

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 currently supports in excess of 500 businesses.

Allon is the author of two bestselling 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 TV show; and also created and published an ongoing entrepreneurial cartoon strip. Allon is the host of his sixth season of the popular *The Big Small Business Show* on BusinessDay TV; and a columnist for *Entrepreneur Magazine* and *The Star* newspaper

Allon is the co-founder of the Entrepreneurs' Organisation South Africa and Rural Roots, and sits on the advisory and judging boards of numerous local and international NGOs and entrepreneurial awards. Allon's passion and focus on the development of entrepreneurs attracted the attention of the World Economic Forum (WEF) which, on 11 March 2008, awarded 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, Allon 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 this field. More recently, Allon 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 was recognised as the country winner, regional winner and continental winner of the Titan Award for Building Nations.

Since 2014, Allon has guest lectured every year 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.



Allon Raiz **Profile**



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

Allon began his career in his parents' umbrella-manufacturing factory. 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 more than 200 workers.

Allon soon realized 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 his experience in the retail sector, and accepted the major personal consequences this decision entailed. Finding himself unemployed, Allon 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 did an article on one of his wacky promotions. As fate would have it, this article was read by a local multibillionaire businessman.

In late 1991, Allon was given the chance of a lifetime by this businessman – to start any business of his choosing, whilst being mentored through the process. The “New York Sausage Factory” was established in early 1992 as 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 and tasked with turning the ailing company around. Within one year, the company had grown to ten times its size. Allon spent the next seven years at this company before leaving to set up Raizcorp.

It was during his time at the vehicle security company that Allon managed to turn around another two small companies, which would go on to become the two pioneering companies within Raizcorp. It is important to note that Raizcorp was started without any external investment. Today Allon is involved in more than 40 businesses directly and hundreds indirectly through Raizcorp.

The lucky break that Allon received as a young man 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 understand further the unique model that he has developed. Allon's work now extends into 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 their businesses, 96% of all entrepreneurs fail; and 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 adaptation to various economic and socio-political environments. The 4% of small businesses that do survive are doing something right: Allon’s achievement is founded on Raizcorp’s ability to identify and capture this entrepreneurial spirit, thereby building and growing successful and, most 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 book, published in 2010 to critical acclaim, is entitled *Lose the Business Plan*.

The great success of *Lose the Business Plan* was followed up 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 business 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.

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 cartoon, 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 on quality, not quantity. It is thus 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 being appointed 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 awarding Allon Raiz as a Young Global Leader on 11 March 2008. 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 recognition of his thought leadership in the field of entrepreneurship. In 2013, Allon was invited as a panellist at the World Economic Forum on Africa, held in Cape Town.

Allon Raiz
Achievements

Milestones

Allon founds **Raizcorp**, the only unfunded for-profit business incubator model in Africa – the world’s **first Prosperator**. (2000)

Allon is a founding member of the international **Young Entrepreneurs’ Organisation** (YEO), later named the Entrepreneurs’ Organisation (EO), in South Africa and serves on the board for two years, with this chapter winning the best start-up chapter in the world award. (2002)

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. (2005/14)

Allon is the founding member of **Rural Roots**, an organisation focused on bridging the rural-urban divide and bringing more economic activity to the rural areas. (2006)

With his team at Raizcorp, Allon designs a programme – **REAP** (Rural Entrepreneurial Accelerator Programme) – to train and grow 70 entrepreneurs in rural KwaZulu-Natal. There are currently 200 entrepreneurs on the programme, and approximately 500 have completed it. The programme is so successful that it is mentioned in the Minister of Environment’s speech to Parliament the following year. (2007/8/9/10/11/14/16)

Allon advises the Mauritian Government on their **Incubator and Entrepreneurship Strategy**. (2007)

Raizcorp opens its **second Prosperator** in the CBD of Johannesburg. (2008)

