

founder



2mzi





INTRODUCTION

Unleashing founder magic has been the most important part of my job since I met Brad and Brett Magrath on February 9, 2009. I was an inexperienced and overconfident Oxford MBA graduate from Canada who had just moved to Zambia with my fiancé Isabelle to find purpose-driven entrepreneurs and connect them to purpose-driven investors. Brad and Brett had started a family business with a vision to digitize payments in Zambia's cash economy and a dream to scale across Africa. I rushed home and told Isabelle, "I want to work with these guys."

Over the next few months I introduced Brad and Brett to an early stage impact investment fund in the US and facilitated a \$200,000 investment. A year later, I found myself swallowing hard and asking my parents if they could lend me \$100,000 to invest in a fledgling Zambian start-up. After giving my most persuasive pitch about what we were planning on achieving together, my parents mortgaged their house and wired the money into our empty company bank account. Brad, Brett, and I shook hands – without any contracts – and committed that we would do whatever it takes to get the business off the ground. Brad and Brett also decided at that point to make me the CEO and lead in a bigger round of funding in what was an amazing gesture of selflessness and humility that brought us closer together.

After bringing in Keith as our fourth partner and a long 18 months of struggling to meet payroll each month (my parents investment didn't last very long), we successfully closed a \$4m Series A round with international investors. This was unprecedented for a start-up from Zambia, but for us it was just another milestone in a long journey towards building a billion dollar business that helps communities thrive.

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT **FOUNDERISMS**.

Founders are the heart and soul of a company, and set the cues for how everyone else should behave. Behaviors become habits, habits become culture, and culture is what drives impact and performance. Zoono has been successful because we have been purposeful about following this process to create a strong culture, but whether we live up to our potential will depend on our ability to scale it. This book provides a blueprint to how we work at Zoono, and if we take these founderisms to heart, we will achieve great things together.

Let's make it real.

Mike Quinn
CEO. ZOONA

a tale of two

BBS

BRAD
& BRETT

"Mom, why is Singapore so small on the map and big in real life and Zambia is so big on the map but feels small in real life?"



A TALE OF TWO Bs

Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start (don't worry – we're not about to break into the entire *Sound of Music* repertoire). As two kids sporting flared jeans and kitchen-scissor haircuts, we learnt about adventure from an early age. When we were young, our mom took a life-changing decision to move to Singapore (we had to look it up on the map). And while it was tough – what with us moving between Zambia, Singapore and South Africa (where we went to boarding school) – that early flux and flow helped us become curious about the world.

My bro in way more than 80 characters

'Brad was always my big brother, but never in a scary way. I was, and still am, inspired by his view of things and his courage to go for it.'

'I have always been amazed by how Brett's brain works - from when we were kids until now - he has always had the ability to solve incredible complex puzzles and problems - it's like he just zones on and matrix's his way through a maze and finds a solution that only afterwards just seems so simple and obvious.'

It forced us to be flexible and adaptable, tough and resilient, and it broadened our horizons. We also learnt a deep and enduring respect for chilli crab and kapenta.

Our mom is an amazing woman whose positive outlook rubbed off on us. She grabs life by the horns and embraces whatever is thrown her way. She taught us that 'if the path breaks, don't worry about it, just create a new one' – and have fun doing it! Her move to Singapore facilitated a spirit of adventure within us. It taught us that there was a whole world out there waiting to be discovered.

Our dad was an entrepreneur long before people knew what the word meant (and long before the internet, craft beer and silly beards). He had many ideas and was always chasing interesting schemes. He had guts. He believed in himself. He went for it. He showed us what dreams were, and he showed us how to treat everyone with respect – he talked to the Managing Director at the golf club and the caddy in exactly the same way. He loved Africa; loved Zambia, and he passed this deep bond on to us. It's still with us today – that and the knowledge that while our feet might have got bigger since those early days in the dust, this is where we belong; this is where things are real. This is where things are **ZOONA**.

More than that, this is where we belong *together*. There was always – and will always be – that one constant: two brothers in this crazy ride together.

Welcome aboard.

Moving between two diverse countries gave us a wide view. Singapore awed us with its service-centric approach to community and business, its shiny streets and smart homes. It was like an efficient machine where people knew the rules and stuck to them. This machine had a very clear direction and it was moving – forwards. In comparison, Zambia seemed like a rusty old tractor. It had once been sturdy but was now stuck together with duct tape. It was moving too, but seemed to be going backwards. That said, we loved

that old tractor and we knew we could help fix her.

Interestingly, we could have set up our lives in either country. There were many times when we had to decide between East and West, and we chose Africa as the place to create our business, families and our lives.

“WE OFTEN WONDERED HOW IN SINGAPORE YOU COULD GET THROWN INTO PRISON FOR CHEWING GUM AND IN ZAMBIA YOU COULD HARDLY BUY IT!”

We both spent time in the corporate world – one in London; the other in Zambia. We even donned a jacket and tie – hell, were they uncomfy! While we learnt a lot about business, we also learnt what we *didn't* want for ourselves.

'My boss in the banking world suggested I could one day have his job in about four to five years. All I could think was "But you have no life!"'

After ditching the corporate clothing, we decided to join forces and start working together. In 2004, we launched our first business. We had nothing: no money, no people and definitely no golf-club membership. Within twelve months, we had operations in Mauritius, Malawi and Zambia and were generating \$5 million worth of transactions every month. Two years down the line, we were broke and almost broken. Things had bombed spectacularly. We didn't have the right people on board and we didn't invest in scale. But we learnt a truckload: get the right people, get the right partners and make sure everyone shares the same values and vision. You only really learn what is important when you lose everything and have to start again.



A TALE OF TWO Bs

In 2008, during a family holiday, we had a heart-to-heart and knew it was time to consolidate.

We were working like dogs on a variety of ideas and our lives outside work were taking strain. We needed to get the balance right – for ourselves, our business and our wives and kids. So we focused on a few key wins, including selling our Malawian business, selling some equity and transforming our transactions system to a payments one. This was the start of ZoonA.

We also discussed how we would *do* business. What really matters are the principles that underpin an organisation and the commitment required to go ‘all in’. We agreed on a set of principles we would not compromise on. These make up the foundation of ZoonA today and are crucial to its continued success and purpose. And they all feed into and from one place: the people who make up the business. At ZoonA, it’s about people.

towards tomorrow....

The name ZoonA embodies our philosophy of ‘people first’. Soon after launching the company – then called Mobile Transactions Zambia Limited – we met with some rural cotton farmers to discuss the product. Unfamiliar with the technology, they were suspicious and said they wouldn’t trust it. However, after explaining how it worked and describing our vision, someone said: ‘Ah! It’s zoonA’, meaning it’s real; it’s true. The farmers enthusiastically came round to the idea – and we got a new name for the business.

Since those early days, we’re often asked if we’ve achieved what we set out to achieve. We’re nowhere near anywhere. We’re not perfect. We don’t want to be. We are functionally dysfunctional and proud of it. The best lessons from the past inform us, and we know that with this team on board, we’re on the right track.

Although the future looks bright and we’re keen for all it brings, we live in the now and in the squiggle, asking the hard questions and diving in. As we drive towards tomorrow, not knowing what’s around the next bend, we look at each other:

*‘Know what I’m thinking?’ one of us says to the other.
There’s a smile, a small nod.
‘Ja, I think it might work.’
See you on the flipside.*

BRAD AND BRETT



Brad and Brett in front of their original Zambian office

“REVENUE IS VANITY. PROFIT IS SANITY. CASHFLOW IS REALITY.”

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE’S MOUTH

When asked to describe Brad and Brett, here are some of the stories from ZoonA employees. We swear they weren’t paid!



‘Brad and Brett are humble and humorous, approachable, charismatic and inclusive. They are the epitome of “work hard, play hard” - and it is in the latter that they set the bar. Whether it’s dancing like maniacs in a Lusakan township bar, or finding the crazy in other attendees at a formal conference (formal is mostly considered “optional”, although they have been known to borrow suits from colleagues for really smart events), or making friends with strangers in restaurants, they will always be the life and soul of the party.’

‘They laugh, they are funny – but more than that, they see the humour in other people and things. “Don’t take yourself too seriously” is lived by these two on a daily basis and it is this that enables us to fail, be bold, brave and courageous and to have open, honest conversations throughout the office.

They care about equality, diversity and fairness.’

‘They are emotional beings. They value family and relationships and the person inside the employee. ZoonA’s purpose and impact drive them and they are sentimental – Brett’s tendency to cry when he speaks about things that matter to him is endearing, brave and moving.’

‘They are smart, opportunistic, positive, brave, inspiring, intentional, honest, open, intuitive, trusting, friendly, always available and always keen to try new things. They do the right thing and don’t sweat the small stuff.’

‘Brad is the guy whose dog ate his passport and Brett is the guy who owns the dance floor in a colleague’s red heels. They have got each other’s back and are profoundly loyal.’

THEY ARE REAL, THEY ARE **ZOONA**

20 TOP FOUNDERISMS...

THE IDEOLOGIES THAT SHAPE ZOONA

isms

BE BOLD
AND BRAVE



SAY
NO

THERE'S
SUCH THING AS
NO
FAILURE

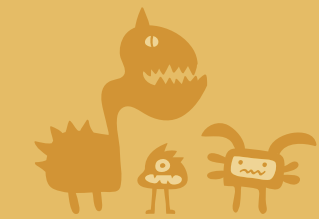
REPEAT REPEAT
REPEAT REPEAT
REPEAT REPEAT
REPEAT REPEAT
REPEAT REPEAT
ACT. LEARN. REPEAT.

LEAD,
DON'T FOLLOW



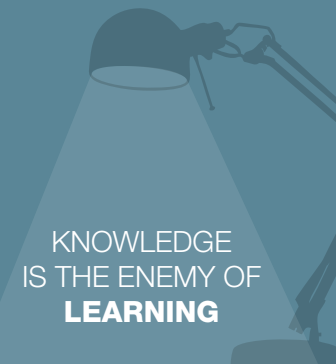
EAT YOUR **FROGS**

SEE VALUE IN **DIVERSITY**



SURROUND YOURSELF
WITH GREAT PEOPLE

**NO PAPER
TIGER
PARTNERS**



KNOWLEDGE
IS THE ENEMY OF
LEARNING

ONE DAY CHICKEN,
**NEXT DAY
FEATHERS**

DON'T TAKE
YOURSELF
TOO
SERIOUSLY

LET GO
OF YOUR

LE
GO
GO

It's all about the
Customer



**KEEP IT
SIMPLE**



SCARCITY
IS THE MOTHER OF
INNOVATION

CHANGE IS OPPORTUNITY



F*#K IT,
LET'S
JUST DO
IT"

PERFECTION
IS THE ENEMY OF

DONE

LOVE
WHAT
YOU DO

BE BOLD & BRAVE

BE BOLD AND BRAVE

Being bold and brave is how we live each day.

From day one (actually night one), in April 2008, when we had that holiday heart-to-heart, we have continuously taken leaps of faith. Back then, we knew it was make or break time. Our commitments to the business were creating stress that was affecting our families.

DURING THAT HOLIDAY IN THE DRAKENSBURG, WHEN SO MUCH CHANGED...

“HAVE THE COURAGE TO START”



...our kids woke up to find us hunched over pieces of paper, hammering out our business plan. We'd been up since 4.30am. We didn't look as rested as they did...

We had forgotten what it was like to have a regular salary or a week free of stress. We were tired, burnt out and had developed weird rings around our eyes. During that conversation, we discussed abandoning our dreams. Maybe we could just pack it all in and become potato farmers, or suck up our dreams, suit up and do the 9-5 with boring bankers. But quitting is not in our DNA. However, we knew if we were to continue, things would have to change. That night, we recommitted to being entrepreneurs, but we also committed to the sacrifices we would need to make to ensure this worked.

It's all very well having a plan, but putting it into practice means you have to dig deep. You have to have the courage to take the first scary step. There'll be plenty of people who will say you can't do it.

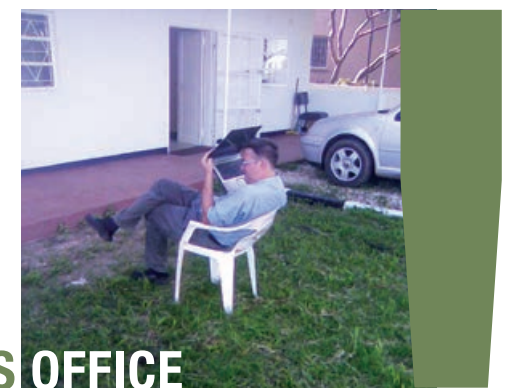
TO THEM WE SAY (VERY POLITELY): **BUGGER OFF.**

Then we surround ourselves with people who are 'can-do', confident, committed and ready to take on the world, and we don't look for external validation. If we don't feel the worth of our ideas in our own guts, then we know they're not the ones for us.

The whole concept of being bold and brave is curious. Why are some people able to do it while others shrink away? Perhaps it's a fear of failure, or a fear of rejection. Maybe taking that first step just seems too risky. We're not immune to all those feelings either. Sometimes in the early days of Zoon, we'd lie in our respective beds at night, with our eyes wide open, wondering if we were right in the head (we kinda already knew we weren't). But we also knew that if we didn't try – even if we failed – we wouldn't know if we could do it and we wouldn't learn how to do it better.

We took a leap of faith with Zoon and we've learnt so much more than we expected. And we continue to be on the lookout for more crazy adventures. Because when you're in mid-air, plunging towards the unknown, there's nothing to do but whoop loudly at the possibilities.

BECAUSE THAT'S ALL THE FUTURE IS: **POSSIBLE.**



BRAD'S OFFICE



“GO **BIG** OR GO HOME!”

‘The implication of making this commitment was massive as it meant subscribing to something that might one day outgrow and outpace us. Nevertheless, we built the foundations from day one around scale and attracting investment.’

**DON'T STRESS IT,
ADDRESS IT.**

BE **BOLD** AND **BRAVE**

Brad's (not so) flaky breakfast bonanza

Being bold and brave also means having so much faith in your ability to adapt you'll do anything to achieve it – including a spot of dough-based stalling...

BRAD: ‘Once we had to do a presentation early in the morning. We arrived and realised it wasn't as low-key as we'd expected. The whole board was there. One look between us and we knew we had to make a plan. While Brett quickly whipped up a PowerPoint presentation (we had come with only a few sheaths of paper), I convinced the board we needed croissants.’

YOU CAN'T HAVE A BREAKFAST PRESENTATION WITHOUT DECENT CONFECTIONERY, **RIGHT?**

I hurried (but not too much) out to buy some, and bought Brett some time. We pulled it off – within three weeks we'd raised \$350,000. Never underestimate the power of making a plan on the fly, or a half-moon pastry.

In another incident that required resourcefulness, we decided that because we couldn't afford a big advertising campaign, we would take out a full-page advert in a Zambian newspaper instead. On the day it appeared, we bought up every copy of the newspaper we could find and gave these away to people across the country over the next three months, pointing them to the advert. The couple of hundred kwacha we spent on the papers gave us an instant national marketing campaign. (#score!)



#SCORE!

“Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.”

– MARIANNE WILLIAMSON, AUTHOR



“The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say no to almost everything.”
– Warren Buffet, investor, billionaire, philanthropist



SAY YES

THERE IS NO 'BIG IDEA'. IT'S ABOUT THE ABILITY TO EXECUTE

SAY NO

While we at Zoono believe in saying 'yes' to many things – courage, quirkiness and *definitely* croissants – one area that requires a big fat NO is ideas. Or, more accurately, too many of them.

Ideas are slippery little beasts. They come to you at the most inconvenient times (in the shower, while you're walking the dogs or dancing in heels) and pull at your sleeves, demanding attention. Sure, you could give each one your time. Hell, you could even read them individual bedtime stories. But sooner or later, you'd find you've spread yourself too thin: you'd be tired and find it hard to concentrate – and you would have lost your voice after the 1094th bedtime story.

But if you say 'no' to all those tugging ideas, except one – the one you truly believe in and the one you know can work – there will be winners all round. That one idea will get your undivided attention – and all your bedtime stories. You will be connected to it and focused on it and you'll watch with pride as it blossoms in your care.

This is how Zoono started. We said 'no' to the scores of ideas we had and 'yes' to the right one. And, hopefully, our bedtime stories have many 'happily ever afters'.

Less is More

The main benefit of saying 'no' to all and 'yes' to one is focus – true, razor-sharp focus. Without focus, two things happen:

- You become like a kid in a candy store, seeing sweet opportunity everywhere but unable to choose.
- You water down your potential by pursuing a whole lot of options at once, thinking if one doesn't work out, you can rely on another.

Research shows that if you try to do 10 things at once, you'll fail at all of them; if you try five things at once, one or two might have average results. However, if you focus all your energy and attention on one thing, chances are you'll get exceptional results.

When we built Zoono, we removed all the other 'candy' in the store and committed to focusing our attention on one business, in one market and with one simple product.

