-Cola Business Report and Classic FM.

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