

# Lumkani fire initiative sparkles with a Silver Ubuntu Loerie

 By Leigh Andrews

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It's not just ad agencies and their clients that win big at the Loeries each year. This year Lumkani, a technology startup, won a Silver Loerie-winning shack fire detection initiative. Here's why they won.

"The Ubuntu Loerie is a wonderful initiative because it recognises innovation in business that provides services to traditionally under-served markets. This is a significant and important market in South Africa and expanding the scope of the Loeries to take into account businesses and campaigns focusing on this market is relevant and required", says David Gluckman, Lumkani director.



The Lumkani team (L to R): Samuel Ginsberg, Francois Petousis, Paul Mesarcik, Emily Vining, Max Basler and David Gluckman.

But what exactly is the Lumkani fire detection initiative? Well, it leverages technology to reduce risk and therefore reduces the costs to society as a whole. The first of these products, sold and installed in 3,500 households, is an innovative fire detector designed to decrease shack fires and their spread. In doing so, they mitigate the loss of life and property in informal settlements across the globe.

That's certainly impressive. More impressive is how the fire detector works, as a networked heat-detector, reducing false alarms and creating community-wide responses in fire situations, coupled with smart units which constantly sense the system and relay information remotely.

## How the Lumkani Fire Detection initiative got started...



The Lumkani device

The devastating shack fires that took place on New Year's Day 2013 in Khayelitsha displaced thousands of people and served as a catalyst for the research and development that led to the first product launch on 21 November 2014.

Even better? It's a low-cost device, with the selling price of R130 direct to customers and the battery lasting at least one year.

## Here's how the fire-detection technology works...

The heat-detection technology used is proven as most effective at sensing fires in already smoky environments, like informal settlements. The in-home heat detector rings when a fire is detected, giving anyone nearby the chance to respond proactively and extinguish the fire. If not extinguished, it triggers all devices within a 40-metre range, effectively creating a community-wide alert.

View the video embedded below:

That doesn't mean it's easy business though, especially as the tech startup can't exactly follow the mantra of "fail quickly, innovate faster and get back into the market," especially with the social development considerations that require careful strategy and steadier progress.

Instead, Lumkani advises you to understand the full picture of your problem, engage deeply with your target market, test, question, and build strong trusting mutually beneficial relationships with your customers by designing solutions specifically for the challenge on the ground in collaboration with people on the ground.

Social entrepreneur Gluckman says this is a case of doing "good business", the marriage between profit and social impact in using profit as a factor of production, where the output is social impact and profit is used to remunerate and retain top talent and grow the organisation in new markets and ways to further create the output of social impact.

Great advice for any startup, especially those looking to make an impact through social responsibility and doing good business.

For more information, visit the [Lumkani website](#), and [click here for a reminder of this year's Loeries Ubuntu winners](#).

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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