

Allon Raiz

Short résumé

Allon Raiz is regarded both locally and globally as a pioneer and maverick in the business-incubation industry. He is the founder and CEO of Raizcorp which, according to *The Economist*, is the only genuine incubator in Africa and which currently supports over 500 businesses.

Allon is the author of two best-selling entrepreneurial books – *Lose the Business Plan* and *What to Do When You Want to Give Up*. He hosted the first national radio show on entrepreneurship in South Africa in 2004; wrote and hosted the first South African prime-time entrepreneurship reality television show; and created and published an ongoing entrepreneurial cartoon strip. Allon is currently hosting his eighth season of the popular *The Big Small Business Show* on Business Day TV, and is a regular columnist for *Entrepreneur Magazine*.

Allon is a co-founder of the Entrepreneurs' Organisation South Africa and Rural Roots, and is on the advisory and judging boards of numerous local and international NGOs and entrepreneurial awards. His passion for and focus on the development of entrepreneurs attracted the attention of the World Economic Forum (WEF) which, in 2008, recognised Allon as a Young Global Leader.

As an accomplished international speaker, Allon was invited to speak at the 2011 WEF Annual Meeting held in Davos, Switzerland. In 2011, he was also invited to become a member of the WEF's Global Agenda Council on Fostering Entrepreneurship, making him one of 15 recognised global experts in the field. More recently, he became a member of the WEF's Global Future Council.

In 2013, Allon received the Entrepreneur of the Year Award at the Oliver Transformation and Empowerment Awards. The following year, he became the country winner, regional winner and continental winner of the Titan Award for Building Nations.

Since 2014, Allon has guest lectured annually at Oxford University where he is recognised as the Oxford University Saïd Business School's Entrepreneur-in-Residence.

In 2015, Allon received an invitation from the White House, on behalf of President Barack Obama, to speak at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit held in Kenya.

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Profile



Allon Raiz was born to entrepreneurial parents in Johannesburg in 1967. Schooled in Durban, he went on to complete his BCom Honours (Marketing) at the University of Natal.

Allon began his working career in his parents' umbrella-manufacturing business. He spent time in each department, learning the many facets of running a big business. He eventually ran the factory floor and, at the age of 22, was responsible for supervising over 200 workers.

Allon soon realised that he needed to succeed in his own right – not in the shadow of his parents. So, in 1991, he left the family business to develop experience in the retail sector, accepting the major personal consequences this decision entailed. Finding himself unemployed, he approached a friend for a job in his ailing retail clothing chain. It was here that Allon truly found his niche. He redesigned the stores, restocked the shelves, and started running innovative promotions. The stores began to boom. The local press wrote an article about one of his off-beat promotions which, as fate would have it, was read by a local multibillionaire businessman.

Late in 1991, this businessman gave Allon the chance of a lifetime: to start any business of his choosing, while being mentored through the process. Allon established the New York Sausage Factory in early 1992, the first retail hotdog chain in South Africa.

A year later, the business was sold and Allon was appointed marketing director at a vehicle security company, tasked with turning the ailing company around. Within a year, the company had grown to ten times its size. Allon spent the next seven years with this company before leaving to establish Raizcorp, which he did without any external investment.

During his time with the vehicle security company, Allon managed to turn around two other small companies, which went on to become the two pioneering companies within Raizcorp. Today, Allon is involved in over 40 businesses directly and hundreds of others indirectly through Raizcorp.

The lucky break that Allon received as a young man is what has driven him to create an organisation that gives other young – and not-so-young – entrepreneurs a much greater chance of success. Business-development specialists from around the world have visited Raizcorp to further understand the unique model that he has developed. Allon's work now extends to the development of rural entrepreneurs.

Raizcorp is the only privately held, unfunded and profitable business incubator on the African continent. This fact – simply stated but completely unprecedented – is borne out of Allon's belief that organisations founded to teach people how to make profit should themselves be profitable. They should not always be waiting for external funding.