AND IT TURNS OUT WE MAY HAVE GOT IT RIGHT.

“By saying no, you not only focus all your energy and effort on your most essential priorities. You also create space for things that are actually worth saying yes to.”
– Greg McKeown, author of Essentialism – The Disciplined Pursuit of Less

SAYING 'NO' ISN'T EASY – we're conditioned to say 'yes'.

This is often to avoid conflict (as in 'Yes, darling, of course I'd love to spend the next five hours watching Grey's Anatomy (Cath) and The Chicago Trio (Jill) with you) or to ensure our popularity ('Why, yes, of course I'm keen to jump out of a plane wearing nothing but my socks.') And sometimes the very thing we're saying 'no' to is something in which we've invested hours of work; something we ourselves are driving and are passionate about. Those idea beasts that clamour for our attention are often accompanied by a sidekick, ego, who whispers in our ear: 'If you let all of these ideas in, just imagine how wonderful you'll be.' OUR ADVICE: **don't listen to them (or get earplugs).**

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS **FAILURE**

How to succeed at failure

OWN IT You don't have to get it tattooed on your forehead or name your first child after it, but speaking about failure is the first step to learning. We encourage people to face up to and own their failures. Remember: failure doesn't mean you're shit; avoiding failure by not trying does. The company's leadership team regularly has frank discussions about their biggest failures and some teams have weekly failure admission sessions. This demystifies failure, transforming it from a scary, shameful monster into an ally for change.

LET IT GO When one of our Z-lab teams headed into Kabwe to distribute billpay devices to tellers and agents, they realised the idea might have been misguided. No one had thought through how we would keep track of the devices, making sure they didn't get lost or disappear. But the team was already committed and there was nothing we could do. So we conceded it was a failure, brushed it off and chalked it up to a learning experience. We learnt to 'let it go'.

ACT AND DON'T POINT FINGERS The Zoono-Airtel partnership was a big deal for us and Zambian customers. We invested lots of time and money in the partnership and its launch was broadcast on national TV as well as on all our social media channels (we even launched a blimp!). However, when we realised our customer experience was being negatively affected, we pulled out. No one pointed fingers; we all stood behind the decision and moved forward. We also learnt that we don't play nicely with corporates and are better at figuring it out ourselves.

MAKE A PLAN In our first Series A Investment model, our voucher product was included as a large revenue driver. We had presented this model to various investors, including Omidyar and Accion, and current investors who, back then, were still doing their homework. During this process, the World Bank named Zambia as one of the world's fastest economically reformed countries. Inflation had been brought under control and the economy was flourishing. Donors pulled out of the country, including our major voucher client, the World Food Programme. Vouchers were dead. We had to put our tail between our legs and go back to the investors to ask them to 'hold'. Six months later we were able to return to them with the same numbers we had forecasted, but with only our Money Transfer product. They were sold and the investment went ahead.

NONE OF THE FIRST FOUR BUSINESSES WE STARTED IS STILL AROUND TODAY, AND WE'RE OKAY WITH THAT.

Without those experiences to teach us where we went wrong, we wouldn't be where we are today. While many people pretend to believe in the power of failure, we really do believe in it. We might even love it! Learning is one of our favourite things – and the only way to learn is to try, and probably fail. Statistically (don't worry, this is not a trick maths test), the more you try, the more you fail. But then because you've tried and failed so much, the more you've learnt. Cool, right?

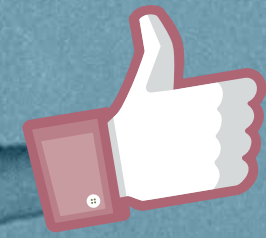
There have been many ups and downs in our journey to building Zoono into what it is today. When people ask about some of our challenges, we usually laugh and reply: 'There have been no failures, only huge learnings.'

Most entrepreneurs fail the first time round – it's the nature of the business. All you can do is pick yourself up, brush yourself off, reflect on the lessons and start again. And then be smart enough to make new mistakes, and in so doing, learn a whack of new things.



“HOW DO YOU MAKE GOOD DECISIONS? WITH EXPERIENCE.

HOW DO YOU GET EXPERIENCE? EASY... BY MAKING BAD DECISIONS.”

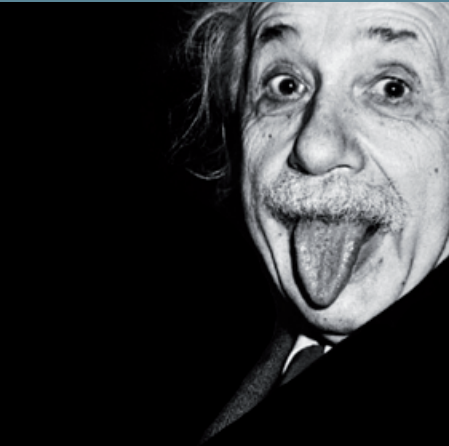


WE MIGHT HAVE FAILED AT BUILDING A HUMAN PYRAMID, BUT WE CERTAINLY LEARNT HOW TO LEAN ON EACH OTHER!



THERE'S **NO** SUCH THING AS **FAILURE**

SEE... NO FINGER-POINTING, JUST EPIC LIKES!



“ANYONE WHO HAS NEVER MADE A MISTAKE HAS NEVER TRIED ANYTHING NEW.”

– ALBERT EINSTEIN

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS **FAILURE**

“Don't keep making the same mistakes. Find new mistakes to make and you'll probably be fine.”

We'll only
fail if we
don't fail

If Thomas Edison hadn't said it, Brett would have...

Thomas Alva Edison

Photographic print. circa 1922

I have not failed, I've just found 10 000 ways that won't work.

ACT. LEARN. REPEAT.

IMAGINE THIS: you're an aspiring young car designer who wants to build the best sports car in the world. The only problem is you have no capital, you still live with your mom and you're not sure if the designs you've been scribbling down for the past 10 years are worth anything. However, you set to work in the garage, making a miniature version of the car using bits of an old wheelbarrow and plundered parts of a motorbike. Your mom keeps bringing you juice. When you're finally done, you take the creation to your friends to try out. One of the wheels comes off around a corner and the steering doesn't work. Three of your friends end up with minor fractures. You take the car back to the garage and tinker some more. When you show the car to your friends, they're nervous yet visibly excited. One of them takes it for a spin. He doesn't crash – in fact, he whizzes around the block, hooting the horn. You tweak it some more. And test it again. Then tweak it some more. And test it again. Finally, the day arrives when you unveil it in an elaborate ceremony in your front garden, involving Oros and lots of biscuits. Everyone tries it – even your mom. Three of your friends place orders for one, and you wonder if you'll finally be able to move out of home...

This scenario pretty much embodies how we work. We believe the best way to create solutions for customers is to define the problem through research and feedback and then create a series of low-cost, flexible prototypes that are tested by users. When we get the nod from our customers that the product does exactly what they want, we start to build something and pilot it. Once that gets the final double-nod, we build and expand the solution.



The process of a work in progress

WE'VE LIVED THE ACT. LEARN. REPEAT MANTRA MULTIPLE TIMES.

When we started Zoona, we had enough information to take that first step, but we really had no idea what would come next. But if we'd stopped to worry about that, we'd still be sitting around in the Drakensberg, staring blankly at each other. So we took the plunge and **ACTED**.

Then we **LEARNED**. We chucked ourselves into the trenches and got to see what was needed. We got down and dirty, and sometimes a bit teary. And we learnt things we'd never dreamed of before. Sometimes this learning confirmed we were on the right path; other times it told us we probably were a bit nuts. But mostly it taught us to keep going; to not get complacent when things were looking good.

Then we took the lessons and feedback and we **REPEATED**. Some of the repeats were small and incremental, others were larger.

One of the most important elements to this entire process is that there is no such thing as failure. In order to repeat, we had to learn; and in order to learn, we had to fail. And even now, with Zoona established and thriving, we maintain Act. Learn. Repeat as a core guiding principle, because there is always more to learn and more to do.

“FAILURE IS SIMPLY THE OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN AGAIN, THIS TIME MORE INTELLIGENTLY.” – HENRY FORD

DID YOU KNOW?

When Henry Ford made the first affordable, mass-produced car (the Model T) in 1908, he'd done many prototypes in the preceding years. These included the Quadricycle in 1896, a 26-horsepower car in 1901, an 80-horsepower racer in 1902, the Model A in 1903 and the Model N in 1907. Bob Casey, an expert on all things Ford and the retired curator of transportation at the Henry Ford Museum in Michigan, US, says Henry 'was one of those people who didn't take a job because he knew how to do it. He often took jobs because he didn't know how to do them, and they were opportunities to learn'.



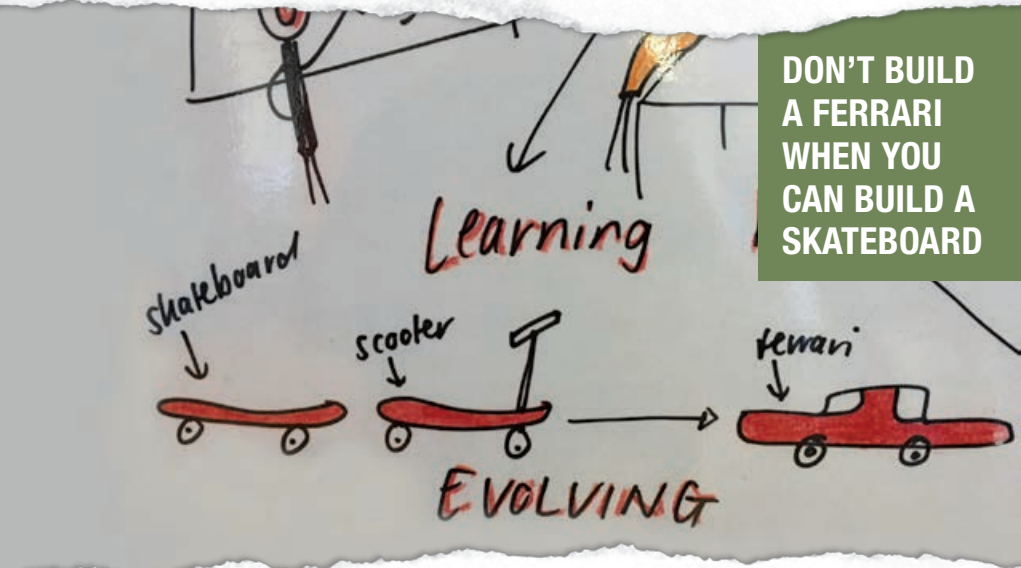
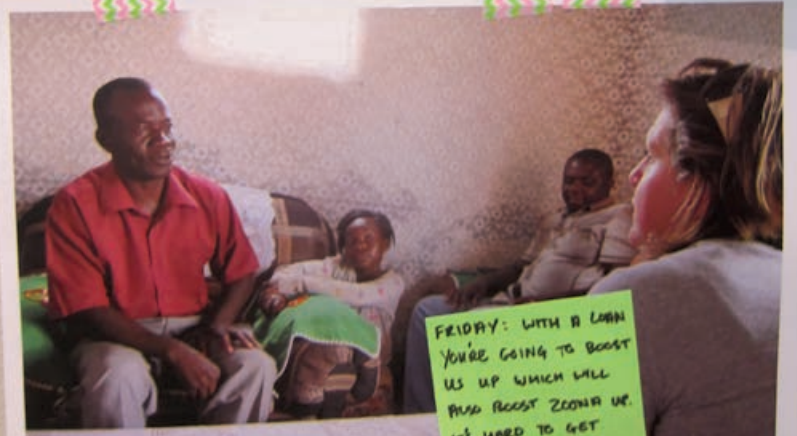
THAT ARE AFFORDABLE AND HAVE PAYBACK FLEXIBILITY

HOW MIGHT ZOONA CONNECT CONSUMERS WITH RESPONSIBLE, AFFORDABLE LOANS?

WE COULD CONNECT CONSUMERS TO A LOAN PROVIDER, AND POSSIBLY USING ZOONA AS A REPAYMENT CHANNEL

MERVIS: HAS A FINCA LOAN OF K5000 BUT HAS NO IDEA HOW IT WORKS OR WHAT THE FEES ARE. SHE KNOWS IT'S EXPENSIVE BUT CAN'T GET ANYTHING CHEAPER.

ODRAS: WANTS ZOONA LOANS OF K 2,500 OR LESS... SMALL LOANS FOR EXPANDING A BUSINESS



ACT. LEARN. REPEAT.

Try and try again

Many of us spend our lives waiting for perfection: the perfect moment to do something; the perfect way to complete a task; the perfect person who will make all perfect moments even more perfect. But the truth is perfection doesn't exist. It's a concept, rather than a reality, whose parameters shift according to norms, trends, moods and whims. So, because it's not real, there's no point in waiting for it. Rather, jump in, flounder, swim, hold your breath, laugh, splash. Then do it again.

OUR **FIRST** BUSINESS came as an opportunity explored with a friend over dinner. With a 'just do it' entrepreneurial attitude, we pulled all the comics out of the lounge and then drove into the township handing them out (those that weren't grabbed from us by the eager excitement of the group of kids surrounding our car). There was no waiting around for the 'perfect' time.

Soon after we started OUR **SECOND** BUSINESS, an ill-considered deal saw us lose \$100,000. But we got up, shook ourselves off, and carried on.

For OUR **THIRD** BUSINESS, we bought a licence to trade in Malawi without ever visiting there. We had to buy airtime to function and we got eaten alive by mozzies. But ... there's no use in waiting for perfection. We launched, we worked hard – and at the end of the day, that business helped us bootstrap and launch Zoota. If we'd dithered and dallied, hummed and haahed, we might not have ventured into Malawi and Zoota might never have been born.

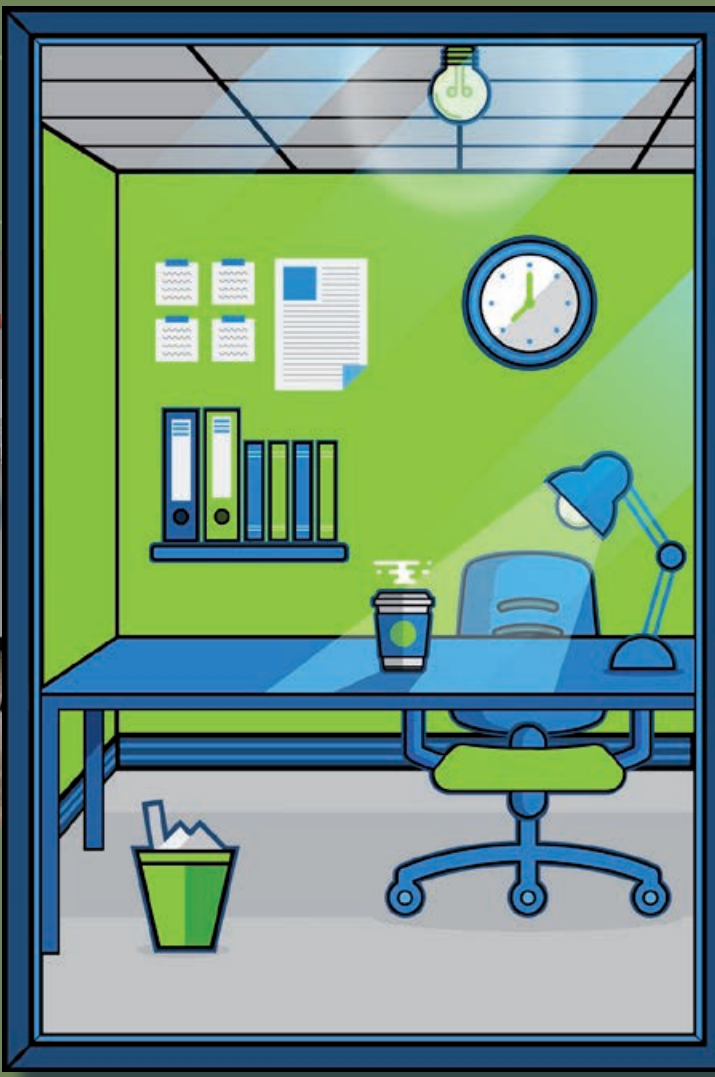
WE'D RATHER **WHOOPI!** (After learning a new word reading this book, Brett and Brad are now avid whoopers – hell, it might even become an ISM.)

IMPROVE – the missing word

We often bandy about new terms and, in our excitement, assume everyone knows what they mean and can fill in the blanks. However, when we opened an office in a new country where English wasn't predominant and the culture was vastly different to that of Zambia and Malawi, one of our ISMs didn't translate. When we introduced the team to 'Act. Learn. Repeat', there was some confusion. It was only when a staff member chatted to us later did we realise the concept had been lost in translation. 'We knew the training wasn't landing with our new agents,' the staff member said. 'You kept saying "Act. Learn. Repeat", but you didn't say "ACT. LEARN. **IMPROVE**. REPEAT".'

We were tempted to change this ISM to include this key difference, but decided to stick to the original and use this story to highlight the purpose of the ISM: to always **IMPROVE** with your learnings.

