

Meet Matimba

Matimba Julian Nkuna · Founder & CEO, Timbuk2

Matimba Julian Nkuna is the founder and CEO of Timbuk2, a South African technology company building intelligence for the physical economy. His entrepreneurial journey has centred on a practical question: how can businesses make better decisions about places and people that conventional data often misses?

Timbuk2 brings together Pikaboo, its business-intelligence offering; FOONA, a network for on-the-ground verification; and 2Klip, browser games that gather local knowledge. The company's journey has taken it from its first client, Virgin Active, in 2023 to an outdoor-media product deployed for Primedia Outdoor and field verification in Abidjan.

Today, Matimba is applying those lessons to a new FMCG challenge: connecting shopper signals with evidence that helps teams decide what to check, where to act and whether an intervention is worth paying for. His approach combines AI with human judgement, local participation and commercial discipline.

In this masterclass, he shares the decisions, setbacks and adaptations behind that journey, and invites students to challenge a live venture thesis: what does it take to turn useful technology into a trusted, repeatable business?

A conversation built around decisions

Monday 12 October, 19:00 SAST, online. PGDip Management / GNBV 521. The calendar reserves 19:00–21:00; the proposed core session is approximately one hour, consistent with the phone discussion.

00–05 min · Welcome and introduction by Dr Theresa Lisita

05–30 min · Founder journey: opportunity, competition, pivots and AI

30–45 min · Student recommendations and the FMCG case

45–60 min · Q&A; and lessons for students' own ventures

Would you fund the pilot?

You are advising an FMCG trade-marketing manager. Recommend whether to fund a small Pikaboo pilot, what decision it should improve, and what evidence would change your mind. Disagreement is useful. There is no preferred answer.

The commercial hypothesis

Timbuk2 combines 2Klip local-knowledge games, FOONA field verification and Pikaboo business intelligence. The FMCG opportunity is to turn shopper signals into a paid, repeatable workflow for field teams: identify what matters, verify the outlet, assign an action and check the result.

What the published evidence can tell us

Sunlight Laundry Soap Bar: 78% weekly purchase signal (n=809).

White Star Super Maize Meal: 73% (n=815).

OMO Superlift Auto Powder: 56% (n=813).

Snapshot cutoff: 28 September 2026. Self-reported, panel-wide and predominantly Cape Town. These figures are not national market share, till sales or local shelf readings. Catalogue prices are not observed counter prices. No live shelf readings are published yet.

The proposed client workflow

Agree the buyer's decision and deadline → scope the category, geography, outlets and evidence → collect and verify → deliver ranked exceptions, owner and action → review whether the result justifies a repeat purchase.

A pilot to challenge

Example round: five SKUs × ten outlets = fifty SKU-outlet checks in one metro. Check stock and price, plus promotion or cold availability where relevant. Evidence should tie to an outlet, have independent support, avoid duplicate counts and meet minimum outlet bases.

The public planning reference is approximately R245,000 for one metro over four weekends, not a quote. A fifty-check round does not define that entire commercial scope. You may reject the economics or propose a smaller pilot. No sales lift is established by this case.

Read: pikaboo.ai/trade · Company: timbuk2.ai

Exercise and resources: pikaboo.ai/nwu

Bring your judgement.

Please complete the online exercise before Sunday 11 October at 18:00 SAST. The organisers can circulate it on Friday. Participation is voluntary; skip any question. No name or email is requested. Do not share confidential employer information. Anonymised themes will inform the class and Timbuk2's product thinking.

- 01 Your perspective. Direct FMCG/retail experience, adjacent commercial experience, academic analysis only, or prefer not to say?
- 02 Buyer and decision. Choose one urgent decision. Who owns it and its budget? Give a recent anonymised example, or label your assumptions.
- 03 The alternative. What does the buyer do today? Compare one substitute on cost, speed and trust. What makes switching worthwhile?
- 04 Evidence you would trust. Name the two most serious evidence gaps and one safeguard for each. Consider sample bias, repeated answers, outlet coverage and independent checks.
- 05 The smallest useful pilot. Specify category, buyer role, geography, outlet count, deadline and buyer action. What would you leave out?
- 06 A value case. Estimate the value of the decision and a sensible fee using labelled assumptions. Recommend buy, renegotiate, smaller test or no purchase, and explain why.
- 07 Repeat or stop. Define a measurable repeat-purchase threshold and a stop rule. How would you distinguish a real action or sales effect from unrelated changes?
- 08 The strongest objection. What is the strongest reason the venture could fail, and what one question should Matimba answer in class?

Student recommendations are advisory insight, not customer-demand validation. Optional follow-up: mjnkuna@timbuk2.ai. NWU supplies the class joining link.