FAMILIES & BUSINESS

BUSINESS FOR GENERATIONS

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VOLUME XII

COVER STORY:
LAVANYA NALLI
6 Yards of Beauty & Elegance

FEATURE STORY:
YOGESH CHAUDHARY
RUGS TO SWEEP YOU OFF YOUR FEET

WOMEN IN BUSINESS:
SHUBHA LAL & NIDHI KUMRA
DEVYANI BHATNAGAR

EXPERT SPEAK:
NAVNIT SINGH
PETER MAY
RISHABH SHROFF
The pandemic year has been instructive and reflective for most of us. What a year this has been! In April 2020, most of us were convinced that the lockdown was a temporary one; we were all making plans for the summer; friends were planning to meet ‘when this is over’; everyone was enjoying working from home, dressed in ath-leisure clothes. Did anyone realise that it would be their life for the next 12 months? The year of the pandemic has been instructive to say the least. Feedback across the board also shows that the year has been a ‘reflective’ one as well. Instructive as individuals and businesses learnt new ways to survive and thrive. Reflective because individuals found time to figure out various priorities in their life. While there were many aspects of the pandemic year that united us all, there was one that stood out – food! People discovered their culinary skills with focus on baking and once food deliveries re-started, ordering in became a way to break the monotony of life. This issue, too, also highlights stories of people in the food business. From Devyani Bhatnagar’s exclusive platters as starters to Nizam’s Kathi Rolls and more as the main course and topping off with Mr. Mustache’s Cakes – this issue has a lot of food for thought! The pandemic year has been a year of learning as well. And family businesses have learnt various lessons in managing crises. Family business owners share their experiences in the following pages. Women came into their own during the pandemic year as well. From the world leaders who were inspirational to business leaders who managed their businesses remotely – there are many stories of women in the year gone by. We have Lavanya Nalli, the first Nalli woman in one hundred years to work in the family business. You can read about her journey in the Cover Story Feature. The above are just a few of the interesting and inspiring stories in the current issue of the magazine and I do hope you will enjoy them all. As always, your feedback is welcome and appreciated. Do write to us at sonubhasinfab@hotmail.com. We want to hear from you. Really. Meanwhile enjoy this latest issue of the Families & Business magazine. Happy reading!

Sonu Bhasin

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: SONU BHASIN
EDITOR: JUGGI BHASIN
FAB MAG EDIT TEAM: VASU VATS, RENU KAUL, KARAN BHASIN, SHERYL D’SOUSA
DESIGN: VIJAY RANA
WRITE TO US: sonubhasinfab@hotmail.com
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EDITORIAL

WHAT A YEAR this has been! In April 2020 most of us were convinced that the lockdown was a temporary one; we were all making plans for the summer; friends were planning to meet ‘when this is over’; everyone was enjoying working from home, dressed in ath-leisure clothes. Did anyone realise that it would be their life for the next 12 months? The year of the pandemic has been instructive to say the least. Feedback across the board also shows that the year has been a ‘reflective’ one as well. Instructive as individuals and businesses learnt new ways to survive and thrive. Reflective because individuals found time to figure out various priorities in their life. While there were many aspects of the pandemic year that united us all, there was one that stood out – food! People discovered their culinary skills with focus on baking and once food deliveries re-started, ordering in became a way to break the monotony of life. This issue, too, also highlights stories of people in the food business. From Devyani Bhatnagar’s Exclusive Platters as starters to Nizam’s Kathi Rolls and more as the main course and topping off with Mr. Mustache’s Cakes – this issue has a lot of food for thought! The pandemic year has been a year of learning as well. And family businesses have learnt various lessons in managing crises. Family business owners share their experiences in the following pages. Women came into their own during the pandemic year as well. From the world leaders who were inspirational to business leaders who managed their businesses remotely – there are many stories of women in the year gone by. We have Lavanya Nalli, the first Nalli woman in one hundred years to work in the family business. You can read about her journey in the Cover Story Feature. The above are just a few of the interesting and inspiring stories in the current issue of the magazine and I do hope you will enjoy them all. As always, your feedback is welcome and appreciated. Do write to us at sonubhasinfab@hotmail.com. We want to hear from you. Really. Meanwhile enjoy this latest issue of the Families & Business magazine. Happy reading!

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**Packing A Punch!**

Starline Packers

The Bengaluru based Starline Packers Private Limited has been a top packing company in the market since 1980. The company provides high quality and precision packing to the Indian market. Their expertise includes corrugated and foam packaging and antifungal treatment service. The chief growth officer and young inheritor of the company Allen Jacob spoke to FAB about the present trajectory of the company and its prospects in a changing environment.

I believe that in every family business women need to play a role as they can bring in a lot of balance and sanity into the business.
WHILE THE CONCEPT OF BEING AN ENTREPRENEUR SOUNDS FUN, THE ACTUAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE DAILY REQUIRES PATIENCE AND MATURITY

FAB: AS A CHILD AND THEN A YOUNG ADULT, DID YOU ALWAYS WANT TO JOIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS?
Allen Jacob: That is a funny question, my parents always wanted me to get into our family business, but I was never too keen. Even when I was studying my engineering, I always wanted to go abroad for my masters and settle down either in the US or UK. After my engineering I was working for a company in Bangalore - BISS who are into manufacturing of testing machines. I was also studying for GRE so that I could apply at a foreign university. In June 2012, my father had had a health issue and that changed my thinking and I decided to come into the business to support my father in his recovery. That is really when I began to understand the business. I started implementing many new systems and processes which helped us acquire new clients.

FAB: HOW EASY WAS IT FOR YOU TO GET INDUCED INTO THE BUSINESS?
Allen Jacob: In continuation to the above, when my father got back to the business after full recovery, he was pleasantly surprised to see a lot of positive changes driving profitable growth in the company. We had grown our monthly revenue almost two-fold! There was, as he told me, a noticeable change in the atmospherics and momentum too. He then suggested that I continue this for at least a couple of years before I took up my master’s studies. But time changes everything and as we kept growing quite rapidly, I decided to stay back.

FAB: TELL US WHAT EXCITES YOU THE MOST AT STARLINE PACKERS?
Allen Jacob: Starline Packers has been in business for more than 45 years and we have people even today who have been with us for about 35 years.
who have been with us for about 35 years. I am 31 and in the initial days, it was a bit of a challenge to mould them culturally as to how I perceived things. It took me time to win their trust. They eventually started buying in to my vision and started to adjust to the new spirit which I had ushered in. After all that our company has been growing on all fronts. Those were exciting times. I continue to feel excited even today.

As of now we are a strong brand in the market and the brand personifies trust, ethics, and commitment.

The 40 plus years of experience and the new technologies and systems we are bringing in has helped us to positively engage with our clients.

FAB: AS ONE OF THE NEXT GEN IN THE BUSINESS, ARE YOU BoTHERED BY SOME OF THE LEGACY ISSUES?
Allen Jacob: No. I have been able to resolve that. My responsibility is to make the family legacy grow and take it as high as possible. My parents have enabled me with the right exposure, they have given me good education and all the support I require to achieve this.

FAB: YOurs IS A FAMILY BUSINESS IN WHICH ALL MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY, INCLUDING

WOMEN, PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE CORE BUSINESS. HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT?
Allen Jacob: During the early 70’s my father was running a business in Mumbai. He had many sawmills in Kerala and was supplying the materials to Mumbai and Pune. As my mother was a home maker, she started supporting him by managing some of the Kerala operations. They moved base to Bangalore by 1980. My mother acquired new clients in Bangalore with similar requirements.

After I was born in 1989, my father decided to close the Mumbai operations and moved to Bangalore. They then progressed the business my mother had created. They are running it together till date.

FAB: WHAT DO OTHER FAMILY BUSINESSES NEED TO DO TO GET MORE OF THEIR WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE BUSINESS?
Allen Jacob: In India there used to be a notion that men earn, and women manage the home. That is slowly changing now. In my experience I have seen that both my parents had equal say in all the decisions be at home or at work. My father was able to work on new projects and other businesses because my mother held fort at the base camp. This was the essence of success in our business.

I believe that in every family business women need to play a role as they can bring in a lot of balance and sanity into the business.

FAB: WORKING WITH FAMILY MEMBERS IS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD: HOW DOES YOUR FAMILY HANDLE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES AT WORK?
Allen Jacob: This is a challenge every successful family business must overcome. A small issue at work can come home and can cause problems.

In our family, we try to keep the business at office and avoid taking about business at home unless something critical comes up. An element of formal housekeeping is essential. For example, on the dinner table there is no business discussion. Sundays are family days and there is no home related discussions in the office. Following such rules bring about some balance into the complicated equation of running family businesses.

FAB: YOuR VISION FOR STARLINE PACKERS?
Allen Jacob: To be the first-choice innovative partner to protect and ensure safety of your products on the move.

Adding to the above, Starline Packers over the next few years are looking to moving to other packaging products such as food, dairy & FMCG packaging. We are also working on some innovative solution for the industrial packaging segment that is our domain.