SHOEBOX STORY:
The enormous amount you learn when you just start, fail, try – much more than by not starting.



2004
BRAD AND BRETT STARTED THE ZOOTA JOURNEY

START UP
OPERATIONS IN MALAWI, ZAMBIA & MAURITIUS

2 YEARS BROKE & ALMOST BROKEN

"How do you make good decisions? With experience. How do you get experience? Easy... by making bad decisions."

BROTHERS DON'T HAVE QUITTING IN THEIR DNA

COMMITTED TO BE THEMSELVES » ENTREPRENEURS & FAMILY DUDES

WITHIN 3 MONTHS THEY RAISED \$ 350,000 IN EQUITY
WITHIN 6 MONTHS THEY SOLD THEIR BUSINESS IN MALAWI FOR \$ 400,000

FOCUS SOLELY ON ZOOTA
TREAT EQUITY AS GOLD
ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY. HAVE FUN
WIN. BE BALANCED
NO PAPER TIGER PARTNERS
STAY HUMBLE AND GROUNDED
GO BIG OR GO HOME

THE SHOEBOX
A REMINDER OF OUR HUMBLE BEGINNINGS & AN INSPIRATION TO ALL THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE. YOU JUST HAVE TO START.



ACT. LEARN. IMPROVE. REPEAT.



LEAD, DON'T FOLLOW

A teacher once asked a bunch of young kids if they could sing. All of them chorused: 'Yes.' In their early teenage years, someone asked them again: 'How many of you think you can sing?' About half said they could. By their late teens, that number had dropped even further, and by adulthood only one or two people said they could sing. Why is this? Why did they start out life believing they could sing (even if they warbled slightly off-key), yet as adults most of them thought they sucked? It's probably because, over the years, these once-singers were told by others – parents, peers, strangers, siblings, teachers, that horrid reviewer at the end-of-year pantomime – that they couldn't sing. And they began to believe it

The difference between leaders and followers is the presence of self-belief. When the world tells you you're crazy for trying something new, followers start doubting themselves and leaders carry on their way. When we started Zoono many people told us we were bound to fail.

THAT MADE US **MORE DETERMINED!**

And we zoned in and continued focusing on our strategy: to view agents as our core customers. We lent agents money to buy booths with zero collateral (granted, some people spent their money on TVs, but those who didn't blossomed) and went to work honing our agent-centred model. The environment in which we launched was harsh and pretty scary. However, we took it up as a challenge. As long as we stayed focused on our goal – providing on-the-ground service to improve lives – we knew we'd make it to the other side.

WE **MIGHT** EVEN BLAST OUT *THE BEAR NECESSITIES* IN THE PROCESS.

We're all influenced by external forces (admit it, it's hard not to start dancing to that terrible Black Eyed Peas song). But the key to making something work is to make your own ideas, own them and then share them. External validation is just that – an external opinion shaped in someone else's mind. But true opinion lies inside us. Only we know our own worth. So don't look for external validation

(NO ONE CAN APPRECIATE YOUR MIRROR DANCING LIKE YOU DO)
AS THIS COULD DILUTE YOUR AWESOMENESS!



"DANCE LIKE NO ONE IS WATCHING"

ONE OF OUR FAVOURITE QUOTES IS:

'Those who danced were thought crazy by those who could not hear the music.' Write it out. Stick it on your mirror. Scribble it on your hand. Because once you truly understand it, you won't become despondent when everyone tells you you're crazy; when people can't see your vision and dreams. We believe all of us should celebrate the unique music that is playing in our heads, and we must understand that not everyone can hear it. Rather than be discouraged, turn up that music, wave your hands in the air and dance your own funky chicken.

CONFUCIUS

WHAT THE SUPERIOR MAN SEEKS IS IN HIMSELF; WHAT THE SMALL MAN SEEKS IS IN OTHERS.

MIKE, BRETT & KEITH,
SEEKING THEIR INNER ZOONA MAN



LEAD, DON'T FOLLOW

Leading means you don't need to worry about competitors. You just need to keep your head down and focus on your goals. Too much time is wasted and too many ideas escape if you're constantly looking around, measuring yourself with the competition.

It turns out Zoona is so good at putting its head down that our competitors seem to be the ones following.

CHECK OUT THESE PICTURES AND SPOT THE, UM, DIFFERENCE ...

Other competitors also seem to think Zoona is pretty awesome...

Industry 'experts' are everywhere. They quote studies, wear impressive suits, belong to think-tanks and sometimes convince people they can see into the future. It's tough to ignore what they say. What if they're right? What if they do have access to a crystal ball? At Zoona, we know forging our own way – dancing to our own music – is the route to success. In fact, when the 'experts' say we're wrong, we double down and back ourselves, knowing we're on to something good.

Being the crazy people no one publicly agrees with is an interesting experience. (However, more interesting is watching them change their tune to align with your direction, and then bang on about it as though it's something they've discovered.) It's only through listening to our customers, and not the 'experts', that we've learnt what's required. And when the views of our customers differ from those of the 'experts', we know what to do... **ALL HANDS ON DECK.**

MORE THAN JUST HOT AIR



Because we're 'up for it' and we like trying new things (even if they don't always work out), when someone presented us with a crazy idea, we jumped straight in. We decided to take Zoona's meagre marketing budget and reach for the skies. Literally. In 2010, we launched a blimp – a big, beautiful, green Zoona blimp emblazoned with our branding. We even had to apply for a civil aviation licence to fly it. And because we're also a bit cheeky, we released it at Airtel's headquarters during the launch of our partnership. It was an **AWESOME** day. Not only was it the first blimp ever launched in Zambia, but it knocked the socks off our competitors – the look on the Airtel marketing manager's face was priceless. And for days, the blimp hung in the sky over Lusaka, reminding us not only of where we belonged but also what can be achieved when you think big and own it.



NICE LOCATION! POPPING UP RIGHT NEXT TO US!

COMPANIES ACTUALLY USING OUR MANUFACTURER AND COPYING THE BOOTH DESIGN!

ZOOONA MAN RELEASED... ...MR MONEY RELEASED



"IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY THAT MEDIOCRITY CAN PAY TO GREATNESS." – OSCAR WILDE

“NAIL IT BEFORE YOU SCALE IT”



WE DON'T HAVE 'A F'ORK IT, JUST SCALE IT' ATTITUDE

If you're new to Zoono, you might have noticed we have our own language. It's not quite elvish or Esperanto, but there are a few words and phrases that may seem foreign.

SO, AT ZOONA, EAT YOUR FROGS MEANS GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT BEFORE FOCUSING ON THE NEW SHINY STUFF.

Remember that princess who developed a major crush on a frog? Well, she had to kiss that slimy little bugger before he could turn into a prince.

In the first few years of Zoono, our offices were abuzz with creative thinkers. Their energy and vision was what we needed at the time and the place swirled with ideas and plans and mad scribbles on white boards. And while the energy was enthralling and the ideas necessary, a part of the puzzle was missing: we needed complementary focus on scalable solutions.

WE NEEDED A SOLID YIN FOR THE SWIRLING YANG.

THE THING ABOUT FROGS IS THAT SOME PEOPLE ACTUALLY LIKE EATING THEM (French gourmards, foxes, seagulls), so we set about diversifying our team to ensure a useful distribution of frog-eaters and not-so-much frog-eaters.

We sought people who relish the challenge of scale and structure as well as those who think wide and far. And while we ensure that frog-eaters eat the frogs, we also make sure we all have a palate for at least a leg or two...

EAT YOUR FROGS

Anatomy of a frog

So what does eating a frog at Zoono look like? It could be a number of things, but one big croaky frog we chomped was when we realised that by shifting our focus to hitting numbers and roll-out targets, we had negatively affected our customer experience. We landed up with the wrong people in the wrong places and with processes that benefited the balance sheet but didn't meet customer expectations. We took the decision to shift our targets to ensure quality not quantity. It was a difficult decision, but the right one. By putting the needs of our customers first, we saw the impact on revenue almost immediately. The basics weren't right and we had to fix them before we focused on growth and scale.

Eating frogs is easier than it seems. Sure, you can spend days avoiding them, turning up your nose at the sight of their slippery limbs, but they're not going to miraculously disappear in a puff of smoke.

THE FIRST STEP TO EATING A FROG IS ... **IDENTIFYING IT AS A FROG.**

You need to know what you're dealing with, and this is made easy by embracing failure. Huh? Yip, *embracing* failure. Because when you embrace failure, all the bullsh*t gets set aside and the egos disappear, and all you're left with is you and the frog. By recognising these as failings, and therefore frogs, we were able to look them in the eye, chew them up thoughtfully and correct our direction.



DID YOU KNOW?

WE HAVE ACTUAL (SORT OF) FROGS AT ZOONA. Brad's nickname - which he got at school - is 'Kermit', due to his long, skinny legs. And because their school mates thought they were totally hilarious, they named Brett 'Toad'. No wonder frogs' legs aren't on the menu in the Zoono cafe.

“SIMPLE, CLEAR PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES GIVE RISE TO COMPLEX AND INTELLIGENT BEHAVIOUR. COMPLEX RULES AND REGULATIONS GIVE RISE TO SIMPLE AND STUPID BEHAVIOUR.”

- DEE HOCK, CEO EMERITUS VISA INTERNATIONAL



EAT YOUR **FROGS**

ZOONA BELIEVES IN A BALANCE OF BLACK AND WHITE, AND WE WILL ALWAYS KEEP WHITE SPACES.

The journey from a start-up to a mature organisation means there will be a natural progression from a blank white canvas towards more black space. What does this mean?

Basically, in the beginning, the white board will be full of those scribbles we spoke about earlier. Ideas will be pumping and visions will be visioning. However, when the business starts growing – more people, more projects, more opportunities – structures need to be put in place to ensure an efficient and stable business. And this isn't a bad thing because white spaces are then free to exist on their own page while the black spaces take care of the overall structure. In this way, ideas keep flowing, visions keep visioning AND the business keeps moving forward. (And we don't all croak.)

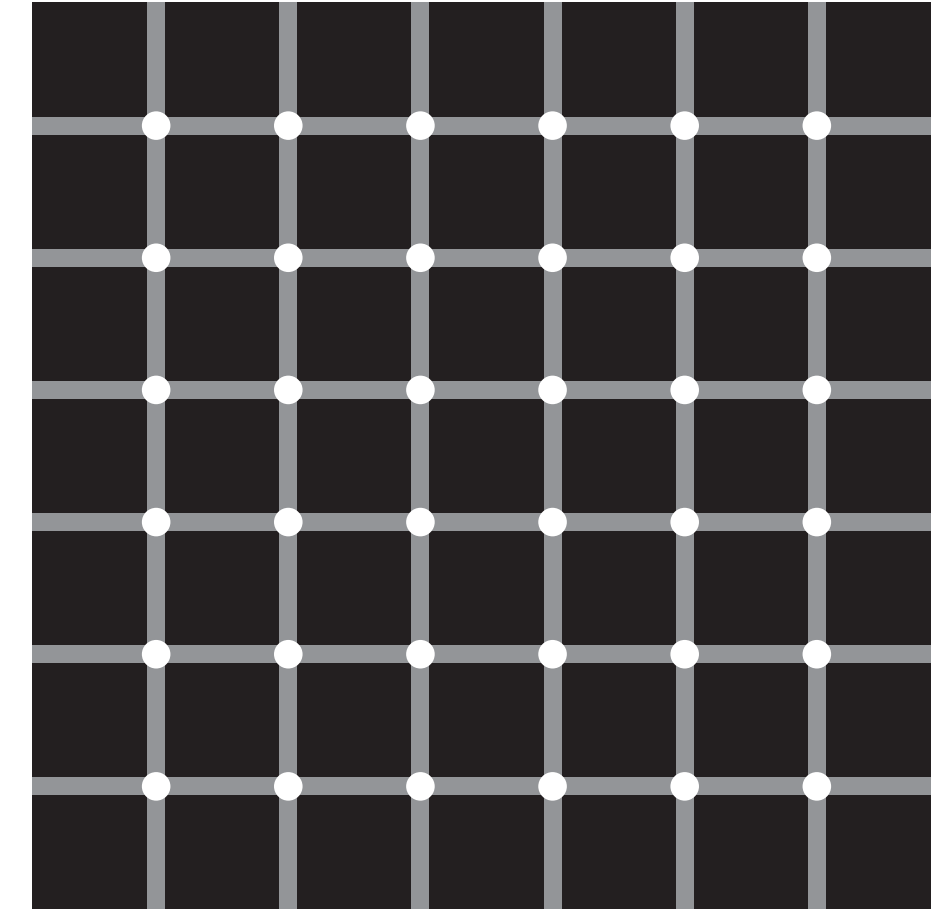
A business's greatest breakthrough will probably come from 'whitespace projects', where strategy is unclear, budget is non-existent and roles are undefined – in other words, when people are given free rein to unleash their craziest and most astonishing ideas.

BLACKSPACE

DEFINED
ORDERED
STRUCTURED
BUDGETS
METHOD
POLICIES
PROCEDURES
RULES
REGULATIONS
MANAGER TO MANAGE

WHITESPACE

UNDEFINED
UNPREDICTABLE
CREATIVE
CHAOTIC
CULTURE
UNEXPECTED
TINKER
SOLVE PROBLEMS
NEW IDEAS
LEADERS TO CREATE



COUNT THE **WHITE** DOTS



the reason we created zoon

BESTA (ZAMBIA)

AT ZOONA, OUR FOCUS IS ON PEOPLE: AGENTS, TELLERS, CONSUMERS AND OUR EMPLOYEES. WE ARE DRIVEN TO KEEP LEARNING AND PUSHING BECAUSE OF PEOPLE LIKE BESTA AND THE CHANGES WE BRING TO HER LIFE.

Besta, 34, lives in Lusaka with her five children. Her husband is a driver for a construction company based in Solwezi, nine hours away. Although he passes through Lusaka and drops in to see his family when he can, he is mostly on the road. He gets paid in cash and uses Zoon to send money to Besta which she uses for running their home, rent and school fees. Besta has her own business selling ice lollies. Her role model is her sister, who was once a paraffin seller and now imports and sells clothing and perfume. One day Besta hopes to own her home. She dreams and plans for the future, and Zoon is committed to supporting her on her journey towards those dreams.

zoon
consumer

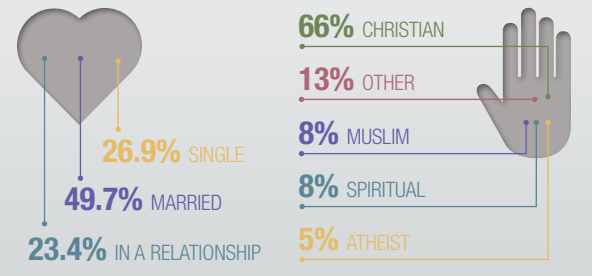
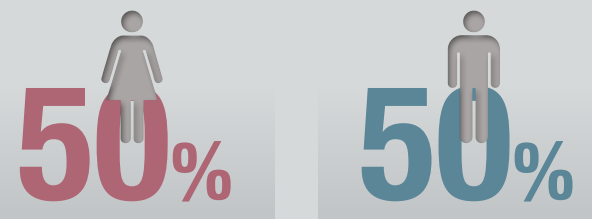
LANGUAGES

18.5%
SPEAKS 4 OR MORE LANGUAGES

16%
SPEAKS 3 LANGUAGES

54.2%
SPEAKS 2 LANGUAGES

11.3%
SPEAKS 1 LANGUAGE



RACE

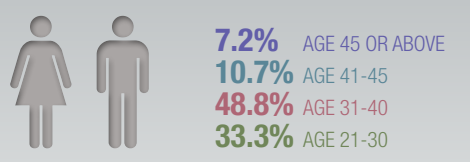
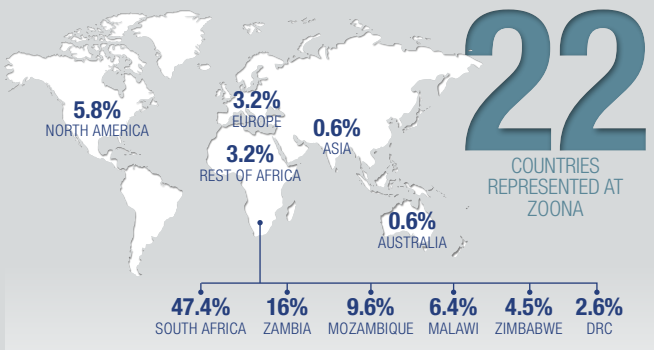
43.7%
BLACK