Within ten years of opening a business, 96% of all entrepreneurs fail. In this environment, Allon has made it his life's purpose to turn this statistic around. With Raizcorp as his platform, Allon's mission is to increase the survival rate of small businesses by providing them with a proven model, capable of both scaling and adapting to various economic and socio-political environments. The four per cent of small businesses that do survive are doing something right, and Allon's achievement is founded on Raizcorp's ability to identify and capture this entrepreneurial spirit, thereby building and growing successful and, more importantly, profitable entrepreneurs.

Capturing the entrepreneurial spirit relies on new ways of thinking about business. For this reason, business plans do not interest Allon. It is common knowledge that they are not predictors of success. In their stead, Allon looks at the psychological makeup of the entrepreneur; it is the hearts and minds of entrepreneurs that will, ultimately, determine their success. In fact, Allon's first book – published in 2010 to critical acclaim – is entitled *Lose the Business Plan*.

The great success of *Lose the Business Plan* was followed in 2012 with the publication of Allon's second book, *What to Do When You Want to Give Up*. Research by Brad and Dunstreet shows that, of the small businesses that fail, 90% do so because their owners have decided to give up – not because the businesses were forced to close down. Allon wrote *What to Do When You Want to Give Up* to help change this bleak statistic. The book is a tool to help entrepreneurs determine whether or not giving up on their businesses is truly the right decision. It shows entrepreneurs how to look at the salient issues unemotionally and gives them insight into identifying alternative and less drastic remedies for the challenges their businesses may be facing.

The year 2013 saw the launch of *Carlson Dutz (Avoiding the 96%)*, a cartoon strip created by Allon, which explores the lighter side of the entrepreneurial lifestyle. The main character of the strip, Carlson Dutz, seeks to make it big as an entrepreneur. The ups and downs that Carlson experiences reflect the real-life experiences of Allon and the entrepreneurs he has worked with, allowing readers to draw entrepreneurial lessons in a light-hearted way.

In March 2014, Allon was invited to present a series of masterclasses on entrepreneurship at the Saïd Business School at Oxford University. The success of these masterclasses was such that Allon was invited to present a further masterclass series in 2015 and was welcomed as the Saïd Business School's Entrepreneur-in-Residence.

In 2015, Allon received an invitation from the White House, on behalf of President Barack Obama, to speak at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit held in Kenya.

The nature of Raizcorp's interventions is such that entrepreneurs are exposed to high-level contact with Raizcorp growth guides, each specialising in a key area of business. The focus at Raizcorp is quality, not quantity. It is therefore a model built on measuring efficacy. Raizcorp prides itself on its ability to measure the impact of its interventions across each of its key focus areas – sales, marketing, strategy, finance and personal development.

Currently, Raizcorp is involved in wide-ranging projects, from deep rural environments to its headquarters in urban Johannesburg. This is testimony both to the adaptability of the model and Allon's belief that entrepreneurs hold the key to unlocking wealth in the developing world.

Allon's passion for transformation and entrepreneurship has resulted in his appointment to the board of the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) by the South African Cabinet. It is this passion and focus that attracted the attention of the World Economic Forum (WEF) and led to their recognition of Allon Raiz as a Young Global Leader on 11 March 2008. In recognition of his thought leadership in the field of entrepreneurship, Allon was subsequently invited to become a member of the WEF's Global Agenda Council on Fostering Entrepreneurship in 2011 and again in 2012. In 2013, Allon was invited to be a panellist at the World Economic Forum on Africa held in Cape Town.

