

# Kenya's advertising guru nominated for business leader award

By [Carole Kimutai](#): [@CaroleKimutai](#)

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Bharat Thakrar, CEO of Scangroup Limited, has been nominated for the [2011 All Africa Business Leader Awards](#) in the Africa Entrepreneur of the Year award category. Thakrar has been recognised for his entrepreneurial skills in building Scangroup into a powerful pan African business. The awards aims at recognising business leaders and companies that have excelled in Africa over the last year.



Bharat Thakrar, CEO of Scangroup Limited

Scangroup is a marketing services group of companies that offers an integrated range of advertising and communication services and controls more than 50% of Kenya's market share. The company is behind some of Kenya's advertising campaigns like Dura Coats Peter Marangi and Equity Bank's Member campaign.

"I am greatly honoured and humbled to share this platform with Africa's best business people. I take this nomination not only a personal recognition to me but also to the employees of Scangroup who have stood by me and helped me build this company over the past 30 odd years. This is also recognition of Kenya as a country, its ability to export some of its best organisations to the rest of the continent and an affirmation that any local business can make an impact on the African business landscape," said Thakrar on his nomination.

## Thakrar's career

Thakrar holds a diploma in advertising and marketing from the Communications and Marketing Foundation - UK. His father, a commercial manager of an advertising agency, contributed to his choice of career and admits he expected to find himself in advertising.

"I was good at Biology at school and I was planning to become a doctor," Thakrar said in an earlier interview. During exams, his father would take him to his office and give him a quiet corner where he could read with minimum distractions. However, during his study breaks, Thakrar would sneak and go to the studio where he would watch and marvel at the creatives working.

After his A Level, Thakrar took a gap year and did his internship at the advertising firm as he waited to join medical school. He loved the job so much that he decided to get into advertising. That marked the beginning of his career in advertising - which has seen him become the founding shareholder of Kenya's first listed advertising and marketing communications company.

Thakrar setup Lowe Scanad (now Scanad) in December 1982. His big break came when he got a contract from the Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) to work on the banks 'closer to the people' campaign. He worked closely with Prof. Benjamin Kipkorir, who was then the executive chairman of KCB on the historical campaign that aimed at taking banking services to rural areas.

"For a long time, KCB was the only bank that had branches in rural areas," he says. Lowe Scanad worked on the Kenya Airways Premier World class, Tusker Milele, 2002 Electoral Commission of Kenya's voter awareness campaign and the Fanta Feel Free campaigns.

In 1996, he started Media Initiative, a media independent company in Kenya providing specialist media solutions. Then, specialist media planning and buying outfit was novel and the first company to adopt the idea was Unilever.

## Other nominees

Also nominated in the Africa Entrepreneur of the Year award category are Aliko Dangote, founder of the Dangote Group; and Leo-Stan Nnamdi, chairman and CEO, Zinox Technologies, both from Nigeria.

Winners will be announced at a gala ceremony to held on Thursday, 20th October 2011 at the Sandton Sun, Johannesburg, South Africa.

## Criteria

According to a statement from the organisers, the winners would have made an outstanding contribution to the development of the continent, the economic aspirations of its citizens and the transformation of Africa's image in international markets, while displaying high standards of good corporate citizenship and social and environmental responsibility.

"The awards have become a benchmark for institutions across Africa and a reminder of the amazing achievements which are currently unfolding throughout the continent," reads the statement in part.

African Business Awards brings together prominent business leaders, entrepreneurs, heads of state and other high-ranking government officials from across the world to celebrate the achievements and successes of those who have played a pivotal role in driving Africa's economic development forward.

## ABOUT CAROLE KIMUTAI: @CAROLEKIMUTAI

- Carole Kimutai is a writer and editor based in Nairobi, Kenya. She is currently an MA student in New Media at the University of Leicester, UK. Follow her on Twitter at @CaroleKimutai.
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