

From Regs to Riches

Reg Athwal, the founder of the RAW Group companies is a world renowned presenter, livewire moderator, panel facilitator, and master of ceremonies. From opting out of going to university, starting his own business at 17 and becoming bankrupt at 21, Athwal speaks to **AM** about his devastating fall and his exceptional comeback to the top.

It's hard to get up after a fall. As kids we do it all the time. Scraped knees and bruised wrists are everyday occurrences, but no matter how many times we fall, we somehow manage to get right back up. As we grow older however, and as our uninhibited youth slips away, we grow more and more conscious of how we're perceived and the fear of a second failure prevents us from taking up those second chances that come our way.

Not for Reg Athwal. Despite losing his entire business at 21, declaring himself bankrupt

and shouldering the burden of GBP 55,000 worth of debt, Athwal managed to not only pick himself up but he learnt from his mistakes and used his newfound wisdom to try again. And try again he did. At 26, he made his first USD 1 million and now he is the founder of the RAW Group companies, has built a reputation across the globe and has presented his signature keynote presentation in 36 countries. And you know what? We haven't even got to best part. What's incredible about his achievement is he did this with no formal business education.

Having had experience presenting in conferences in several countries, Athwal has grand plans for his career in the UAE, where he has been residing for three years now. He is currently working on producing a TV channel aimed at different audiences in the region, from business and property shows to educational and cultural ones. Athwal has spent three years thinking and planning the content for the platform and believes that with the right people with the right passion, it has the potential to be a huge success. It's this obvious passion and determination to succeed that gives Athwal his unique edge.

At just 17 and whilst on holiday, Athwal came across a personal development book that inspired him to take a leaf out of Bill Gates' life and try entrepreneurship rather than the traditional University route to success, something that his parents considered to be almost sacrilegious.

"My father refused to speak to me for two days," he reveals. "But he could see how determined and passionate I was. In the end, he agreed to let me try it for a year but if I couldn't do it, I promised to return to further education." After a year, Athwal's marketing company was flourishing and there was no need to look back.

A few years later however, tragedy hit when, overexerted, his ventured failed. "I was the only person who was involved in the leadership and management role of my business. Although I was hiring people in sales roles and other areas, there wasn't a number two." Athwal reflects. "I thought about hiring someone else to support me but then decided against it. I thought that it would be a waste of resources and that I could do it all myself. That was a huge mistake. A year later, I couldn't cope with the finances, the back office, the administration, the operations because my natural skills were in the areas of sales, marketing, business development and presenting. I knew what I was weak at but kept spending time on that area instead of just realising that I needed someone else to manage those aspects. I ended up sabotaging my own success." University however, was still not on the cards for Athwal who, having tasted the sweetness of entrepreneurship – the thrill of starting with a blank page and watching an idea develop into something more, was anxious to start again. He was determined to keep his attitude positive and with the help of self-help books, he was able to accept his past and start again.

"I remember one particular book called 'Tough Times Don't Last' by Dr Robert Schuller about how bad times are temporary. I made the decision to learn from my mistakes and have another go."

Unlike his first stab at business, Athwal decided that the best way to learn about a business, rather than a BA in Business Administration, was to work for a successful entrepreneur. He wanted to work somewhere where he would be adding value to the company and learning as much as he could until he was ready to start his own business once again. He realised that in order to be successful, this time he would have to focus on his strengths. At 19, Athwal experienced the adrenaline rush of presenting at a conference at London's Wembley

Conference Centre in front of an audience of 3,000 sales representatives, and despite the sweaty palms and huge nerves that accompanied the adrenaline, Athwal realised where his true talent lay. He knew that he enjoyed interacting with people and speaking about things he is passionate about. He knew he had the ability to capture people's attention and keep it – and he knew he was able to connect with a large audience in a way not many can. After years of offering HR consultancy and leading thought-provoking workshops, Athwal decided to take his expertise, his talent and his personality and package it into a presentation that educates, inspires and empowers people to turn their undiscovered talents and potential into reality. Thus, 'Unleash Your DNA' was born.

'Unleash Your DNA,' Athwal's keynote presentation, is one that he has developed over time to deliver at corporate conferences. In a nutshell, 'Unleash Your DNA' is about finding the best in yourself, utilising your talents and finding the best in others and because it's about people, it can be adapted to suit any corporate conference. He has presented to clients as diverse as L'Oreal in London and the Kempinski Hotel in Ajman. Following his first disastrous business experience and then his subsequent experience working in HR, Athwal highlights his past mistakes and the lessons he learnt from them during his inspirational presentation that aims to leave the audience with thought-provoking ideas to take home.

'Unleash Your DNA' is successful because Athwal has done exactly that. His words are not empty or meaningless. He is someone who, having tried out different ventures, has not given up because of failure. Instead of lamenting on his weaknesses, he has focused on his strengths – his personality and has essentially bottled it into a product that sells. From rejecting the traditional path of university and instead, opting to learn his lessons from life, from losing his business at 21 and becoming bankrupt, Athwal has utilised his mistakes to benefit both himself and others, and is now the CEO of the RAW Group, a leading provider of expert professional speaker services. He has proven that one failure need not dictate the course of your life.

REG ATHWAL AND THE RAW GROUP

Reg Athwal chairs conferences as an expert link presenter, livewire moderator, anchor for live interviews, facilitator of panel discussions and forums, and master of ceremonies for prominent gatherings that include awards ceremonies, product launches, government forums, royal family addresses and celebrity functions. Athwal has spent many years building businesses and specialising in human capital management and human potential development, and combines these two areas to be masterful when presenting on the platform, whilst informing and educating audiences throughout their conference experience. What you get with Athwal is a warm and energetic professional delivery style, backed with extensive business expertise and substance.

RAW Group (RAW LTD and RAW LLC) is a leading provider of expert professional speaker services for conferences, congresses, meetings, exhibitions and events throughout United Kingdom, Europe, Africa, Middle East and Asia, with offices established in London and Dubai. Since 2002, the RAW Group has presented 'what really matters' to countless people across the globe.

Their vision is to continue to 'present what matters' to people throughout the world and currently offer extensive value-added services to clients running events in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jeddah, Riyadh, Doha, Cairo, Karachi, Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore.

Visit:
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