THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

From Loft Startup to Leading IT Firm: How Eliezer Zusman Built KEZ into a Game-Changer for Schools

BY N. GOLD

MR ELIEZER ZUSMAN,
*Founder and director
of KEZ*

Anyone who has used KEZ is familiar with their professional and seamless delivery of a wide range of IT-related services. These include IT sales, data recovery, software solutions, web and software development, as well as a clean and professional internet kiosk with 40 computers and a conference room.

KEZ was first established in 2016 with a data recovery service operating in the loft of a private house. Nine years later, they are a multi-branch, multi-service IT solutions company. Their latest upgrade, the opening of a new branch in the popular Hillwood shopping district in Stamford Hill, is impressive for a young company like KEZ.

A significant recent achievement is the KEZ School Management System, a ground-breaking task management portal that enhances efficiency and professionalism in school management.

Hamodia set out to discover the man behind it all, and we had the privilege of speaking to Mr Eliezer Zusman, the founder and director of KEZ.

Interviewing Mr Eliezer Zusman was a real eye-opener. It showed us what one yungerman can accomplish by sheer willpower, determination, and surely, a lot of siyatta diShmaya.

Hello, Mr Zusman. Can you tell us a bit about your background?

I was born in Argentina and grew up learning in the local *heimishe* school system there. Later, I attended a yeshivah in London and I've been here ever since.

Can you tell us what spurred you to develop the School Management System?

From a very young age I was passionate about two things — computer technology and helping people with weaker abilities. Both of these have blended together to bring me where I am today.

Following my marriage in 2016, I started working as an OT and SLT assistant in the SENCO department of Talmud Torah Torah VeYirah on Bethune Road.

Almost at the same time, I launched KEZ, and I was able to continue working at the SEN department for eight wonderful years, thanks to a most devoted and capable team.

The SEN department at Torah VeYirah began with 10 children, and as the *cheder* grew, so did the department. Eventually we had more than 120 children — 50 of whom were under my care — and record-keeping became a problem.

When I initially joined the *cheder*, all records were handwritten. Later, we used Excel sheets and Word documents, but it was clumsy and very inefficient. If a child received a set target from a therapist, the therapist would follow up on his progress, but there was little to no monitoring of the other aspects that impact a child's overall success.

For example, if a parent called to complain about their child's lack of progress or if the SENCO decided on a specific approach for a child, there was no efficient way to record the plan and track the child's progress. This meant that important information sometimes went astray and valuable time was being lost, which impacted the success of the department.

I realised that there was a vital need to develop an efficient computer program that would streamline record-keeping for the school in general, and the SEN department in particular.

In order to track progress, you need a central space where all important information can be viewed by the relevant therapists, *menahalim*, teachers, and so on, so they can follow up, set new targets, and review each student's progress.

This would also facilitate increased communication between the staff working with each child, and between the principals of different age groups (when the child goes up a class). Of course, the system would also need to include billing and funding information, which would greatly assist the administration department.

In other words, the *cheder* urgently required an efficient task management system, and I took it upon myself to fulfil that vision.

What did you do to get there?

With the help of an amazing team of developers I built a very basic portal, which I initially provided to the *cheder's* SENCO department at no cost.

In the early days it was mainly a management system that maintained a record of each child's basic information, such as personal details and test results. This allowed the school to track where each child was holding on a basic level, and ensured that no glaring problems fell through the cracks.

As we continued to fine-tune the program and incorporate new options, we realised it could also save other *mosdos* a lot of headache and hundreds of hours of work. It would also improve the quality of help being delivered to each child, which could significantly up the level of their achievements.

Can you describe the program for us?

The portal has a dedicated space for every type of information held by a school, including student information, parents' contact details, previous school records (in the case of a child who transferred from another school), academic performance and progress, behavioural performance, a list of actions required, and the progress of each of these.

There is also a space for all staff information, including past experience/qualifications, contact details, and anything else of relevance.

For the SEN department we have a section that keeps track of all past and upcoming sessions, appointment availability with specific therapists or assistants, progress tracking, reports, session invoicing, payments, and so on.

I can go on and on, as there are thousands of functions and tabs for every type of information that you can think of. We continuously perfect the portal, and depending on which package a school chooses to go for, they can access new features as the system is updated.

Are any other schools using the program?

Sure! Just by word of mouth we already have many *mosdos* in London and Manchester enjoying its unparalleled benefits. Our clients include boys' and girls' schools, yeshivos, and seminaries.

We have recently begun marketing the portal internationally, allowing *mosdos* across the world to benefit from this amazing resource as well.

Is it easy to add or edit information when necessary, and is the system easy to navigate?

Yes, the system is intuitive and easy to use. In fact, it is more robust and user-friendly than any task management program available on

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the general market.

What about yeshivos, Maggidei Shiur, and Roshei Yeshivah who aren't the most tech-savvy?

