

By solving real problems, entrepreneurs can drive real change

As part of their ongoing efforts to help South African SMEs navigate the post-pandemic "Great Staggering" back into the new post-normal, post-lockdown world, [Bronwyn Williams](#), partner at Flux Trends, interviewed Tshidi Morabi at the Alinea Innovation Master Class to find out South African businesses can use innovation to become more resilient and sustainable.



Tshidi Morabi is the inventor of LocTransie, a mobile application that connects parents with their child's school transport system. She established the business in 2014, with her over 20 years of experience in software development and technology.

LocTransie scooped up several, including two MTN Business app of the year awards in 2019. As such, Morabi shares insights into building an innovative business from the ground up in South Africa - even when the odds seem stacked against you.

❏ ***What was that aha! moment that made you want to create your business and your app?***

That aha! moment was when I was unable to locate my own child. She was using scholar transport and it was first day of the first year at high school. I had to rush home just to make sure that my child is in a safe at home because the scholar transport driver was not answering the phone. I was really, worried. So that is what made me to create the app, for me and for other parents to addressing our social need for peace of mind for parents.

❏ ***Have you had to innovate your business due to Covid-19?***

In alignment with Covid-19 requirements, we have added the temperature field so that when the scholar transport driver picks up the child at his home, they can actually enter the temperature to say the child was picked up, and again when the child is dropped off at school.

❏ ***What are some of the hurdles and challenges that you had to overcome to take your original idea and turn it into actuality?***

My challenge was more about cash flow because the app was self-funded. Also getting the right person to develop the app the way I envisioned it was a challenge.

❏ ***What do you think it takes to do something innovative, like what you have done? What are the attributes that potential entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs should have if they want to be successful at being innovative?***

I believe that if you can think of something, and you see that it will work - just go ahead and pursue it. Because my motto in life is that if I can think of it, then it is worth pursuing.

You just must take chances and say, this will work if you believe in it, then you should be good to go.



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Evan-Lee Courie 1 Aug 2019



■ ***What do you think, in general, are the challenges that hold people back from being innovative in South Africa, not in your specific case, but in the more general context?***

I would say people tend to be too relaxed. We are used to being consumers, not creators of things.

We believe that if somebody has created something, we will just be piggybacking on it and use it. We need to change our mindset to be creators, not consumers.

■ ***Coming back to what you said a bit earlier, when you were starting your own business, you said that the challenge is, on the one hand, obviously getting funding and financing to get the project off the ground, but the other one was finding the right partners with the right skill sets. To what degree do you think that innovation is held back or enhanced by collaborating and finding partners?***

Collaboration, it is critically important because you might have an idea, but you need to collaborate with other people so that you can see things in a different context. Because when I thought of my app, I was looking at it from a parent point of view, because I was the parent who was anxious about the safety of my child. Then, when I started collaborating, speaking to the schools speaking to the transport companies, and I realised there is another set of information that I require for me to make my service accepted by all the parties.

■ ***When it comes to finding partners to innovate with, do you have any advice for any people on how to find the right partners that will enhance innovation rather than hold you back? Because that is always the challenge - the general human condition of tension between collaboration and competition - how do you find the right people to pull together to support your vision?***

That is difficult one, I think finding collaboration if you are not looking for funding, it is quite easy. Some people will push back if you need money from them, and they do not believe in your idea.

“ But if you are collaborating for the sense of putting this product together, and you make it clear that you will fund it and that you just want their point of view from a specific perspective, I think it is much easier. ”

But again, you must also make sure that you do not get people who are claiming they can do something for you - they need to prove what they can deliver.

It's critically important to be hands-on as the owner of the idea, to make sure that it's developed and delivered exactly how you wanted it initially, even though you have combined other people's perspectives in it.

▣ ***How do you succeed in changing and adapting and continuing to innovate, to make sure that you stay ahead of the competition?***

I would say you must always be innovative; we must always come with a new idea like now with the Covid-19, we did not sit back and complain about Covid-19.

We used Covid-19 to look at what can we do so that our product is relevant now, in the correct context - that is why we added the temperature feature to our app, for example.

You need to be proactive and respond to the changing needs of your customers.

▣ ***Do you have any advice to anyone that is trying to start an innovative new product service or business either for themselves or for a company? If you could just give one piece of advice to someone that is wanting to follow on a similar journey to what you have been through - What would that be?***

My advice will be to follow your dream. If you have any innovative idea, you can always turn that into reality. So, talk to other people, if you need help, but make sure that they sign an NDA before you disclose what you want to do.

And run with it. Because it is possible.

This interview was part of the Flux Trends Alinea Mini Masterclass Series dedicated to helping South African entrepreneurs and SMEs use trends as business insights to get back to work after the manifold challenges of 2020.