We are working on many other new non-packaging products as well. Our vision for the Starline group is to have businesses in 3 different segments over the next 10 years.

In our industrial packaging business, we will soon be a leader. We have already declared the “Best MSME for Quality excellence in 2020.”

When I Started Off at Starline We Had One Manufacturing Unit, Today We Have 5 Running Units and 2 More Are Under Construction
NOW MANY EATING ESTABLISHMENTS does one know which carry the name of their main chef or khansama as we say in Urdu. Well, Nizam’s Kathi rolls is one such rare establishment named after its renowned khansama Muhammad Nizam. Nizam’s Kathi rolls are a familiar, illustrious name in the Delhi gastronomical circuit and the credit for their finger licking recipes and staying power goes to the Chugh’s who came together more than 40 years ago to start Nizam’s Kathi rolls. Rajesh Chugh with almost 40 years of work in the hospitality sector, his brother Sumeet Chugh who developed the famous galouti and kakori range and young Kabir Chugh - ex Oberoi, have spearheaded this quite literally ‘delicious’ enterprise through good times and tough times like the present pandemic. FAB conversed with young Kabir Chugh to get a perspective of how this family venture has been able to sustain itself over the years and continues to thrive.
FAB: WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND NIZAM’S?
Kabir Chugh: In 1978, a couple of friends came together to start Nizam’s Kathi Kabab in Connaught place and that gave birth to Delhi’s original Kathi roll. This pocket-food cuisine was named Nizam’s Kathi kabab to honour its first khansama (Chef), Mohammed Nizam, whose descendants continue to work with us even till this day. The army of three chefs with limited resources, traditional cooking methods, heirloom recipes and a will to serve quality cuisine gave Delhi its favorite comfort food - Kathi roll kabab! We still use a 200 kilogram, 4 feet wide, 1.5-inch-thick tawa to make our signature luqmi parantha. It is a shallow fried bread made to crispy perfection. We also use only bamboo skewers (Kathi) to roast our meat which gives it a delicate smoky flavour. We now have 5 outlets which are managed by Rajesh, Sumeet and me. After 44 years of having only one USP - Kathi Rolls, we now have galoutis too - marinated for 16 hours, stoneground & seared delicately with desi ghee. We also have a vegetarian version made from jackfruit & elephant foot yam or jimikand. Believe it or not, you can hardly tell the difference between the vegetarian and non-vegetarian variety!

FAB: HOW LONG DID IT TAKE FOR NIZAM’S TO BECOME THE ICONIC NAME THAT IT IS TODAY AND HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE IT?
Kabir Chugh: It has been a long journey these past 44 years. We have been through many openings and closures, good times as well as tough. The first decade was spent in establishing an identity for ourselves in Delhi. Through the past four decades, we always focused on three main things - quality, consistency, and value for money. Nizam’s grew up in Delhi’s neighborhoods and there is a strong sense of attachment to this city. Even though we firmly believe the best days of Nizam’s are yet to come in the present to be known as Delhi’s original Kathi roll and serving almost 1000 Delhiites everyday makes us feel extremely fulfilled!

FAB: THERE ARE THREE OF YOU IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS. WHAT IS THE UNIQUENESS THAT EACH ONE BRINGS TO THE BUSINESS?
Kabir Chugh: Though we all have our own responsibilities and areas, it is interesting to understand the dynamics that drive the company. Rajesh is 58 years old with 40 years’ experience in the hospitality sector. He is the foundation rock and leader of the company. He guides us through new avenues, navigates the company with a holistic vision in mind and helps shape the future of the company. Sumeet is 48 years old, and he is the ideal army captain in our set up. He keeps everything in check and...
ensures smooth operations and sees to it that every cog in the Nizam system is well oiled and performs to its best and optimum. His determination is the main reason we have endured some rough waters in the past. He is also the spirit keeper of Nizam’s, holding everyone’s morale forever high. And there’s me all of 28 years. I bring in new energy and a driving force at Nizam’s. I am working on transforming Nizam’s from a traditional business to a new age business enterprise. We are ready to move to more cities and fuel exponential growth in the coming years.

FAB: FAMILY BUSINESSES WHICH HAVE MORE THAN TWO MEMBERS IN THE BUSINESS OFTEN GO THROUGH SOME CHALLENGES OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS. HOW HAVE THE THREE OF YOU PROTECTED YOURSELVES AND THE BUSINESS FROM THIS?

Kabir Chugh: It is not like we don’t disagree, in fact we disagree a lot! But we take that as a healthy development which fuels creativity, pushes limits and drives personal growth. That only helps us to a point. After that it’s all about enforcing strong communication about objectives and individual goals and having well-defined key responsibility areas, having deep discussions about where we see the company in the future. Nizam’s is our family legacy, and it defines who we are as people hence this strong desire to see it grow unites us.

FAB: HOW EASY IS IT FOR THE NEXT GEN TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE BUSINESS AND CARVE OUT A PLACE FOR THEMSELVES?

Kabir Chugh: This takes time. In your twenties you are still figuring out who you are as a person and what you want your life to be like. We make sure the company remains a fluid atmosphere for the next gen to explore and find their interest level. All family members - including women and children - are very well exposed to the business.

We celebrate some festivals with our employees and know most of our team members by their first name. People relate to this and lowers the feeling of an alien intimidating environment. This can be risky at times, but we let the new members make changes easily and let them inculcate a little bit of themselves into the business. This makes them feel valued and almost immediately they assimilate into the spirit of the business.

FAB: HOW ARE THE INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERING POINTS OF VIEWS BEST HANDLED?

Kabir Chugh: This is probably the only aspect a family business where you can benefit from long lengthy meetings. Generational differences are not something you can reason with so easily. The best way is to spend hours understanding the other person, their objectives and their thinking. It is important to make everyone feel that they have a voice in all that matters in the business.
THE PANDEMIC GAVE US A CHANCE TO INTERNALISE AND RE-CREATE OURSELVES FROM SCRATCH

Once you can agree over a common goal, it becomes easier to figure out the method. At least for us, it works that way.

FAB: THE PANDEMIC WAS A TRYING TIME FOR ALL BUSINESSES, BUT THE FOOD BUSINESS WAS HIT PARTICULARLY BADLY. WHAT LESSONS DID YOU LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF AND ABOUT THE BUSINESS DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Kabir Chugh: The pandemic gave us a chance to internalize and re-create ourselves from scratch, so we did exactly that. We gave ourselves a fresh new direction and approach. The biggest change was we scaled down our menu from 42 items to a crisp 25 items. We are now in a mode to become a lean, process-driven restaurant that focuses on historic recipes cooked with high-quality ingredients with traditional cooking methods. We are going to embrace the identity of being Delhi’s Original Kathi roll and are planning to take it to other cities soon while at the same time always maintaining a small-restaurant ideology. That means staying away from premixes, frozen goods, artificial flavourings and staying focused on simple things. And that would be fabulous ingredients cooked with skill and served with love.

FAB: SHARE WITH US HOW YOU KEPT THE HOPE ALIVE IN YOURSELVES AND IN YOUR EMPLOYEES DURING THESE CHALLENGING TIMES?

Kabir Chugh: Fifty percent of our team have been working with us for over 15 years and thirty percent over 8 years. We have always made sure our people are the absolute centre of the business and taking care of them and their loved ones is as important as taking care of our own. Therefore, it is no surprise that we have enjoyed immense loyalty from them. We have faced tough situations in the past too but have never wavered from our promise to help as much as we can. The pandemic was no different. Our employees know the company will always be there for them. We employed 95% of our staff back, in different capacities however, within 2 months of the lockdown being lifted. The company is as much theirs as our family’s.

FAB: HOW DID YOU SPEND TIME DURING THE FIRST, VERY STRICT, LOCKDOWN?

Kabir Chugh: It was quite eventful. We spent a large part arranging different amenities for our teams. The kids played a lot of board games while the adults caught up on their sleep! We all would spend a lot of time admiring the beautiful sky and clean air in Delhi. Everything after the first 21 days though was spent in anticipation how to re-start the business and get things going again. The pandemic was brutal, but it taught us how less you need to have a happy life.
SEPARATING MYTHS FROM STRATEGY

By Sunil Dias

THE MYTHS THAT DEFINE STRATEGY
The word ‘strategy’ means different things to different people. While of older vintage, it is similar to ‘AF’ and ‘Blockchain’. Words which sound nice but are often used misleadingly. Even the management experts do not seem to agree on a standard definition. Instead of attempting a definition, this article will try to bust some common myths about strategy. With the intent that busting the myths will give us a clearer understanding of strategy.

MYTH: STRATEGY AND PLANNING ARE THE SAME
Strategy and planning are quite different. Plans are largely centred around budgets. How do I allocate my finite set of resources? In contrast, strategy is about making an integrated set of choices that differentiate your company from competition. Strategy by number crunching is boring. And it does not work. For instance, your strategy cannot be to sell fewer units at higher margins. That is obvious and it does not work. For instance, your strategy cannot be to sell fewer units at higher margins. That is obvious and it does not work.