35.3%
WHITE

14.4%
COLOURED

4.2%
OTHER

2.4%
ASIAN



39% OWN THEIR HOME
50% RENT THEIR HOME
11% OTHER

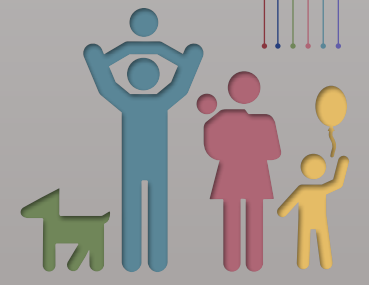


84% HOT AND COLD
15% COLD ONLY
1% NO RUNNING WATER



DEPENDANTS

32% NO DEPENDANTS
19% 1 DEPENDANT
20% 2 DEPENDANTS
15% 3 OR MORE
11% 4-6 DEPENDANTS
3% 7 OR MORE



CHILDREN

4.3%
HAVE CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

38.4%
HAVE CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

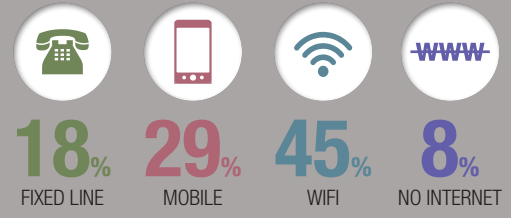
15.9%
HAVE CHILDREN THAT HAVE NOT STARTED SCHOOL YET

47%
DO NOT HAVE CHILDREN

0.6%
CHILDREN IN OTHER TYPES OF FORMAL EDUCATION

PEOPLE IN THE HOUSE

6.5% 7 OR MORE
34.5% 4-6 PEOPLE
17.9% 3 PEOPLE
27.4% 2 PEOPLE
13.7% LIVE ALONE



TRANSPORT

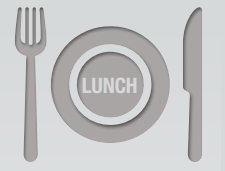
58.1%
COME TO WORK IN A CAR

29.3%
COME TO WORK IN A BUS OR TAXI

5.4%
COME TO WORK BY TRAIN

3.6%
WALK TO WORK

3%
COME TO WORK IN A PRIVATE TAXI



44.9% BUYS

42.5% MAKES

12.6% OTHER

78% NOT STUDYING
22% FORMALLY STUDYING



20% MASTERS OR PHD
17% POST GRADUATE
42% UNIVERSITY DEGREE
17% HIGH SCHOOL
4% DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES

TRAVEL

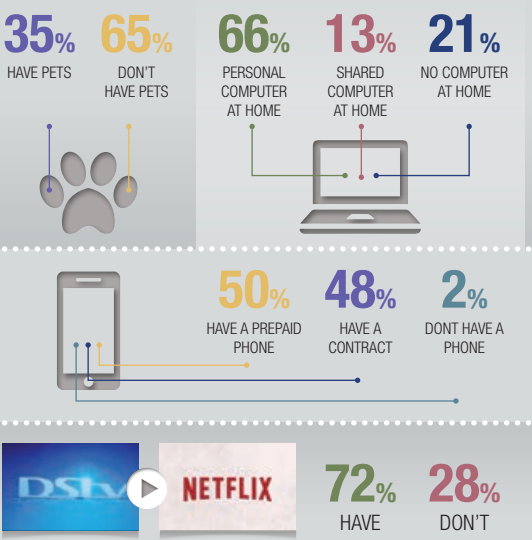
16.3%
MORE THAN 5 CONTINENTS

11.5%
4 CONTINENTS

20%
3 CONTINENTS

17%
2 CONTINENTS

35.2%
AFRICA



SEE VALUE IN DIVERSITY

ZoonA is pretty much the United Nations of companies, with more than 22 countries represented among our employees. We're a veritable melting pot of cultures, languages, religions, genders, shoe sizes, hairstyles, stretchers, meditators, football players, beer drinkers, beer brewers, sock wearers, pen stealers, non-pen stealers, wine connoisseurs ... you get the picture.

<< IF NOT, HERE'S A PICTURE TO HELP.
IF ZOONA WAS 100 EMPLOYEES, IT WOULD LOOK LIKE THIS.

ZoonA **LOVES** diversity. We don't build walls, we tear those suckers down. The beauty of the world is that we're all so different; we're all unique. Imagine how boring life would be if we all looked the same, acted the same, thought the same. Not only that, but diversity is a great teacher. It shows us how to accept a different point of view and how to move beyond simple tolerance of 'other' to a celebration of the rich dimensions found within each individual. For true success, diversity is a trump card, and we believe this individuality is where genius and great ideas exist.

*We love what this picture represents and **WE WANT MORE UPSIDE-DOWN BALLERINAS** to join our team. We can't be disruptive in Africa unless we have people who see the world a little differently and who aren't scared to show it.*

IF WE ARE ALL THINKING THE SAME THEN NO ONE IS THINKING.





'zoonA'
[REAL]

Okay, so you might have heard this a zillion times. You can even buy a T-shirt printed with this quote: 'Surround yourself with the dreamers and the doers, the believers and thinkers, but most of all, surround yourself with those who see the greatness within you, even when you don't see it yourself.' The quote is by author and entrepreneur Edmund Lee. The T-shirt costs \$22 online.

At ZoonA, we don't just quote stuff – we live it. And we don't need fancy T-shirts to remind us. Our proudest achievement is the unbelievable people who have joined us and continue to join us on this journey. Without our employees and customers, ZoonA is nothing. Really. No quote-unquote. As the founding frogs, we're extroverts who buzz off the people around us.

We've intentionally developed and instilled a great culture at work – one that attracts great people – because great people being **'ZOONAA'** (authentic, real and open) is key to moving forward. It supports great relationships, and great relationships allow for great thinking, which leads to great actions, which then bring great results. Who wouldn't want to be great? Because of this, we hire people who will fit into the culture.

No matter how skilled someone is, we will never hire brilliant assholes. We know A-players attract A-players and that one C-player can disrupt the team. We strive to develop and retain A-players.

IN LINE WITH THIS, YOU WON'T EVER HAVE TO WEAR A TERRIBLE TIE TO WORK, OR BUNION-INDUCING HEELS

– unless you want to. ZoonA is loudly (and proudly) non-corporate (our early experiences of corporate life were torture). We reject cold, demotivating work environments where the brightest colour is a blue stapler. Instead, we've created a place where people are at ease, have space to grow, are appreciated and can bring their unique and quirky selves to work to get into flow, have fun, love what they are doing and create game-changing solutions for our customers. **SHOES ARE OPTIONAL.**

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH **GREAT PEOPLE**

'Twas a dark and stormy fright ... Brett and Brad's run-in with corporate torture

Brett used to work with dinosaurs – and not just in the corporate sense of the word. One of his first jobs in London was for a big company in a small, windowless office with a mammoth task ahead of him: cataloguing *Walking With Dinosaurs* videos. He had to watch, label and organise the collection, and while he learnt a lot about velociraptors and tenontosauruses, the work was repetitive and boring. However, refusing to succumb to the evil forces of demotivation, Brett jumped right in, creating a system that helped him to be more efficient. The videos were labelled in record time **(#SCORE!)**.

As he surveyed the fruits of his labour, and wondered what it would be like to have a velociraptor as a pet, he felt proud of his achievement and expected he would be rewarded with a more exciting challenge. After all, he was the fastest data capturer in the team!

When he handed his 'boss'* the finished tapes, another pile of videos was plonked in front of him, and our valiant video-sorting hero realised this job wasn't for him. Because instead of valuing output, challenge and growth, the company rewarded its employees by paying an hourly rate for merely turning up for the day, regardless of what they did. **THE DINOSAURS HAD TO GO.**

** This word is not a cultural fit at ZoonA.
In fact, it's pretty much banned.*

Brett then started working as a business analyst at one of the large financial corporates in London. Two incidents there informed the development of ZoonA's culture.

1. **I'VE SEEN THE FUTURE ... AND IT SUCKS**

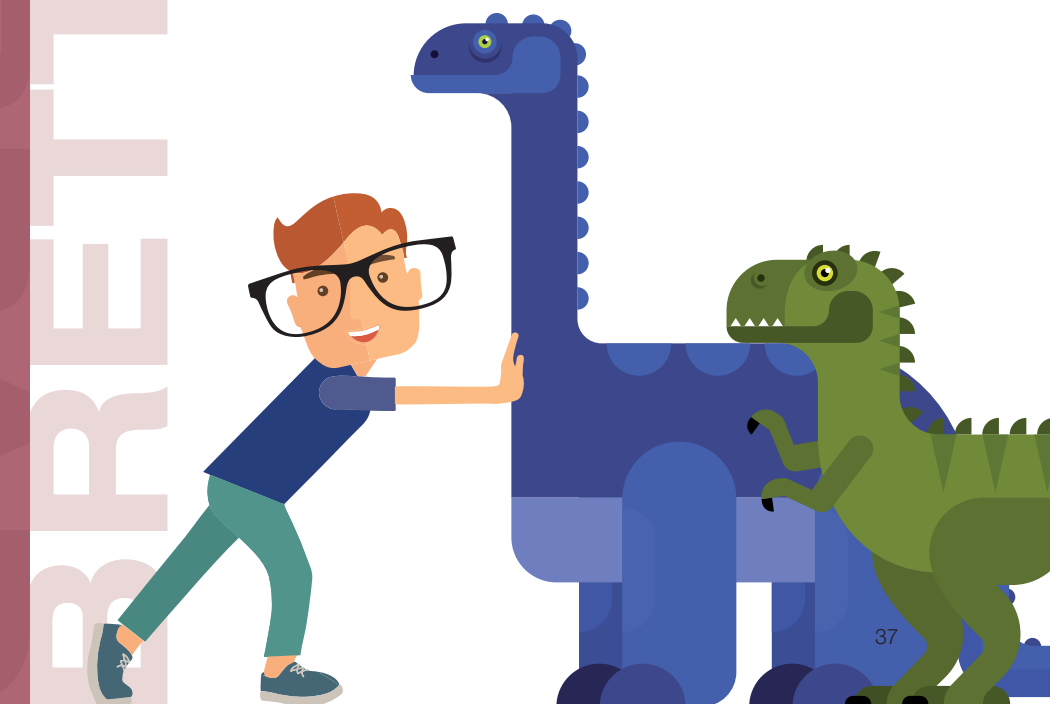
After a few years of hard work, Brett's manager took him aside. 'You know, lad,' he said, 'you're doing so well you'll probably be doing my job in five years' time.' The manager may have winked. Although meant as a compliment, Brett was horrified and felt slightly ill. 'I'd hate to be doing that in five years' time!' he thought (not out loud). 'He has no life! He never goes home!'

2. **THE LESSON OF KEEPING YOUR WORD**

While still at the company, Brett was called in for his end-of-year performance review. He had worked hard all year, putting in extra hours and extending himself. He had been promised a bonus for all of the extra work he was putting in. When the end of the year came, his manager had changed his mind. 'Nope,' he said, 'and Happy Christmas.' Brett felt exploited and angry. He had put his best self forward for the company keeping his side of the bargain and they had not kept their word. He resigned on the spot and walked out. (He did later return to fulfill the last three months of his contract because that's just who he is, but the relationship was never the same). They exploited the fact that his contract was coming to an end. He swore that when he started his own company, he would always acknowledge and respect the people around him who bring their best selves to work. And more importantly, that he would always keep his word.

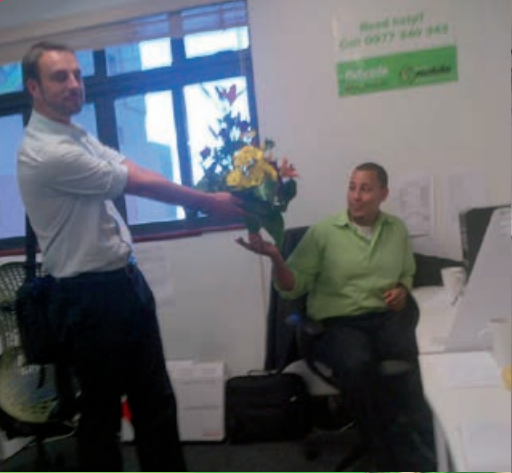
BRAD'S STINT IN THE CORPORATE WORLD WAS, IN MANY WAYS, LIFE-CHANGING.

It taught him more about himself and what compromises he wasn't prepared to make. During that time, he met some amazing people and learnt a lot about business, but as he quickly climbed up the corporate ladder, he became frustrated and unhappy. He felt suffocated – as though an invisible machine was pushing down on his creativity and innovation. And even though he had a director's salary, a big house and a fancy company car, he was miserable. When he left that world, throwing aside his shirt and tie, he had teenage children and a host of responsibilities. However, just as in business, Brad had the backing of the right people – or person, in this case. His wife, Jill, supported his 'craziness', knowing he needed to take a different route to achieve success. It might have taken a bit longer and been tougher than expected, but that journey has now delivered so many more rewards.





SURROUND YOURSELF WITH GREAT PEOPLE



SURROUND YOURSELF WITH GREAT PEOPLE

Trust is a must

Many people ask us how we look after cash in African markets. They lean forward and say in low voices: 'Isn't it risky?' The best way to answer this question would be to use Ron Rutland's observations. A South African-born adventurer, Ron spent 845 days cycling through Africa. When he was asked about his journey, he said he found 99.9% of the people he met on his trip to be great and only 0.1% were not-so lovely. Believing in the essential decency of people and trusting them creates space for opportunity, depth and growth in business.



Mike knew this from the start. When he joined ZONA as CEO and wanted to invest in the business, his parents agreed to lend him the money. They would have to re-mortgage the house they had finally paid off on teachers' salaries. Slightly concerned, Mike's dad asked if he had a signed contract. 'No,' Mike replied, 'but we have a handshake, and that's enough.'

WE'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT **HANDSHAKES COUNT.**

#MIKE!

'Culture is fundamentally about relationships.

People often talk about what will change – I will share one thing I think will not change: the importance of relationships. So I would encourage everyone to build and foster relationships, to build an entrepreneurial community and share stories.'

Why we are passionate people passionate about other passionate people...

'Find like-minded people – the best in their field – and ones who share the same values. People who are street-smart, have business savvy and are committed to service.'

THE RIGHT PEOPLE SAY **'YES AND'**

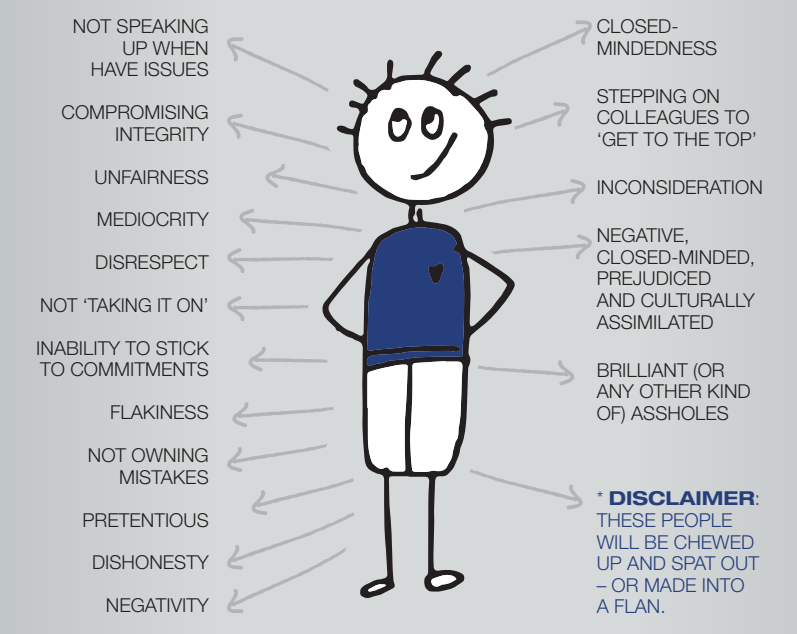
THE WRONG ONES SAY **'NO BUT...'**

'We found and connected with other people who believed.'

The right people are those who harbour entrepreneurship – clear on who they are and what they want to make happen without the need for external validation.'

BEING ZONA

NOT*



MY FAVOURITE
 THING IS THAT I GET
 TO WORK EVERY
 DAY WITH PEOPLE
 I FUNDAMENTALLY
 RESPECT, BOTH
 PROFESSIONALLY AND
 AS INDIVIDUALS.
 KEITH

System
 Conric
 Access
 Approachable
 Coffee!!
 Lunches /
 Brads
 vibrant
 This is a
 non-family
 family
 business
 I get to
 walk the
 dusty
 streets
 Customer
 Travel,
 Africa
 Team
 atmosphere

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH **GREAT PEOPLE**

The translation of **'zoona'** – being real – is something that will never leave us. Even if Zoona becomes hugely successful, we will always stay humble and grounded.

We've experienced first-hand how constant striving at work – long hours, ridiculous schedules and crazy deadlines – affects your life. Because life is not only work; work is just one part of life. If you miss your child's first ballet concert or that important swimming gala, you'll never get it back. Poof – it's gone. We want Zoona to be a part of your life, but we also want your time away from work to be fulfilling, adventurous, rich and rewarding.

As Maxwell, one of Zoona's first drivers who had previously worked as a personal driver for the MD of a large bank, put it: 'At my old work, there were nice cars, but not so nice people. Here, the cars are horrible, but the people are nice.'