Allon Raiz

Achievements

MILESTONES

- 2000 Allon founds **Raizcorp**, the only unfunded for-profit business incubator model in Africa – the world's **first Prosperator™**.
- 2002 Allon is a founding member of the international **Youth Entrepreneurs' Organisation (YEO)**, later named the Entrepreneurs' Organisation (EO), in South Africa and served on the board for two years, with this chapter winning the best start-up chapter in the world award.
- 2005/2014 Allon is invited to speak at the inaugural **Homecoming Revolution Expo** in London on opportunities for entrepreneurs in South Africa. He is invited to speak again in March 2014.
- 2006 Allon is the founding member of **Rural Roots**, an organisation focused on bridging the rural-urban divide and bringing more economic activity to rural areas.
- 2007–11/14/16 With his team at Raizcorp, Allon designs a new programme – **Rural Entrepreneurial Accelerator Programme (REAP)** – to train and grow 70 entrepreneurs in rural KwaZulu-Natal. There are currently 200 entrepreneurs on the programme and approximately 200 have completed it. The programme is so successful that it is mentioned in the Minister of Environment's speech to Parliament the following year.
- 2007 Allon advises the Mauritian Government on their **incubator and entrepreneurship strategy**.
- 2008 Raizcorp opens its **second Prosperator™** in the CBD of Johannesburg.
- Allon is chosen by the *Mail & Guardian* as one of the **200 young South Africans** you must take to lunch.
- 2009 Raizcorp opens its **third and fourth Prosperators™** in Richards Bay and Meyerton respectively.
- Raizcorp signs a **memorandum of understanding with the International Finance Corporation (IFC)** to roll out Raizcorp in Rwanda and nine other African countries.
- 2010 Allon is chosen to attend **Harvard University's** programme on *Global Leadership and Public Policy in the 21st Century*.

Raizcorp opens its **fifth and sixth Prosperators™** in Rustenburg and eMalahleni.

Raizcorp signs an agreement with Chevron to open its **first international Prosperator™** in Cabinda, Angola, which opens the following year.

2010–18

Allon develops and launches **Pitch & Polish**, a platform that gives a voice to entrepreneurs in small towns across South Africa to pitch their business ideas to a panel of expert judges who polish the ideas. Pitch and Polish was broadcast in radio format on SAfm from 2012–14.

2011

Allon is invited to **speak** at the **World Economic Forum Annual Meeting** in Davos, Switzerland.

Raizcorp opens a **seventh Prosperator™** in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape.

Allon is invited to attend a private roundtable discussion in London, hosted by the USA's **Kauffman Foundation**, focusing on the realities of the high-growth entrepreneur and the funding environment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Raizcorp is visited by Judith McHale, the **United States Under-Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs**, who lauds it as a “model for Africa”.

Raizcorp is accredited as a **Centre of Excellence by the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI)**, the UK government-recognised standards setting body for business support and business enterprise.

Allon is invited to present a paper on the work Raizcorp is doing in Africa at the 2011 **African Development Bank and European Marketing Research Centre (EMRC) Annual Conference** held in Lisbon, Portugal.

Allon is invited to deliver a speech on quality incubation at the launch of the **Competitive Investment Climate Strategy (CICS II)** in Kampala, Uganda, which is chaired by President Yoweri Museveni.

2011–13

Allon is invited to serve as an expert on the **Human Resources Council Entrepreneurship and Education Technical Task Team (HRDC EE TT)**, under the chairmanship of Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe.

2012

Allon is invited to attend the **World Economic Forum Annual Summit** in Davos, Switzerland.

Raizcorp opens its **eighth Prosperator™** in Durban. The Prosperator™ is designed to “prosperate” 57 small businesses at a time, and 200 in total.

Allon is invited to speak at the **SME Africa 2012 Conference** and is voted **best speaker** at the event by the delegates.

The **Women's Forum for the Economy and Society Global Meeting 8th Edition** invites Allon to speak on the subject "How can Africa create more high-growth entrepreneurs?" in Deauville, France.

Allon is invited to present at the **37th International Small Business Congress** held in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The **cover story** of **Entrepreneur Magazine's** November 2012 issue is a five-page profile of Allon and his achievements as an entrepreneurship thought leader.

