

Oratile Seabela, founder of Malii on championing your dreams into reality

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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As part of our [#YouthMatters](#) feature, we chat to Oratile Seabela, founder of integrated public transport mobile app solution, Malii.



Oratile Seabela, Founder of MALII

As founder of Malii, Seabela is responsible for setting the company's vision and making sure that it is unique and attractive to potential consumers. She is also responsible for assembling a team that is invested in the company's success, developing business plans and executions and managing the business finance.

Here, Seabela chats to us about her business, what inspires her and where she sees herself and her business going in the next five years.

Who inspires you?

I am inspired by billionaire businessman and philanthropist Dr Strive Masiyiwa. My perspective on how to do business in Africa changed when I stumbled on one of his Facebook posts. I then religiously started following his posts and went as far back as 2014 to when he started blogging so that I could learn all that he had to teach and about his entrepreneurial journey.

Through his blog, he has selflessly taught me things that money cannot buy; things that are not in textbooks, things only he learnt through experience. I have never personally met Dr Masiyiwa but regard him as my personal business mentor.

He mentors us, about 5.7 million people on his Facebook page, and says that it is important to focus on the 'substance' of what someone says rather than the form (style of delivery). So, I urge the youth to stand on the shoulders of a giant by following and practising what Dr Strive Masiyiwa teaches.

■ ***What do you most love about your work?***

I love the fact that I have an opportunity to make a difference in the community and impact the lives of South Africans.

■ ***What other skills or talents do you have?***

I'm a qualified fashion designer and was a fashion editor for the iconic Drum Magazine, so I've got a knack at spotting trends - be it fashion or technology.

■ ***Where do you see yourself in five years?***

In five years, I'd like for Malii to be available in all of South Africa's nine provinces.

■ ***What sparked your interest in fintech and the integrated transport sector?***

All minibus taxi commuters have hilarious stories about the exchange of money in a taxi. Some people will bring R100 notes, some R50, others the exact taxi fare in coins which will end up underneath the taxi seats; squabbles often erupt in a taxi due to lack of change. Then there are those brave enough not to pay, prompting the driver to make a U-turn and drive all of us back to the taxi rank.

While riding a taxi in 2017 I began asking myself questions. Why were we still paying like this in a taxi? Why is the taxi experience still like this?

Clearly, there had to be a better way. I then delved into further research, speaking with taxi owners, drivers and commuters, to see if this was a genuine pain point; if they wanted it to be solved and if they were prepared to pay for a solution.

■ ***Can you tell us more about your mobile app solution, Malii – how does it work?***

[Malii](#) is an app that enables taxi commuters to make payments in a taxi without the use of cash. Commuters upload funds for the month in the Malii wallet, using their bank card or top up at the nearest spaza shop. When riding a taxi, they will find a QR code sticker positioned on the taxi window and then scan the QR code with their smartphone.

■ ***You've previously won the SAB Foundation 2020 Social Innovation Development Award and 2020 Johannesburg Smart City Innovator Challenge Award – what did these wins mean for you?***

Malii is solving a tough social challenge that can be solved. Through the support of the SAB Foundation, it has been possible to find solutions; we can't do it alone. It was so encouraging and it meant the world to the Malii team to have won these prestigious awards.

■ ***What is your message to South Africa's youth this Youth Month?***

You have an advantage because you come from e'kasi, nobody knows the hood like you do. Use that to your advantage.

That thing that bothers you in your community, is YOUR problem to solve. No one is coming to save you or solve that problem.

Change your thinking, where there is a problem, there is an opportunity for you to start a business that provides a solution. "Hang around with millionaires" by listening to podcasts like [How I built this](#); [Masters of Scale](#) and [Business Wars](#) to learn how they built multi-billion dollars business from absolutely nothing.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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