To cater towards this clientele we created a tailored solution called "Yeshiva Mode." This version allows the less tech-savvy to navigate through the portal with ease and familiarise themselves with the various features.

When issues have been raised, how have they been resolved?

At KEZ we pride ourselves on our excellent support team, who are on hand to respond to queries in a fast and efficient manner.

You mentioned that you keep updating the system. What type of capabilities have been added?

Our feedback feature is a very important part of the program. Users tell us what they'd like to see featured in the portal and we work on creating those features to meet their needs.

One example of an upgrade in the works is a portal for parents. When this new option is up and running, parents will have the ability to check in on the progress of their child and send comments to the head teacher or SENCO when required.

It is important to note that not every school requires all the features we offer. Because of this, we personalise the portal for each school by enabling or disabling features for maximum efficiency.

Does the portal require an internet connection to work? What about someone who doesn't want to be connected to the internet?

While our portal operates online, we know that most schools have a filter plan across their school's computer network and they don't want any access to the internet. This is not a problem, as the portal can work in tandem with the filter, by allowing only our URL domain on their computer and nothing else (also known as whitelisting).

Having the portal online allows users to log in from anywhere and means we can update the program remotely, without the need to access each user's computer individually. This also means that program administrators can grant access to as many users as needed, without the need for complicated installations.

Another added benefit is ongoing data backup. Schools using an independent system can find themselves in a real dilemma if data is lost or tampered with due to a broken computer, security breach, or a fire, *chas v'shalom*. Our program keeps the schools' data in a secure, government-approved data centre, with additional backups in an encrypted facility in Zurich that is also used by huge companies like 3M. The backups can be restored to any point, down to the precise millisecond.

What about privacy? Aren't people concerned that all this information is available to so

many people at the school?

The program is designed with permission settings, which means the program administrator can limit access to specific areas of the portal in accordance with a particular staff member's need for information. For example, SEN staff can be limited to just the SEN tabs and teachers can have the ability to enter information, without viewing a child's entire file.

Is it easy to set up user controls to restrict data access for individual staff members?

Yes, very easy.

What about Ofsted? Does the portal allow users to collate information easily when required for Ofsted or similar educational bodies?

Yes, sure, this is one of the greatest accomplishments of the program. Dealing with Ofsted and providing the information required is so much simpler, reducing the usual stress associated with an impending Ofsted visit.

How does payment work for such a program?

We have two options available. The first involves a one-time payment with

lifetime access for a small annual hosting fee. This allows buyers to download the program, add users, enable permissions, and so on.

Then there is our bestseller — the subscription plan. With this plan, users receive all of the above plus all new updates as they become available. They are also able to request custom features, based on their school's particular needs, at no extra charge.

Do you also create other programs or only this one?

We create custom databases for companies all the time. We have created programs for various businesses, charities, property management companies, among others. We also create attractive and easy-to-use websites for events, businesses, service providers, and more.

But the KEZ School Management System is the realisation of what I view as my life's mission. I experienced its transformative effects when I worked in the *cheder*, and I know that it's a game-changer for schools and students alike. This satisfaction propels me forward every day.

