

Heavy Chef launches new book for entrepreneurs

By  Juanita Pienaar

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Heavy Chef and Xero have recently launched a book entitled *The Heavy Chef Guide to Starting a Business in South Africa*. The book is the first of many of these guides and is written by Heavy Chef founder and CEO Fred Roed, and published by Xero and Heavy Chef.



Image supplied.

The book includes 160 pages of startup tips, packed full of lessons gleaned from Roed on starting and exiting a successful business, as well as input from 'heavy chefs' that have spoken on the Heavy Chef events stage over the past decade. Here, Roed lets us in on what we can expect from the new book...



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■ What is Heavy Chef and what is your involvement in it?

The name 'Heavy Chef' comes from the saying: "never trust a skinny chef". We celebrate 'doers': people who eat their own food. In a world of people who stare at screens, we believe it is the doers that will change it. At its core, Heavy Chef is a platform for entrepreneurs. We try and create magical learning experiences – real-life interactions with heavy chefs, in the form of events, workshops and tours.

■ What inspired you to create a series of guidebooks for entrepreneurs and tell us more about the first book which you're about to launch.

At Heavy Chef, we get inundated by people asking for advice on how to start a business. One of our partners, financial software company Xero, had the same challenge with its community. So, we decided to tackle it by creating an easy-to-read guidebook that could be digested in one sitting. The next book is focusing on financial management for startups. Then operations, HR, marketing and more...

We've been stunned by the response of the first book. So much so, that our first print run has sold out and we've ordered a second printing of it. It will be available soon via the [Heavy Chef website](#), and the [za.xero.com Xero South Africa website](#).

▣ **What makes Heavy Chef's approach different to all those who came before?**

There are a lot of similar, very cool initiatives out there. What sets us apart is that we both inspire and empower. Our methodology is: learn, do, share. So it's not just about absorbing the lessons, it's more about what you do after the lessons. Then we encourage our constituents to share their learnings.

I believe our tone is also different. We're irreverent, accessible, informative and credible. Our tone, I've been told, is a unique combination of humility and ambition. Moreover, we're not exclusive or preclusive.

“ Heavy Chef is more a shared attitude than a demographic. We bridge the gap between billionaires and aspiring entrepreneurs living in underserved areas such as Khayelitsha. ”

Our goal is to create a platform that inspires and empowers anyone with the dream of creating their own business, company initiative, organisation or side project. Whether the person is an established business person or an emerging talent, Heavy Chef is a welcoming place.

▣ **Comment on the state of entrepreneurship in South Africa?**

I believe we have an incredible latent potential. South Africa has extraordinary challenges and our entrepreneurs have the ability to solve many of them.

That said, we have a long way to go. There are several blockages that need to be removed before we can fully realise this potential. One is the government support that is still minuscule for the SME sector. There are initiatives like the SA SME Fund, CEO Initiative fund and organisations like CiTi that are promising, but it's not enough. We need cohesion in our sector, with these organisations talking to each other.

I hope that Heavy Chef will play a part in making that happen.

“ We also have too many accelerators and incubators serving too few startups. Heavy Chef led an immersion tour to Silicon Valley earlier this year. According to our friends over there, Silicon Valley has a tight-knit group of signature accelerators, serving around 60,000 startups. In comparison, we have around 1,200 startups with around 120 accelerators. We don't need more accelerators, we need more focus! ”

Lastly, there is a psychological problem with emerging entrepreneurs that we don't have the ability to crack a global market. That needs to stop. Having met hundreds of startup founders around the world through Heavy Chef, I sincerely believe we have the talent to change the world, and yes, we can do that from down here on the tip of Africa.

▣ **What are the biggest challenges with regards to starting a business in SA?**

Look, starting a business is hard anywhere, but it's getting easier with all the cloud-based tools available to us – I talk a lot about that in the book. My feeling is that the support network is too fragmented. There is no direct route to funding and it's tough to support yourself while getting the business off the ground.

If we can take that challenge off the table, supporting the entrepreneur while he is getting started at a more micro level, it will change our world. It's easier said than done though. We need more micro business, seed funding initiatives, with support for the individuals on the technical challenges of the startup phase.

▣ **Any other plans in the pipeline?**

Yes, we're launching more books and workshops to support our community with those technical challenges. We're working on getting funding for those who cannot afford the R1,480 workshop fee we charge.

We also have our YouTube channel which we're excited about. It's called *Raw* and involves our presenters taste-testing the raw ingredients of raw talents, shot in a series of raw videos. You can check it out at [HeavyChef.com/Raw](https://www.heavychef.com/raw), but note that it's in seriously early stages so you'll have to excuse the dodgy sound and shaky camera work! We're getting better though, and we're proud of the progress we're making – we believe that video storytelling is critical to Heavy Chef's future.



Heavy Chef CEO and founder, Fred Roed.

Follow Heavy Chef on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for any updates on events or visit its [website](#) for more info.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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