2013 Allon is invited by the **American Chamber of Commerce in South Africa** to participate in a panel discussion with the honourable **Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr Rob Davies**, on the value of business-incubation initiatives.

2013–16 Raizcorp launches the **ACUMEN Enterprise Acceleration Programme** in partnership with **Investec**. Following the massive success of the first programme (which had a budget of R12 million), the programme was reintroduced in 2015 with double the budget.

2014 Raizcorp is recognised by **Fast Company magazine** as one of the 25 most innovative companies in South Africa.

2015 Allon is invited by **BBC World News** to take part in a panel discussion focusing on entrepreneurship in Africa.

Allon is invited by the **White House**, on behalf of **President Barack Obama**, to speak at the 6th Global Entrepreneurship Summit held in Kenya.

Raizcorp purchases **Radley Private School** with a view to introducing entrepreneurship to children from Grade R through to Grade 12.

2016 Allon is invited to speak at the 2016 annual meetings of the **African Development Bank** in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

2017 Raizcorp launches its **first Beacon Model in rural South Africa** with Coal of Africa.

JUDGING, BOARDS AND ADVISORY ROLES

2004 Allon is appointed to the pioneering EXCO of the **South African Incubator Association (SABTIA)**.

- 2005 Allon is appointed as mentor for the **ABSA Incubation Fund**.
- 2005–6 Allon is a judge for **ABSA's Internal Innovation Awards**.
- 2006 Allon is appointed by the South African Deputy President's Office to the **Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) Working Group of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA)**.
- 2006–9 Allon is an adjudicator for the **Technology for Women in Business (TWIB)** awards for the Department of Trade and Industry.
- Allon is a judge (and chairperson of the judging panel) for the prestigious **Ernst & Young Emerging Entrepreneur Awards**.
- 2007–8 International NGO, **Endeavor**, appoints Allon as a panellist (judge) on the **international selection panel to select Endeavor Entrepreneurs**.
- 2007/2009 Allon is invited by the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)** to be a panellist at the **MIT Global Start-up Workshop** in Trondheim, Norway and Cape Town.
- 2007–9 International NGO, **TechnoServe**, invites Allon to become a member on the board of advisors for the **Believe, Begin, Become national business plan competition**.
- 2008 Allon is invited by the Department of Trade and Industry to judge the **Cell C GeM Techno-Girl Programme**.
- 2008/2010 Allon is invited by the **Businesswomen's Association** to be on the judging panel for the entrepreneur category in the **Businesswomen of the Year Awards**.
- 2009 Allon judges the **HIT-Barcelona '09 Global Entrepreneurship Competition**.
- Allon is appointed special advisor to the board of **FNB's Enterprise Development Trust**.
- 2009–11 Allon is appointed to the board of the **National Empowerment Fund (NEF)** of South Africa.
- 2010 Allon is selected as a judge for the **Johnny Walker – Celebrating Strides** competition.
- Allon is selected to be part of the **task force to identify key propositions for the G20 Summit** in France in 2011, hosted by **French President, Nicolas Sarkozy**.
- 2010–13 Allon is appointed to the advisory board for the **Citibank Micro-Entrepreneurship Awards** presentation.
- 2011 The NGO, **Heartbeat**, which focuses on the protection of Aids orphans, appoints Allon to their board.

