

Gain exclusive early access to Africa's next generation of tech leaders

The tech talent marketplace with the top 0.1% powered by DirectEd Development

Most founders waste *months* and *thousands* of dollars trying to build an MVP with freelancers or agencies with a good price but questionable quality of work.

We give you a managed team of elite African engineers and interns.

Fully AI-native engineers who focus on value: your **first paying customers** and **investor** meetings.

The Offer

- **Full-stack software consultancy:** We cover everything from product specification, user experience design, user interface design, company style guide, web application development and AI/ML integrations and features.
- **Risk-free:** We are happy to work with a model that works for you: be it a fixed scope with predefined deliverables so you know what you'll get at the end, or pay-as-you-go.
- **Senior support:** Our fractional CTOs come in with decades of experience in software consulting and development. The CTOs are involved in making architectural decisions whereas the Head of delivery actively reviews code to ensure it adheres to best-practice.
- **Long-term:** You have the option to hire the development team to join you in-house and continue the work on your product beyond the initial delivery.
- **Specialised:** We exclusively work with startups and scale-ups, and prepare students to be proactive and active participants!
- **No friction:** We take care of all admin, compliance, and day-to-day management.

Why work with us?

- **Handpicked.** All our developers and designers go through the rigorous Distress Development [academy](#). Our academy exclusively recruits from the top-5 academic institutions in the countries in Africa we recruit from. The majority achieve marks in the **top 0.5%** in terms of national university entry exam.

- **Best of the Best.** From this elite pool, only the cream of the crop: top ~20% get offers to continue after the intensive 4-month long program (50h/week). Curriculum [here](#).

- **The Proof.** After only **4 months of intensive training**, they went from having **never** written a line of code in their lives to being able to build and deploy fully operational web applications.

- **Talent Program.** Unlike most offshore dev houses, all our developers and designers are with us for the long term. This is because the vast majority of Tison developers, designers and interns are also DirectEd Talent program members. This means that DirectEd Development acts as their agents for 4-7 years (contractually), providing all members with continuous upskilling opportunities, personal development, professional development and infrastructure support to all our interns.

Leadership team

Simon Sällström

CEO

Simon is a World Bank S4YE Youth advisory group member and holds an MPhil in economics from the University of Oxford. He's previously led several NGOs and organised several multi-national events, including [ETH Oxford](#), one of the largest hackathons in the UK, with more than 300 attendees. Under his leadership, DirectEd Development has established itself as one of the premier technical education institutions in East Africa.

[LinkedIn](#)

Ananya Fekeremariam

Head of Delivery

Previously on the team responsible for Config Sync at Google, a GitOps service within the Kubernetes Engine (GKE) as a software engineer intern. This system enables cluster operators to deploy and manage configurations across multiple clusters and repositories in hybrid or multi-cloud environments. He is also the former Head of Education at A2SV - Africa to Silicon Valley, an organisation that's trained and placed 50+ students from Ethiopia and Ghana into companies like Bloomberg, Databricks and Google.

[LinkedIn](#)

Yasin Gulam

Fractional CTO

Yasin comes in with 8+ years of software consultancy experience, having worked with Deutsche Bank, Barclays, Grant Thornton and many more companies. Strength lies in C#, Python, Vue.js for financial applications and use-cases.

[LinkedIn](#)

Jon Burlinson

Fractional CTO

As an accomplished leader with over 25 years of experience in information management, software engineering, and technical management, he is dedicated to harnessing the power of AI and data analytics to develop advanced SaaS solutions.

[LinkedIn](#)

How We Work

We are excited about the opportunity to collaborate with your company by providing talented, dedicated and eager junior developer interns to meet your project needs.

Our approach focuses on providing a tailored service to best fit your needs and requirements. Below is an outline of our process to ensure a seamless and successful partnership.

