

Success Story

Sage strikes the right chord with Marimba Jam

The social enterprise gets time back to focus on reaching more schools and students in South Africa



Bright Path Business Consultants free up Marimba Jam's time to focus on reaching more schools and students across the country.

Marimba Jam is a social enterprise that aims to promote social and cultural harmony and connect youth from different socioeconomic backgrounds through music and rhythm. Founded by Kiara Ramklass, Marimba Jam teaches school marimba bands around Cape Town and upskills students to become teachers of the 'African xylophone'. It's home to a professional performing marimba band and has created a syllabus for the marimba to become the first African instrument to be taught as a school subject.

Key outcomes

- All financials in one place, for the first time
- Better grasp on cash flow, which helps with financial planning
- More financial accountability and more time to focus on building the business

Company
Marimba Jam

Location
South Africa

Industry
Education

Sage Products
Sage Business Cloud Accounting
and Sage Business Cloud Payroll

Partner
Bright Path Business Consultants



About Marimba Jam

Marimba Jam is a social enterprise that was founded by Kiara Ramklass with the aim of connecting youth from different socioeconomic backgrounds through music and rhythm.

Sage



Blurred financial lines and limited accounting visibility

Kiara started Marimba Jam as a community project while she was in high school. By the time she graduated from university, she was teaching a number of school bands and was using her personal bank account as a business account.

It was the same account through which she paid teachers and a full-time university student who assisted her with invoicing, using a free-to-use online invoicing service.

“Because I was using my personal bank account, I was being taxed a very high rate. I also didn’t know what expenses I could claim against my tax bill,” says Kiara.

Marimba Jam grew exponentially over five years, from 100 students to 500. “Staying on top of the invoicing became too much for a full-time student to handle. We started experiencing issues, like schools not being invoiced, and having no sight of which schools and students hadn’t paid their accounts. I had no sense of what our profit was, what we were earning from each school, or how much money we had to spend on outreach work.

“It was a big wake-up call that we needed to change our entire financial system to get a bigger, more accurate picture of our finances,” adds Kiara.

All financials in one place, for the first time

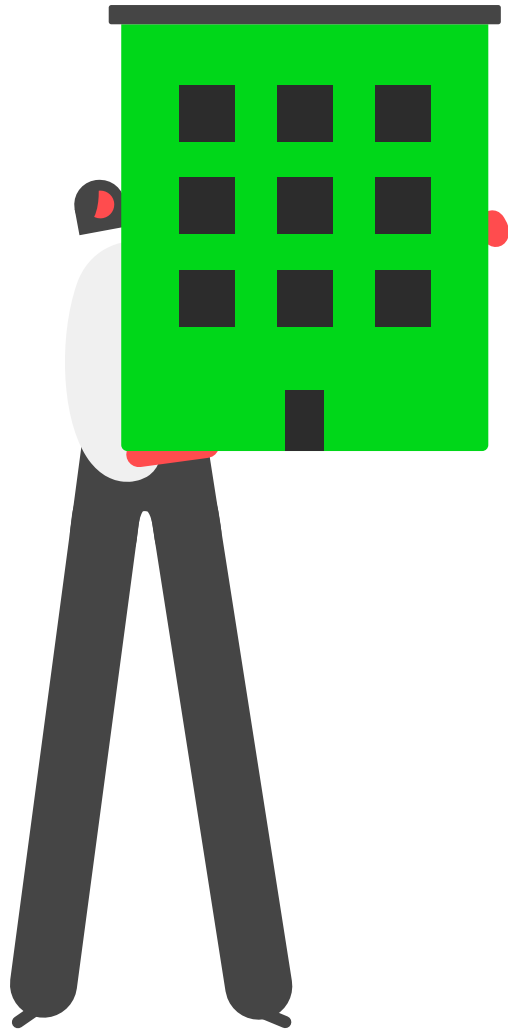
Kiara came across Bright Path Business Consulting when searching for tax assistance on Facebook.

“I didn’t want to sign a retainer with a large consulting firm that serves hundreds of clients. So, when TJ Ledwaba, founder of Bright Path, put up his hand, I was drawn to his business concept. He was also starting out and valued personal relationships with his clients. He was focused on us and wanted to grow alongside us. We also had many mutual friends and coworkers in the social enterprise space, so our values naturally aligned,” she says.

As a start-up owner himself, Ledwaba had experienced the pain of inefficient systems and slow, manual processes first-hand. But after switching to Sage – what he describes as his ‘secret weapon’ – he’s had more time to consult with his clients and give them advice on everything from cloud accounting software to tax affairs.

“In the past, I’d collect files from my clients’ offices and then disappear for three weeks to manually capture the information for reporting purposes,” says Ledwaba. “Now, thanks to features like Bank Feeds and instant transaction allocation, Sage automates much of the accounting process. Tasks that used to take days or weeks – like recurring invoicing, reporting, and integrating data across payroll and accounting systems – take minutes to complete.”

It was these features that Ledwaba introduced to Kiara in Sage Business Cloud Accounting and Sage Business Cloud Payroll.



“Linking our bank account to Sage was a huge step in terms of giving us a better overview of our finances,” says Kiara. “We now have a better grasp on how much we have to spend on new hires, annual events, and outreach work. We know exactly who owes us money and how much. We have insights into what our expenses will be, which has helped to streamline operations.”

Ledwaba says that, with Sage, he can run audits down to the school and student level, pull reports, import data from any system, schedule invoicing, export employee figures into the South African Revenue Service’s (SARS’s) e-filing system, process journals, capture expenses, and much more – in seconds.

