

BlueAvo to tackle inequality in the media industry



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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South African startup [BlueAvo](#) has been shortlisted for the Royal Academy of Engineering (UK) Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation. BlueAvo is a digital platform which connects brands with freelance creatives across the African continent for their creative and marketing needs, and functions as a digital workspace.



Co-founders of BlueAvo, Indira Tsengiwe and Isaac Tshiteta.

Source: RAEng/RodgerBosch©

I chat with entrepreneurs Indira Tsengiwe and Isaac Tshiteta who built the solution in response to the need for innovation in the African media industry.

■ **Can you tell us a bit about BlueAvo?**

BlueAvo was founded in 2019 as a response to the need to innovate the media industry on the African continent. Together, we (Indira Aliyana Tsengiwe and Isaac Tshiteta) spent the first year of operation working offline to test the business model. We then found a need for brands, agencies and startups to be able to create localised content at scale across the African continent - this, combined with the opportunity to provide equal and open access to briefs for creatives, fuelled their passion.

One important objective of BlueAvo is to address the concern of creative “exploitation” on the continent. BlueAvo ensures same-day payment of the creative on each successful delivery to the client, in the brief currency - it also manages the legal contracts to allow for IP transfer/protection for the creative and client.

BlueAvo is a web based solution which converts the African creative economy into an internet-based marketplace.

“ It connects brands, agencies and startups to content creators across the African continent for film, graphic design, UI/UX, advertising, etc and any marketing needs. ”

Currently, the platform has onboarded creatives in at least seven African countries - with the number growing each day.

It's exciting to see a pan-African solution come to life. We've witnessed international companies looking to reach African markets utilize the space, co-creating with locals to develop their media products. Creative contracts have been developed by Bowmans, and payments are managed in at least 50 currencies across the continent.

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

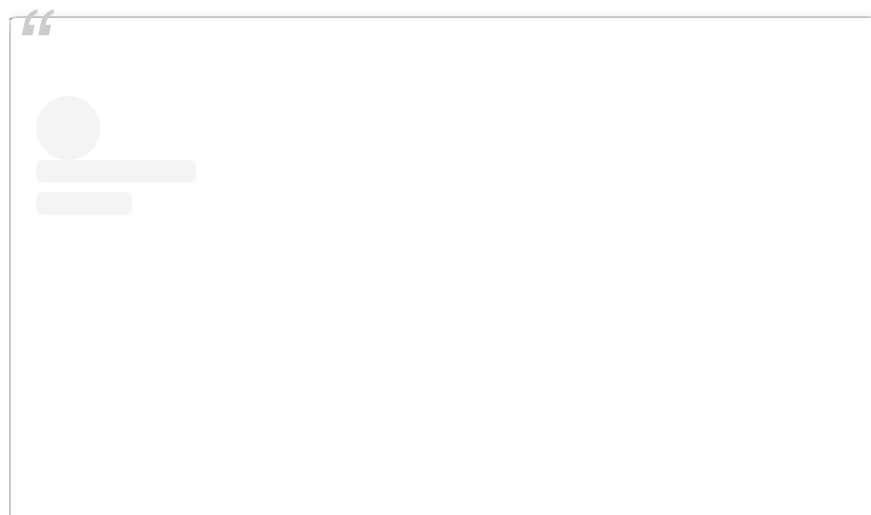
Indira Tsengiwe: As a young, female of colour being in the media industry for over eight years - it became apparent that opportunities kept going to the same people, over and over again. In South Africa there was a huge issue of legacy where little transformation was seen - and the constant notion of lack of knowledge of/access to premium creatives was presented as the cause.

After additional research, Isaac and I discovered that this was not a singular story - that African talent was off the bat considered to be sub par. So we decided to do something about it - and provide brands, agencies and startups access to a vetted and diverse supply chain of creatives - from South Africa to Egypt - for equal opportunity and access to creative briefs.

Isaac Tshiteta: When we democratise opportunity - we truly empower economic participation, and have a real chance of building our world. The creative industry is one of the largest on the continent. We asked ourselves, what would happen, if we used technology to even the playing field? This is how BlueAvo was started.

■ **What is the core function of BlueAvo?**

BlueAvo is a web based solution which converts the African creative economy into an internet based marketplace. It connects brands, agencies and startups to content creators across the African continent for film, graphic design, UI/UX, advertising, etc. and any marketing needs.





[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by BlueAvo (@officialblueavo)

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■ ***What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome since starting out?***

The road to transformation is always a difficult one. Teaching people to try and use a digital solution for an industry that has primarily operated on physical interaction is the steepest learning curve that we have had to encounter. But we are excited about the challenge. It's fun advocating for the value of the service and showcasing the potential that exists through BlueAvo, not just for the platform but the client and creative as well.

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

Isaac Tshiteta: Network like your business is dependent on it...because it is. Never be afraid of rejection. The worst that anyone can say to you is no, and the truth - someone else will say yes.

■ ***What has been your proudest achievement thus far?***

Our solution was recently nominated for the Royal Academy of Engineering for the Africa Prize of Engineering Innovation. It was a nod that truly confirmed the need for the solution on the continent.

■ ***What does the future of entrepreneurship look like to you?***

The barrier to entry in entrepreneurship has been lowered to a laptop and an internet connection. Today anyone can access a global market for sales and suppliers - companies are increasingly reshaping themselves to compete in an innovative economy. It is clear that the opportunities for entrepreneurs are exponential for we have entered the age of the entrepreneur.

■ ***What do you think is the importance of startup accelerator/incubator programmes?***

The importance of such programs is found in the soft skills: mentorship, support and networking.

■ ***What would you like to see changed in the African startup landscape?***

Africa's entrepreneurship rate is the highest in the world. With a significant segment of the working age population starting their own businesses - we would like to see this growth matched with an increase in trust for those businesses. We hope to see more and more consumers become early adopters of such innovations in effort to give our businesses a real chance. And where there's lack of customer satisfaction - to communicate so to the entrepreneurs.

“ From Cape to Cairo.. we've got it covered. We are BlueAvo | Africa's Creative Marketplace. [#creative #marketplace #tech #rae #innovation #africa #briefs #engineering #branding #marketing pic.twitter.com/YZpRP6nZzR](#)— BlueAvo (@officialBlueAvo) [April 7, 2021](#) ”

■ **What do you believe are the traits an entrepreneur needs in order to succeed?**

Tenacious grip on the vision, and the ability to sell it to whoever, and whenever.

■ **Tell us about your biggest struggles as an entrepreneur, as well as some major highlights.**

Some of our major highlights include receiving support from some major brands, agencies and startups with offline briefs as we tested and fixed the kinks of our solution. We have onboarded creatives in over seven African countries, and we have the opportunity to collaborate with some of the continent's local payment gateway solutions that ensure that as we grow our brand, we are supporting another.

■ **Why would you encourage someone to become an entrepreneur?**

At the core, an entrepreneur is someone who identifies a problem in society and chooses to address it. We believe that the world could use more problem solvers - now, more than ever.

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

In five years, BlueAvo will be the go-to solution for brands, agencies and startups to connect with the best creatives across the African continent for localised content in the relevant market.

We want to achieve a business standard that will cause creatives across the African continent to proudly say, "I am available exclusively on BlueAvo," this is due to the legal protection and payment structure that the platform provides.

To find out more, go to <https://www.blueavo.com/>

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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