1. Discovery. A short 15-minute exploratory call to see if we're a good fit.
2. Scoping call. This will help us understand your business, technical and long term *skill development* goals
 - a. **Initial Consultation:** We begin with an in-depth discussion to understand your project requirements, goals, and technical specifications for the project.
 - b. **Technical Assessment:** For stand-alone projects, our CTO will propose an approach with appropriate time-to-market, scalability and cost-efficiency tradeoffs to align with your business goals.
3. Project Proposal
 - a. **Detailed Plan:** We will create a comprehensive project proposal that outlines the scope of work, timelines, and deliverables. For more comprehensive projects, we will propose scoping as a first separate deliverable.
 - b. **Resource Allocation:** Identification and allocation of the most suitable interns for your project.
 - c. **Milestones:** Clearly defined milestones and key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress.
4. (optional) Selection options:
 - a. **Pre-selected:** We take care of the selection on your behalf, keeping in mind your priorities in terms of hard and soft skills.
 - b. **Coding test:** Clients may request coding tests as part of the selection
 - c. **Interview:** Clients have the opportunity to interview the interns.
5. Pricing Model and Quotation
 - a. **Transparent Pricing:** We provide a clear and detailed pricing model that includes all costs associated with the project.
 - b. **Flexible Options:** Multiple pricing options to suit your budget and requirements, including fixed-price projects, or retainer models (see section below).
6. Work begins.
 - a. **Infrastructure set-up:** We set up a dedicated Linear task management workspace, shared WhatsApp or Slack group, Github repository, Figma workspace, and a Google Drive folder containing the four key documents guiding the work: (1) Project Master Document, (2) Product Requirements Document, (3) Product Specification and Roadmap Document, (4) Running Meeting notes.
 - b. **Kick-off Meeting:** A project kick-off meeting to introduce the team, review the workflow cadence, and regular check-in meeting times. We also discuss the Product Development Manual.

- c. **Planning Phase:** On the basis of the Product Requirement Document, designers interview the Client to write User Stories. If the project has a Product Manager then they work closely with designers to map out User Stories and User Flows. Developers conduct research on technical solutions and needs under the leadership of the Tech Lead and CTO.
- d. **Development Phase:** The team starts working on the project under the guidance of senior mentors and project managers.
- e. **Regular Updates:** Progress reports and regular check-ins to ensure alignment and address any issues promptly.
- f. **Quality Assurance:** Rigorous testing and quality assurance processes to ensure the highest standards are met.
- g. **Delivery:** On-time delivery of project milestones and final deliverables.

Employer of Record & Placement Commission

If you choose to hire one of the engineers or designers, then Tison charges a commission amounting to 15% of the first-year salary as a commission.

Full Refund within 30 Days: If the candidate leaves within 30 days, Tison provides a full refund.

Partial Refund within 90 Days: If the candidate leaves between 31 and 90 days, Tison provides a partial refund equal to 50% of the fee.

Replacement within 180 Days: If the candidate leaves within 180 days, Tison will find a replacement candidate at no additional cost.

Case Study - Ticklish

Between May and June 2025, an internship team of 5 built a fully operational P2P ticket sales platform, <https://tick-lish.com/>. In merely 3 efficient sprints, the product was feature complete. The platform enables the seller to onboard as a Stripe merchant (connecting to their bank account), upload a ticket, set it as fixed price or “auction-based”, generate a URL and then manage their current sales.

The founder, Freddie Bale, had previous experience working with outsourced teams and gave the team an outstanding review:

Just wanted to say, with Ticklish and the team, the communication and service have honestly been exceptional. One of the things I value most is the level of professionalism and how clearly everything is communicated. A lot of the time with dev work you worry about losing touch with the process or not having control over direction, but you guys do a great job at keeping the client involved and making sure nothing gets lost in translation.

I genuinely can't fault the service and would absolutely recommend you. The way everything's organised in docs, every detail covered, and you being so in tune with user experience — it's just a great combo and makes the whole development process feel smooth and well thought out.

Really appreciate the way you run things.

