

Hey Jude . . .

I've seen the future and it's on Ben Lynch's mobile phone.

Jude is the name of the app Ben built to manage your bank accounts – for any bank – your bills, Kiwisaver, and pretty much anything else financial. Ben gave me a quick demo on his phone and, suddenly, it all started to make sense. Jude strikes me as one of those products you don't know you need until you start using it and then you find it indispensable.

Ben explains, 'It allows you to be smart about your payments, avoid fees and, importantly, own your own data. It returns the power over your finances to you.' Jude will also allow services such as number portability – like you can do with your mobile phone number now, but it would be your bank account number. And it does so much more.

Being stung by his bank for unnecessary fees inspired Ben to build the app. 'I decided there was a better way to deal with my accounts so I built Jude as a side project while I was working for Xero in Wellington.' Now, the business resides in a small office in Matakana. 'I have one employee, but I'm about to do another fundraising round which should allow me to hire a couple more people.'

Ben grew up in Arrowtown, moved to Wellington to work at Xero and then to Auckland. 'But I'm no city kid,' says Ben, 'so my wife and I moved to Point Wells. We've been here for two years.' He loves the community feel of Point Wells and their two children go to Matakana Primary.

My assumption that Ben was the product of a traditional university education was quickly shot down. 'I'm completely self-taught. I got bored and failed my last year at school, but I loved learning and doing things on my own, figuring it out for myself.'

Staying focussed on the core purpose of Jude is important for Ben. 'One of the things about this opportunity is deciding what *not* to do because the scope is so large. We've just changed over to subscription basis so we are now figuring out what those paying people are using and doubling-down on making it better for them. Then we just have to find more people like that.'

Five years from now, Ben aims to be employing a lot more people and he hopes to have a pretty decent foothold in Australia. 'New Zealand is a great test space,' he explains, 'but the world is the market. Everyone has a bank account and a phone, and bills to pay, so that's the size of the market.'

For more information . . . well, you'll just have to be patient. 'We are invite only at this stage while we continue to build and test the app,' says Ben. 'I personally guide each new subscriber through Jude's features. We want 1000 people paying to use the product in the next 12 months, and have them absolutely love Jude and talk about it to their friends. Once we have that base of people talking about the product, the scaling up process is pretty easy.'

Then we watch Matakana Valley become the next Silicon Valley.

meetjude.com