- 2011–13 Allon is invited to become a member of the **World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Fostering Entrepreneurship** in recognition of his global thought leadership in the field of entrepreneurship.
- Allon is invited to be a member of the **Young Global Leaders (YGL) Advisory Group** by the YGL Initiative Steering Group under the auspices of the World Economic Forum.
- 2011–14 Allon is appointed to the technical advisory panel of the **SBP SME Growth Index**.
- 2012 Allon is appointed to the international jury (consisting of 74 expert jurors across eight countries) of the **Core77 2012 Design Awards** in the social impact category.
- 2012–15 Allon is reappointed by the South African Cabinet to the **board of trustees of the National Empowerment Fund** for a second three-year term.
- 2013–18 Allon is appointed to the **expert advisor panel of Entrepreneur Magazine** and also becomes a regular columnist for the magazine.
- 2014–16 Allon presents a series of masterclasses at **Oxford University's Saïd Business School**, where he is recognised as the **Entrepreneur-in-Residence**.
- Allon is appointed to the advisory board of **Startup Nations South Africa**.
- 2015 Allon is appointed a judge of the **Oliver Empowerment Awards** which are recognised as South Africa's most influential.
- 2015–17 Allon is invited to join the **advisory board of Henley Business School**.
- 2016–17 Allon is appointed to the jury panel for the business, entrepreneurship and innovation category of the **Agahi Awards**, an annual series of awards for journalism in Pakistan.
- 2017 Allon is appointed as a judge for the **American Chamber of Commerce in South Africa's Stars of Africa Awards**.

NOMINATIONS AND AWARDS

- 2004/2010 Allon is nominated twice for the **Johnny Walker Entrepreneur of the Year Award**.
- 2007 Allon is a semi-finalist in the international **Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneur of the Year Awards**.
- Allon is the grand winner of the **Champion of Entrepreneurs in Africa Award** presented by the **Africa Heritage Society**.

- 2008 Allon is recognised as a **Young Global Leader** by the **World Economic Forum** in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Allon is the recipient of the **Entrepreneurs' Organisation South Africa Award** for the **most outstanding personal achievement** of the year.
- 2009 Allon is recognised by the **Gordon Institute of Business (GIBS)** as one of **South Africa's Top 50 Thought Leaders**.
- 2013 The **Oliver Transformation and Empowerment Awards** recognise Allon as the winner of the South African **Entrepreneur of 2013 Award**.
- 2014 Allon is recognised as the country winner, regional winner and continental winner of the **Titan Award for Building Nations**.
- 2016 Allon is recognised as the finalist of the Minister's Award Business Incubation Pioneer at the **South African Business Incubator Awards**.

MEDIA

- 2004–7 Allon runs South Africa's **first weekly national radio show** on the subject of entrepreneurship called **Raizen Entrepreneurs**.
- 2006 **Oprah Magazine** has a regular monthly feature with Allon as the entrepreneurial coach.
- 2007 Allon is a regular contributor to the magazine **Whizz Kids**, writing about the links between attention-deficit disorder and entrepreneurship.
- 2007/2014 Allon **writes and hosts a prime-time reality television show** called **Rize Mzansi** for the SABC, which takes nine small businesses through an incubation process with one business ultimately winning R1 million (the largest-ever prize at the station at the time). The show won a **Silver Award at the Rose d'Or Festival** out of 1 100 entries across 23 countries. Allon again features in the third series of the show in 2014.
- 2009–10 Allon is a regular columnist for the **Business Report** on the subject of entrepreneurship.
- 2011–14 Allon is a featured contributor in episodes of **It's My Biz**, an entrepreneurial television show **aired nationally on e.tv**.
- 2011–16 Allon is a regular contributor to **Destiny Magazine** – both the printed magazine and website.

- 2011–18 Allon is an expert contributor to **Entrepreneur Magazine's** printed magazine and has a monthly column called *Shift Questions*.
- 2012–18 Allon is the host of Business Day TV show, **The Big Small Business Show**, which enjoyed a first season of 45 weeks. During its third season, the show became the **most watched show on Business Day TV**. It is currently in its seventh season.
- Radio stations, **702 Talk Radio, Classic FM, Kaya FM and Power FM**, feature Allon as regular guest contributor.
- 2015–16 Allon becomes a regular contributor to **The Star Workplace** with a monthly column called *Raizing Entrepreneurs*.