And we all stand together...

A work culture wins when everyone has bought into the values and is stoked to participate. It can't be something that's merely adopted, put on like a swanky outfit to impress others. It has to be an intrinsic part of the people who shape the business. That's why we, as founders, do the following things to ensure we continue to have the right people with the right attitudes doing the right work that gives them flow.

We admit to mistakes. As we pointed out earlier in the book, failure is part of the learning journey. If we don't admit to our mistakes, we won't know how to learn from them.

We put culture at the forefront when hiring people and have started cultural group interviews to make sure the candidate is a suitable fit. Brad meets every new employee who joins the company.

We have been known to put people through 14 interviews to make sure they are the right fit.

We gave the job of CEO to an 'outsider' and not a founder – we identified our strengths and weaknesses and handed over the reins, knowing he would do the best job

WE PROMOTE FUN! AND BAD WIGS IN THE OFFICE!



YIP!
 WE PLAY WITH LEGO DURING
 OUR GROUP CULTURE INTERVIEWS



NO PAPER TIGER PARTNERS



SO WHAT IS A PAPER TIGER?

'Paper tiger' is the English translation of the Chinese phrase 'zhilao hu'. Basically, it refers to someone or something that seems powerful and threatening but is actually ineffectual.

In Chinese, it looks like this: 紙老虎. Yoda would pronounce it properly.

OUR TAKE ON TIGER TRICKSTERS

Before Zoono, Brett and I had been 'dealt' by paper tigers. So with Zoono, we wanted partners who were as committed, driven, hard working and, frankly, 'crazy' as we were to build the impossible. By way of example, Mike and Keith are the total opposite of paper tigers, and because of people like them, we've been able to build Zoono to what it is today.

WE NEEDED REAL TIGERS AT ZOONA, AND WE GOT THEM.

BAD METAPHOR OF THE DAY... It would be safe to say that when it comes to dealing with paper tigers, Zoono has earned its stripes... (#groan)

NO PAPER TIGER PARTNERS

A few years ago, we got really excited about partnering with one of the big global mobile network operators in Zambia to support their mobile wallet cash-in and cash-out function. We worked hard to get the partnership up and running – we didn't get much sleep and Brad started growing a very bad beard.

While romantic relationships might thrive on the notion of opposites attract, business relationships are an entirely different thing. There has to be synergy, equal commitment, shared values – and both parties have to be willing to do the dishes. Unfortunately, our new partner wasn't as committed and our values and work ethic were out of sync. Eventually, we pulled the plug on the partnership when it started to harm all three of our customer groups: agents weren't getting support; tellers were dealing with a sub-par system; and consumers were dealing with slow service, long queues and a product that didn't work.

SOMETIMES A DIVORCE IS THE BEST WAY TO REMAIN **INTACT AND SANE.**

Now we are more vigilant about whom we choose as partners. In the same way we hire for culture fit, we do the same with our partners. They all go through our onboarding process and we ensure we are both aligned before engaging further.

THAT **'COURTSHIP'** IS KEY.

Even our lawyers had to go through our onboarding process with it not being billable time.

"PAPER TIGER PARTNERS ARE THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT WE VALUE. THEY ARE THE COMPANIES THAT FOCUS ON THEIR OWN INTERESTS RATHER THAN THOSE OF A PARTNERSHIP OR CUSTOMER. WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH AND YOU NEED THEM IN THE TRENCHES ROLLING UP THEIR SLEEVES, THEY ARE NEVER THERE."



A BIG CORPORATE ONCE TOLD US

that they are like a 50 year old adult man. They know what they are doing, have experience and know how to manage a kid.

OUR RESPONSE WAS

that we are like a 16 year old teenager who thinks they know everything. We might know nothing, but we need the space to figure it out and make our own mistakes.

– YODA, STAR WARS
"DO OR DO NOT. THERE IS NO IN-BETWEEN."

MAKE YOUR OWN ZOONA TIGER

1 Fold to meet the centre line

2 Fold to meet the centre line

3 Open

4 Fold on the dotted line

5 Fold on the dotted line

6 Fold on the dotted line

7 Step fold on the dotted line

8 Fold to make a crease and fold back

9 Fold on the dotted line

10 Fold backward on the dotted line

11 Fold in half

12 Open the top part and flatten

13 Turn over

14 Open the top part and flatten

15 Fold to make a crease and fold back

16 Open the top part and flatten

17 Open the top part and flatten

18 Fold backward

19 Fold backward

20 Fold backward

21 And flatten

22 Step fold on ear

23 Fold ear up on crease

24 Turn over

25 Repeat ear fold on other side, steps 21-23

26 Nose: fold to make a crease and fold back

27 Pocket fold

Copyright: Fumiaki Shingu

NO PAPER TIGER PARTNERS

Money and bottom lines

Money and bottom lines (and, perhaps, the occasional golf day) – that’s what drives most larger corporates. Good for them – may they reap whatever rewards they seek. However, we at Zoona do things differently. Instead of driving our decision-making, we view revenue as an output. What informs our choices and strategies are customers and people. We know if we get that right, the rest follows. And intrinsic to our people-centred approach is purpose: the chance to make a difference in Africa. Our purpose is to help communities thrive. Knowing you’re coming to work to make that difference provides meaning, motivation and empowerment.

PEOPLE CONNECT TO PURPOSE, NOT TO REVENUE GRAPHS.

‘I believe in businesses with purpose – those that are built to make a difference and have a positive impact on their environment. It is incredibly tough to start a business, so choose ones you can believe in. And even more importantly, attract great talent to join you. In today’s world, the very best talent want more than just a job; they want to be part of something, to make a difference, and they want to be empowered and challenged to own their contribution to something real that has impact. At Zoona, every employee has share options, and if asked, nearly all of them would agree that our purpose, “to help communities thrive”, is what attracted them to us and keeps them with us.’

– BRAD, SPEAKING AT AN ENTREPRENEUR EVENT



“ If the partnership is just to enhance revenue, then we should not be doing it as things inevitably always go wrong down the line. The partnerships should be undertaken to enhance the experience of **ZOONA CLIENTS** and align with Zoona’s core strategy and values. ”

– BRETT DISCUSSING PARTNER POSSIBILITIES AT A BOARD MEETING

KNOWLEDGE IS THE ENEMY OF LEARNING

Yes, you read the headline right: **KNOWLEDGE IS THE ENEMY OF LEARNING**. We know, it's a pretty bold thing to say, and for years we felt it in our hearts but couldn't put our finger on what it actually was. Besides, we're all taught from a young age that knowledge is king; that if we acquire it or gain insight into how something works, we're sorted for life, right? We'll become clever people, stuffed with knowledge, able to conquer the world and anything it throws our way.

But **KNOWLEDGE** – information accumulated from experience or education – is often static and rigid, and is informed by assumptions. It's also often subjective – we generally only seek knowledge of things that interest us. However, **LEARNING** takes place in real time in response to real situations. It's flexible, adaptable and, unlike knowledge, learning seeks us out instead of the other way round. Whereas people talk about having a 'thirst for knowledge', you never go thirsty with learning. It's around us all the time, moving and morphing. All we have to do is reach out, grab it and drink it in.

We're not going to become a million-dollar business in Africa through knowledge. If that were the case, someone would have done it already. Our continent is like one of those fibre-optic decorations found in Chinese karaoke bars. Just when you think you know what it is (a white fan-shaped thing which glows purple), it changes colour and shape (bugger, now it's a green bush with glowing orange tips).

Things are shifting at a rapid rate – customer profiles are changing, expectations are changing and technology is changing. Operating in Africa has no set formula, even within a single country. Knowledge isn't going to help, and if we are to win in this space, we need to toss it aside, question our assumptions, roll up our sleeves and start learning.

This is best achieved through trying – and sometimes failing (as we discussed in the beginning of the book). Additionally, getting into the field, spending time with customers and questioning all of our assumptions also brings learning. We learn by being thrown into unfamiliarity. And, like kids in a sandpit digging around with plastic spades, we also learn through play and enjoying what we're doing.

Most useful, however, is **EMBRACING THE SQUIGGLE**. No, it's not some new exercise. Embracing the squiggle means recognising and accepting that getting from point A to point B might not be a straight journey. By its nature, life – and business – is filled with twists and turns. There is no such thing as a perfectly straight trajectory, and in order to reach your destination with minimal stress and maximum learning, you have to let go of an idea of perfection, get into that squiggle and ride it – whooping all the way – until it's done.

The environment in which we operate is growing exponentially and for us to keep up, we cannot think in a linear way. We need to be disruptive and think and act differently if we are to stay relevant – both as a company and as individuals.

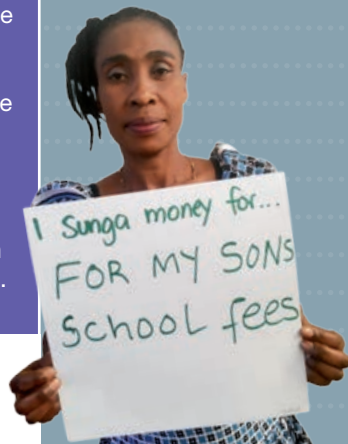
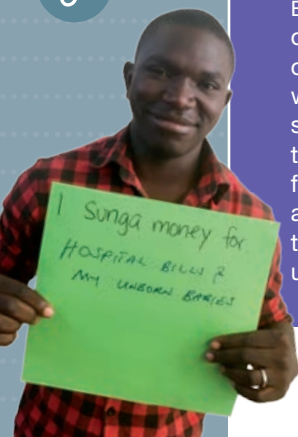
US PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR CAROL DWECK DID EXTENSIVE RESEARCH ON THE FIXED MINDSET VERSUS THE GROWTH MINDSET. HERE IS A SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF WHAT THAT MEANS:

	FIXED MINDSET		GROWTH MINDSET
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something you're born with • Fixed 	SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come from hard work • Can always improve
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something to avoid • Could reveal lack of skill • Tend to give up easily 	CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be embraced • An opportunity to grow • More persistent
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary • Something you do when you are not good enough 	EFFORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential • A path to mastery
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get defensive • Take it personally 	FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful • Something to learn from • Identify areas to improve
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blame others • Get discouraged 	SETBACKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as a wake-up call to work harder next time

Because knowledge is based on assumptions and these are so ingrained, we sometimes don't even recognise when we're relying on them to inform our actions. This sort of rigid thinking gets in the way of learning. Here are two examples of how this has played out in a Zoonas context:

1. CREDIT VERSUS SAVINGS

BRETT'S KNOWLEDGE told us that the whole of Africa needed credit. This was based on the ASSUMPTION that our customers wanted credit. However, when looking at the situation closely – listening to customers, trying new approaches and being in the field – we LEARNT that customers wouldn't actually take credit from us unless some of their money was in savings. This resulted in us launching Sunga before a credit product.



2. SECURITY AT KIOSKS

BRAD'S KNOWLEDGE told us that security gates at kiosks would negatively affect the relationship between customers and tellers. This was based on the ASSUMPTION that our customers would feel removed from the tellers. However, when we dug around for real answers, we LEARNT that tellers and customers actually feel safer with security gates at kiosks.



“Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in.” – ISAAC ASIMOV

The incredible power of the human mind

Studies have shown that if misspelled words are strung together in a sentence, people can still read them with ease because all that matters is the first and last letters of a word. Our brains fill in the rest. The same thing happens when we face situations where we have experience (and experience comes from learning). Our automatic response is to reach for what we already know. We start answering questions before they've been asked. We stop seeing new data points or contrary points of view. We stop seeking feedback and input from others.

SEE IF YOU CAN READ THIS TEXT! >>

I cnduo't bvlieie taht I culod aulaclyt uesdtannrd waht I was rdnaieg.

Unisg the icndeblire pweor of the hmuan mnid, aocdcnrig to rseeerah at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtttaer in waht oderr the lterets in a wrod are, the olny irpoamtnt tihng is taht the frsrit and lsat ltteer be in the rhgit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whoutit a pboerlm. Tihs is bucseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey ltteer by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Aaznmig, huh? Yaeh and I awlyas tghhuot slelinpg was ipmorantt! See if yuor fdreins can raed tihs too.

Scuh a cdonition is arppoiatrely claed typoglycemia.

'I feel smarter at the end of every day than I did at the beginning of the day.'

– MIKE

'You don't assume you're the cleverest person in the room and, therefore, you assume other people have value to add to your decisions.'

– KEITH

KNOWLEDGE IS THE ENEMY OF LEARNING

Hi, all!

Knowledge is **BAD**.

“What do you mean, knowledge is bad? I've spent the last X years of my life working my butt off to accumulate knowledge and now you are telling me that everything I know is bad?” This has been a conversation I have heard many times over the past year. I can imagine this is especially frustrating for the 80+ newbies who have been told knowledge is bad at Zoonas but lack the context and background as to why. I wanted to weigh in on the topic with the hope that I can provide some clarity and insight as to why we feel this way at Zoonas.

To start, of course, not all knowledge is bad. We know that the earth is round and revolves around the sun every 365 (and a quarter) days per year. We know that water freezes at 0°C. We know why the sky is blue. It's good that we know these things and we shouldn't waste our time trying to pretend that we don't. But there are many other things we group into the same

category as 'knowledge' when they are, in fact, 'assumptions' or 'opinions'.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Our pricing is too high.
- Our model won't work in country X.
- We need to do more advertising.

For each of these statements, it is impossible to know whether they are true or not before we've tested them. They also might be true in some situations but not others. For example, maybe our pricing is too high – in some locations and for some of our customers some of the time.

THIS IS WHERE KNOWLEDGE STARTS TO BECOME A PROBLEM.

The entire world is pretty much rigged to reward people who know the answer and then spend all their time trying to prove they are right. The more we know, the more successful we become, and the more we think we know. We then start to impose our knowledge on others (citing our years of experience and fancy job titles), and before we know it untested assumptions transform into unchallengeable positions. As rapid prototyping guru Tom Chi elegantly puts it in a great TED talk, 'KNOWING IS THE ENEMY OF LEARNING'.

There is a better approach.

Imagine if everyone left their years of accumulated knowledge at home and instead came to work each day with inquisitive questions and ideas that they wanted to test rather than positions they wanted to argue. Imagine if everyone could contribute freely and openly to challenge and improve on these ideas, with the best idea rising to the top of the list regardless of who came up with it. Imagine if nothing was assumed to be true until it was tested widely with feedback from customers who knew their voices counted. Imagine that learning was prioritised above all else – even in situations where we failed.

This is the kind of company Zoonas wants to be, which is why we wanted to embed the philosophy of **ACT LEARN REPEAT** into our cultural DNA. If it's impossible to know the answer up front (which is most of the time), we must start by generating an exhaustive list of possibilities and **ACTING** on the best one. The next step is to then focus on **LEARNING** as much as we can as quickly as possible. Finally, we need to incorporate those learnings to create a new set of actions and **REPEAT** the process again.

Our Sunga roll-out has proven to be a great example of this process in action. We tested a beta product in Kabwe and signed up 1,000 accounts. We then consolidated the learnings and tested three different approaches in the next three towns. We will again consolidate the learnings, develop new hypotheses and keep testing them at increasingly larger scales until we either prove that Sunga is going to be a hugely successful product – or not.

If we can master this process across all areas of the business – **AND GET REALLY GOOD AT LEARNING** – we will become a truly awesome company. We will develop better and more customer-centric products and processes much faster and for a fraction of the cost. We will have more engaged and talented employees. Our culture will continue to grow. We will learn how to help communities thrive.

All we have to do is leave our knowledge at home, show up to work with an open and inquisitive mind, and **ACT LEARN REPEAT**.

Best, **MIKE**

Email from Mike to all employees on 23 October 2016



WE ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH COMPLACENCY.



ONE DAY CHICKEN, NEXT DAY **FEATHERS**

It's a reality: things can and do go wrong. High-flying investors go bust, star athletes get injured, opera singers lose their voice, top models get old, and chickens ... well, one day they might be running around making holiday plans; the next they're naked in a roasting pan. It's impossible to see into the future and to know how everything's going to turn out. So you may as well just keep focused, do what you're doing to the best of your ability – AND NEVER GET TOO BIG FOR YOUR BOOTS.

“THE FUTURE WILL BE FAR MORE SURPRISING THAN MOST PEOPLE REALISE, BECAUSE FEW OBSERVERS HAVE TRULY INTERNALISED THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FACT THAT THE RATE OF CHANGE ITSELF IS ACCELERATING.”

– RAY KURZWEIL, *The Singularity Is Near*

Technology – the sector in which Zoona operates – is growing at an exponential pace, pretty much on a daily basis. Think about it: a year ago, driverless cars were mere concept; now they've taken to our roads. We're living through a time of global change: mobile money and FinTech are gaining huge focus; financial inclusion is on the agenda, entrepreneurship is increasing and the world's power centres are shifting. Soon, the only constant we'll be able to rely on will be that change is here to stay and will only get exponentially faster.