Allon is chosen by the Mail and Guardian as one of the **200 young South Africans** you must take to lunch. (2008)

Raizcorp opens its **third and fourth Prosperators** in Richards Bay and Meyerton respectively. (2009)

Raizcorp signs a **Memorandum of Understanding with the International Finance Corporation** (IFC) to roll out Raizcorp in Rwanda and nine other African countries. (2009)

Allon is chosen to attend **Harvard University’s** programme on *Global Leadership and Public Policy in the 21st Century*. (2010)

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. (2010/11/12/13/14/15/16) Pitch & Polish is broadcast in radio format on SAfm. (2012/13/14)

Raizcorp opens its **fifth and sixth Prosperators** in Rustenburg and eMalahleni (Witbank). (2010)

Raizcorp signs an agreement with Chevron to open its **first international Prosperator** in Cabinda, Angola, in 2011. (2010)

Allon is invited to **speak** at the **World Economic Forum Annual Meeting**, held in Davos, Switzerland. (2011)

Raizcorp opens a **seventh Prosperator** in Uitenhage, Eastern Cape, South Africa. (2011)

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 funding environment in sub-Saharan Africa. (2011)

Raizcorp is visited by Judith McHale, the **United States Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs**, and lauded as a "model for Africa". (2011)

Raizcorp is accredited as a **Centre of Excellence by the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative** (SFEDI), which is the UK Government-recognised Standards Setting Body for Business Support and Business Enterprise. (2011)

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

Allon is invited to serve as an expert on the **Human Resource Development Council Entrepreneurship and Education Technical Task Team** (HRDC EE TTT), under the chairmanship of Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe. (2011/12/13)

Allon is invited to deliver a speech on Quality Incubation at the launch of the **Competitive Investment Climate Strategy** (CICS II) in Kampala, Uganda, chaired by President Yoweri Museveni. (2011)

Allon is invited to attend the **World Economic Forum Annual Summit** in Davos, Switzerland. (2012)

Raizcorp opens its **eighth Prosperator** in Durban, South Africa. The Prosperator is designed to prosperate 57 small businesses at a time, and 200 in total. (2012)

Allon is invited to speak at the **SME Africa 2012 Conference** and is **voted as the Best Speaker** at the event by the delegates. (2012)

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. (2012)

Allon is invited to present at the **37th International Small Business Congress**, held in Johannesburg, South Africa. (2012)

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. (2012)

In 2013, Raizcorp launches the **ACUMEN Enterprise Acceleration Programme, in conjunction with Investec**. Following the massive success of the first programme, which had a budget of R12 million, the programme was reintroduced in 2015 and the budget has now doubled. (2013/14/15/16)

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)

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

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

Allon is invited by the **White House**, on behalf of **President Barack Obama**, to speak at the 6th Global Entrepreneurship Summit, held in Kenya. (2015)

Allon is invited to speak at the 2016 Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. (2016)

Judging, Boards and Advisory Roles

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

Allon is appointed to mentor for the **ABSA Incubation Fund**. (2005)

Allon is a judge for **ABSA's Internal Innovation Awards**. (2005/6)

Allon is an adjudicator for the **Technology for Women in Business (TWIB)** awards for the Department of Trade and Industry (dti). (2006/7/8/9)

Allon is a judge (and chairman of the judging panel) for the prestigious **Ernst & Young Emerging Entrepreneur Awards**. (2006/7/8/9)

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)

Allon is invited by the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)** to be a panellist at the **MIT Global Start-up Workshop** in Trondheim, Norway/Cape Town. (2007/9)

Endeavor (an international NGO) appoints Allon as a panellist (judge) on the **International Selection Panel to select Endeavor Entrepreneurs**. (2007/8)

TechnoServe (an international NGO) invites Allon to become a member on the board of advisors for the **Believe, Begin, Become national business plan competition**. (2007/8/9)

