Vinny Lingham

Gyft

“ I saw an opportunity to make it easy for anyone to build a website. ”

COUNTRY	Global
INDUSTRY	Technology
EMPLOYEES	60
WEBSITE	http://www.gyft.com/

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

From his kindergarten days, when he made money selling stickers, through his college years, when he helped defray tuition costs by managing rock bands, Vinny has always had a knack for thinking big.

His vision, drive, and leadership have propelled his success as a young tech entrepreneur in South Africa. In 2007, Lingham founded Yola, an online platform that allows people without programming skills to easily develop websites through a simple drag-and-drop system. Yola currently has over three million users worldwide, and last December the company signed a distribution deal with HP to pre-install Yola on all HP computers—approximately 60 million per year. Yola also signed a recent deal with AOL and was selected by Google to serve as the default web host for its new “Get Your Business Online” initiative. Lingham also successfully positioned the company for growth, receiving $20 million in Series B Financing in 2009.

Under Lingham’s leadership, Yola has garnered a plethora of accolades, including being named one of the “Fast Fifty Reader Favorites” in 2008 and one of BusinessWeek’s “Fifty Tech Startups You Should Know” in 2009. The same year, Lingham was named a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader.

Yola is not Vinny’s only enterprise. Vinny was originally selected as an Endeavor Entrepreneur for his venture incuBeta, which has quickly grown into one of the world’s leading affiliate marketing companies serving all-star clients such as Yahoo!, eBay and Expedia.com. In 2006, incuBeta was named “South Africa’s Top Technology Company” and received substantial investment. Vinny has sold the majority of incuBeta to concentrate on Yola.

Born and educated in South Africa, Lingham now lives in the Bay Area where he serves as an angel investor and board member of multiple tech companies. A vocal proponent of entrepreneurship, Vinny is an active spokesperson for the power of technology and entrepreneurship, which he seeks to foster in his home country through the Silicon Cape Initiative, which he co-founded with a fellow high-tech entrepreneur.

ENDEAVOR AND GYFT

Vinny, who recently raised financing for his startup, credits Endeavor with helping him raise the funding and for providing a Harvard MBA intern who helped prepare the requisite business plan. “Your connection to Endeavor may be the most important one you ever make in business,” he told a group of high-potential entrepreneurs in Endeavor South Africa’s Excelerator program. “Look at what it did for me.”

Vinny has demonstrated commitment in numerous ways, including by serving as a keynote speaker at Endeavor South Africa’s first Excelerator Panel.