“I don’t have to chase clients for information anymore, and I don’t need to get in my car to fetch files. I just log into Sage from wherever I am, on any device, and it’s all there. Kiara can also access her information whenever she needs to, giving her ownership over her finances. We can both work on the system at the same time, with confidence that we’re using the same data.”

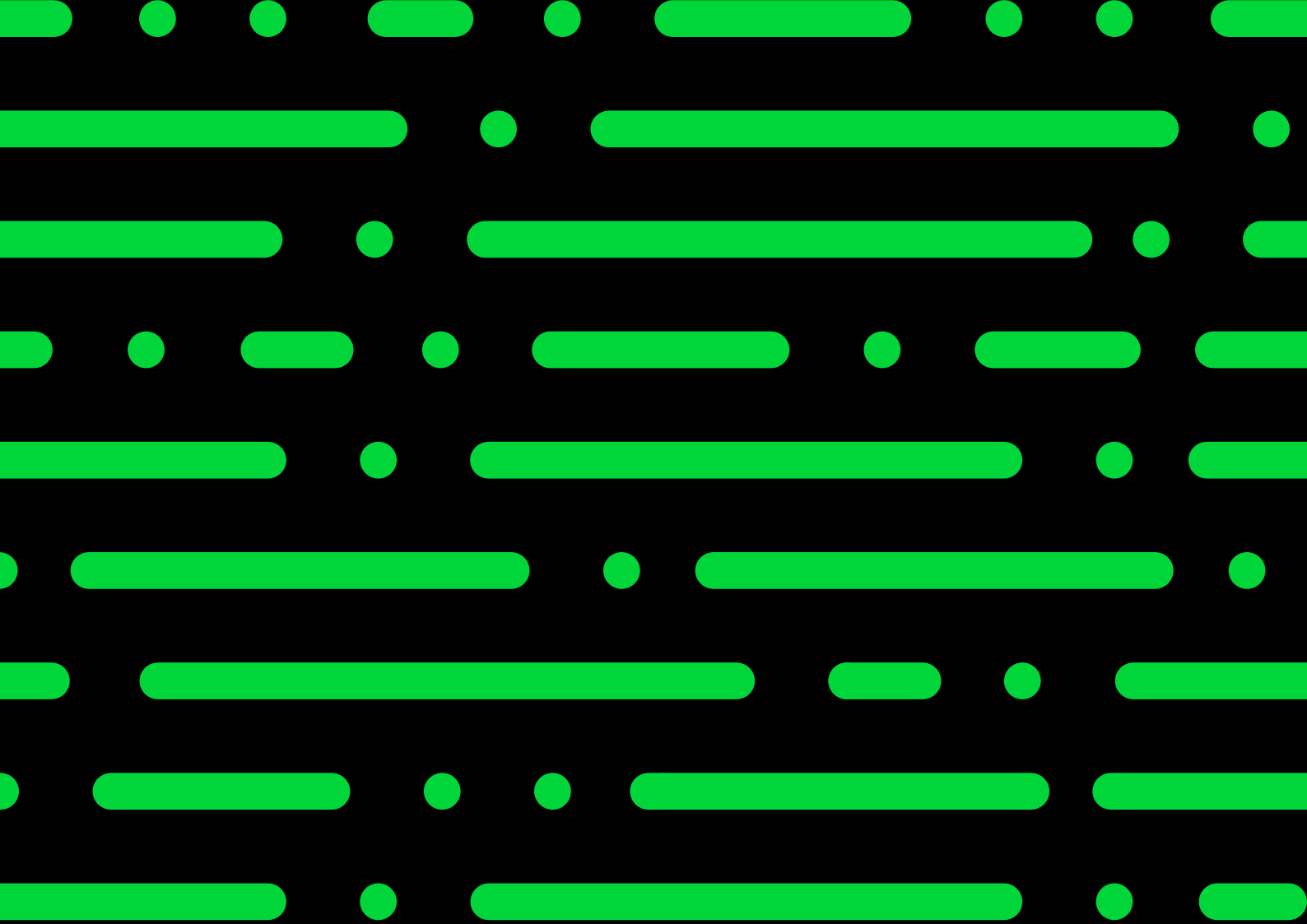
In 2019, Kiara needed a financial statement to enter the Western Cape Entrepreneurship Recognition Awards. “I’d never had a financial statement drawn up before and the fact that TJ could do it in a few days was impressive. We couldn’t have done this if all our finances were not in order.” She might also not have won in the category ‘Best Youth-Owned Business’ of the Awards.

Confidence, accountability, and no more anxiety

“As a business owner, I feel safer knowing that all our financial records are in one place. There’s more accountability and it’s given the business a professional boost. Sage and Bright Path have given me confidence in the financial component of the business. I no longer have anxiety when I think about our finances and I actually have time to look at other growth aspects in the company, like meeting new clients, doing more demos at schools, and holding strategic business meetings.”

“Our goal is to be in 2,000 schools across South Africa. We can only do this with an automated financial system and with TJ by our side. I don’t think any small business can move forward without a proper accounting system and a trusted financial consultant. Sage and Bright Path was the solution we needed,” says Kiara.

“Sage keeps me organised, and empowers me to access all my clients’ information from one place, wherever I am. It’s given me a competitive edge. Every accountant has something that works for them; Sage works for me. It puts me in the pulse of my clients’ businesses – and that’s where lasting relationships form,” concludes Ledwaba.



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