



What it is like to be a finalist at the Undergraduate of the Year Awards

31 May 2018

Over 3,300 students from across the UK entered this year's TARGETjobs Undergraduate of the Year Awards. Kudzai and Philipp were two of the finalists in the Innovation category and we caught up with them to hear about the experience.

Kudzai Moyo ([BSc Accounting and Finance](#) with Foundation Year) and Philipp John (BSc Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship) both entered the Innovation category which was sponsored by Barclays. Applicants for the awards went through several stages from application, to online tests and assessment centre or – in the case of the Innovation category – an Innovation Pitch Day. 10 finalists for each category were then invited to the Grand Final in Canary Wharf on 20 April where the winners were announced. The prize for this year's Innovation winner was a two week internship with Barclays as well as membership of Barclays Eagle Labs for one year.

Why did you choose to enter the Undergraduate of the Year Awards?

P: "The award itself sounded very intriguing "Undergraduate of the Year"... who doesn't want to be the Undergraduate of the Year? I first thought that no category would really apply to me since I feel like I am more of an all-rounder; I like various kinds of subjects from life sciences to engineering to art. When I saw that there was a 'Innovation' category I thought that sounded really interesting so I just went in and applied."

K: “Having studied Creativity and Innovation during the [Foundation Year](#) at Warwick Business School, I learnt a lot more about what innovation means and different ways to enhance our creativity. Prior to this, I would have never labelled myself as creative or innovative, but an important lesson I learnt is that creativity isn't just something people are born with, it is something you can nurture and develop. I went on to put this knowledge into action by undertaking the Undergraduate of the Year for Innovation competition.”

What did you showcase at the Innovation Pitch Day?

P: “I pitched ‘DeepFleet’ an idea I recently entered into Warwick Entrepreneur’s ‘The Apprentice’ competition which my team won. The idea has a pretty bold vision of trying to connect truck drivers with their smartphones and then allowing them to drive in fleets. Think of it like Uber: You just need your phone and can see where other truck drivers are around you. DeepFleet then recommends which fleet(s) you should join and also incentivises the leading truck of a fleet. If trucks then drive in these fleets, they each save between 7 and 10% of fuel. Implement this in the USA and we would save 1 billion litres of fuel per year. This would help achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.”

K: “I showcased a voluntary project that I had previously worked on in Uganda, which helped raise awareness of the harm of using bleaching cosmetics and the importance of embracing individuality in society. I had to present the innovative challenge behind the project in front of senior members of Barclays. Overall the experience was great, the other finalists were lovely and we worked more like a team rather than competitors and that in itself was fulfilling.”

What were your most enjoyable and your most challenging moments in the process?

P: “The most enjoyable part was definitely meeting the other finalists as well as Barclays’ representatives. It was nice that we didn’t see each other as competitors. We were just a bunch of passionate and likeminded people who enjoyed meeting each other. Everybody was top-notch, really friendly and interesting and just happy to be there! I’m sure our paths will cross again someday, we all will definitely kept in touch.”

K: “The biggest challenge for me was the Pitch Day. I get nervous speaking in front of people – to help I had to engage in a lot of positive self-talk and I attended some public speaking seminars offered by the University of Warwick prior to the pitch day to help. The feedback I received was amazing and I can say I feel one step closer to becoming a confident public speaker.”

What advice would you give to those who want to enter the Awards next year?

P: “Your CV and charisma matters. It was not just what you pitched at the Innovation Pitch Day, it was also about the person you were and your previous efforts, hence a CV showcasing relevant engagement was important. But I would definitely recommend going for it.”

K: “It can be easy to get trapped in self-doubt and let good opportunities pass us by. I had to remind myself that I had nothing to lose by applying – and in all honesty, I didn’t expect to receive the phone call telling me I was one of 10 students across the country out of hundreds of applications selected for the semi-finals and further onto the finals. I would advise those who want to enter next year to go for it and try their best! Warwick Business School provides a great environment that encourages and facilitates innovation, so I am confident that we already have a solid foundation to build upon.”

If you would like to find out more about the undergraduate programmes on offer at Warwick Business School you can download our [2019 Undergraduate brochure](#).

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