However, change is good. **WE LIKE CHANGE** – it keeps us engaged and provides us with opportunities. And 'one day chicken, next day feathers' reminds us of the ongoing growth and innovation happening around us. These are crazy-exciting times! It also keeps us honest, real, motivated, focused and humble. And it keeps us growing as a business and as people, makes us innovative and allows us to reflect on how far we've come and the impact we've had. Most important, it keeps us humble. Because once you start thinking you've 'made it' – that you're at the top of your game and you should probably buy a Lear jet – you're denying yourself and the company growth. There is no finish line and growth is our constant partner. **LEAR JETS ARE OVERRATED ANYWAY.**



“ ON HUMILITY... ”

Always be humble in any success you have.

Be humble and stay connected.

OUR (OFTEN BARE) FEET HAVE ALWAYS, AND WILL ALWAYS, BE FIRMLY ON THE GROUND.



ONE DAY CHICKEN, NEXT DAY FEATHERS

There's a big difference between feeling proud of your achievements and being an arrogant asshole. One of the main distinctions is learning. People who feel proud of their achievements, yet are humble about their success, know they still have lots to learn. They listen to others, value the lessons of failure and acknowledge their mistakes. Arrogant assholes, on the other hand, believe they know it all. They don't listen to others (why would they when they know everything?), hate failure and will cover up their mistakes – or, worse, blame someone else.

HUMILITY IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART OF ZOONA IT COULD BE AN 'ISM' ON ITS OWN. At Zoona, you're not going to find us swaggering around in Armani suits, driving fancy cars or eating unpronounceable French dishes. We're from Kitwe in Zambia. Our (often bare) feet have always, and will always, be firmly on the ground. We usually wear shorts to work (those that were on the top of the pile) and on the days we look good, our wives probably dressed us.



The thing is, we are acutely aware of 'one day chicken, next day feathers'. Things can go wrong at any moment, so best enjoy the successes of the ride while not getting too tangled up in them. We also realised early on that our triumphs often don't have much meaning for anyone other than us. And that's okay. If Lady Gaga had to collar us at a party and tell us how excited she is about having finally nailed overlock-stitching on dresses made from meat, we'd also smile, nod and move swiftly on.

Once, Brad was at a braai with friends, chilling in his shorts with a beer. His phone rang and when the call was over, he excitedly told a friend: 'You'll never guess what just happened! Patrick Pichette, the CFO of Google, has made a personal investment in Zoona!' The friend smiled and said: 'Cool, that's nice. So do you want beef or chicken?'

Success is all relative – and it's never set in stone. So keep your slip-slops on, hang onto your shorts and stay humble, connected to customers and driven by purpose.

STAY ZOONA. AND ENJOY THE RIDE!

Six ways humility works at work

1. Knowing our customers have more answers than we do.
2. Driving a *klapped-out* old BMW when you could buy something that had actual working gears.
3. Admitting that no one at Zoona knows how we're going to reach our Wildly Important Goals, but knowing that together we'll figure it out.
4. Admitting failure after investing time and energy into business models or ideas that won't scale.
5. Knowing when there is someone else who can do a job better than you and stepping aside to make space for them to flourish.
6. Using a toothless old laptop with keys missing while you ensure other employees have the equipment they need.

'In Zambia, if someone respects you, they say you are "humble". I would like us all to remain humble as we grow both in size and attention. That is how we are going to be successful as an organisation and why I genuinely believe we are going to change the world.'

– **MIKE**, AFTER NEWS OF SERIES A INVESTMENT, OCTOBER 2011



ONE MUST FLOSS ALL BITS AT ALL TIMES...



WORK IS WHERE YOU SPEND A WHACK OF TIME SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL DO SOMETHING YOU LOVE AND ENJOY.



FORMAL DINNER FOR LEPRECHAUNS... MAYBE?

DON'T TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY



leave your ego at the door



THE FUTURE'S SO BRIGHT, YOU'VE GOT TO WEAR SHADES, BIG SHADES.



WHO SAID THE TELETUBBIES WERE DEAD?



FUN REMINDS US THAT THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN HARD WORK



WIGGING OUT AT WORK



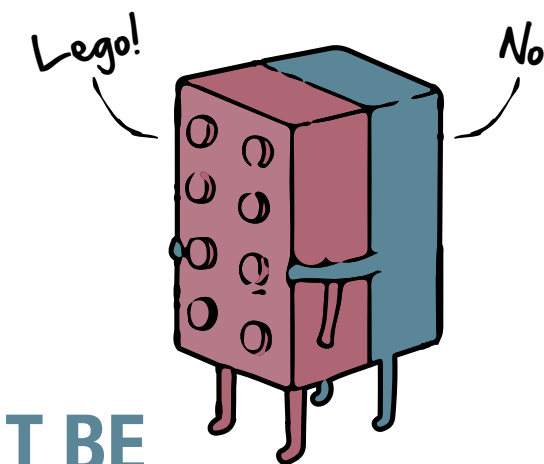


LET GO OF YOUR **LEGO**

If you can remember that far back, you might well have had a 'Give me my f**cking Lego, that's mine, I hate you' moment. Except, being five years old, you hopefully wouldn't have been swearing. If you can't cast your mind back that far, this is how things may have played out: you're in a sandpit with another kid. You've managed to disgorge an entire suitcase of Lego into the sand – including a very cool pilot-looking person neither of you seems to have noticed. However, you soon spy it half-buried in the sand, pick it up and start sticking it onto some blocks. Suddenly, all hell breaks loose. The other kid gets all whiny and grumpy. He says he wants the 'man'. You clutch Pilot Man to your chest. 'He's mine,' you hiss. The other kid becomes even more whiny and tries to snatch it from you. You get cross and feel like punching him. Other Kid starts crying. You might call him ugly.

THIS SAME SCENARIO PLAYS OUT IN THE ADULT WORLD. While the Lego has long since been packed away (at home, at least!) and you're no longer fond of getting sand in your ears, the same strong emotions and illogical behaviour can be witnessed at work. This is especially true of a company that's going through a period of rapid expansion. In the beginning, when the team is small and the tasks manageable, everyone pulls together towards a common goal. However, when the start-up begins to grow and the team gets bigger – often resulting in work being carved up and shared to ensure efficiency – there is often a tendency to become protective about turf and people are unwilling to let things go.

WE NEED TO LEARN TO 'LET GO OF OUR LEGO' – this could be aptly abbreviated to **L(EGO)**. We need to trust that if we focus on our smaller pieces, we can build something wonderful and that there's more than enough to go around. After all, we are scaling business faster than we are scaling roles. New people do not equal less work – they mean more work for all!



“DON'T BE PRECIOUS ABOUT WHO DOES WHAT, JUST GET IT DONE.”



'If you've ever watched an extremely high performer go from killing it one year to struggling the next, you know what I'm talking about. There's a unique feeling of ambiguity, chaos and stress that comes with doubling or tripling your team every six months.'

– **MOLLY GRAHAM**, tech strategist -and former Facebook team-lead.

LEGO

LET GO OF YOUR **LEGO**

We know letting go can be difficult and it's okay to be anxious about it. As founders, we've had to learn how to approach the Pilot Man issue – and it's turned out better than we expected. Because sharing work, visions, plans, strategies and the occasional double bed (we're prudent and brothers for life) makes life not only easier, but happier. It enhances connectivity, exploits the amazing diversity we have at Zoono and facilitates learning from one another.

We have massive growth ambitions – we want to build a company that's not only awesome for our clients and customers, but awesome for every Zoono employee too. In its basic form, we want to double each year, and as we get bigger, these jumps become exponentially larger. Even though the company's strategic direction will stay the same, massive people and organisational change will be required to maintain this growth.

Over the years, we have shared out so much Lego that, between us, we've probably held every single role the company has ever had. We quickly realised where we weren't in flow and handed that Lego over. Quickly. Every year our roles have become smaller and our responsibilities bigger.

The only way to deal with this is to accept that we all need to constantly evolve in our roles and focus areas. When we started Zoono, no one on the team had done what we were about to do. This still hasn't changed – we are virgins in many of the things we tackle. How better to learn! And it's not as though we're alone. In this quickly evolving sector, pretty much everyone is doing something for the first time. It's exciting, scary, wondrous and nerve-racking. We will make mistakes and will need to change direction, but throughout the process there will always be opportunities

WE NOW KNOW AND FULLY EMBRACE THAT THE ONLY ROLE WE WILL NEVER GIVE UP IS THAT OF BEING A **FOUNDER**. AND THIS IS FOR GOOD REASON.

– AND HUGE **SANDPITS** FOR LOTS OF **LEARNING**.



“CONSTANTLY CHANGING ROLES IS WHY WE NOW HAVE BUSINESS CARDS WITHOUT TITLES ON THEM!”

'I have met some incredibly successful people and every one of them shared the following characteristics: they were humble, sincere, had empathy and they listened with real interest. Good people doing good things can win. As an entrepreneur, you need to keep your feet on the ground and constantly grow. Most importantly, you must always be learning.' – MIKE





When we, as founders, find ourselves flagging at work – sweating the small stuff and getting frustrated –

WE GO OUT AND TALK TO OUR CUSTOMERS.

All it takes is fifteen minutes with a teller or agent, and we become so amped and inspired by these young people being bold and brave and putting their trust in us.



LISTEN



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

If companies listened to their customers, there wouldn't be a need for that slogan 'The customer is always right'. There's something empty and retroactive about the saying. It implies that no one bothered to find out what the customer wanted in the first place, and then when the customer complains, the company rolls over, pretends to care and gives them 50% off their next whatever-it-is-they're-complaining-about.

At Zoono, our customers come first right from the start. They are the reason we come to work. They're first in the queue, not at the back waiting to be heard.

As a company that drives customer-centricity as part of our culture, this doesn't mean just listening to customers – it's about empathising and knowing them, immersing ourselves in their worlds. It's about truly believing that our customers hold the answers and embracing that their insights drive our strategy.

Meeting customer needs is the reason we work the way we work – it informs many of our Founder-isms. For example, Act. Learn. Repeat requires us to continually connect with our customers when designing solutions. Embracing failure liberates us to think bigger and broader to solve their needs. And learning and being humble facilitates the ongoing dialogue between us and our customers.

ZOONA PRIORITISED **CUSTOMER NEEDS** RIGHT FROM THE START. In the early days, Brett and Brad spent time in the field speaking to agents and consumers. Initially, the company focused on agents as its main customer and from there, the rest of Zoono's goals naturally fell into place. By understanding our agents' unique needs, challenges and desires, we were able to co-create businesses with them which, in turn, met their clients' needs. We owe much of Zoono's success to this approach.

With time, agents have started to expand their businesses and have employed tellers to work in their booths. We realised we could no longer see consumers – the people who use our services – as our agents' customers. They are our customers too. Their needs drive the products our agents provide and their experience is driven, largely, by our tellers.

WE THEREFORE SEE OUR CUSTOMERS AS **THREE KEY GROUPS: AGENTS, TELLERS AND CONSUMERS.** And it is the sweet spot where all their needs are met where we win the most – in helping communities thrive.

We're on a constant mission to listen to them so we get to understand exactly what they want. We don't hold the answers – they do. Our job is to work with them – with empathy, connection and curiosity – to unlock these answers and make a real difference.



AGENTS

1



TELLERS

2



CONSUMERS

3



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Focus on the inputs

Listening to customers is a no-brainer – or so you’d think. But even at ZoonA, which is acutely people-centred, we sometimes lose the plot by driving a revenue strategy the spreadsheets show will work. It’s an old way of working and sometimes its nostalgic allure becomes overwhelming. However, whenever we’ve strayed into this way of doing, it’s never been rewarding. Focusing on short-term revenue results in a reduced experience for customers and employees, slow growth and revenue projections that are never met.

Rather, we believe revenue must never be driven in isolation and must always be the output (rather than the focus) of the process of improving or increasing access to a great experience. It’s a simple formula: listen to what customers want and give it to them in a way that meets, or ideally exceeds, their expectations. Revenue then solves itself.



The recent launch of our new savings product, Suga, illustrates this perfectly. Throughout the entire process – from early design and research through to development and implementation – we focused exclusively on the consumer. We knew if we got that right, everything else would fall into place.

On day one of the Suga nationwide launch, we registered more than 1,750 people and did 2,000 deposits – without a single advert or SMS campaign. All we had was a product designed around consumer needs and an agent and teller network that believed in it.

Now we need to keep that focus to ensure Suga’s true potential is reached.



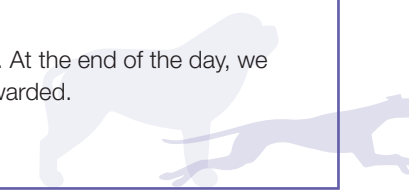
“FOCUS ON THE OPERATIONAL INPUTS AND GIVE CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY WANT”

David and Goliath

In our changing world, we believe David will always beat Goliath; greyhounds will always out-run St Bernards. The speed at which you can improve things for customers is critical for success. Being agile means you can constantly pivot your organisation to move with disruptions and changing times. Traditional big business has too much technical debt to move quickly or effectively – it’s like a lumbering Goliath, often stepping over opportunity. But what we’ve learnt (the hard way) is: don’t go sticking your nose into their business; they have very sharp teeth and they’ll try to eat you. Rather go and invent what is not yet there, then they’ll never catch up with you.

At ZoonA we always focus on attacking the core customer problem and not the competition. At the end of the day, we are committed to baking a bigger pie and leaving all players in the value chain whole and rewarded.

WE FOSTER WIN-WIN RELATIONSHIPS AND NOT WIN-LOSE ONES.



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE **CUSTOMER**

AGENT: **Michael** MALAWI

MEET MICHAEL CHUMA, A 24-YEAR-OLD ZOONA AGENT IN MALAWI. MICHAEL FIRST HEARD ABOUT ZOONA THROUGH HIS SISTER'S FRIEND GERTRUDE, ONE OF OUR ZOONA LILONGWE ROCK STARS! HE JOINED AS A TELLER MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO AND HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY RUNNING HIS OWN KIOSK FOR OVER A YEAR.

Michael has always been entrepreneurial. He ran a small grocer's business for many years, but could never quite make ends meet. With Zoona he's finally able to exceed his own goals and build towards a future he can be proud of. He also sees what convenience his service brings to his community. Michael's main customers are the elderly in the area he operates in. They need Zoona in both good and bad times, for everything from medical care to paying their grandchildren's school fees. Michael says, 'Zoona has made a huge difference to my life. Without it I don't even know how far some of the agogos (grandmothers) would have to travel to get the money they need to survive. I will always be thankful to Gertrude for helping me to be able to help myself, and others, through Zoona.'

STEP AGENT: **NOEMIA** MOZAMBIQUE

AT THE BAIXA POST OFFICE IN MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE, YOU'LL FIND ZOONA STEP AGENT NOEMIA CHISSANO. HERE, IN HER OWN WORDS, IS NOEMIA'S STORY:

'It has been wonderful for me to work as a Zoona agent, and I do it with dedication, zeal and love! I have been through good and bad times and it was never easy, but I overcame. I have learnt so much and acquired more responsibilities. Working with money is not an easy task and I wasn't mentally prepared to do it at first, but I had to adjust and have faith, knowing that I am firm and confident with Zoona. At times I thought about quitting, but it is my nature to be persistent. There have been many benefits to my job and I do a lot with my income. I have a dream to become a successful businesswoman, moving forward with Zoona services. ilovezoona as well as my work!'

With this attitude it's no wonder her Zoona manager describes her as 'One of the best we have. Dedicated and persistent; a champion.'

CONSUMER: **CHARITY** ZAMBIA [BOOST CONSUMER – CREDIT PRODUCT]

CHARITY NAMONJE OWNS AND RUNS HER OWN RESTAURANT IN ZAMBIA. AS A WIDOW WITH TWO CHILDREN OF HER OWN AND HER LATE SISTER'S CHILD AS A DEPENDANT, THE SUCCESS OF HER RESTAURANT IS CRUCIAL. FROM HER EARNINGS SHE HAS PAID FOR ALL THREE CHILDREN TO COMPLETE SCHOOL.

One is now working at Shoprite and the other two are job-hunting, hoping to find employment soon. Charity's restaurant is run from a small structure which is open to the elements. Using a Boost loan, she has managed to refurbish the veranda of the restaurant, as well as have a wall built which will shield her customers from the rain. If it wasn't for Boost she would have had to wait another year to afford the upgrades. To have the work done before the rainy season means a lot to Charity, and to her loyal customers who now have a sheltered spot to enjoy their food!

the reason we created zoona

ANNETTY (ZAMBIA)

ANNETTY CHAMA, 19, HAS BEEN A ZOONA TELLER FOR JUST OVER FOUR MONTHS. SHE WAS A CANDIDATE ON THE ZOONA "GIRL EFFECT ACCELERATOR" PROJECT THAT LOOKS TO EMPOWER YOUNG WOMAN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 22, TO BECOME PART OF ITS TELLER PIPELINE.