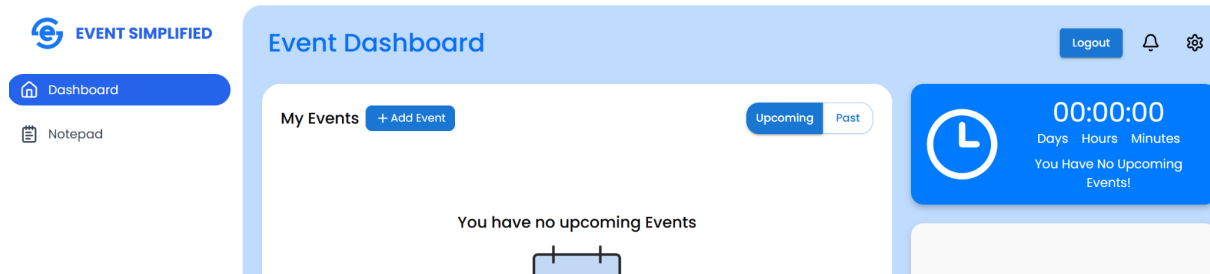
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Case Study - Event Simplified

In the winter of 2024/25, a team of four interns built a full-stack MVP of a product that helps event organisers simplify the planning and management of their work with the help of AI. The project was built in Typescript, NextJs, and NestJs hosted on AWS.

The project is about to enter private beta testing in February and we will resume with a follow-up contract in March. The founder, [William Santo](#), is an ex-Amazon product manager.



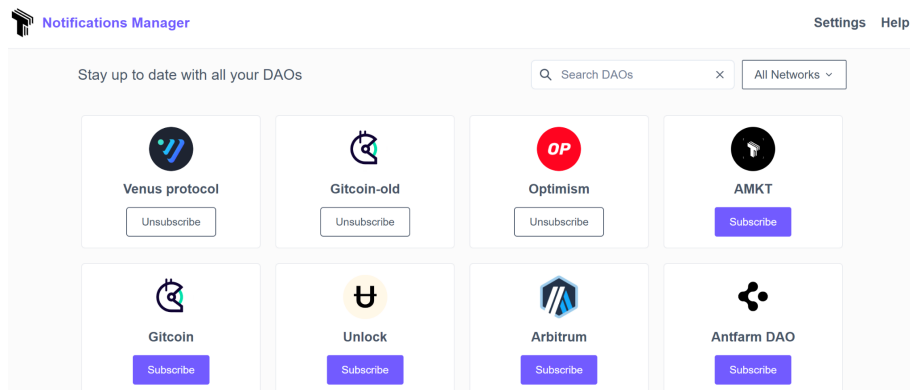
Case Study - Tally.xyz

In the fall of 2023 and spring of 2024, a team of top graduates from the [DirectEd Development](#) bootcamp undertook a remote internship with [Tally](#) - the world's leading blockchain governance tooling provider whose customers control an aggregate of \$30B+ in assets. The internship team consisted of four students; [Denis Mwangangi](#), Elizabeth Gitau, Bewton Maina and Victor Wacheni.



They developed a [web application for notification management](#), integrating with Tally's blockchain voting protocol APIs to give users event-based and customisable governance proposal notifications. Current live site: <https://notify.tally.xyz/>

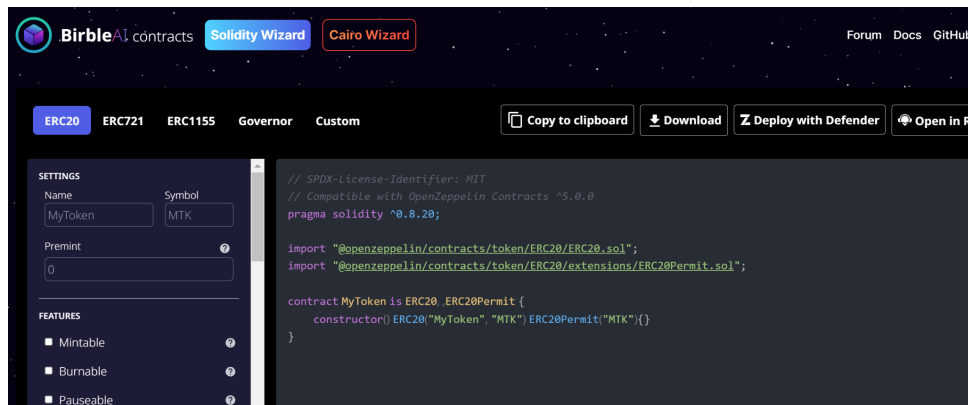
Watch the [video testimony](#) from the CTO of Tally, [Rafael Solari](#).



