

## 3 local entrepreneurs to watch

By [Ben Bierman](#), issued by [Business Partners Limited](#)

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Entrepreneurs are the unsung heroes of the South African economy. The small business sector is an important source of job creation and for millions of South Africans, it is a driver of income that supports the business owners as well as their families and communities.

Small businesses also provide some of the most innovative solutions to pressing social issues such as the need for safe and reliable transport and mobility, the urgent demand for educational support for young people and the need to solve key ecological and environmental challenges.

However, the environment is anything but easy for the majority of local entrepreneurs. And yet, year-on-year, extraordinary examples of grit and determination continue to demonstrate that South African entrepreneurs are deserving of their reputation for being resilient.

Despite several hurdles, many entrepreneurs have reinvented the approach to business, pushing for more agility and a high degree of adaptability. They have been able to evolve their businesses in ways that align their ventures with the evolving economic and social climate and have succeeded in building robust ventures that are positioned for long-term success.

Here is a list of three local entrepreneurs that should be on everyone's watchlist.

### **Portia Mngomezulu | founder, Portia M Skin Solutions**

After discovering the healing properties of marula oil first-hand, Portia Mngomezulu was inspired to start a business centered around the oil and its benefits for one's skin. Her entrepreneurial journey began with just R200 and an experiment in her kitchen, with Mngomezulu mixing ingredients using a two-plate stove and basic cake-making tools.

In 2015, she successfully pitched her business to Innovation Hub, an incubator programme targeted at small businesses in the bioeconomy, technology and green economy sectors. Shortly after receiving the financial assistance, she quickly got her business off the ground, setting up her own factory and later launching a skincare range that's purposed towards solving uniquely African skin issues.

Her story is also a proudly African one, with the brand using only indigenous African oils. In 2018, Mngomezulu received the award for the Top Entrepreneur in agro-processing granted by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Entrepreneurs Awards. Today, you can find her skincare products in leading retailers such as Shoprite, Checkers, Clicks and Pick 'n Pay and has recently launched a make-up range.

### **Johan van Rooyen and Willem Wouter Dreyer | co-founders, All Green Fresh Farming (Pty) Ltd**

With South Africa's agricultural sector feeling the impact of climate change, food security has become one of the country's most vital needs. Entrepreneurs Johan van Rooyen and Willem Wouter Dreyer set out to create a solution by developing an indoor vertical farming system that allows for the production of fresh produce all year round, regardless of weather conditions.

Their methods do not require the use of harmful pesticides or fertilisers and use less than 10% of the water required by



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traditional agriculture. Their company, All Green Fresh Farming caters simultaneously to the need for more eco-friendly food production methods as well as the need to boost sustainable development in the country.

### **Leslie Brenton Naidoo | CEO, Brengen Energy**

At 27, Leslie Brenton Naidoo is a shining example of the potential for young people to influence and change the local business landscape. He is the CEO of Brengen Energy, a specialised firm in the energy sector. Focused on petroleum product sourcing and distribution, Brengen Energy also offers comprehensive services including business development, strategic planning, supply-chain development, energy studies, and management courses.

Leslie is also the youngest South African to hold both a fuel wholesale license and a petroleum company. He is committed to community development and aims to create job opportunities, supply fuel at competitive rates, and uplift underprivileged students.

These three entrepreneurs should be on every South African's watchlist as they break down barriers, empower their communities and contribute towards positive change. While their journeys to success have been chartered in different ways, they share a collective love and admiration for South Africa and represent the best that lies ahead for the country.

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