Allon is invited by the **Businesswomen's Association** to be on the judging panel for the Entrepreneur Category in the **Business Women of the Year Awards**. (2008/10)

Allon is invited by the dti to judge the **Cell C GeM Techno-Girl Programme**. (2008)

Allon judges the **HIT-Barcelona '09 Global Entrepreneurship Competition**. (2009)
Allon is appointed special advisor to the board of **FNB's Enterprise Development Trust**. (2009)

Allon is appointed to the board of the **National Empowerment Fund (NEF)**, South Africa. (2009/10/11)

Allon is selected as a judge for the **Johnnie Walker – Celebrating Strides** competition. (2010)

Allon is appointed to the advisory board for the **Citibank Micro-Entrepreneurship Awards** presentation. (2010/11/12/13)

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)

Allon is appointed to the technical advisory panel of the **SBP SME Growth Index**. (2011/12/13/14)

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. (2011/12/13)

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. (2011/12/13)

Heartbeat NGO, which focuses on the protection of AIDS orphans, appoints Allon to their board. (2011)

Allon is re-appointed by the South African Cabinet to the **Board of Trustees of the National Empowerment Fund** for a second three-year term. (2012/13/14/15)

Allon is appointed to the international jury, consisting of 74 expert jurors across 8 countries, of the **Core77 2012 Design Awards**, in the *Social Impact* category. (2012)

In January 2013, Allon is appointed to the **Expert Advisor panel of Entrepreneur Magazine** and is monthly columnist in the magazine. (2013/14/15/16)

In March 2014, 2015 and 2016, Allon presents a series of master classes at Oxford University **Saïd Business School**, where he was recognised as the **Oxford Saïd Business School's Entrepreneur-in-Residence**. (2014/15/16)

Allon is appointed to sit on the advisory board of **Startup Nations South Africa**. (2014/15/16)

Allon is invited to join the **Henley Business School Advisory Board**. (2015/16)

Allon is appointed as a judge for the **Oliver Empowerment Awards**, recognised as South Africa's most influential empowerment award. (2015)

Nominations and Awards

Allon is nominated twice for the **Johnnie Walker Entrepreneur of the Year Award**. (2004/10)

Allon is a semi-finalist of the international **Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneur of the Year** awards. (2007)

Allon is chosen as the grand winner of the **Champion of Entrepreneurs in Africa** award by the **Africa Heritage Society**. (2007)

Allon is awarded as a **Young Global Leader** by the **World Economic Forum** in Geneva. (2008)

Allon is recipient of the **Entrepreneur's Organisation South Africa Award for the most outstanding personal achievement of the year**. (2008)

Allon is recognised by the **Gordon Institute of Business Science** (GIBS) as one of **South Africa's Top 50 Thought Leaders**. (2009)

The **Oliver Transformation and Empowerment Awards** recognise Allon as the winner of the South African **Entrepreneur of 2013 Award**. (2013)

Allon is recognised as the country winner, regional winner and continental winner of the **Titan Award** for Building Nations. (2014)

Allon is recognised as the Finalist Minsiter's Award Business Incubation Pioneer at the **South African Business Incubator Awards**. (2016)

Media

Allon runs South Africa's **first weekly national radio show** on the subject of entrepreneurship, called **Raizen Entrepreneurs**. (2004/5/6/7)

Oprah Magazine has a regular monthly feature with Allon as the entrepreneurial coach. (2006)

Allon **writes and hosts a prime-time reality television show** called **Rize Mzansi**, taking nine small businesses through an incubation process, with one business ultimately winning R1 million. This is the largest prize ever on the broadcasting TV station. The show won a **Silver Award at the Rose d'Or Festival** out of 1 100 entries across 23 countries. In 2014, Allon is featured again in the third series of the show. (2007/14)

Allon is a regular contributor for the magazine **Whizz Kids**, writing on the links between attention deficit disorder and entrepreneurship. (2007)