Case Study - BirbleAI Contracts

In the spring of 2024, a team of four interns built a web application that generates Solidity and Cairo [smart contracts](#) with just a click of a button, enabling the user to download generated contracts as single files or projects and deploy and view them in various ways i.e Defender and open in Remix.

Link to live [MVP](#), [slide](#) and [video presentation](#).



Talent Development and Selection Before Joining [Tison.io](https://tison.io)

1. **Selection:** Students are chosen from a pool of highly motivated top performers from our partner institutions. They are either in the final year or close to graduating from some of the top universities such as Kenyatta University in Kenya or are recent graduates from our partner high schools, including [Mang'U High](#), Maryhill Girls High, Kagumo High in Kenya and Menelik Science Shared Campus in Ethiopia. All in the top 5 in their respective countries.
2. **Intensive Training:** Scholars undergo a comprehensive 14-week bootcamp, mastering both technical and soft skills. This course is currently undergoing accreditation with TechUK's TechSkills, the only tech industry employer-led accreditation body in the UK.
3. **Graduation Capstone Project:** All students have completed a capstone project where they (a) defined a problem, (b) wrote a technical specification and (c) developed a full-stack web app. This was done in the last 8 days of the boot camp. Sample of a final project [presentation](#).
4. **Internship Training:** To prepare them for a professional environment, they undergo another 3 months of "on-the-job" type training and professional preparation. These projects are typically super-low budget wherein we either build for an NGO or put the teams on internal low-stakes projects.
5. **Talent Program Membership:** Only those who consistently perform after this final selection phase are invited to join the exclusive DirectEd Talent Program. The first part of joining this program is the opportunity to work with real startups and companies as a [Tison.io](https://tison.io) team member.

Frictionless Selection Process

1. **Interviews and Tests:** interns take any coding or behavioural tests that you require and participate in interviews with you. We can also make the selection on your behalf.
2. **Project Execution:** Under the staff augmentation model (see below), your team dedicates a pre-defined number of hours per week to your project, bringing your vision to life.
3. **Ongoing Support:** DirectEd provides both a dedicated curriculum for the upskilling and a mentor and project manager with professional experience providing additional support for our students.
4. **Minimal Overhead:** We manage the stipend distribution, compliance and other administration.
5. **Minimal Cybersecurity Risk:** Due to the long-standing relationship that we have with each of our interns through the Talent Program, the risk of Intellectual property theft, breaking NDA or developers simply disappearing from one day to another is **significantly** reduced.

Prices and Guarantees

We make use of two different pricing models, depending on the needs of our clients.

Retainer Model

A bespoke team is designated to work for you at a fixed monthly rate.

- **Pricing.** We charge the bare minimum we need to provide an excellent experience. Our rates cover the cost of interns' stipends and the managerial and tutoring overhead. The stipends ensure that students stay motivated while covering internet data costs and saving up to purchase a laptop of their own.
- **Contract length:** 2 months to 10 months. Commitments to longer contracts come with a discounted price. We recommend an initial commitment of 3 months at a minimum.
- **Benefit.** This pricing model is more flexible, and suitable for startups or companies with a CTO who can direct the work and where the precise product requirements may not be known in advance.
- **Team choice.** With this model, you have the option to interview the team and, if desired, set job test that fit within a 20-hour time-frame per intern.
- **Guarantee.** If you can find any service that provides better pricing then we price-match that.

Project Contract

The full scope and pricing are defined upfront. This is more expensive as we take on deliverability guarantees.

- **Pricing.** After understanding your goals and requirements, we will draft a Product Requirements Document and a timeline for the work, after which we will provide a quote.
- **Benefit.** This model has predictable pricing and strong guarantees in terms of when a product will be delivered but it comes with a premium because we take on higher risk. The drawback is that it does not offer flexibility.
- **Guarantee.** Our senior engineers will step in to ensure that the product is delivered in accordance with the product specifications.

Free Trial

We understand that it is very difficult to understand just how good the interns really are.

This is why we are more than happy to let you set a time-bound test jobs to the interns in order to understand their skill level.

The test jobs should take no more than 20 hours. We can only offer this when we have spare capacity.

Interested?

Expression of Interest [Form](#)

Discovery call with CEO [Simon](#) [booking link](#)

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