

# Spottem app - Using tech to fight crime

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As the country moves to alert Level 2 of the national lockdown, more people will be out and about, meaning opportunities for criminals to strike are going to increase. Crime sharing and reporting app, Spottem, aims to make communities safer by allowing information about security and crime risks being shared freely and anonymously among communities in real time.

The app, launched on the app stores in April, allows people to access crime information and seek help if they need to at the touch of a button. But how did the idea of the app come about? How effective is this app? And how can technology be used to help fight crime?

We caught up with the app's founder and business development director at Kovar Agency, Boaz Bam, to find out more.



Boaz Bam, founder of Spottem

## ■ Please tell us a bit about Spottem App.

Spottem is a free app for sharing and reporting crime and security risks, accessible to everyone across South Africa to make this country a better and safer place.

## ■ How did the name 'Spottem' come about?

It is derived from the phrase "spot them."

## ■ Why did you decide to develop this app?

One day I received a call from a friend living in the US. She told me about a woman who had been attacked and murdered

in a park close to where she lives and usually goes running and asked me: "Don't you have any idea what could help us, women, to be safer?"

I started brainstorming and concluded after my own research that we would need technology that focuses on proactive and preventive measures instead of reactive measures. We all see and hear of people becoming victims of crime every day.

“ We wanted to create a platform that allowed information about security and crime risks to be shared freely among communities in real time. We felt that this type of information was not readily accessible to the general public and wanted to help inform communities. ”

With the help of everyone on this platform, there will be no blind spot.

#### ■ **What are the main features of the app?**

Users are given an anonymous platform to report suspicious or actual criminal activities with ease. In addition, users will be able to help prevent other people from falling victim to a crime, while also informing others in the community.

The app allows you to add emergency contacts and send an SOS notification to them via the emergency button. Users can stay up to date with the latest crime-related news as well as reach out to a wide range of emergency services, such as trauma counsellors, ambulances and the police.

#### ■ **What are some of the challenges you have faced so far?**

One issue we have faced is that people will occasionally add something to the crime map that is either irrelevant or incoherent. These are easily addressed though, as we are able to edit or remove these incidents.

#### ■ **We have been on lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic since 26 March. How did this affect you, particularly during Level 5 lockdown?**

We actually launched the app on the app stores in April under Level 5 Lockdown. The advantage with such an application is that we can manage it from wherever we are. So we managed to work on it from our homes throughout the lockdown.





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GREAT NEWS! The Spottem App is now live and available to all South African Android users! Follow the link below and start making your neighborhood a safer place! <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ir.hamplus.spottemsa> Watch this space, because Spottem for iOS is on the way! Spottem is an app that allows you to spot criminal and suspicious activities around you or any location so you can inform others to be aware. You will also be able to view other people's spotted activities and verify them if you have witnessed them or add comments. #spottem #crimeprevention #crimewatch #saftey #southafrica #neighborhoodwatch #news #app #android #googleplay

*A post shared by Spottem (@spottemsa) on Apr 7, 2020 at 12:52am PDT*

**What can you say to South Africans as the lockdown regulations ease and we gradually return to our normal lives?**

Stay vigilant. With more and more restrictions being eased, we are able to be out and about more. This offers more opportunity for petty crimes to occur during a period where people are more desperate than ever.

Remember how you have been adhered, compromised and sacrificed throughout the lockdown – your efforts show that you care about others' lives and because of your part, you might have saved lives. If we come together, we can make our country a safer place.

**Technology plays a major role in daily our lives. How can it be used to combat crime?**

Technology has given us systems that work to process and analyse data so that we can have access to accurate information. We then use this information to allocate our resources to combat and reduce crime effectively.

Also, the number of unreported crimes is very high in our country, causing loss of life and economic losses. Our platform will enable people to report more crime and so forth, thereby assisting the correct allocation of resources to combat and reduce crime.

**What advice would you give to aspiring mobile app developers?**

I believe, in every part of life, when you want to become something or do something, do it for the right reasons and do it with passion.

▣ ***Where do you want to see Spottem in the next three years?***

We would like to see Spottem on each and every phone as a pre-installed app. We want Spottem, with its South African roots, to grow into a global powerhouse of effective crime management and safety assurance – the new Google Safe.

## ABOUT JOHANNES MASITENG

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