



Ma3Route

Helping citizens share and access info about transport and traffic in real-time.



PAST STARTUPS

- Stephanie was the first Data Manager at Ma3Route, a mobile tech social impact venture.
- Today, she uses her experiences and lessons learned as a Business Analyst for Open Capital Advisors, a management consulting and financial advisory firm.



CHALLENGE

Traffic in Nairobi is a major challenge where cars can spend hours stuck in gridlock. Residents have a difficult time navigating this issue, and there are limited sources for up-to-date traffic information.



IDEA

Ma3Route was created to address this traffic challenge as a platform that provided up-to-date, crowd-sourced information on traffic around Nairobi. Commuters were willing to provide traffic information; however, there was no central platform that could aggregate and present the data. Ma3Route provided the missing platform, and it has since grown to serve additional regions.

The initial financing for the company came through a competition that they won, run by mLab East Africa, a local infoDev supported initiative to nurture digital entrepreneurs.



BUSINESS MODEL

To incentivize people to provide traffic information to the platform, Ma3Route runs occasional promotions. For the most part, information is not difficult to get.

Using crowd-sourced information, Ma3Route provides traffic updates around the city using three channels: the website, SMS, and mobile application. One aspect of their business model is to charge a fee for SMS alerts. Information from the website and mobile app are provided for free, but the SMS service

for a particular route carries a charge per message. This is convenient for the commuter that does not want to sift through social media messages to find information about their route.

Ma3Route did not charge for its services initially; however, since the SMS subscription service was instituted, there has been a steady increase in new registered users.

Through its partnership with a local company and one of Kenya's major network providers, the SMS service gained further traction in the market.



ENTREPRENEUR INSIGHTS

Based on Stephanie's time with Ma3Route, she provided the following as insights for entrepreneurs:



Business plan: A good launch strategy requires a detailed business plan on how to make money, reach customers, and execute your vision and idea.



Comfort with failure: Recognize that some ideas will fail, and that you will have to pivot your business model to move forward.



Full time or part-time: Consider carefully the parameters for you to dive in 100% or remain part-time with your business, and figure out what the best fit is for you.



Team and staff turnover: Be very careful to consider how to assemble the best possible team. Think creatively to overcome budget constraints and provide incentives. Concentrate on picking people who are the right fit and are passionate about the business. But don't be discouraged by high turnover.



Investors: Spend time learning how investors think so that you can effectively access financing to grow your business. Talking to investors in the right way is the best way to ensure that you have the best possible access.



Network: It's important for entrepreneurs to network and consistently expand your networks. You should be open to learning learning opportunities even if you can't afford to go to trainings or paid networking sessions.



WORKING WITH infoDev

Stephanie participated in Mobile Startup Camp, a one-week workshop led by infoDev, which provided a solid foundation in business fundamentals.

The experience was particularly valuable as an opportunity to meet other entrepreneurs and see how they were developing the business and technical sides of their enterprises.



NOWADAYS

Stephanie is now a business analyst at Open Capital, a management consulting and financial advisory firm. They work with SMEs to grow and scale their businesses, as well as teaching them how to deal with financing and investors. They also conduct due diligence of SMEs on behalf of investors.

Open Capital is a fast-growing company. In the two years since Stephanie joined the team, it has expanded from 25 to 40 employees. It's a completely different role, but what drew her to Open Capital is their involvement in helping high-potential SMEs get to the next stage.



Be careful about who you listen to—not every advisor is a good advisor. The best advice will come from someone who has skin in the game and understands your challenges. Listen to that advice, but use your own judgment on how to execute.

