

ISAQUE

34 years old

Fale Easy

 *easyinglesfacil*



IN 2011, ISAQUE BEGAN TEACHING PRIVATE ENGLISH CLASSES in Rio de Janeiro. Through his experience as a teacher, he realised that to achieve financial and professional autonomy it was not enough to have qualifications and competence: he had to take another step. So he left the schools where he worked and opened the course *Fale Easy*.



FROM PREJUDICE TO FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Openly gay since he was 16, Isaque suffered prejudice and discrimination because of his sexual orientation during his childhood and adolescence and when applying for jobs in language schools. However, since he became self-employed, he has not experienced any problems because of his sexual orientation. He believes that the fact that he is cisgender and not effeminate exposes him to fewer risks of homophobia.

Moreover, since gaining financial independence, he no longer feels prejudice within his family, even though they are conservative and evangelical. Quite the contrary, this independence not only gave him more freedom and acceptance, but also allowed him to help his family financially. He emphasizes:

“When you have financial independence, when you no longer depend [on your family] for anything, for us, gays, LGBTs in general, the relationship becomes easier, they have nothing to go against”.

“NOW I CAN DO MY WORK WITH PROFICIENCY”

In 2015, Isaque enrolled in the first class of Micro Rainbow Brazil’s entrepreneurship course in the hope of developing the business he had dreamed so much about. Before the course he ran

his company very intuitively, without systematic control of its finances. Completing the business plan and learning the course material enabled him to better organise his company’s finances and more efficiently monitor its expenses and cash flow, which were previously unknown. He is now able to better plan his spending and investments and separate the management of personal and business expenses:

“Before, I had a hard time organising my finances to pay the basic bills, and nowadays it goes smoothly. [...] Today I have two bank accounts, one for personal use and one for my company, which is something I’ve learned from the course”.

In fact, Isaque says that the greatest lesson he learned on the course was how to make a proper financial plan. This enabled him not only to organise the finances of *Fale Easy*, but also to invest in his own company. While he did not necessarily increase his company’s profit, he did learn how, when and what he could spend. Consequently, two years after the course, he has managed to gain financial stability and achieve the dream of financing the purchase of a car and his own apartment. He says enthusiastically:

“What the project did was to professionalise me. I already had qualifications [to teach], but now I can do my work with proficiency”.

“IT’S POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OTHER LGBT PEOPLE”

Isaque still wants to get his own office, since he currently teaches English at home. This goal, which once seemed impossible, now seems feasible in the medium-term. His experience with Micro Rainbow International broadened his horizons and sparked a desire to increase revenues and expand the business. He hopes to be able to change his legal status from individual micro entrepreneur (MEI) to Simples Nacional in the near future⁶. Being in contact with other LGBT people has also increased his awareness of the difficulties this community faces in entering the labour market, so he intends to hire other LGBT people, especially transvestites and transsexuals, when he expands his business.

Isaque emphasises that his participation in the project made him see his potential to pursue another profession. After finishing the course, he was elected by his peers to be a teaching assistant of the next class, in

⁶ Unlike MEI, Simples Nacional is a taxation arrangement that allows successful micro and small businesses to have annual revenues of more than R\$60,000 and other advantages, such as hiring employees.

order to help others develop their business plans. Isaque performed so well on the second course that the teacher invited him to continue being a teaching assistant on following courses. Also, Isaque together with another teaching assistant created an online registration platform of LGBT entrepreneurs, *Pink at Work* (learn more on page 28). He believes that his role as a teaching assistant has increased his empathy and solidarity with other LGBT people, allowing him not only to support other entrepreneurs and share his knowledge, but also to aspire to a future career as a coach. *“Now I am able to think beyond my own company, to the professional success of others, of my friends. Now I see that it’s possible to improve the lives of other LGBT people”.*

Isaque’s story suggests that the entrepreneurship course helped him not only to plan and organise his own business, but also to achieve financial stability and economic prosperity. In addition, his case shows that being part of the Micro Rainbow Brazil Project encouraged participants to become positive role models for other LGBT people. This contributes to one of Micro Rainbow International’s central objectives, which is to expand LGBT support networks and recognise the talents and potential of LGBT people. ■



PINK AT WORK

PINK AT WORK is an online platform of products and services offered by LGBT entrepreneurs that was created by Isabela Colucci and Isaque Lima, former students and teaching assistants of the MRI entrepreneurship course. Inspired by their participation in the project and the potential of virtual networks to empower vulnerable groups, they describe this innovative tool. Isaque explains:

“Pink at Work was created after a conversation in the first class of the entrepreneurship course, where we realised that there was no platform to promote products and services offered by LGBT people. Through an easy-to-access platform that includes a customer review feature, we intended to strengthen and give visibility to LGBT businesses so that they could potentially expand in the future. The LGBT community is a strong consumer base, and we could direct our buying power to promote our own businesses and circulate money within the community, empowering ourselves and creating a network of services and businesses”.

Isa reflects on the social relevance and sustainability of the initiative in helping LGBT micro entrepreneurs enter the market:

“When we encourage individual production and, in this case, the LGBT audience specifically, we better distribute income, create equal conditions and allow each person to develop their potential. Relying on small business is the most sustainable path for our society as a whole. It is very inspiring for me to know that the entrepreneur can compete in this market. Even if you pay a little more sometimes, it's not just the price that makes a product or a service”.

To learn more and register, go to www.pinkatwork.com.br