PUBLISHED WORKS

- 2005–17 Allon authors the **Entrepreneur's Inspiration Pack**, the **Young Entrepreneur's Inspiration Pack**, the **Female Entrepreneur's Inspiration Pack**, and the **Pitch & Polish Preparation Pack**. To date, 60 000 units have been sold.
- 2006 Allon co-authors **Sharing the Passion – Conversations with Coaches**.
- 2009 Allon publishes an article on **Business incubation in the private sector (South Africa)** in the *Enterprise Development & Microfinance Journal* (Vol. 20, No.1, March 2009).
- 2010 Allon writes **Lose the Business Plan**, a book in which he shares the lessons he has learned – and seen others learn – on the road to business success. To date, 18 000 copies have been sold.
- 2011 A chapter is devoted to Allon in Donna Rachelson's **Branding and Marketing YOU**, published by BrandingandmarketingYOU Publications, Strathavon, South Africa.
- Allon and his achievements with Raizcorp are featured as a case study in **Entrepreneurial Solutions for Prosperity in BoP Markets: Strategies for Business and Economic Transformation** by Eric Kacou, published by Wharton School Publishing (Pearson Education Inc.), New Jersey, USA.
- 2012 Allon writes **What to Do When You Want to Give Up**, which is designed as a tool to help entrepreneurs in difficult times determine whether or not giving up on their business is truly the right decision. The book reaches the bestseller list within two weeks of its launch.

- 2013/2015 Allon creates a cartoon strip about the entrepreneurial lifestyle called **Carlson Dutz (Avoiding the 96%)**, which launches in **Entrepreneur Magazine** in February 2013. In 2015, Carlson became a weekly addition to **The Star Workplace**.
- 2013 Raizcorp is studied as a case study in the MBA programme at **Wits Business School**.

TALKS

Allon has been invited to speak on topics related to entrepreneurship and incubation in over 50 cities around the world. He has addressed audiences in the following countries:

Botswana	Lesotho	Senegal
Brazil	Malawi	South Africa
China	Morocco	Swaziland
Côte d'Ivoire	Nepal	Switzerland
Dubai	Nigeria	Tanzania
France	Norway	Uganda
Gabon	Pakistan	United Kingdom
Ghana	Portugal	United States
India	Rwanda	Zimbabwe
Kenya	Saudi Arabia	

Some of the organisations, events and government departments that Allon has addressed include:

AAA School of Advertising	Deloitte
ABSA	De Montfort University
AFDB Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy	Department of Trade and Industry
African Development Bank	Entrepreneurs' Organisation South Africa
Anglo American Enterprise Development Conference	First National Bank
Bright Young Minds	Franchise Association of South Africa
Business Day TV SME Summit	Gauteng Township Economy Business Week
Business Unity South Africa	Goldfields
Businesswomen's Association	Gordon Institute of Business Science
Cass Business School	HIRS
CGMA Africa Inaugural Conference	

Homecoming Revolution (London)
IBM
Industrial Development Corporation
Investec
IPM Annual Convention and Excellence Awards
IQ Business
Johannesburg Stock Exchange
Junior Achievement South Africa
Kaya FM
Klipdrift Premium Brandy
Liberty Life
Loeries Masterclass
Lonza (Switzerland)
Microsoft
Midrand Graduate Institute
Nedbank
Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chambers
New York Forum Africa
Old Mutual
Pathways to Funding Do-ference

QuadPara Association of South Africa
Regenesys Business School
Smart Procurement Expo
South African Breweries
South African Institute of Chartered Accountants
Standard Bank
SUCCESSness Fest
Suits & Sneakers
Supplier Development Seminar
Tony Elumelu Foundation
Triologue Business in Society Conference
University of Johannesburg
University of Oxford, UK
University of Oxford's Saïd Business School
University of Pretoria
University of South Africa
University of the Witwatersrand
Wits Business School
World Economic Forum
Zimbabwe Entrepreneurs Masterclass