Can you share with our readers how you cope with running the multiple operations within your
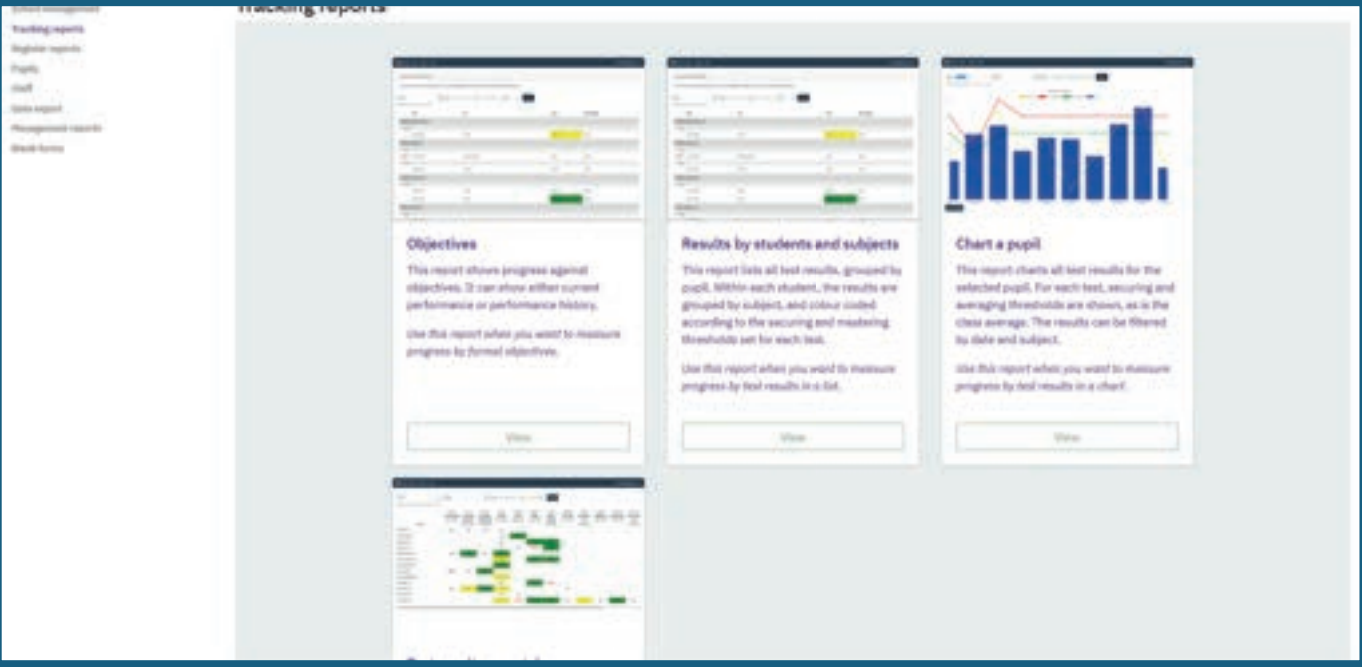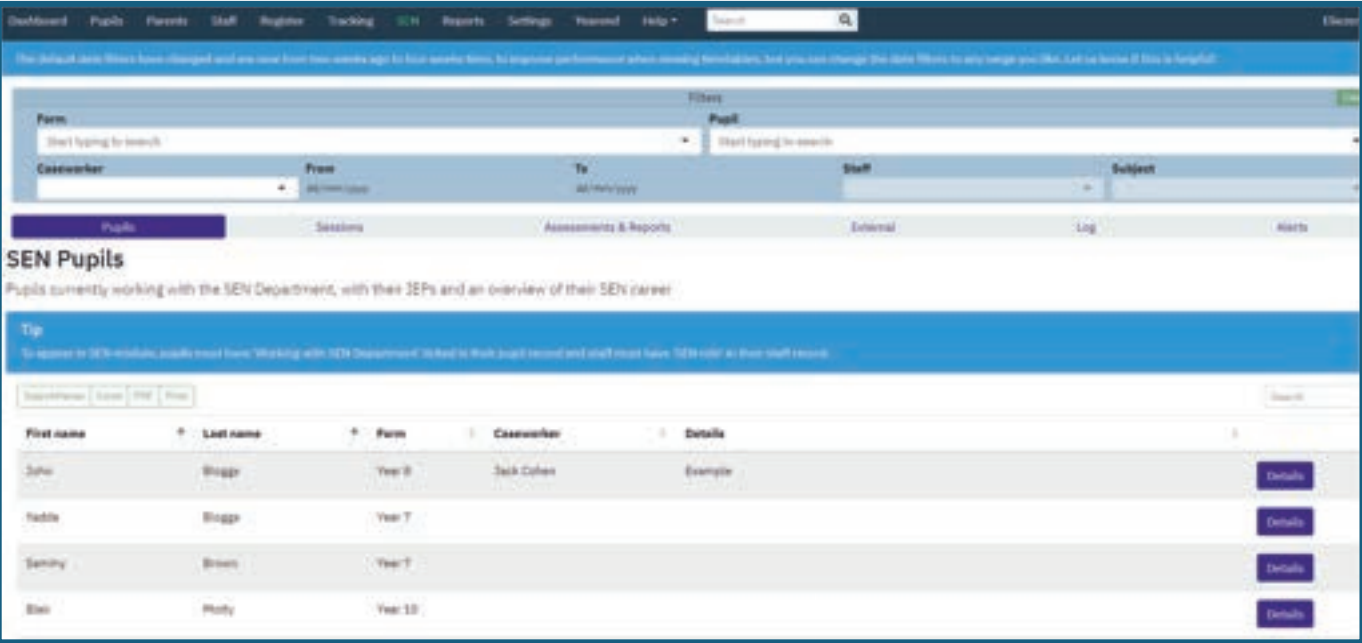
"Our program keeps the schools' data in a secure, government-approved data centre"

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business?

It's all about building a good, trustworthy team. Having the right people to delegate work to, people who take initiative and aren't fazed by challenges, is the best way forward for any business. I have an amazing team and we work together on all aspects of the business.

When I first started out, I experimented with inexpensive remote options in India and South America. However, I quickly realized that nothing compares to the professionals within our own community. They excel in every aspect — they're reliable, trustworthy, intuitive, and intelligent. While it may seem more costly upfront, the long-term benefits far outweigh the expense, saving both money and considerable frustration.

I couldn't agree more. Our community is rich with talent, and as insiders, we have the unique ability to drive transformation like no one else can. I'm excited about the impact of this new portal and confident that many schools will adopt it soon. Wishing you a kosheren Pesach and much hatzlachah going forward! ∎

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