

Zimi Charge speeds up EV charging infrastructure accessibility in SA

 By [Imran Salie](#)

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Last month, September 2022, a few startups were given an opportunity to pitch their businesses to African energy leaders at the Green Energy Africa Summit. Zimi Charge, a Cape Town-born electric vehicle (EV) startup, was one of the companies selected to pitch. The company invests in charging stations to build the electric vehicle infrastructure. Zimi Charge's target is to help those who participate in e-commerce, package, grocery and restaurant deliveries, as well as e-hailing, last-mile logistics, and car rentals.



Zimi Charge founder and CEO Michael Maas | image supplied

I caught up with Zimi's founder and CEO, Michael Maas, to find out more about the company and what inspired him to start an EV charging startup.

■ Take us through the story of Zimi Charge, from its inception to the present day...

I was looking at buying an electric vehicle to reduce my impact on the environment. I, unfortunately, couldn't find an easy way to charge the car while out on the road.

When looking into the availability and accessibility of charging infrastructure, I got frustrated and started researching if this was a problem. I soon realised that there is a big problem that needs to be solved before electric vehicles become a real possibility for most people in South Africa.

After some initial research and development, we launched the company. We spent the first year diving into designing and developing the solution, and the past year rolling out our first stations and the app.

■ How does it work?

Zimi Charge enables you to charge your car anywhere. Using the mobile app, you can find, charge and pay at any of our charging stations, as well as other public charging stations. It's simple, download the app, find available stations, and start charging.



How many EVs were sold in SA in the first half of 2022?

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What inspired you to start an EV charging startup?

I've always been looking for ways in which I could use my background and experience to make a tangible impact on climate change. EV charging seemed like a great fit because it would enable accessibility and promote sustainability in South Africa.

What challenges did you face in starting Zimi Charge?

There are a number of challenges to starting a business: Finding a problem to solve, building the right solution, getting your first customer, and financing your idea. I think our biggest challenge has been finding the right solution that would suit the South African consumer.

Why is it better to use renewable energy for EV charging?

When using grid-tied energy, you are already decreasing your impact on the environment because an EV is much more efficient at converting energy than a traditional ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicle. When shifting to renewables, that positive impact on the environment is even higher, resulting in a massive reduction in carbon emissions when switching to electric.



Cape Town car charging startup Zimi Charge gets opportunity to pitch to energy leaders

28 Sep 2022



What future plans do you have for Zimi Charge?

We are busy onboarding multiple public charging points in South Africa, and working with a number of fleet operators to pilot charging and EV use for logistics. We plan on expanding into Africa very soon, with Kenya and Botswana as our first two key markets.

What trends do you predict for the EV landscape in South Africa?

A large uptake in EVs in the next three to five years. We will start seeing cheaper cars becoming available, the dropping of import taxes and the introduction of subsidies, as well as bans on internal combustion engine vehicles in urban areas.

Tell us briefly about yourself...

I was born and raised in Johannesburg, but have been living in Cape Town for the past 13 years. I have degrees in mechatronic and electronic engineering and worked for more than seven years in a product environment, building digital products for new ventures and markets in the USA, UK, and South Africa.

What words of advice do you have for aspiring entrepreneurs looking to solve real-life problems?

I think you have to find a problem and test that it actually is a problem. Then ensure that you have the required skills or experience in solving it, or find co-founders that can assist with the skills in building the right solution. Focus on having fun, because there will be a lot of challenges and stress, but if you are having fun, your longevity will be much longer.

ABOUT IMRAN SALIE

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