

# Sxuirrel platform solves storage space issues

By  Ilse van den Berg

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Sxuirrel is a local disruptive tech company that connects individuals with extra space to those in need of storage and parking space. Coined the "Airbnb of storage and parking", the startup has successfully launched in the Stellenbosch, Cape Town, and the general Western Cape area. We chat to Michael-John (MJ) Dippenaar, co-founder and CEO of Sxuirrel.



Michael Louis (co-founder and CTO), Michael-John Dippenaar (founder and CEO), and Henri Bam (co-founder and COO)

## ■ Tell us a bit about the idea behind Sxuirrel as well as the choice of name.

Sxuirrel was the solution to a problem we experienced first hand whilst at Stellenbosch University; a lack of affordable and easily accessible storage space. We decided that the traditional, slow-paced storage-industry could be disrupted by means of a decentralised, peer-to-peer network. Sxuirrel, the (tongue-in-cheek) Airbnb of storage and parking space, connects individuals with available, local, safe storage and parking space, to those in need of space.

The name was local to Stellenbosch itself, where a squirrel ran past one of the founders during a brain-storming "walk-about" in town. As the squirrel ran up a tree storing an acorn, the founder immediately felt that Sxuirrel (with "X" marking the spot) served as the perfect name for their scruffy, fast-paced, agile, and witty startup venture.

## ■ Congratulations on securing the R2.4m in seed funding! What does this mean for the company, and particularly in its founding years?

First off, thank you for the congratulations! We deeply appreciate all the support in this humbling startup journey.



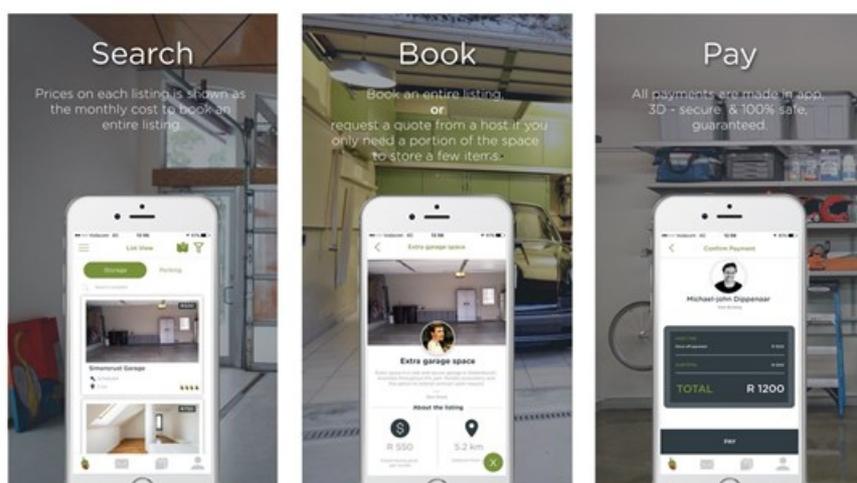
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As a company, it really means a lot. Not only does the financial support allow us to move faster in terms of development, expand our platform and product offering as well as focus on expanding our services to different markets, but it also legitimises the value proposition on which the company is built.

The support, not only financial, but through mentorship, advice and the extended network of our partners, allows Sxuirrel during these founding years to aspire towards reaching the ultimate goal of building a company synonymous with “finding space”, and truly making our extended scurry family's (or platform users) live's easier.



As a group of twenty-something-year-old entrepreneurs, the funding serves a humbling gratification of the hard work and innovative ideation we put into place, that a corporate entity would back for long-term disruption. It also serves as a reminder of our responsibilities as founders to keep a key focus on our strategy and achieving operational deliverables.

As a founder and ideator behind Sxuirrel, it's truly humbling to have seen the company a group of friends started, grow from sketching the logo with a pencil during one of my portfolio management classes at University to a business with staff, offices and revenue and, most importantly that solves a real-world problem.

#### ■ **What is Sxuirrel's competitive advantage/core differentiator?**

- More affordable pricing (close to 50% average of market-related prices).
- A flexible pricing model, where you pay only for the space you use for the duration of your choosing.
- No fixed monthly contracts.
- A personal and unique user experience.
- Scalable tech platform.
- Most importantly, we're truly focused on exceptional customer service.

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

- Finding the right people with a key balance of technical skills, experience and startup urgency.
- Balancing studies (up to the end of 2017) and managing a startup full time.

- Consumer mentality and lack of trust/security concerns with regards to disruptive tech.
- Startup culture is still evolving locally, so finding people with the right mindset to join the team.

### ■ **The company is run by a young bunch! What advice would you give to other young aspiring entrepreneurs?**

Think big, but do small - focus on non-scalable efforts. Often people over think what is needed to run a business/to find customers and to build a specific system.



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Start small and focus on what can be done as quickly and cost-effectively as possible. To test your assumptions, iterate and evolve.

Importantly, hustle. Starting a tech startup is tough and you've got to have a never-say-die attitude.

Even though we're not very experienced and we're still learning a lot down the startup road, we've learned that running a startup is basically a quest for solving problems. Focus on solving the one in front of you and keep moving forward.

For more, go to [www.sxuirrel.com](http://www.sxuirrel.com).

## ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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