MYTH: STRATEGY IS FOCUSED ON WHAT I SHOULD DO
Strategy does help you choose what you should be doing. Yet, what is equally or more important is what you choose ‘not to do’. That sharpens your focus significantly. And prevents you from chasing every new opportunity which you come across. It is quite simple to fall into the trap of doing everything. Once in this trap, it is difficult for customers to know what you do. It is difficult for you to have a differentiated offering.

MYTH: STRATEGY REQUIRES FANCY FRAMEWORKS
Somewhat, good strategy has become inextricably linked to fancy frameworks. It all started with the BCG Matrix. While that is a fairly simple and useful framework for larger businesses, that can’t be said for some of the newer (and fancier) frameworks developed. The less frameworks, the better. They force you to fit your future into a box and constrain thinking. That said, if your strategy is well explained by a custom-made, simple framework, go for it. Only, make sure that the strategy comes first - not the framework.

MYTH: YOU CAN HAVE THE SAME STRATEGY AS ANOTHER COMPANY
If you successfully copy another company’s strategy, either that company, your company or both of you are going out of business soon. Thankfully, it’s difficult to copy strategy. Uber and Lyft look similar on the face of it. Dig a little deeper, and their strategy differs significantly. Focus on developing your business into something unique; not making your business a clone of your competitor.

GAME-CHANGING STRATEGIES ARE DEVELOPED THROUGH CREATIVE THINKING. A SPARK OF INTUITION, A LEAP INTO THE UNEXPECTED

MYTH: STRATEGY IS A SCIENCE
Following a fixed process to develop strategy is useful. Yet, strategy is more art than science. The most important ingredient? Creativity. Game-changing strategies are developed through creative thinking. A spark of intuition, a connection between different ways of thinking, a leap into the unexpected. That said, do not take forever to formulate your strategy. Set timelines and make sure you complete developing your strategy and plan in those timelines.

MYTH: THE LEADER DEVELOPS STRATEGY
Many strategy development exercises turn into the group agreeing with the senior-most persons ideas. If this is the case, your strategy might be limited to the thinking of the senior most person. You will miss out on the hands-on, customer facing experience and knowledge of the people lower down the line, which might prove invaluable to your business. It is important that the leader performs the role of a team member rather than the leader in a strategy development exercise. Everyone should be encouraged to speak their mind. Involve people from outside your industry: ‘Outsiders’ can bring in refreshing, unconstrained ideas. Involve people from other industries or invest in an advisor to bring perspective to the strategic planning exercise.

MYTH: STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IS EASIER THAN DEVELOPMENT
It is not. It is more difficult for three reasons. One, for successful implementation, everyone needs to know and believe in the strategy. Two, there often need to be organizational changes to ensure that appropriately skilled employees are in the right positions. Three, implementation of initiatives to realize your strategy needs constant program management.

CLOSING THOUGHTS
Ensuring you are working on the right thing brings more and faster success than working harder. And you need a strategy to identify and ensure that you are working on the right thing. Your effort sets the foundation of your business. Your strategy sets your ceiling. Strategy is one integrated set of choices. What is your winning aspiration? Where will you play? How will you win? What capabilities are required? Focus your energies in answering those questions. If you do that and avoid falling for one of the myths, chances are you will develop a great roadmap for your company’s future.

The author runs Greatstuff Strategy, a consulting firm helping businesses become bigger and better. Email: sunildias@iv-advisors.com
A conversation with the Harvard educated family business inheritor Lavanya Nalli

THINK NALLI. 6 yards of magnificent colours, textures, and materials offering irresistible choice to the Indian woman. Think Nalli. A patina of streaming elegance that is worn by many and desired by most. Think Nalli. A statement made by Indian women for all to see and appreciate and admire.

For generations Nalli is that iconic name from South India that the Indian woman across the length and breadth of the country has flaunted, shown, and worn. It has become almost like rites of passage for Indian womanhood. And leading the charge of this iconic company is 35-year-old Lavanya Nalli who as vice chairperson of this 100-million-dollar legacy saree retailer is taking the company to new untapped markets while consolidating core business which has been around for almost 100 years.
MY FIRST CONCERN WAS FOR THE BUSINESS, SINCE IT WAS UNCLEAR IN THE EARLY DAYS HOW LONG THE LOCKDOWN WOULD LAST. WE STILL HAD A DUTY TO OUR EMPLOYEES, WEAVERS, BUSINESS PARTNERS:

Lavanya Nalli with a formal engineering degree and after completing her business studies from Harvard Business school joined global consulting firm McKinsey which prepared her as it were to foray in her family business and bring innovative management tools and fresh thinking in taking the company forward. FAB Editor in chief Sonu Bhasin caught up with Lavanya to understand how she has redefined a conservative family business to mainstream with contemporary times and offer choices to Indian women in sync with the here and now.

FAB: HOW DID YOU GET INDUCTED INTO THE BUSINESS?
Lavanya Nalli: It was a lot of learning by observing and doing. I learnt from some of the most tenured salespeople on the floor. My VP in Mumbai was also extremely helpful in letting me observe and learn from him. I shadowed and learnt from others.

Lavanya Nalli: It happened slowly. The first 4 years in the family business I mainly observed but created a few initiatives and tracked them with the customer, using that feedback to refine my approach. After 7 years away in the US and working outside the family business, by the time I re-entered I was much more confident.

FAB: YOU ARE A DAUGHTER, A WIFE, AND A MOTHER BESSIDES BEING A BUSINESSWOMAN. PLEASE SHARE WITH THE READERS, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG WOMEN, HOW YOU MANAGE THESE ROLES CONCURRENTLY.
Lavanya Nalli: I aim for work-life harmony. Over the years, I have grown to realize there is no such thing as balance; it sets up a false notion that one must either be at work or at “life” and that these two things are mutually exclusive. My own personal experience is that life is richer once one has a more integrated approach to both work and non-work life. It
also helps to ruthlessly prioritize and then take stock of whether one’s actions and time spent matches the priorities that one has committed to. You can always be a 10% better boss, a 10% better mother, etc etc... but at what cost?

**FAB: HOW CAN WOMEN IN FAMILY BUSINESSES PROACTIVELY PREPARE THEMSELVES TO JOIN THE CORE BUSINESS?**

Lavanya Nalli: If you are clear it is what you want to do, then speak up and make your intent clear as early as possible, then elicit the support of your mentors, bosses and other influential family members in ensuring you are able to carve out a training program for yourself to help you in this goal. If your family business values members who receive 2-3 years of training outside the family business, then make it clear to the core family that this is the goal, and your trajectory is in line with this objective of yours.

**FAB: WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU GIVE TO THE PATRIARCHS WHO WANT THEIR CHILDREN - SONS OR DAUGHTERS - TO JOIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS?**

Lavanya Nalli: The world that the younger generation, my own brother, and younger cousins, are growing up in a vastly different from the world of 10 or 20 or 30 years ago. Look at both the aspirations and the opportunity costs faced by someone in their early 20s. When faced with the daunting question of what to do with their career, and if getting in the family business is an objective, then those individuals should craft a clear approach wherein it’s clear to both the organization and to the individual what all sides with gain with their entry in the family business. Most of all, keep an open mind what you want for your kids, because kids have a mind of their own.

**FAB: A COMMON COMMENT MADE BY PROFESSIONALS WHEN LOOKING AT A CAREER OPPORTUNITY UNDER A YOUNG GEN-NEXT IS “OH BUT SHE IS SO MUCH YOUNGER THAN ME!”. HOW HAVE YOU DEALT WITH SITUATIONS LIKE THESE?**

Lavanya Nalli: Luckily by the time I had my second stint at the family business, I had already established myself by holding senior positions at Myntra where I was a VP or working at McKinsey where I was directly interacting with Fortune 10 CEOs. This helped with my credibility.

**FAB: WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU GIVE TO THE PATRIARCHS WHO WANT THEIR CHILDREN - SONS OR DAUGHTERS - TO JOIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS?**

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Lavanya Nalli: The world that the younger generation, my own brother, and younger cousins, are growing up in a vastly different from the world of 10 or 20 or 30 years ago. Look at both the aspirations and the opportunity costs faced by someone in their early 20s. When faced with the daunting question of what to do with their career, and if getting in the family business is an objective, then those individuals should craft a clear approach wherein it’s clear to both the organization and to the individual what all sides with gain with their entry in the family business. Most of all, keep an open mind what you want for your kids, because kids have a mind of their own.

I THINK THE FIRST THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT THERE ARE A LOT MORE OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA TODAY THAN THERE WERE 5 OR 10 YEARS AGO
FAB: HOW DID YOU SPEND TIME DURING THE FIRST LOCKDOWN DUE TO CORONA VIRUS?
Lavanya Nalli: My first concern was for the business, since it was unclear in the early days how long the lockdown would last. We still had a duty to our employees, weavers, business partners - the whole business chain that has interdependencies all along it. Once I was able to get a better grip on the business front, then I started to enjoy some aspects of the lockdown, such as spending more quality time with my son and family.