Allon is a regular columnist for the **Business Report** on the subject of entrepreneurship. (2009/10)

Allon is a regular contributor to **Destiny Magazine's** printed magazine as well as website. (2011/12/13/14/15/16)

Allon is a expert contributor to **Entrepreneur Magazine's** printed magazine, and has a monthly column called **Shift Questions**. (2011/12/13/14/15/16)

Allon is the host on a BusinessDay TV show – **The Big Small Business Show** – which ran its first season for 45 weeks. In its third season, the show becomes **the most-watched show on BusinessDay TV**. The Big Small Business Show is currently in its sixth season. (2012/13/14/15/16)

702 TalkRadio, Classic FM, Kaya FM, and Power FM radio stations feature Allon as a regular guest contributor. (2012/13/14/15/16)

Allon is a featured contributor in episodes of **It's My Biz**, an entrepreneurial TV show **aired nationally on e.tv**. (2011/12/13/14)

Allon is a regular contributor to **The Star Workplace** and has a monthly column called **Raizing Entrepreneurs**. (2015/16)

Published Works

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, 50 000 units have been sold. (2005/6/7/8/9/10/11/12/13/14/15/16)

Allon co-authors **Sharing the Passion – Conversations with Coaches**. (2006)

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). (2009)

Allon authors **Lose the Business Plan**, a book in which Allon shares the lessons he has learnt, and seen others learn, on the road to business success. To date, 18 000 copies have been sold. (2010)

A chapter is devoted to Allon in **Branding and Marketing YOU** by Donna Rachelson, published by BrandingandmarketingYOU Publications, Strathavon, South Africa. (2011)

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. (2011)

Allon authors **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. (2012)

Carlson Dutz (Avoiding the 96%), a cartoon strip about the entrepreneurial lifestyle created by Allon, is launched in **Entrepreneur Magazine** in February 2013. In 2015, Carlson became a weekly addition to **The Star Workplace** newspaper. (2013/2015)

Raizcorp is studied as a case study in the MBA Programme at **Wits Business School**. (2013)

Talks

Allon has been invited to speak on topics related to entrepreneurship and incubation in more than 40 cities around the world.

He has addressed audiences in the following countries:

- Brazil
- Botswana
- China
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Dubai
- France
- Gabon
- Ghana
- India
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Morocco
- Nepal
- Nigeria

- Norway
- Pakistan
- Portugal
- Rwanda
- Saudi Arabia
- South Africa
- Swaziland
- Switzerland
- Tanzania
- The United Kingdom
- The United States
- Uganda

Some organisations and government departments that Allon has addressed include:

- AAA School of Advertising
- ABSA
- African Development Bank
- Anglo American Enterprise Development Conference
- Bright Young Minds
- Business Unity South Africa
- Businesswomen's Association
- Cass Business School
- Deloitte
- De Montfort University
- The Department of Trade and Industry
- Entrepreneurs' Organisation South Africa
- Franchise Association of South Africa
- First National Bank
- Goldfields
- Gordon Institute of Business Science
- Homecoming Revolution (London)
- HIRS
- Industrial Development Corporation
- Investec
- IQ Business
- Junior Achievement South Africa
- Kaya FM
- Klipdrift Premium Brandy
- Lonza (Switzerland)
- Microsoft
- Midrand Graduate Institute
- Nedbank
- Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chambers
- The New York Forum Africa
- Old Mutual
- QuadPara Association of South Africa
- Regenesys Business School
- Smart Procurement Expo
- South African Breweries
- Standard Bank
- Supplier Development Seminar
- Tony Elumelu Foundation
- The Johannesburg Stock Exchange
- South African Institute of Chartered Accountants
- University of Johannesburg
- University of Oxford, UK
- University of Oxford's Said Business School
- University of Pretoria
- University of South Africa
- University of the Witwatersrand
- Wits Business School
- The World Economic Forum

Allon Raiz **Life's Purpose**

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