

# Innovators win, partnerships lose

BY ALEX KAYLE AND AUDRA MAHLONG

[ Johannesburg, 27 February 2009 ] - It is “encouraging” to see technology companies take an innovative approach to the challenges facing them, says science and technology minister Mosibudi Mangena.

Speaking at the Technology Top 100 (TT100) business awards, in Johannesburg, last night, Mangena stated it is the use of innovation that made winners on the night globally competitive companies.

The TT100 awards are a Department of Science and Technology initiative. They aim to reward companies that have achieved success through the use of technology, innovation and people.

Organisations were required to send in applications detailing their innovative projects and prove their business was able to meet the challenges of the market through new technologies.

Mangena stated that while the government tries to promote public-private partnerships, he is concerned by what this year's entrants revealed.

“It is worrying that no state universities and only two publicly funded research councils are willing to subject themselves to the scrutiny of this council...It is also worrying that most of you here today are not willing to enter into partnerships with state-funded institutions.”

Mangena said government initiatives such as the Technology Innovation Agency were created to promote innovation – which is fundamental to growth – and increase the benefits of partnership by closing the gap between the public and private sector.

He also noted that companies continue to shy away from processes of patenting as a means to protect their intellectual property. He called for a change of this practice, noting that measures such as the Intellectual Property Rights for Publicly Funded Research Act will illustrate the benefits of patenting innovations.

## The winners

Dr Bill Venter, founder of the Altron Group, and Irvine Bell, founder of Bell Equipment, were recognised for their contributions to technology. Both received the 2008 Life Time Achievers Award.

The award for the 2008 Department of Science and Technology Minister's Award for Overall Excellence went to Bell Equipment. Emerging company, Breadbin Interactive, was awarded the Director-General's award for Overall Excellence, as well as the award for Excellence in the Management of Technology.

Resource Ballast Technologies scooped the majority of the awards in the emerging category. The company was jointly awarded the Director-General's award for Overall Excellence, the award for Excellence in the Management of Systems, and the Excellence in the Management of Research award.

Established enterprise X/procure Software won the Eskom Award for Excellence in the Management of Technology, while Rapid Liquid Dispensing won the award for Excellence in the Management of Innovation. DebTech won the same award but for the emerging category.

ID Control Solutions, an established enterprise, received the award for Excellence in the Management of People, and Flexi Manufacturing won the award in the emerging category. Established companies Hazelton Pumps and the South African Post Office jointly received the award for Excellence in the Management of Systems.

Sasol and the South African Medical Research Council jointly won the award for Excellence in the Management of Research – in the established category. Altech and Sasol were jointly awarded the accolade for Excellence in the Management of Technology, Innovation and People.