FAB: IS THERE ANYTHING NEW THAT YOU LEARNT ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY DURING THE CORONA TIMES?
Lavanya Nalli: It was a very odd time indeed, at first I was working even more than before and quite stressed by the uncertainty of the lockdown and how long it would last. Once those aspects settled down, then I had a period of wondering what to do with all my non-work free time given that I could not travel for work or otherwise, or socialize, or meet anyone or go anywhere. It was mainly spent on quality time with my son and family, and also, I rediscovered some of my hobbies from my childhood that I hadn’t explored in a long time - like sketching, painting, writing.

FAB: HAS YOUR VISION FOR THE BUSINESS CHANGED/MODIFIED AFTER THE PANDEMIC? CAN YOU SHARE YOUR VISION FOR NALLI AS IT STRIDES AHEAD CONFIDENTLY?
Lavanya Nalli: If anything, my confidence in achieving our vision has only strengthened. I believe given our strong business values, our long-standing history and exclusive partnerships with master craftsmen and weavers going back generations, our legacy and foundation, we are poised to become the number one saree destination in the world. I believe we can make it happen and we are just getting started.

You can buy them at Amazon: https://goo.gl/1GKur9
THE CHANGING FACE OF INDIAN FAMILY BUSINESSES

By Navnit Singh

AFTER GOVERNMENT SPENDING, family businesses have been the backbone of most nations worldwide and India is no exception. Post partition most business families either migrated to India or then in the Nehruvian period took the initiative to start building the nation. The socialist structure and the so-called license age did undermine their entrepreneurial spirit to a large extent but as the economy opened, they were the first to seize the opportunity to build large conglomerates. According to Business Today, family run businesses amount for 25% of India Inc. sales, 32% of profit after tax, almost 18% of assets and over 37% of reserves.

This note is about how families have transformed themselves from their traditional business style to adopt the latest management practices to sustain in this changing business dynamics hence the need for talent changes dynamically.

The changing business dynamics hence the need for talent changes dynamically.

The GenNext of most business families are getting themselves professionally and technically trained and the business family of yore, which was almost home grown and self-educated is virtually non-existent. When they come back to join the business, they surely feel out of place. The business family of yore, which was almost home grown and self-educated is virtually non-existent. When they come back to join the business, they surely feel out of place. The younger generation is more independent emotionally and less hierarchy driven than the older generation.

This is one of the most dynamic changes taking place in the Indian business houses, where the next generation scions are coming back after pedigreed exposure overseas and affecting change in the thinking of their parents. Parth Jindal of JSW is an excellent example of how one has transitioned from a young green horn to a very mature business leader who is already leaving a mark of professional behaviour measured on outcomes.

Even traditional businesses in South India have reconciled to the changing landscape and examples are a plenty i.e., Lucas, TVS, GM, GVK, etc. who have hired professionals to manage their businesses.

Everyone appreciates the need to change from a ‘promoter driven company’ to becoming a ‘professionally driven company’. The endeavour is to move from a pure loyalty and may be sans performance driven metrics to building employee commitment by encouraging openness and reciprocity. They look after the interest of the employees and their family and implicitly (or sometimes explicitly) ask employees to look after the company’s interest in return.

Given the above, the challenge is with professional managers, who also expect the keys of the house to be handed over to them without understanding the nuances of India business houses dynamics and of establishing the bond of trust and performance. One counsel to both sides has always been to do deep referencing on capabilities and of the managing family dynamics which is going through transformation at one hand and on the other hand on onboarding candidates through a formal on-boarding process. The need today is to identify learning agility, adeptness to feedback and change management. The success of this country has been based on the entrepreneurship of groups like Reliance, Adani, ITES sectors, to name a few. Let us not take away our place under the sun by not contributing to the growth of the Business Houses by virtue of great talent not working with them. The larger talent pool needs them as much as professionals need to manage this changing dynamic.

The author is Chairman and Managing Director of India, Korn Ferry.
IT IS HARD TO CHANGE OVERNIGHT. SO, I FEEL THE KEY IS TO DO IT SLOWLY BUT CONSISTENTLY, AND TO PUT IN PLACE A STRONG CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

HEALTHY GREENHOUSE FARMING WITH HARVEL GREENS

IT IS HARD TO CHANGE OVERNIGHT. SO, I FEEL THE KEY IS TO DO IT SLOWLY BUT CONSISTENTLY, AND TO PUT IN PLACE A STRONG CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

F THERE IS ONE THING that the current pandemic has taught us it is that we need to take care of our health and wellbeing to survive and do well in an everchanging, unpredictable world. In that light Harvel Greens – high tech greenhouse farming company founded by Neha Oswal is doing a pioneering job. An alumnus of Indian school of Business at Hyderabad, Neha has turned her family business in conjunction with her father to give people fresh, clean, and chemical-free produce through high-tech high-tech greenhouse solutions. FAB spoke to Neha Oswal about her venture and where she intends to take it in the years to come.

FAB: WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO JOIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS?

Neha: We are a small family of 4, my parents and two sisters. My younger sister is settled in London. Therefore in 2016, as a part of the succession plan, I decided to join the family business. However, having done my bachelor’s in architecture and master’s in design from Milan, I was keen to use my education and experiences to add to the business and steer it forward. That meant it came down to designing structures for protected cultivation. It was the perfect amalgamation of my family business and my education and skillset.

FAB: HOW DID YOU GET INDUCTED INTO THE BUSINESS?

Neha: After a long maternity, I decided to quit my design business and set foot in the family business. In January 2016, I joined our Corporate office in New Delhi as the ‘Business Development Head’. I was clear from the start that I needed to carve out a niche for myself, but I gave the first 2 years of my association with the company to understand the working of the business.

FAB: YOU ARE AMONG THE SMALL PERCENT OF WOMEN INHERITORS. DID YOU HAVE TO CONVINCE YOUR FATHER TO LET YOU START WORKING IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS? OR DID YOU FATHER HAVE TO CONVINCE YOU?

Neha: My mother has been the guiding force behind me joining the business. Like any other parent, she was worried about the succession plan and wanted my father to take it easy and hence suggested him to train & induct someone younger. Even though my father is extremely hard working and passionate about his business, with unmatched
URBAN FARMING IS A FAST-GROWING MARKET, CATAPULTED BY THE FOCUS ON HEALTH AND IMMUNITY

YOUNG INHERITORS

WE ARE ONE OF THE OLDEST, MOST WELL KNOWN COMPANIES IN THE IRRIGATION INDUSTRY

energy and rigour, till date timing of my entry was a big consideration. After several family discussions, it was agreed I would be inducted in the business. In the lead-up to joining the family business, I completed a course at Indian School of Business, Hyderabad and felt even more prepared to take the big step.

FAB: CAN YOU TELL US WHAT EXCITES YOU MOST ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS?
Neha: Our company has been in this business since 1982. We are one of the oldest, most well-known companies in the irrigation industry and it’s the brand recognition and legacy of quality, that makes me extremely proud. I remember when I was young, and I travelled with my father for expo’s across the country, the kind of love and respect he got from the industry - it was very endearing. Ever since I joined the business, we have made a conscious effort to increase our offerings to the urban segment vs the rural segment which we primarily catered to until my induction into the company. I find it very exciting to explore this new segment, to meet new people and understand their challenges and help them solve those. We are consistently adding to our product lines and that too is an exciting journey. Launching a new offering in the market and seeing the market respond to it, has its own joy and that is what keeps me going day after day.

FAB: HOW DID THE CLIENTS REACT TO DEALING WITH A YOUNG WOMAN INSTEAD OF A VETERAN LIKE YOUR FATHER?
Neha: I must confess that even though the agricultural / irrigation industry is completely male dominated, I have received a very warm welcome. Everyone who has met me has been very encouraging. I think seeing a woman in this business is not just refreshing but also inspiring for many. They see me as the ‘new generation’ and so far it’s been great. Nevertheless, it is intimidating for a small entrepreneur spirit within a well-run family business, and that requires hard work.

FAB: THE GEN-NEXT COMES INTO THE BUSINESS WITH THEIR NEW IDEAS, HOW DOES THE GEN-NEXT GET THE NEW IDEAS IMPLEMENTED?
Neha: For me, this is the most beautiful part when the younger generation gets in a completely fresh outlook towards things. I think firstly one must spend enough time to understand the current establishment to see the good and the bad. It is crucial to take forward the good in every organisation and to try and eliminate the bad, but the process must be gradual. I think its most important to first gain everyone’s trust before we begin to implement any changes. Once we have won hearts and confidence, it gets a lot easier to make changes. Also an open communication channel with your team is a very important change management tool. Sharing vision and strategy for the company, and taking senior executives along that journey is a key success factor.

