

Unemployment prompts Zinhle Zikalala to start Sibizi Magazine



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Zinhle Zikalala is a young businesswoman, an entrepreneur at heart and the cofounder and director of Sibizi Media. As a result of unemployment, the journalist and writer launched Sibizi Magazine. The online magazine covers content that is most suitable for young professionals, entrepreneurs of all industries and the youth of South Africa in general.



Zinhle Zikalala, cofounder and director of Sibizi Media

We find out from Zinhle Zikalala, who is also the editor of Sibizi Magazine.

■ Can you tell us a little more about Sibizi Magazine?

Sibizi Magazine is an award-nominated and rapidly growing digital mag that speaks to the everyday person on the street. We are known for telling real stories of real people. With the content we produce, we strive to empower, entertain, inspire and educate South Africa's youth. We're all for the underdogs, the hustlers, the go-getters and the movers and shakers that we often miss on the move. In the magazine, we cover upcoming entrepreneurs, stars and talents giving them a time to shine and an opportunity to expand their brands and horizons.

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■ ***When, how and why did you get started?***

The magazine was birthed at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic – as the first issue piloted in March 2020. It was something that started of a personal passion project that was fuelled by unemployment. I’ve always wanted to have a magazine and be the editor of it – and with all the time that I had on my hands after I lost my job in September 2019, starting a magazine sounded like a good plan. I started conceptualising and planning for it in November 2019, two months of being at home and doing nothing had shown me flames, so this was also a way for me to keep my mind fluid and busy with something that I loved and enjoyed doing while a job hunt.

At that time, there were already too many predictions of where print media was headed and the pandemic literally fasted tracked those predictions even more, with a lot of big and popular publications on their knees already – a digital magazine was the only thing that made sense, plus people needed something to consume in the interim – while the print media industry figured out what to do next. I had already started entertaining the idea of a digital magazine. It works out cheaper than printing the magazine, not like I had the money to print it, even if I wanted to in any case.

I started working on the first issue in December 2019, thinking it was going to go be launched in January 2020 (*hahaha... wishful thinking*). It only came out in March 2020 because it’s a lot of work – I was also still doing everything myself then so

you can imagine.

Content-wise, I wanted to speak the truth to the youth. I felt like there was a gap in that area, a lot of us (youth) are smart and genuinely want to start, do and own things, but lack things like the correct knowledge, resources, motivation and inspiration and I wanted to somehow bridge that gap with the content I was producing on the magazine. Even though getting street cred is really hard to get, so far it's been good. Even bagged us a nomination in KZN Youth Business Awards for Innovative Media.

■ ***What is the core function of Sibizi Magazine?***

Our core function is really simple, we want to give everyone an opportunity to speak their truth and tell their story with the intentions of inspiring, motivating and educating the next person. We want to create a community of young people that are self-sustaining, doers, and not reliant on government but on their own minds and skills through ownership and entrepreneurship.

■ ***What are some of the obstacles you've had to face since you started?***

As a brand-new brand, it's always a bit of a challenge to win people's hearts at first – so I could say street credibility and getting enough brand awareness with a budget of R0 has been a real challenge we face. But other than that, I think it's really what all other budding entrepreneurs face. Getting funding for infrastructure, and in our case, it's also been hard getting big brands to take us seriously and place ads because we're so new, which in turn affects our revenue as we heavily rely on that to make money.

■ ***Have you received any funding to get Sibizi Magazine up and running? If so, what was the process like?***

No – so far I've covered most of the Sibizi Magazine costs. And rely on a few campaigns we bag with different brands.

■ ***What advice would you give to other aspiring entrepreneurs?***

Entrepreneurship is hard but very doable. With the right attitude, skills and network, there is very little you cannot do when you set your mind to it.

■ ***As an entrepreneur, what would you like to see changed in the South African landscape?***

For a generation that will be carrying the country's economy on their backs in a few coming years, I don't think the youth is taken seriously enough. The youth has so many great ideas that could change the game for our country in so many ways, but are sidelined and denied opportunities in places of influence and decision making.

“ We need to move with times and now is the time for young people to shine ”

. I'd really love to see people who are in positions to give others a chance, should genuinely do so. Today a lot of us are looked at as examples of this or that; some measure of hard work, greatness or excellence.

What we don't always tell is that we were once not ready, unskilled, incompetent and lacked knowledge. But someone took a gamble with, and the rest is history. We cannot ignore the fundamental influences – opportunities and constraints of the environment.

■ ***Where would you like to see Sibizi Magazine in the next five years?***

I would definitely like to see it become a giant publication that is nationally and internationally that is recognized as a household brand name. Credible and relevant to society.

For more, go to [\[https://www.sibizimagazine.co.za/\]](https://www.sibizimagazine.co.za/)

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