

ZODAJ NEWSLETTER

A Brief Introduction...

ZODAJ is a company whose mission is to improve standards of living in Africa through the use of technological innovation. Though the company and its members are young, we use this to our advantage. Our ideas aren't limited by what already exists; we allow them first to surface then be refined through testing and retesting to get to the best solution to the problem at hand.

We are currently working on **Eko**, an app that is designed to merge job readiness skills with traditional curricula and serve as a teaching assistant in primary and secondary schools. Eko has the potential to decrease unemployment rates in Africa, thus improving standards of living. ZODAJ technology tailored to the unique circumstances brought about by a lack of development provides an avenue through which millions of African families can lift themselves out of poverty.

This Week...

ZODAJ has made it to the final round of the McGinnis Venture Competition! On Tuesday, March 26th at 2:00 pm, ZODAJ's CEO, Awa Ndiaye, will be delivering a five-minute pitch of our pilot product, Eko, to a panel of judges in hopes of winning the first place grant of \$4000 (most of the award will be put toward ZODAJ's first trip to Senegal). The pitch will be followed by a Q&A session from the judges about a wide range of topics pertaining to ZODAJ and to the Eko Business Plan, which we completed and submitted last week.

This will all take place in the Swartz Center for Entrepreneurship at Carnegie Mellon University. You can [RSVP](#) to attend the event, which is free and open to the public. We will be the last of six teams to pitch to a panel of judges, who will then deliberate and vote. The awards ceremony will begin at 5:30 pm.

The Last Few Weeks...

On Tuesday, March 5th, 2019, ZODAJ officially moved from round two to the final round of the McGinnis Venture Competition, which we had been competing in since November. Almost immediately following this news, the team broke for a week-long Spring Break, but not before releasing a [Spring Break Briefing](#) to all board members, outlining the specific tasks each member would have to accomplish by the time we returned in order to have time to properly prepare for McGinnis.

Some highlights from our completed Spring Break Briefing are outlined below:

ZODAJ NEWSLETTER

- ❑ Members of the Business Subunit were able to secure a meeting with [Yoonie Choi](#), a Research Analyst The United Nations Headquarters, in New York City to discuss funding, exposure, and marketing strategies for ZODAJ.
- ❑ Acting on the advice of first and second round judges of the McGinnis Venture Competition, we decided to reach out to members of the CMU community with the following credentials: Entrepreneurship Expertise, Legal Advising, Expertise in International Relations and Politics in Africa (or otherwise), Expertise in Technology in Developing Countries, and Nonprofit Expertise, with the intention of forming an Advisory Board to help address some of the challenges of being such a young team.
- ❑ ZODAJ successfully secured our first bit of funding from the Social and Decision Science Department at CMU, which will go toward travel for our Chief Officers to Senegal from April 5th to the 13th. This trip will be the beginning of ZODAJ's User Discovery Phase, on the ground. More information about the trip can be found below in the **Looking Forward** section of this newsletter.

On Tuesday, March 19th, having returned from break, we were able to finalize and submit our Business Plan. The following Saturday, March 22nd, we held a board meeting to vote on the shortlist for members of the advisory board. We also began exploring new and innovative ways of marketing ZODAJ across campus to expand our network and reach.

Looking Forward...

ZODAJ is looking for funds in order to send our Chief Officers, Awa Ndiaye, Dominique Aruede, and Odell Blackmon III to Senegal in April to conduct our first phase of on-the-ground research. If we win the McGinnis Venture Competition, we'll have secured funding to send them all. As of right now, we are about a third of the way in our funding goals. More details on how to contribute to ZODAJ's travel fund can be found in the section, **A Few Final Words**.

ZODAJ plans to finalize the members of our Advisory Board in our next meeting set to take place on March 30th. We will also use this meeting to determine what positions need to be filled as we work toward creating the first Eko prototype and expanding ZODAJ's visibility.

About This Newsletter...

We intend to release a ZODAJ Newsletter biweekly to keep those interested in ZODAJ and the work we're doing up-to-date on all our latest accomplishments as well as some of our challenges.

ZODAJ NEWSLETTER

We hope this will also serve as a tool for the team to refer back to and reflect on our past experiences as a company and see how we can improve going forward.

A Few Final Words...

Along with this newsletter, ZODAJ plans on taking to yet another platform: YOUTUBE! On our YouTube channel, we will share not only our progress, but also how our members contribute to the team, interact with one another, run the company, and improve ZODAJ's products. We'll include general updates on where ZODAJ is in terms of stages of company development as well as how we are hoping to grow. Much like this newsletter, we'll include an outline of any company updates, milestones, or pivots with the hope of increasing our reach and network, to extend the dialogue and respond to questions about our company.

ZODAJ is always looking for additional sources of funding. To get in contact with us about possible contributions please visit: www.ZODAJ-Africa.com, and leave a message for us on our contact page.

We can also be found on...

- ❑ Instagram @zodaj.africa
- ❑ Twitter @ZODAJ_Africa

Or email us at zodaj.africa@gmail.com.

Z ZODAJ NEWSLETTER

THE TEAM:

Chief Officers



Awa Ndiaye



Dominique Aruede



Odell Blackmon III

Board Members



Akwellé Quaye



Amen Assefa



Dee Harris



James Barkley