FAB: WHAT ARE THE NEW IDEAS THAT YOU HAVE BROUGHT INTO THE BUSINESS?
Neha: When I joined the business in 2016, I realised that our business was primarily catering to the rural market. Urban farming is a fast growing market, catapulted by the focus on health / immunity, and to reduce reliance on supply factors, I felt this could become a strong revenue generator for the company. Therefore, I started developing products and services to take the strong Harvel brand to the urban market. Today, Harvel Greens, is a company within Harvel Agua India Pvt Ltd which is completely focussed on urban farming. We work with corporates, HNIs, Universities and also the Government to promote concepts of urban farming in the country. We are constantly introducing & experimenting with new technologies from around the world. Hydroponics, the art of growing plants in water is one such offering that Harvel Greens specialises in. Another huge change is that we have now gone digital. We have setup an e-commerce portal and are now targeting the domestic retail segment which was never considered as a market for us in the past.
and I followed that. I hardly raised my point of view in the first several months of joining the company. I simply absorbed all the information coming my way like a sponge. This helped me understand and reflect on many aspects of the business and also took the load off me to prove myself immediately. I would certainly say that my father’s advice helped me make my place in the organisation smoothly and gain a very broad exposure to the inner workings of the company. People often share more when they feel safe.

**Fab:** Was there any advice given by your father that you completely disregarded?

**Neha:** So, after a long observation period, when I decided to bring about changes to the organisation, there were several disagreements between my father and me. I realised very early that my father was quite resistant to change (like most people his age). But I truly believe a company needs to constantly reinvent itself and so change is crucial. I did what I had to in the smoothest, politest way I could, and today I would like to believe that my father and I have found our balance. We have grown to understand, respect and adapt to each other’s styles. Today we comfortably debate, discuss, and argue strategies and decisions which help us align and seamlessly execute. We have complimentary skill sets that helps us manage our people and this helps in the smooth operations of the company on day-to-day basis.

**Fab:** How did you overcome the resistance from the workers in the factory/plant who would have dealt only with your father till then?

**Neha:** Since ours is a 35 year old establishment, there have been several challenges in trying to bring about change in the working culture. People are not to be blamed, considering how one has worked in a certain way for several years. It is hard to change overnight. So I feel the key is to do it slowly but consistently, and to put in place a strong change management program. My father and I work together as a team to help resolve challenges, through our complementary skill sets and aligned vision for the company. This has been a learning curve for both my father and I and we struggled with this at first. We soon realized that it is better to discuss at length earlier and debate things out, so that the execution is aligned and consistent, balanced between process vs outcome. My father has been very supportive during this process and we have both walked steps towards each other to be able to respect alternate points of views and agree on what is best for our customers and teams.

**Fab:** What was the best advice you got from your father when you started working?

**Neha:** For the first year, my father told me to just listen,
FAMILY ADVISORS CAN HELP IN PLANNING SUCCESSION FOR FAMILY BUSINESSES

SUCCESSION PLANNING can be a difficult exercise for any organization, but in a family office environment, where emotions run high and competing priorities are prevalent, the process is especially challenging. With a wide variety of issues on hand to deal with, family members often seek the support of trusted advisors who can be seen as the most relied external source of advice and knowledge that family businesses draw on.

Trusted advisors improve the efficacy of the succession process by mentoring both incumbents and successors, providing new insights on the succession, or acting as agents to bring different opinions together and achieve compromise solutions. The major challenges in this pre-succession phase are:

• The incumbent must become aware of the need for succession in the near future.
• The incumbent needs to build up his or her willingness to withdraw and prepare both the business and the family for succession.
• The succession process must be initiated well in time. Information asymmetries between the incumbent, the family, and the successor candidate is also a big challenge. Principal conflicts during succession are the result of such uneven distribution of information and divergence of interests. Advisors can help alleviate these problems by adopting the role of a neutral, external mediator who facilitates discussions among the incumbent, the successor candidate, and family members. In particular, based on previous experience with succession cases and interpersonal skills, they can promote the communication among all involved parties and thereby reduce informational asymmetries. Moreover, due to their education, training, and experience, advisors can also provide important and objective information on the succession process.

Given many people haven’t been through the process, owners usually select a lead advisor to help lead and coordinate the process. For a lead business succession advisor, the main responsibility is to provide a structured process in which the owner makes the big decisions, while the advisor ensures the completion of any detailed planning work. A good professional advisor act as a quarterback – “doing” where the issue is within his expertise and “coordinating” where other advisors will be involved. The advisors are aware of their limitations and know when to turn for advice that is beyond their expertise. So, using advisors who are used to working as part of a team is also important.

Thus, given the role they can play during succession, most family offices try to build up a deep stable of advisors over the years. But while these advisors provide value in their own areas, they can often bring competing priorities and confusion into the succession planning process too. The challenge for families then, is to cut through the clutter, determine who to listen to and what advice to act on. It’s important to pare down the planning process and only involve the most trusted advisors. And while it’s important to get the insights and advice from a select few, it’s also important that the family, not advisors, lead the planning. Family survival is at stake in succession planning and family members should have ultimate accountability.

FAB Editorial Team
I look back at my journey at Pearl Bag Factory, which began with working at Citi Bank in Mumbai and wound up over the years to manufacturing high quality bags for the international market, getting married and settling down in the small town of Rajkot (engineering based industrial town) in Gujarat.

My decision to manufacture bags was prompted by my brother settled in the United States who ran a flourishing promotions and advertising agency; he was also buying these bags from suppliers in US, who in turn were sourcing them from China and Pakistan around that time. He encouraged me to start manufacturing these bags in Rajkot and the deal was that he would look after the front end and the sales in the US.
My husband’s family has a successful engineering business but had no expertise in manufacturing bags. The thing is a cotton bag looks simple enough but, believe me, there are enormous challenges in manufacturing a high, export quality bag! Back then in 1996, nobody in India had heard of cotton bags because plastic bags were then the rage.

I began my manufacturing journey by putting up four machines in the conference room of my husband’s office on the second floor. I still remember that when the first truck load of fabric arrived from Bombay Dyeing, we realized that fabric comes in 500 kgs huge bales and we would have to take it up two floors without a lift! Within a week I had to move my fledging business to a section of the family factory in the industrial area of Rajkot. Within four days I had to move out because the Excise department objected to this arrangement. I then rented a factory nearby and started construction work on my own factory. Being married into a well-known successful business family of Rajkot posed a challenge to me because there were no women then working in industrial plots - least of all women who were running their own factory. People would be amused and dismissive of the “thali” ka factory; people did not want to work there, especially under a woman boss. Rajkot does not have a garment manufacturing industry, so everything from needles to fabric had to be sourced from outside. There was not any trained manpower available. Local tailors used to work in the shops in the city and were not willing to work in a factory culture or come to the industrial area 7 kms out of the city. I would meet them at the city office every day and personally drive them in my car to the factory, work full day and drive them back to the city at night.

WITHIN A FEW MONTHS OF US STARTING, OUR MAIN BUYER IN THE U.S. DECIDED TO SHUT DOWN THEIR OWN MANUFACTURING UNIT IN IOWA AND TRANSFER THE ENTIRE PRODUCTION TO US! THEY INVITED BHARAT AND ME TO VISIT THEIR FACTORY TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE AND PRINT BAGS AND SHIPPED THEIR MACHINERY TO US. WE ARE STILL USING SOME OF THOSE MACHINES AFTER 25 YEARS!
I had to train every single person working in the factory from scratch. At the peak of my manufacturing endeavor, I employed almost 200 people. Currently, I employ 110 people and forty percent are women. Up until 2008, we were supplying only to the US. After the crash in 2008, two of our main buyers filed for bankruptcy on the same day, two days before Diwali! We then made a website and attended trade shows in Europe and expanded the business into Europe.

STRENGTHS
We now have 25 years of experience in this field, have come a long way and have ramped up our manufacturing abilities -helped in no small measure by my husband’s engineering background.
We have a set of very loyal buyers who have stayed with us over the years because of the quality that we deliver and for the price we quote and offer. They call us the “Mercedes” of the bags industry. Our products are made from cotton grown in India and are available cheaper in India than in China. Most of similar bag producing units in India are not organized and are small scale. In comparison, we are a fully socially and ethically complaint SEDEX audited and accredited factory since many years. We also have GOTS certification for organic bags.

MY VISION
Once the pandemic is over, there is going to be a huge pent-up demand which will get unleashed and we plan to be ready with a head start. We already supply our bags to some of the best brands in the world. There is huge scope to scale up and grow much bigger even though location wise we are in the wrong place. The business can grow much bigger in the right city. We would like to scale up either by bringing in a partner who is willing to take this forward or by launching our own brand internationally. God willing that will happen soon.

MEETING THE COVID CHALLENGE
I come from a working-class background and bring my values of honesty, hard work and discipline to the table and striving to give my absolute best in any situation.

When the lockdown started, there was shortage of PPE suits; we were approached by the Indian Medical Association, Rajkot to make PPE suits for them. We were in two minds about opening a factory of PPE suits. Back then not much was known about the virus and my husband Bharti, being a recovered cancer patient with diabetes, was at high risk and was not allowed to go outside by his doctor. So, I knew I would have to do it alone. Which in a sense also meant I would be putting Bharti, my husband, at indirect risk by going to the factory every day. There was also the fear of whether we were putting the workers at a risk by asking them to come to work.

At that time, I remembered Sadhguru’s words - “Whatever needs to be done, whatever opportunity comes your way, whatever you have to share, this is the time, not tomorrow.”

