

Local entrepreneurs chart new business growth path powered by technology

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Western Cape based software development startup, Temo Digital, are living proof that being young tech entrepreneurs and non-conforming to traditional ways of work is *cool* and can work.



The approach that Temo Digital have taken in growing a startup business with core services in technology and custom-solution development, has been unconventional and from the grassroots level up. Since starting out in 2018, the business has bloomed organically, experiencing rapid growth in size and turnover, implementing and sustaining a 50/50 balance of formally trained ICT professionals and newly upskilled matriculated school leavers who are the driving force behind the company's success. The choice for this format was inspired by the impetus to break the mould of traditional methods of working while encouraging more youth to enter the technology sector.

Shifting from a one-man show to a collective

For small businesses, besides funding, another obstacle on the growth path is knowing when and how to scale. When the time and demand for more capacity arose, the team at Temo Digital opted to employ an Agile methodology which saw them successfully achieve business maturity in a short space of time. What started out as a team of four consultants has now grown to a thriving team of over 30 dynamic, young and talented staff members. As a result, the business has been able to realise greater efficiencies and productivity, quicker turnaround times and innovative solutions for clients, which Wahseema Roberts, CEO of Temo Digital, describes as "the beauty of working as a collective with self-managed teams".

Working eight hours a day has been the norm for employees across the globe. However, with the advancement of technology and globalisation overtaking the way societies operate today, many perceive the traditional 40-hour work week as redundant and in need of an overhaul.

“It’s very important to us that our employees have a sense of freedom. Not all are morning people, some people work best in the evening, so 9-5 just doesn’t work for us,” adds Emilio Flanigan, chief technology officer for the business.

“There is no typical day with a start and end at Temo Digital. Our team work on what we call exchange, flexible hours. We start the day with a standup meeting at noon, where every staff member gets a chance to update the team on what they have been working on, we iron out any issues and everyone just tracks work progress on the board,” a tool the team have implemented which provides centralised, company-wide visibility of all clients, projects and deliverables to all members, explains Michael January, head of Product Delivery for the company.

Slow and steady growth – a winning formula

Even for the most seasoned individuals, running a small business in the everchanging arena of technology, is no easy feat. The issue of financing is a common barrier for growth experienced by small businesses, this was no different for Temo Digital. “There is constantly demand in the digital space that we found we couldn’t meet, not because we were not capable, but because we didn’t have the people to deliver. People cost money and so one of our biggest challenges was having to say no to work we knew we could do and do well. It all came down to not having the financial resources available,” explains Nicole Miller, Temo Digital’s financial director.



“Simple is our superpower”

- Wahseema Roberts – CEO, Temo Digital

“We overcame this challenge by simplifying our process. The work that we take on sits very much within the patterns of work we have done before, where we know we have a strong, robust foundation and room for us to show our capabilities and skill in building onto it through customisation,” explains Roberts.

Through slow and steady, incremental wins over their challenges, Temo Digital have been able to craft a unique value proposition with excellent time-to-market being the winner that keeps them selling to client after client. “Part of what we also offer is upskilling our client in the process of delivering a solution for them. We don’t want them to be continually paying for our services. It must get to the point of self-management, where they are able to engage with and own the technology themselves,” Roberts adds.

The need for mentorship for small businesses cannot be understated

While there is much credit due for the skill and expertise in delivering a product or service proficiently, for entrepreneurs just starting out, being thrown into the deep end, too deep and too quickly, can be dangerous and catastrophic. The need for sound mentorship to entrepreneurs just starting out is crucial for building a strong foundation, accessing industry networks, and offering a realistic perspective on what can and can’t be achieved through the early activities in business.

“We became business owners overnight. We knew the technology. We could build the systems, but we didn’t know how to run a business, and [Innovator Trust](#) came onboard with us at just the right moment to support our growth journey,” says Roberts.



Temo Digital has been a beneficiary on the [Innovator Trust](#) two-year [Enterprise Development programme](#) since 2020, where they've received holistic business support covering technical skills, business acumen and financial management training as well as access to one-on-one mentorship and resource support. Most recently, the business was recognised for their excellent performance at the 2022 [Innovator Trust](#) Women In Tech Appreciation Experience, where CEO, Wahseema Roberts and financial director, Nicole Miller walked away as winners in the Enterprise Development Top Female Achiever First Quarter 2022 category and second place winners in the Enterprise Development Top Female Achiever Highest Percentage Growth for 2021/2022 category. Both awards also included a cash prize to be utilised for the business.

For more information on Temo Digital, <https://temodigital.com/>.

For more information on the Innovator Trust incubation programmes and the Women In Tech 2022 Appreciation Experience, visit www.innovatortrust.co.za.

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The Innovator Trust was created to support the growth of small black-owned Information and Communications Technology (ICT) businesses in South Africa. Our programmes facilitate training that develops their skills as business owners.

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