Annetty finished school in 2014 but there was no money for her to continue her studies. She spent her time at home helping her mother and grandmother with chores and looking after her father and brother, who were both terminally ill. Since becoming a teller, she leaves home at 5am to travel an hour to work. She spends her day serving consumers until 5pm, when she closes her kiosk takes a taxi home. She is now the main breadwinner for her family and is the reason that her brother can attend school. She still lives in her grandmother's two-bedroom home, but she feels optimistic. "You know when you just know you're going to be successful," she says. "I'll be walking to work sometimes and suddenly get excited because I know I'm going to be successful one day." Successful tellers have opportunities available to them to become agents.

zoona teller



EASY. QUICK. SAFE.



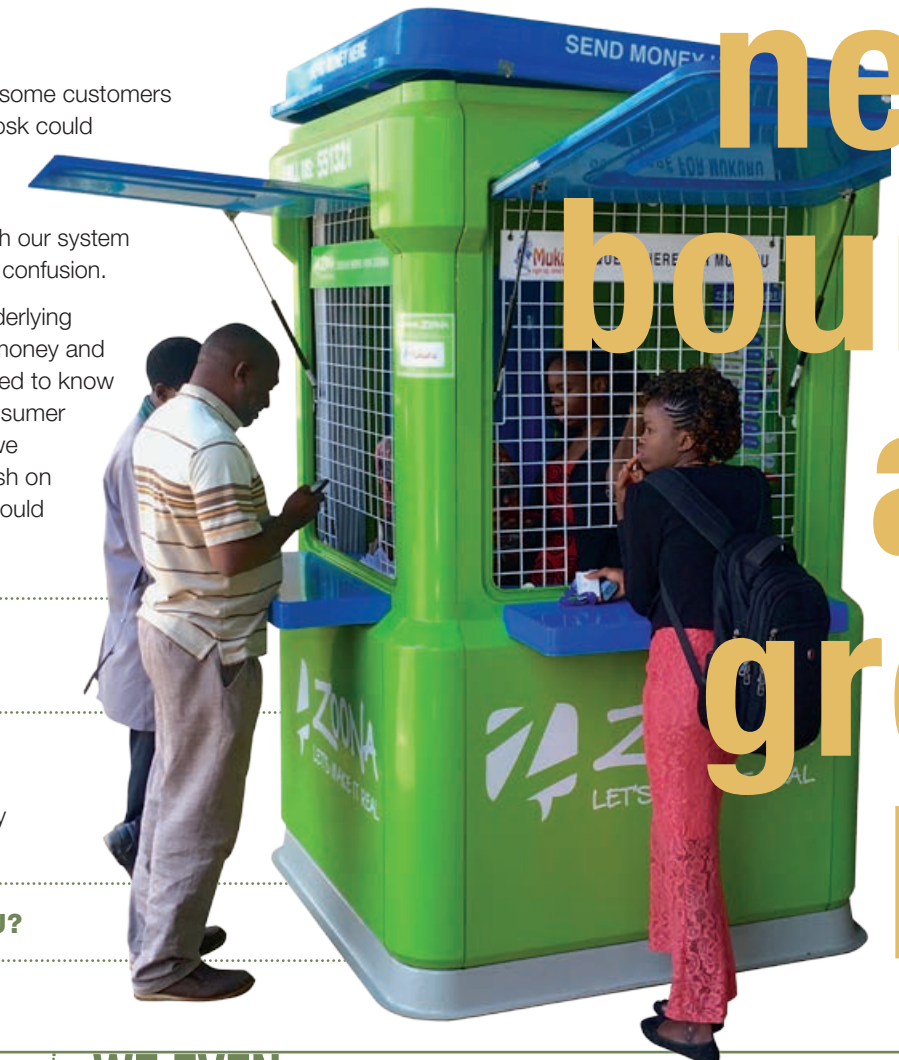
KEEP IT SIMPLE

Boxing clever

Soon after the launch of Zoona, we were made aware that some customers didn't quite understand how cash they deposited at one kiosk could magically pop up at another kiosk.

Some employees suggested putting up a poster showing customers how their money moved from their hands, through our system and out the other side. They thought this would clear up the confusion.

However, Brett took it back to basics and looked at the underlying problem. He found it was only when a customer had sent money and the receiver could not withdraw the funds that people wanted to know where the money had gone. The problem was not with consumer understanding but with kiosk liquidity. Instead of a poster, we needed to make sure our agents and tellers always had cash on hand – and that we kept our promise that our customers would 'never bounce at a green box'.



never bounce at a green box

OPTION A

Never bounce at a green box

OPTION B

All manner of detail and complicated words about how the system works (including flow charts, code and spiky things that look like sea anemones)

WE'D OPT FOR OPTION A – WOULDN'T YOU?

AT ZOONA, WE DON'T DO COMPLICATED LANGUAGE AND WE DON'T USE CONFUSING LEGALESE.

Using fancy words doesn't make you more intelligent than anyone else – it just means no one can understand you. When we communicate internally, it's simple; and when we interact with customers, it's clear (we added layman's terms to our agent contracts and reduced their length). You'll never hear us use the word 'expeditious' when 'fast' does a better job.

WE EVEN ENSURE OUR LAWYERS SPEAK SIMPLE
>>>

On Tue, Nov 3, 2015 at 4:45 PM, **Martin Cloete** <martin@mtzl.net> wrote in response to an email from Brad welcoming him to the team and telling him to KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid):

I shall certainly use reasonable endeavours not to unnecessarily overcomplicate what would otherwise be a relatively simple concept to comprehend by the persistent and gratuitous use of nonsensical, repetitive, unnecessary, excessive and redundant legalese and jargon. With effect from (and including) this, the 3rd (third) day of November 2015, I shall embrace the concept of "KISS" or, in the words of my Latin brethren, "Simplex Sigillum Veri".

KEEP IT SIMPLE

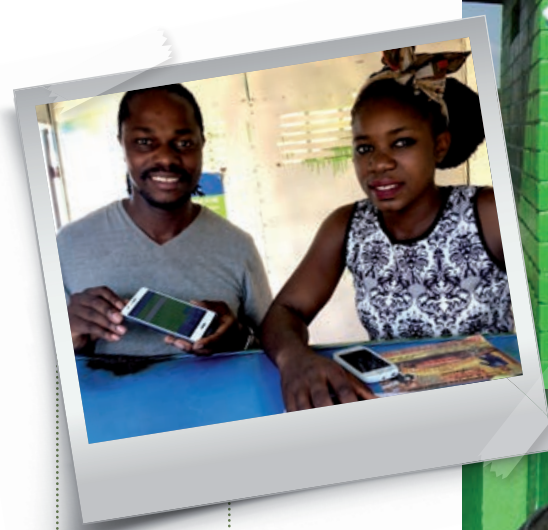
Tech solutions are, by nature, multilayered, ranging from the complicated back-door stuff (coding, database management and system architecture) to the interface, which is best kept simple (intuitive menus, one-click menus and clear fonts). Just because something looks simple doesn't mean it's not also complex.

SIMPLE MEANS IT'S EASY TO USE - AND THAT'S WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS NEED.

Besides, in most cases our customers have already created solutions for their needs – sending money on a bus to a relative, saving money in groups, setting up community lending structures. They are merely looking for simpler and more reliable ways of doing things. We need to listen to them, meet their needs and improve what they already have. Making this complex or asking them to radically change their behaviour would not take hold. Just as Uber didn't invent taxis, we didn't invent money transfers. What we did, however, was take an existing practice and ensure it didn't entail major behavioural changes and led to a maximum improvement in customer experience.

Keeping it simple is why we decided on the over-the-counter money transfers before the wallet. It's why we have no registration process and why our product can be accessed on old GSM Nokia phones.

AND IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS THAT HAS GIVEN ZOONA ALL ITS SUCCESSFUL ZING.



first
ANDROID
TRANSACTION



TECH SOLUTIONS
kept simple



the reason we created zoonA

EDSON (ZAMBIA)

MEET EDSON (EDDIE) SIKANYIKA, A ZOONA AGENT IN CHILILABOMBWE, ZAMBIA. CHILILABOMBWE IS A SMALL TOWN LOCATED ON THE CONGO BORDER IN ZAMBIA'S COPPERBELT PROVINCE.

Eddie began his business in 2012, operating out of a makeshift structure. In the early days, Eddie's business sold stationery, small computer accessories and relish. He also offered photocopying, typing and ZoonA mobile money transfers. Most of his profits came from his mobile money transfer business, with the majority of customers being copper miners who sent money to their families back home. Today he has eight outlets and employs 16 women as tellers. Eddie continues to work hard to support his four-year-old son and give him a brighter future.

zoonA agent

SCARCITY IS THE MOTHER OF **INNOVATION**

ZOONA IS ALL ABOUT INNOVATION – FROM THE SOLUTIONS WE FIND TO THE WORKPLACE CULTURE WE CREATE. INNOVATION TAKES PLACE WHEN YOU’RE LEADING AND NOT FOLLOWING. IT ALSO HAPPENS IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF SCARCITY – AND THIS IS ONE OF THE FOUNDATIONS ON WHICH THE COMPANY IS BUILT. WE LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN PLUNGING IN AND GOING WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE. SCARCITY? WE AREN’T SCARED OF SCARCITY. IT’S WHAT DRIVES US TO COME UP WITH **THE BEST POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.**

Finding magic in *tapali*

Tapali means ‘nothing’ in Bemba, a language widely spoken in Zambia. In the early Zoona days, that’s exactly what we had (okay, Brad had a pair of slip-slops and Brett had a few pairs of socks), but that ‘nothingness’ was filled to the brim with opportunity.

We had a few kiosks with agents who believed in us, a core team of resilient and enthusiastic warriors and a consumer or two.

We didn’t know if we had enough money to pay our employees, we had no money to pay for the new talent we needed and no work cars or laptops (we asked people to bring their own laptops to work and considered getting a donkey, but thought better if it).

But this backdrop – which could easily have been a scene from *Les Misérables* – didn’t put us off. It made us dig deeper to make things happen. This period was a time of peak innovation for us. We kept our focus on serving customers and letting them lead us. For three years there was *tapali*, and for the first part of that, we were just trying to survive. Then slowly things improved: our focus was spot-on, our customers were happy and the system was working. We bought some office equipment, established a solid payroll and Brad bought a new pair of slip-slops. In a strange way, our own lack of abundance reflected the need and scarcity around us and growing the sector in which we had chosen to operate meant Zoona grew too.

There’s an old adage that says you can’t get something for nothing. While it usually applies to buying and selling, we believe you can actually get so many things from nothing. In a world of abundance, it’s easy to get lazy – there’s no need to scurry around looking for new ways to do things. However, this is exactly when competitors take advantage of the situation, sneaking into your space while you’re snoozing in the sun.

AS ZOONA GROWS, WE CONSTANTLY STRIVE TO CREATE SCARCITY

(don’t worry – we won’t steal your lunch or deprive you of toilet roll). It might seem like a strange, almost illogical concept. How does one create scarcity? We do this in various ways, including being prudent, real and humble with spending. We spend in the field and where we can create corresponding customer value.

And while the creation of scarcity is vital for innovation, it’s also essential that the right people are in that space, scanning the seeming horizon of nothingness for opportunity.



finding
magic in
tapali



SCARCITY IS THE MOTHER OF INNOVATION



THE ILLUSTRIOUS RHODES PLACE OFFICE IN LUSAKA where most of the early innovation took place ... notice the distinct lack of abundance.



Zambia is nowhere near Puerto Rico. In fact, it's 10,913km away.

Is Zambia, like, somewhere near Puerto Rico?*

When we started Zoon, many people would ask: 'Why did you start Zoon in Zambia?' And when we told them we were from Zambia, they would nod and say: 'Oh, okay, that makes sense.' Really? So if you're from, say, a tiny sheep-farming village in Scotland, it's inevitable you'll end up working in that same village, bottle-feeding lambs and spinning wool? Starting Zoon in Zambia wasn't inevitable. Sure, we knew the lay of the land and were familiar with the culture, but we could say the same of Singapore or Britain – both places we had spent time in. No, we started the company in Zambia with intent, to proactively and deliberately change the environment. Zambia was somewhere we felt we could have real impact.

Some might think Zambia isn't exactly a hot spot for FinTech start-ups.

And it's true – it's not Silicon Valley and you could use that as an excuse to throw in the towel. Or you could flip this perception on its head and use it as motivation. You could take that scarcity and own it, seeing the opportunity it creates and using it as your drive. People have built far greater things in far tougher times, and this same sense of struggle and resilience can be your advantage. Scores of ideas live in *tapali*. You just have to look around and see the incredible amount of hard work and innovation millions of people in Africa do every day just to get by. This environment of scarcity has created huge opportunity for innovation

– WE JUST NEED TO LISTEN TO THEM TO UNLOCK THEIR POTENTIAL.

IS ZAMBIA, LIKE, SOMEWHERE NEAR PUERTO RICO?*



UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL



CHANGE IS OPPORTUNITY

Charles Darwin got it right when he said it's not the strongest that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change. And, right now, the world is changing faster than you can say 'evolutionism'. When we started on this journey, we didn't plan today to look like today. We didn't know exactly how things were going to pan out.

However, we did know one thing: we would remain agile, ready to adapt to whatever was thrown our way.

This, along with the belief that change creates opportunity, has enabled ZoonA to weather a few storms, thrive and still be planning for tomorrow, knowing everything can change in the blink of an eye. Being agile has been a conscious decision – just as a ballet dancer practises every day, making sure she is as fluid and light on her feet as possible, so too have we ensured we keep agility as a focus. Sometimes we do a few arabesques across the office, just to make sure. Rapid growth, changing economies and technologies, and competition require both the organisation and employees to be agile. We invest in health and wellness programmes to support employee agility and have cross-functional teams to ensure flexibility.

A hurdle just means you've got to change the bar

Even if you have the best-laid plans and the most solid intentions, obstacles will come your way. If they don't, you're probably not tackling the problem with a meaningful solution. When we started out, we soon realised our agents could not raise the necessary working capital to start and run a ZoonA kiosk. So we pivoted our business to provide them with affordable financing options to get them started.

After some time, we realised the agents' social and economic environments were putting undue pressure on them and they were dipping into their business capital to meet their day-to-day needs. This, in turn, was putting their businesses and our capital investment at risk. But rather than retreating or throwing in the towel, we dug down to understand the real problem. Again, what was needed was a change in the way things worked.

We had amassed historical data on our agents, including records of the sorts of transactions a successful agent would do on day one, week one, month one, month six, year one and year two. Then we put our data engineers to work in building algorithms and generating cohorts that could predict these profitable trends. Once we had the data, we were able to make a commitment to our young agents: that as long as they stayed within our performing cohorts, we would invest in all their short-term costs so that starting a business could keep their personal, family and life environment in balance.

Change OVER THE YEARS

Change is a constant at ZoonA. Sometimes it's an external force thrust upon us, which requires a shift in response. Other times it's driven from within the organisation as a means to ensure we all remain agile, resilient and adaptable. Ask any ZoonA employee who's been around for a year what their job is and they'll probably tell you they've had at least three roles.

BEING AGILE HAS BEEN A CONSCIOUS DECISION



🐟 CHANGE IS OPPORTUNITY IF YOU ARE AGILE



CHANGE IS OPPORTUNITY

A dash of this, a pinch of that – and a whole lot of stirring

When a big MNO decided it would be a swell idea to erect kiosks next to each of our outlets, many people were concerned. ‘They’re massive,’ they whispered. ‘They’ll wipe you out.’ While there was a moment of panic (it lasted exactly two minutes and 32 seconds), we felt flattered that a behemoth like them would want to follow our lead. We also knew we’d done the right legwork. Our competitor might have thought they could simply stick up a kiosk and the trade and revenue would follow, but they lacked our ‘secret sauce’: focusing on the customer. We’d worked with the communities to solve the problem and had spent time on the ground testing our approach. **THIS COULD NOT BE COPIED.**



Soon pictures emerged showing our kiosks open and trading and the neighbouring kiosks closed for business. The recipe for secret sauce can’t be bought or sold; nor can it be made up on the spot. It took lots of tweaking and tasting to get it right, but we always had **COMPLETE FAITH** IN THE INGREDIENTS.

Kwacha gonna do about it?

We all know that saying about making lemonade when life gives you lemons. But what about when life gives you a currency that’s in such freefall it needs a parachute and a large net at the bottom? In September 2015, as a result of falling copper prices, reduced exports to China, a strengthening dollar and a power crisis, the Zambian kwacha went into a nosedive. A widening budget deficit saw the currency depreciate from 7 to 14.6 against the US dollar in just three months! It was terrible to witness: costs of imported goods shot up, thousands of people lost their jobs and many went hungry. There was suffering everywhere and many businesses had to close their doors. There was no way that was going to be us.