I rose to the challenge after the opportunity that had been given to us and started the factory with forty percent staff on 2nd April within a week of the lockdown. And to my surprise most of the employees agreed happily to come to work and were at workstations the very next day. We had to train the workers about hygiene, sanitizing, working with a mask, maintaining social distance. We ran practically a covid free factory.
I had to get on the shop floor to first learn how to make PPE suits and then teach the workers how. We also made and donated 15,000 face shields free to the front-line workers and the traffic police.

When you got over your fears and do something for a better good than your personal gains; life also has a way of rewarding you back. The PPE factory helped us to pay the employees their salaries, keep them motivated and keep the migrant labour from going back to their villages. When business started to pick up a little in June and July, our factory was already up and running while other factories were still shut down. We were able to get orders which would have otherwise gone to other factories in India and China. We are truly blessed that we will be closing the current year almost at the same turnover as last year. There is no perfect way, it is a constant juggle, sometimes your decisions work out sometimes they don’t but at least you can rest easy knowing you did the best that you could.
Jaipur Rugs is one of the country’s biggest manufacturers of hand knotted rugs. In 1978 N.K. Chaudhary started his carpet business with just two looms and eight artisans. Today that same business renamed Jaipur Rugs has grown and provides employment to 40,000 artisans spread across 600 villages of India. Yogesh Chaudhary of Jaipur Rugs spoke to FAB about the overarching vision, business practises and social responsibility of this path breaking company.

MY FATHER SPENT NINE YEARS OF HIS LIFE IN THE TRIBAL REGION IN GUJARAT TEACHING THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA THE ART OF CARPET WEAVING.
WE HAVE CREATED A BUSINESS MODEL, WHICH PROVIDES LIVELIHOOD TO THE ARTISANS AT THEIR DOORSTEP

FAB: GROWING UP IN A FAMILY THAT OWNED A BUSINESS, WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR EARLY RECOLLECTIONS ABOUT THE BUSINESS – AS YOU SAW IT THEN?

Yogesh Choudhary: I have some unique childhood memories related to the business. One of the coolest ones is of the walkie talkies that we had in Gujarat which my father and other people used as there were no mobile networks. Piles of unfinished carpets, wool, yarn and other raw material was our perfect spot for playing hide and seek. And the various trips to villages where we were greeted with immense warmth and got to experience idyllic country life.

On the business front, one learns the ups and downs of a business cycle fairly early. I was an observer to all the business decisions that my father took and how those decisions played out added to my learnings of the industry.

FAB: YOUR FATHER HAS BEEN A PIONEER IN MANY AREAS – ALSO IN SETTING UP COMMUNICATION TOWERS SO THAT HE COULD KEEP IN TOUCH WITH HIS WEAVERS? TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THIS.

Yogesh Choudhary: For him everyday communication was critical. He realised the importance of exchanging information on a daily basis very early on so that the weavers do not suffer due to any shortages of raw material and otherwise. He has also always sought ways to nurture weavers and spread the art of weaving to some of the remotest corners of the country. He spent nine years of his life in the tribal region in Gujarat teaching the people in the area the art of carpet weaving. Some of those places were so remote that reaching them was an adventure in itself. Seeing the work that my father had put in to bring sustainable livelihood to the region the government had allowed him to set up towers to use walkie talkies to communicate with branch officials.

This helped him create a weaving cluster out of a tribal belt and ensure that some of the highest quality hand-knotted carpets out of the country come from there.

FAB: AT WHAT AGE DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANT TO JOIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS? WHAT DREW YOU TO IT?

Yogesh Choudhary: I accidentally joined the business when I was 19. I had come down during break and the business was in upheaval due to a mishap. I decided to stay
for a year and basically haven’t left since. When I joined back in 2006, I found running the company a daunting task. My education has been in the technical field but I was assigned to look after the sales, marketing, and finance departments. I remember I when I joined, I thought that I’ll bring about a revolution in a short amount of time. But I soon comprehended that trust and respect can only be earned with time and hard work, which will, in turn, convince people of your expertise in the field.

What has always drawn me to Jaipur Rugs is the people-centric and purpose-driven business model. It is a platform for the artisans to take their craft and their stories to the world. I see the artisan as the true hero of our company. And the unique, ancestral tradition of weaving is a ceaseless source of rich and authentic ideas that have universal appeal. These stories in turn weave an incredible picture of India and its authentic art forms and helps shape its rich cultural identity. With Jaipur Rugs I see the opportunity of taking our heritage global.

FAB: YOU HAVE SAID THAT JAIPUR RUGS IS A FAMILY BUSINESS THAT LAYS IMPORTANCE IN KEEPING FAMILY VALUES ALIVE. WHAT ARE THESE FAMILY VALUES AND HOW DO YOU KEEP THEM ALIVE THROUGH THE BUSINESS?

Yogesh Chaudhary: At Jaipur Rugs we combine the pursuit of profit with the spreading of kindness in a way that benefits all of our stakeholders: our consumers and their families, the artisans and their families, our employees, our suppliers, the buyers and channels we work with. We work with compassion for those around us and believe that everyone deserves dignity. This means that Jaipur Rugs works with all those that stand for these values and it drives us as an organization to work with and tap into the creative capacity of those in society that are disadvantaged or rejected.

FAB: ENTREPRENEURS OFTEN ARE FACED WITH THE DILEMMA OF FAMILY VALUES VERSUS BUSINESS REALITIES. HOW HAVE YOU FOUND THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO?

Yogesh Chaudhary: Yes, sometimes it happens. It depends on how much you want to bend. For example, we do not pay for our awards. Some of the values we hold close as a family are the founding values of our business. The entire relevance of our work is based on the values of love, compassion and empathy. In any clashing situation where we feel our values are being brought to test, we ensure that our actions do not chip away in any way at the ethics with which we conduct our business. We adhere to some unsaid rules of combining

I LIKE TO SEE JAIPUR RUGS AS A PLATFORM FOR THE ARTISANS TO TAKE THEIR CRAFT AND THEIR STORIES TO THE WORLD
There are some unique childhood memories related to the business. One of the coolest ones is of the walkie talkies that we had in Gujarat which my father and other people used as there were no mobile networks.

FAB: Work from home is a concept that became popular during the pandemic. However, your people have been working from their homes for many years. Share with our readers how and why did the concept of work from home come about in your business.

Yogesh Chaudhary: We have created a business model, which provides livelihood to the artisans at their doorstep. Weavers receive raw material at their doorstep and work from the comfort of their homes while taking care of those around them. Having found sustainable livelihood in villages many weavers don’t have to migrate to cities and add to the ever-ballooning clutter.

In case of any difficulties or challenges the weavers can report the same to their quality supervisors digitally and the quality supervisor can update the same on the in-house ‘Tana-Bana’ app. The app sends alerts to the head-office in real-time and helps solve most problems at the grassroot without physical intervention.

Even as factories shut down globally last year, the weavers at Jaipur Rugs continued to work on long term orders and other projects as per their convenience. We feel this people-centric business model will stand out and hopefully kickstart a new conversation around truly sustainable businesses that can stand tall even when faced with unsurmountable odds.

Perhaps this is what they call it “value creation”.

FAB: On the other side, have you taught your father some things? If yes, what are these?

Yogesh Chaudhary: Papa is someone who makes quick decisions. A quality that is important for all entrepreneurs. But some decisions need to be given their own time, I feel I have had some impact in making his decisions more paced out. More thoughtfully informed and in alignment with our future goals.

FAB: Can you share with us the changes you made, if any, to your crisis management handbook after Covid?

Yogesh Chaudhary: The pandemic gave us the time to analyse the underlying philosophy of our business and not just its mechanics. There is a clear purpose that the business must have. A gap in the market that we fill up. We have learnt to not lose focus of that. In a difficult situation, when even survival is a question mark, losing focus of the goalpost can be a potentially disastrous move.

In fact, we used this opportunity to consolidate and relocate our resources to the core idea of the business like going digital. It is no longer a choice. It is a fundamental business move. If there is one thing our customers have in common, it is the internet and access to the web. Everywhere, all the time. Therefore, for us it is critical to fulfill their on-demand requirements. Doing business virtually has made it more measurable and thus helped us in clearer decision making.

But nothing is possible unless you have a motivated team. It has been our top priority to keep the teams feeling positive in these uncertain times. Only with the support of our team were we able to sail through the doldrums.

FAB: What is your vision for Jaipur Rugs?

Yogesh Chaudhary: I like to see Jaipur Rugs as a platform for the artisans to take their craft and their stories to the world. I see it as a global hub for co-creation and envision it as a truly global brand out of India taking its rich culture and traditions to the world. My aim is to make it into a timeless brand that we all can be proud of.!
The journey of Surabhi is the endless fulfilment of a passion, of a discovery of India.

Siddharth Kak - Professional turned legendary creative entrepreneur.

