



# Visionary leaders get the nod

## CONSCIOUS COMPANIES AWARDS: CELEBRATES BOSSES WHO CARE FOR PEOPLE

→ Place a premium on people, community, culture and the environment.

**T**he first winners of the inaugural Conscious Companies Awards 2017 were announced by Mervyn King, chairperson of the judging panel.

Company leaders, high-profile business personalities and former politicians attended the dazzling event, hosted by Classic FM business presenter Michael Avery with entertainment provided by the Tribhangi Dance Theatre.

The Conscious Companies Awards is an innovative initiative in recognition of visionary leaders and organisations who heed the call to create a conscious business environment. It also celebrates leaders that steer their companies to prosper, perform and pursue profits, while placing a premium on people, community, culture and the environment.

In the companies category, the award was presented to Monica Singer, CEO of Strate, a technology company that serves the financial markets. There were five other finalists in this category.

In the non-profit organisations category, the award went to Afrika Tikkun and The Smile Foundation and was received by its dynamic CEO, Marc Lubner. There

were two other finalists.

Singer is a rare breed of individual. Adversity had shaped her to embody the conscious strands of creating business value through human value beyond the bottom line.

"The world sometimes does not cope with transparency, honesty and love", she says, displaying a unique femininity in a male dominated environment.

In 1996 she understood the need of the market to execute efficient financial digital solutions and successfully disrupted it moving away from historic manually intensive paper driven processes to offer efficient, digital systems as a Central Securities Depository. As a result South Africa is ranked among the best economies in the world for its financial market development and tops the regulation of its exchanges. Trade volumes now exceed 350 000 from an initial 4 000.

Through Singer's vision the company has become a national asset, internationally recognised as a Financial Market Infrastructure (FMI) trusted to use state-of-the-art technology, international expertise and sound risk management framework to support and promote the safety and efficiency of the financial markets.

"I really wanted to get to know and understand what makes my stakeholders and employees tick," Singer says.

"We really care about our stakeholders, staff, environment

and community".

Strate is a multiple award-winning enterprise, including the Deloitte Best Company to Work Survey that celebrates companies which have been rated by their employees

Under Lubner's stewardship, Afrika Tikkun has made an indelible difference in society by helping break the cycle of poverty, crime and abuse and giving young people hope.

Afrika Tikkun Services (ATS) serves as a facilities management business to provide skills development and training, placement and procurement, and broad-based empowerment consulting in the enterprise development space from cradle to career. The setting up of the Afrika Tikkun Investment Trust (ATI) ensures that all profits are routed to fund the hundreds of learners in dire need of assistance.

The number of programme

beneficiaries increased dramatically from 1 200 to almost 20 000, with the annual spend increasing from R20-million to R60-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 is made possible for children who would otherwise be deprived of the gift of a smile.

Afrika Tikkun's Conscious Companies initiatives include: having an impact on more than 100 000 beneficiaries since 1994 and the provision of development programmes to over 12 500 beneficiaries, and over R40-million invested in building and maintenance of infrastructure in six communities.

The Smile Foundation has had an impact on 2 000 children giving them the gift of a smile with costly corrective facial reconstructive surgery and treatments. Provision for professional family, group and individual therapy sessions in response to abuse, and Centres of Excellence such as Wings of Life in Diepsloot and Phutaditjaba in Alexandra.

The leaders of the companies and NGOs and 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. They have a deeply rooted willingness and courage to create disruption and bring about a different quality of being in the world of business proves yet again that conscious leaders shape conscious companies.

What sets these awards apart is that it translates King 4 into tangible action. In keeping with the consciousness ethos of the award, the leader of the winning organisation will undertake a trip to India to participate in a week long Mindfulness/Meditation Course.

Brenda Kali, managing director of Conscious Companies SA and author of *Beyond Corporate Sludge: Insights to create balance and harmony in the workplace*, explains: "When plunder and looting become the rule of law then we need a dramatic shift in consciousness, reason, justice, integrity and ethics."

"We also need to seek alliances between people and profit, reason and consciousness, integrity and effort with energy and ability. We need a few good men and women to prevail."

"The leaders of the organisations that made it as finalists are conscious human beings, all deserving of the Conscious Companies Awards. They are a few good men and women."

**When plunder and looting become the rule of law then we need a dramatic shift in consciousness, reason, justice, integrity and ethics.**

**Brenda Kali**  
Managing director of  
Conscious Companies SA