Keith’s message to the team was ‘**NEW GAME, NEW PLAN**’. We reworked our financial forecast daily and told employees to not worry about the things we couldn’t control but deliver the shoo-wowzers out of what we could control. When most companies were raising their prices in a bid to fight the currency pressure, Zoon lowered theirs. What can we say? We’re experienced at finding opportunity in change, so give us a crisis and we romp our way through the possibilities.

COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN OUR ‘SECRET SAUCE’



“Don’t criticise the way it flies. Be in awe of the fact that it flies.”



‘The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers. You can do anything you decide to do. You can act to change and control your life; and the procedure, the process is its own reward.’

– AMELIA EARHART, FIRST WOMAN TO FLY SOLO ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

F*#K IT, **JUST DO IT**

Perhaps you wouldn’t shout this out in front of your gran, but at Zoono – even if we’re not saying it out loud – F*#k it, Just Do It is a driving mantra. It’s one of Brett and Brad’s favourite philosophies, and if you’re around them you’ll hear them say it – followed by infectious laughter.

This devil-may-care attitude ensures we don’t allow ourselves to sweat the small stuff and it injects a bold energy into our actions. It also means it’s okay to try something and it’s okay to fail. There’s no right first step and there’s no optimum amount of planning. However, just starting – making that initial move – galvanises action, which then leads to learning, interacting and growing.

WE’RE OFTEN ASKED HOW WE CAME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR ZOONA.

It’s difficult to answer because an idea is merely a starting point and what follows is a journey. You start, and in starting you learn, and in learning you start again. The original idea of Zoono is probably less than 1% of what we do today. There’s an urban legend about a few beers, many conversations, a brilliant idea, a few more beers and an SMS (it’s probably more true than we would like), but the real lesson is that ideas germinate in conversations with awesome people, and they evolve and grow when they are shared and acted upon. So what is the idea that started Zoono is the wrong question. The real question is what took the idea to action – and that is a key reason we did this book. Ideas require action.

F*#K IT, JUST DO IT!

“We were going to give examples of Just Doing It, but we can’t ... because they’re already done.”





MISOZI'S CAIRO ROAD OUTLET

WITH THE POST OFFICE
LOOMING IN THE
BACKGROUND AND
THE ENTREPRENEURIAL
ENVELOPE SELLER
STILL OWNING
HIS TRADE

F*#K IT, **JUST DO IT**

In the early days this attitude landed us customers on the one hand, and in a spot of trouble with the law on the other!



**BRAD & MISOZI,
IN THE SAME SPOT
HE WAS PUT UNDER
CITIZEN'S ARREST
IN 2009**

We needed to test our product on people, so we sauntered down to the Post Office in Cairo Road and began recruiting volunteers from the money transfer queue. Turns out the authorities aren't fond of innovative niche marketing and Brad ended up being put under citizen's arrest by a burly security guard. After some negotiation, we agreed to never steal customers on Post Office property again.

So a few days later, we set up shop right next to the Post Office's main entrance and began recruiting interested customers to process our first transactions.

YEARS LATER, MISOZI'S CAIRO ROAD OUTLET IS STILL ONE OF ZOONA'S **TOP-PERFORMING OUTLETS.**

The trader who sold envelopes in front of the shop when we moved in is still there, the Post Office queues are shorter – and in the spot where Brad was arrested, a sign outlining consumer rights stands proud and firm.

“If properly done, Founder Magic can be like rocket fuel for your company’s performance.” – MIKE



Check out this minibus transporting livestock. If these dudes had worried about perfect – getting hold of a bakkie, or building a fancy trailer, or hiring a Lear jet – the pig and goats would still be grazing in the field.

PERFECTION IS THE ENEMY OF DONE

Perfection doesn't exist so aiming for it is impossible, but having something that is done and adds value means you can start building relationships with customers and evolving what you're offering. Perfection is also in the eye of the beholder – what seems imperfect to you might be extremely valuable to someone else. The only way to know this is to get started so that people experience what you're trying to do and give you feedback. Start with that homemade car and end with the Ferrari.

RECENTLY, BRAD ASKED THE EXECUTIVE **THREE QUESTIONS** RELATING TO OUR 2025 WILDLY IMPORTANT GOALS:

1. Who here has developed an ecosystem of products and services that improve the financial health and wellbeing of one billion people?
2. Who here has unleashed emerging entrepreneurs to build profitable enterprises that create one million jobs?
3. Who here has proved that a purpose-driven entrepreneurial business can be a global model for growth and impact?

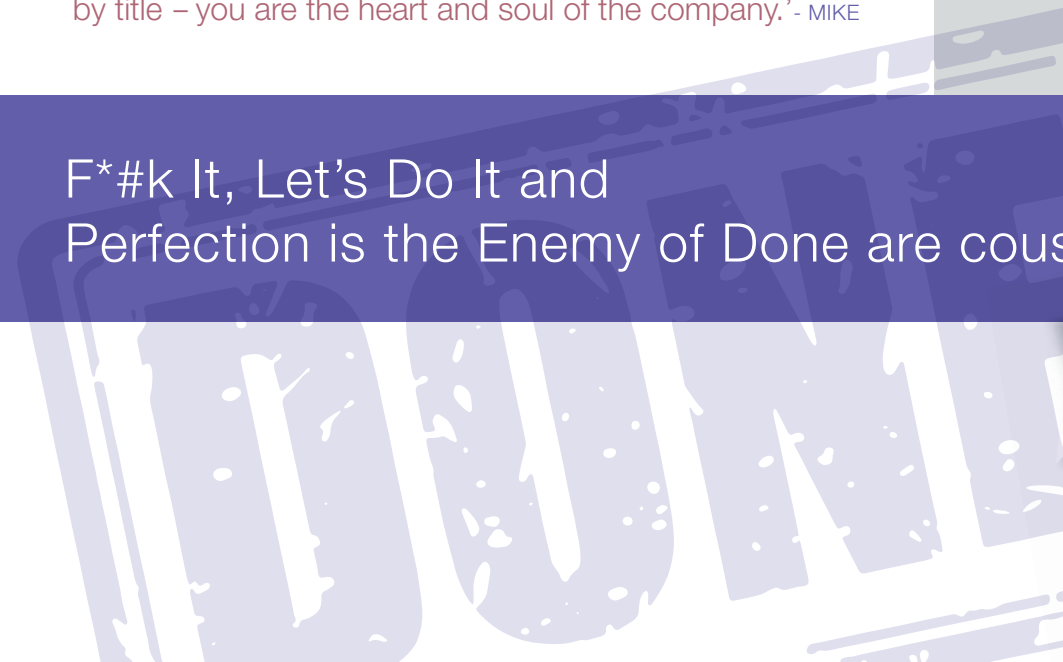
The reality is no one at Zoono (and potentially anywhere else) has done these before. There is no knowledge – just an ability to learn and a commitment to figure it out together. And we can't wait for perfect before we do.

‘You are not just the “founder” or “entrepreneur” by title – you are the heart and soul of the company.’ - MIKE

F*#k It, Let's Do It and Perfection is the Enemy of Done are cousins.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS IN WHICH WE DO 'PRESENT IMPERFECT' IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE 'FUTURE NEAR-PERFECT'.

- For example, our intranet was developed as a side project by an employee. She was struggling to find the time to polish the final parts and didn't want to let it go until it was 'just right'. Thing is, the project was 'just right' for what was needed and we knew any glitches could be smoothed out later. So Brad pushed her to launch it before it was totally ready, telling her: 'Launch it now and we'll learn as we go.'
- We also set objectives and key results for employees that are way too big for anyone to achieve. It's not that we want people to fail, but rather that we want them to think big, be challenged and motivated, learning as they go instead of relying on static knowledge.
- All of this is demonstrated by Brett, who is the King of Hack. He's so good at it we've been thinking of making him a crown (an imperfect work in progress, obviously). He won't wait for a perfect solution, but will make something work and use it.





Love

LOVE WHAT YOU DO

We get one shot at this life. One shot. Why, even as you're reading this, a few seconds have gone past and you'll never get them back. It's quite an overwhelming thought – but it's also incredibly motivating because it makes us want to cram as much enjoyment, fulfillment, engagement and, sometimes, beer as we can into every day. Life can be hard and business can be challenging, but if you love what you're doing, you'll be engaged and motivated and will therefore find creative ways to approach the task at hand.

WE'RE NOT FAIRY GODMOTHERS WHO LIVE IN LA-LA LAND (WE LOOK TERRIBLE IN BALL GOWNS, ANYWAY).

We know there will be times at ZoonA when what you once loved has evolved into something you might want to stab to death. You owe it to yourself to change this. Be honest and ask yourself: 'Do I love this? Am I growing and learning?' If the answer's no, don't beat yourself up. Take ownership of your future and find that thing that makes you sing. If you keep learning and growing, you can hop around many areas and remain happy.

Let it flow, let it flow...

We'll spare you a messed-up version of the theme song from *Frozen*. However, we will talk about flow. While it might seem like something shoo-wow hippies might espouse, we've found immense value in the concept of 'flow'. Essentially, being in flow is that moment when you're so engaged in doing something you love everything occurs organically and seamlessly – and all of it is touched by a sense of magical inspiration. It's that sweet spot when you're so into a task that you forget yourself and a sense of ecstasy and ease permeates the process.

Hungarian psychology professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi came up with the concept of 'flow' to describe this state. Importantly, in order to achieve 'flow', there has to be a balance between the challenge of the task and the skill of the performer. Without this, there won't be a sweet spot – which is why we encourage matching your skills and loving what you do with a particular role.

The beauty of the diversity within ZoonA is that we all get into a flow state from different things and the range of the work means there is something to switch on this state for everyone. Introverts might relish working alone in tackling a process problem. Extroverts might love being out in the field, talking to customers. Starters might get a kick from the chaos of the squiggle in new markets, products and solutions. Scalers might get a bang out of seeing the upward turn of the straightening line as they gain traction. It's all there for the taking. What's important is that you take responsibility for finding what you love and getting into that sweet spot.

To get into flow, you need to be honest with yourself about what you are good at and what you are not. Focus on and develop your strengths. Your weaknesses will be someone else's strength. Being in flow creates a dynamic, happy working environment because everyone is working on something they are passionate about.

“LUCKILY, THERE IS A GOLDEN RULE: IT TURNS OUT PEOPLE ARE GENERALLY GOOD AT THINGS THEY LIKE DOING, SO IF YOU AND YOUR TEAM ARE WORKING ON THINGS EACH OF YOU LIKE, YOU WILL DELIVER RESULTS AND GROW WITH THE BUSINESS.”
- MIKE





A **buffalo** with wings
and a **penguin**
walk into a bar...

PENGUINS, DREAMS AND BUFFALOES WITH WINGS...

Brad the Penguin

A continent with a huge percentage of the population financially underserved and unemployed ... this is not a reasonable challenge, and needs unreasonable solutions to solve it.

At ZoonA we chose our own animals – almost like totems that represent our philosophies and ideas. When Mike first told me penguins were the most ‘unreasonable’ animals in the world, I was sold. I’ve always viewed the business world through a lens that was often clear and visible only to me. Many people ask me what it’s like working with my brother. Well, it’s awesome because he was the first person who got my vision and, even more importantly, he was able to translate it and build it with me. Even today we joke about ‘Brad speak’, and it still takes people time to get used to my way of thinking, behaving and communicating but, importantly, surrounding ourselves with amazing people ‘who get it’ is just such a key part of our journey.

Those who have worked with me know that in a crisis – I am calm and when things are too calm I get on edge. The reason for this is because massive growth requires us to always be prepared to be agile and driven and never complacent or comfortable.

In a Multiplier event, we had to share our ‘own genius’. I said mine was ‘the ability to start things and fix them’. The person I was sharing with said something that resonated with me: ‘You see and sense things that others do not and then you act and move forward with such conviction that people join you on the ride.’

So this is my conviction: entrepreneurship and technology have enabled a level of creation and disruption that people who are brave, bold, driven, diverse, humble and empathetic can change the world.

I chose this path and invite you to join us.

Business is nothing more
than good people trying to
do great stuff

Brett the Buffalo with Wings

When you start a business or any large challenge you need to understand that there is no such thing as ‘no’ or ‘it can’t be done’. You need to believe there is always a way – and if there isn’t one, then you need to make one. This approach guided so much of the early stages of ZoonA, but when you look at our growth plans, it’s as relevant today as ever before.

As a buffalo with wings, I’ve always thrived on being close to the action, being brave enough to start and drumming the belief that there is always a way. If necessary, I can also put my head down, break into a gallop and bash down walls to force a way.

As a business grows and more people join, founders are often expected to grow wings and elevate themselves from the coal face. While it’s vital to have someone focused on strategy and overall direction, if you’ve ever seen a buffalo with wings flapping above you, you will know they are not the most elegant aviators. At ZoonA we encourage people to find their passion and get into flow. For me, I love swooping down and getting involved in identifying problems, working with amazing people and solving them as quickly as possible.

We want to provide financial services to a billion people and to achieve this we need to look at our customers in a way other companies have never done. We need to approach the problem through their eyes, with a huge amount of empathy, and combine this with a creative energy to bring solutions that meet their needs in a commercially scalable way.

I truly believe ZoonA has the opportunity to not only change how people transact, but also fundamentally change economies. Exactly how we are going to do this, who knows? And whatever we think today will probably change, but I have always believed it is less about knowing where you are going and more about being able to get there as quickly as possible. If it turns out you’re at the wrong place, you can shift direction and take a different route.

Be brave enough to start, committed enough to keep going and adaptable enough to know you don’t know the answer. But if you’re open to learn along the way and confident enough to know you’ll find the answer, the sky – even if you’re not a winged buffalo – is the limit.



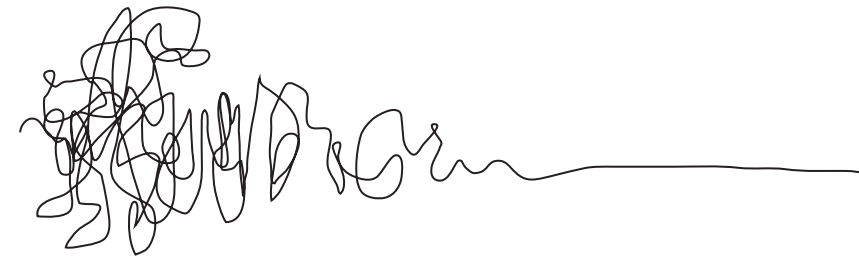
EPILOGUE

I am extremely grateful and privileged to be able to call Brad, Brett and Mike partners and friends for these years at Zoonia. I have learnt an enormous amount from them, much of which is espoused in this book.

We expend a lot of resources at Zoonia unleashing the creative genius in our staff, agents and tellers to deliver on the Zoonia brand promise. By now you should clearly understand how important our values, habits, rituals and beliefs are. But don't be fooled into thinking our obsession with these things mean we care less about commercial results. What Brad and Brett have always understood is that the way we do things is an important input into achieving the tangible results. Therefore it is critical we get the inputs right or else we will never get the outputs we want. Behind the fun and the laughter is a steely, committed, inexorable resolve to succeed in our purpose to help communities thrive. Right from the beginning, starting with Brad and Brett, we have had big dreams and big ambitions and we understand that we will not achieve them without doing and thinking differently.

We need exceptional people alongside us who share these dreams and ambitions and who also share the principles embodied in these pages. People who embrace the associated high expectations and consequent pressure as a necessary ingredient and 'do not go gentle into that good night'. In so doing, we hold each other accountable to not only keep reaching higher but to also do it in the Zoonia Way.

The beauty of these Founderisms is that in as much as they are the path that led us to where we are today, they are also the light that leads the way to our future. These are our fundamental truths that define who we are and how we do things. Nowhere in these pages does it say it is the only way. Nowhere does it claim to be the best way. But it is our way and it works for us.



UNCERTAINTY

CLARITY

Welcome to the Zoonia Squiggle.

Keith Davies

CFO, ZOONIA

THANK YOU



** Caveat: we never let the truth get in the way of a good story.*

First we would like to thank our wives, Jill and Cath, our kids Catie, Hannah, Eva and Jasper, and our folks Richard and Sandy – family is our cornerstone and without these awesome people we (and Zoonia!) would never have started or survived the early days.

We would also like to thank Mike for actively creating the space for us to own our founders role – this takes a special leader. We are also grateful to Keith for being the partner he is, and all our investors who are such a key part of our journey.

Thanks to Megs and the team who helped her – she pitched the idea of the book to us and made it a reality. At first we were not keen – in fact, we were incredibly uncomfortable but we also firmly believe that when you are uncomfortable you need to embrace it, own it and move forward – and so we did and we are so stoked we did. It has been an incredible privilege working on this, so thanks for the awesome work, vision and for connecting the dots.

We would also like to thank every Zoonia team mate who has invested their time, talent and passion – we will always appreciate this and never take it for granted. We look forward to growing and winning together – it is going to be an awesome ride.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank our customers – agents, tellers and consumers – for trusting us and we commit ourselves to constantly working together to make it real.

Brad and Brett