Siddharth Kak is the man who took a huge risk decades ago by leaving a career in the elite Tata Administrative Service (TAS) to listen to his heart and stake a career as a path-breaking documentary filmmaker with his iconic show ‘Surabhi.’ Siddharth took that step because his wife Gita supported him all the way in this decision. He is the winner of several national and international awards. He began his documentary filmmaking career 40 years ago and has made nearly 4000 short and long documentary films so far in a still active career! FAB caught up with him to get a peek into the life and times of a man who followed his heart and his convictions.
FAB: YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL TURNED CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR. WHAT MADE YOU REALISE THAT A SOMEWHAT-CHOPPY LIFE OF AN ENTREPRENEUR WAS PREFERRED BY YOU OVER A CUSHY CORPORATE JOB?

Siddharth: There is a certain predictability about a desk job. You know where you are likely to be in the next two years, next five years, maybe even next 10 years, and there is little you can do to alter that graph!

By contrast being an entrepreneur carries a risk, but also an opportunity not available in a conventional job framework! Suddenly the sky is the limit and that is very motivating!

Alongside, very often your return is commensurate to your input. Greater input, greater reward!

Equally important, you can choose new fields of work, even new partners which can be very liberating!

Most important for me was that I could at last be proud of what I did when I faced the world! I was no longer apologetic about being a salesman! My work reflected me as a person, and I was proud to be that person!

FAB: THERE ARE MANY PROFESSIONALS, BOTH YOUNG AND OLD, WHO FANTASIZE ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THESE PEOPLE?

Siddharth: It depends on what that fantasy is? Is it about wealth or is it about achievement? My advice is that it should be neither. It should be fulfilment. And passion is a driving force for fulfilment. Achievement and wealth creation will follow!

But remember you cannot achieve everything yourself. You will have to depend upon and need many others.

Therefore, the one quality of leadership that you will need to develop is humility. There is a saying I have found very useful in my life, which is that you can achieve anything that you wish, absolutely anything, provided you are ready not to take credit for it!

FAB: YOU WORKED WITH A REPUTED BRAND – THE TATA GROUP AND THEN YOU WENT ON TO CREATE AN ICONIC BRAND OF YOUR OWN – SURABHI. TELL US ABOUT THE JOURNEY OF SURABHI.

Siddharth: The journey of Surabhi is the endless fulfilment of a passion, of a discovery of India. It is a never-ending journey and one which offers new dimensions at every step. I never saw Surabhi as a brand. It was simply the expression of an emotion, the reflection of a people and a nation, fed by a deep love for the simple and ordinary people of my country, who taught me the greatest lessons of life, dedication, and leadership. I found my identity as I believe a million others did, through Surabhi. I feel in such a context considering the show as a brand is restricting and even shallow!

I was often asked when the show was on air, if I were not worried that I would run out of subjects. On the contrary, if I opened a door, four others opened with ever multiplying possibilities. And that phenomenon exists even today! It is indeed the wonder that is India!

FAB: WHAT DID YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

Siddharth: The most challenging task as an entrepreneur is to imbue your team with the same motivation that you have. And you can only do that if you lead by example!

FAB: CREATIVITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP – ARE THEY TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN? OR ARE YOU ONE OF THE FEW WHO HAS MANAGED TO DO BOTH?

Siddharth: How is it possible to separate creativity and entrepreneurship? You must create in the real world. Creativity without entrepreneurship is daydreaming and entrepreneurship without creativity is foolhardiness!

FAB: AS PART OF SURABHI YOU INTERACTED AND SPOKE WITH NUMEROUS PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY. WHAT DIFFERENT KINDS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DID YOU SEE IN SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE?

Siddharth: I believe each person is a secret entrepreneur...
FAB: DID YOU LEARN ANY LESSONS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP FROM THE MANY PEOPLE YOU INTERACTED WITH? IF YES, CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THESE WITH OUR READERS?

Siddharth: You cannot be an entrepreneur without having a burning desire to do something or create something in a particular field. Entrepreneurship is a consuming passion.

There is an interesting story told about the legendary theatre actor Shambhu Mitra, doyen of Bengali Theatre, who once advised a bright young man who asked him for career advice, to join the IAS rather than the theatre! When the young man remonstrated, professing his love for theatre, Shambhuda replied, “You asked me the question young man, so it indicated to me that you were uncertain. I did not feel that you would have the fortitude to weather the storms and difficulties of the theatre profession. When I joined the theatre, I did not have to ask anybody any question. I knew with absolute certainty that I could only live as a theatre actor or else I would die! So, for you I advised “When in doubt, don’t do it!” True entrepreneurs are never in doubt!

FAB: WHAT WAS THE ROLE PLAYED BY YOUR FAMILY IN YOUR JOURNEY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

Siddharth: One’s family is critical in a successful journey. If my wife Gita, who was an actress, and responsible with me for a young growing daughter, had not approved of my decision to leave a comfortable job, to become a potentially penniless documentary film maker, I would never have had the courage to take the plunge! The journey of Surabhi is the endless fulfilment of a passion, of a discovery of India. And she supported me in the first few years when I made my first film on Kashmiri folk theatre as proof of concept! Things took off later when the Tata Oil Mills Co-sponsored my films. Some of the notable ones were on the visit of Noor Jehan to India after 36 years where she sang for the first time (and last time) alongside India’s Nightingale Lata Mangeshkar. Then there was the successful Indian Everest expedition in which Bachendri Pal reached the summit (She now works with the Tata Adventure Foundation). Mortal Men Immortal Melodies has been telecast innumerable times and Everest 84 won me the National Award for the Best Exploration film! My next film on the legendary thespian Raj Kapoor was aired nationwide on the day he passed away. There were other memorable documentaries and then I began Surabhi, which was a series of short documentaries every week; the show aired at prime time for 11 years. Every week, back-to-back, programming! I must thank Tatas in introducing me to clear and practical systems in implementing such a demanding assembly line show with a time bound delivery deadline. And needless to say, I never looked back!

And very often we would travel together as a family to film, explore our own country and the world. My daughter Antara learnt her filmmaking during these travels and won the Best First Film as a Director! Pujita learned editing and edits a regular blog showcasing stories from the Surabhi Archive for Better India and also the weekly film review Sidmak Speaks on YouTube!

It was so much fun; we never needed a vacation!
MAKING ROOM FOR ‘YOUR SPACE’

‘VERY OWN SPACE. A room with a view. Elbow room. My very own digs. Haven’t we all heard these titles before at some time or the other. These titles have a special meaning for youngsters, especially hostel students and young professionals who have taken the first steps in their career and all they wish for is a nice, rented roof over their heads which is comfortable, cozy, friendly and a kind of space where you feel like going back to after a hard day at work or studies.

No surprises then by and large this wish list remains a wish list in the oeuvre of the average student hosteler. But hang on. All that is changing. Help is here. Three youngsters are determined to change the order of things and have introduced student housing that is both inspiring and aspiring. A cursory look at the backgrounds of these three young, entrepreneurs convince

WE WANTED TO REDEFINE THE STUDENT LIVING EXPERIENCE – MAKE IT A FUN AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE AND NOT A STRUGGLE!

Nidhi Kumra
Co-founder and CEO, Your-Space

Shubha Lal
Co-founder and COO, Your-Space

In London where Nidhi and Shubha first conceptualized Your-Space.
one that they are here for the long run and are determined to change the very concept of student housing. CEO Nidhi Kumra after packing degrees from St. Stephens and Cambridge was a trader at Merrill Lynch and Lehman Brothers before the entrepreneurship bug bit her. Keeping her company is Shubha Lal from IIM Calcutta who has worked as a management consultant with top consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Trying to catch up with the ladies is the third partner Karan Kaushish who is an Oxford man and was consulting with Deloitte in London in his previous avatar.

To the young belongs the future and keeping that in mind FAB editor in chief Sonu Bhasin talked with Nidhi and Shubha to get a measure of their student housing venture ‘Your space’ and their plans.

Sonu Bhasin: What was the motivation behind your space? Tell us more about your space.

Your Space (Nidhi): Student housing is a well recognised sector in the West. Back in 2014-2015, many student housing transactions took place that caught our attention. Nidostudent housing was one of them. It was a large well managed private student housing facility in Liverpool street. Nice and clean rooms, well managed facilities, biometric entry and exits, a small in-house café, terrace garden, a large common area for people to hang around. It was truly aspirational!

Around that time my cousin was struggling with her housing in Bangalore – the food, hygiene, the facilities were not up to scratch. My uncle was quite upset with all this considering he was paying almost Rs 25,000 a month (which is not cheap) for this and yet was not satisfied with what was available.

At that point, Shubha, my co-founder, and I went around Delhi University, where we both once studied and realised nothing had changed at the local PGs since we had left DU almost a decade ago. There were still unorganised mom and pop run shops – packed with 4 to 5 kids in small rooms, sharing bathrooms, and average food to eat. Living in these places seemed like a struggle.

We then took it upon ourselves and took a leap of faith and set out to do our first hostel in Greater Noida. We wanted to redefine the student living experience – make it a fun and memorable experience and not a struggle!

Sonu Bhasin: Each of you is a partner in your space and is also a friend of the other. How do you manage both relationships - friends and business partners?

Your Space: Both of us have acknowledged that we are quite different and have different styles of working. We have different strengths and weaknesses and we have always tried to leverage those rather than step on each other's toes. We have a very aligned vision and a great core team and board which helps us concretise our vision and clearly defines our paths and roles making execution easier.

Sonu Bhasin: What is the key to handling differences of opinions between business partners who are also friends?

Your Space: Both of us have acknowledged that we are quite different and have different styles of working. We have different strengths and weaknesses and we have always tried to leverage those rather than step on each other's toes. We have a very aligned vision and a great core team and board which helps us concretise our vision and clearly defines our paths and roles making execution easier.

We are not shy of having a discussion, argument and sometimes even a screaming match in the office and the very next moment we go grab some wine at a bar next door!

Sonu Bhasin: What is the key to handling differences of opinions between business partners who are also friends?

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Our vision of Your Space is the same and every
decision is taken keeping the company in mind rather than which one of us is suggesting it. We also have very supportive husbands, who are friends themselves. They help us stay grounded and very often hold a mirror to our own thoughts.

**SONU BHASIN: HAS AGE OR GENDER BEEN A CONSTRAINT IN YOUR BUSINESS?**

*Your Space:* Initially when we moved back, we were both taken aback by the apparent gender bias. Dealing with people in real estate we felt then that they were not ready for women to take the lead. Obviously, we completely overlooked these biases and moved along to do what we had set out to do. People very quickly realised that the two girls were a no-nonsense team and meant business. Today, we are very comfortable with what we do and how we do it. Some biases still do show up from time to time, but the best way to deal with them is to ignore them and continue doing what needs to be done!

**SONU BHASIN: YOU FLIRTED BRIEFLY WITH PROFESSIONAL LIFE BEFORE STARTING YOUR SPACE. WAS IT DISILLUSIONMENT WITH PROFESSIONAL LIFE OR THE DRIVE TO START YOUR OWN VENTURE THAT WAS THE GENESIS OF YOUR SPACE?**

*Your Space:* Both of us spent over a decade in the financial services sector. It was well-paying and deeply stimulating and we both enjoyed our jobs. But it was the drive to build something of our own and make a mark that drove us to your space.

**SONU BHASIN: HAD THERE BEEN ANYONE ELSE IN THE FAMILY WHO WAS IN BUSINESS? WHAT WAS YOUR MOTIVATION?**

*Nidhi:* My dad is an entrepreneur and honestly a true inspiration for me.

*Shubha:* Surprisingly, no one in my family has been in business, so I am the first. But my parents have taught me the value of hard work and always listening to your clients.

**SONU BHASIN: AS YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS DID YOU GET EVERYTHING RIGHT THE FIRST TIME? IF NOT, HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH THE STUFF YOU GOT WRONG?**

*Your Space:* We got many things wrong in our first year. We overspent, misread what the client genuinely wanted and tried doing everything ourselves. We are very frank and quick to admit when we have made a mistake and we have a cardinal rule to not repeat the same mistake again. Every year has been a different learning experience; we still make mistakes but are getting better every year.

**SONU BHASIN: WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR YOUR SPACE?**

*Your Space:* To become India’s most loved and trusted brand of student housing - Loved and trusted by parents, students, and colleges. We would like to be the ‘Vivanta’ in the student housing world!

**SONU BHASIN: WHAT ARE SOME INSIGHTS THAT YOU CAN SHARE WITH OUR READERS ABOUT DEALING WITH CRISES?**

*Your Space:* Stay calm and focused on doing what is the right thing for your client. Be decisive and agile and move fast. Communicate very clearly and openly, especially with your own team.
MEGHAN MARKLE, HER MAJESTY, OPRAH & THE ‘FIRM’: WHAT CAN INDIAN FAMILY BUSINESS LEARN FROM THEM?

By Rishabh Shroff

BY NOW, many of us would have seen the explosive interview between the Duke of Sussex Prince Harry and the Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle, with television talk-show royalty Oprah Winfrey. The focus of the interview was on the troubled relationship that Mrs. Markle has with the royal family and Her Majesty The Queen, and her difficulties in settling into the roles expected of her. At its simplest, apart from being an exit interview of a disgruntled ‘employee,’ the interview echoed what many Indian spouses go through when they marry into a family business - to quote the new outsider joining an established, hidebound and sometimes baffling family firm.”

The Royal Family and the Crown is one of the world’s most successful family businesses, with its legacy spanning hundreds of years and generations. Not many family businesses can say they hold a fractured nation together. It has been doing so for centuries. From being an exit interview of a disgruntled ‘employee,’ one can see parallels with Indian family businesses. The Royal Family and the Crown is one of the world’s most successful family businesses, with its legacy spanning hundreds of years and generations. Not many family businesses can say they hold a fractured nation together. It has been doing so for centuries. In a way, the Royal Family and the Crown is a fitting description for the establishment. So, what can be expected from a new member joining the Firm? Are there any similarities with Indian family businesses?

One key similarity is the need to make individual aspirations align with those of the Firm. Mrs. Markle was a successful actress in a hit TV show before her marriage. She was a vocal advocate for causes she believed in but had to suppress her passion once she joined the Firm. She was expected to play a pre-written part, as the Duchess and wife of a potential future King. One may say she walked off from the sets of Suits onto The Truman Show. The Firm expects everyone to put the Crown / Institution above themselves and play their assigned role, even if it caused severe distress. And if you do not like it, it is too bad. This was a rare, unprecedented incident where there was ‘live’ washing of the royal family’s dirty laundry on a global stage (with Oprah). In India, parties would move the court / NCLT in similar situations.

Unfortunately, such stories are not uncommon in Indian families. India is littered with the shattered dreams of highly educated, competent spouses (female), who may have had glittering careers if they had been permitted to become entrepreneurs or run their own businesses. But in traditional Gujarati and Marwari families, very few daughters-in-law can follow their dreams and career aspirations. They play a supporting role to their husband and in-laws, not permitted to work outside the family business - and even then, in nominal roles like running charities, small ancillary ventures or as occasional dinner hosts. Asking for an individual identity beyond the bahu / daughter-in-law roles often caused a patriarchal sensitivity of such families.

In changing this mindset, current societal changes and trends are not enough. It is both incumbent on the husband and the in-laws to create a welcoming and supportive environment, modernize traditional expectations and make room for individual aspirations. Mutual trust and conditions would help. It is a delicate balance, and if achieved, will preserve businesses and families alike.

A key element in achieving this balance is direct and clear communication, showing empathy, vulnerability, and a willingness to accommodate. If the family home and business is causing its newest entrant to have serious mental health issues and suicidal thoughts, there is something fundamentally toxic at play. It would not be difficult to believe similar situations exist in Indian family businesses – addressing them is substantially more difficult, with issues of hierarchy, and expectations of deference to elders / in-laws. Another similarity between the Firm and the Indian family businesses is that they need to evolve into modern institutions. The Firm is run by a female leader, appointed not by stakeholders or under the principles of good governance; but a role bestowed by the accident of birth. Supporting her is a well-oiled army of 400 plus servants, footmen, estate managers and the like. The power center in the Firm is well known. Likewise, Indian family businesses are run by primogeniture, and the company is administered under the direction of the leader and conservative senior staff - who are often inherited from the previous generation. Generational change is only at death, often not in the smoothest way. The inherited employees do not always support the incoming leaders (or their spouses) to affect a smooth transition. With unsupportive senior staff, unwilling to adapt, it is not clear whose interests they are serving or protecting. Emotionally, many successors are torn between preserving the legacy of the past and being static versus evolving the business.

It is essential for every new leader to both respect ancestral legacies but look to the future with a fresh perspective. The past is the north star that needs to guide them, but it should not become a straitjacket to stifle change. Both the Royals wanted to modernize the Firm and make it relevant for the 21st century, but as Mrs. Markle alluded to, the senior staff at the Firm granted her few liberties (or permission for lunch with her friends). Similarly, Indian family businesses need to be more accepting of successors, which needs to occur in a planned manner (i.e., not just at death) and who must wisely pick teams to buttress their ambitions. That does not mean a mass firing / corporate style execution of the old guard, but the adoption of a more considered approach can help the young leader sculpt the Firm into his vision. Families need to consider not just succession at the individual level, but at the corporate center and board as well.

In conclusion, it will be prudent not to burn bridges with the establishment as Mrs. Markle and her husband appear to have done. This will only lead to an acquired conflict that is the stereotype found across many Indian homes and businesses, and it must be reformed. When a valuable family business and fragile relationships are at stake, both sides need to do whatever it takes to preserve the same for future generations. Who knows, maybe the birth of the next Royal baby can bring the Windsor’s together again?

Rishabh Shroff is a Partner at Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas, and advises family on succession related issues. Contact: Rishabh.shroff@cyrilshroff.com
AN OWNER STRATEGY FOR THE FAMILY OFFICE

by Prof. Dr. Peter May

THE GLOBAL TREND towards establishing family offices has also reached Germany. Even in the home of the Mittelstand, primary focus is no longer just being placed on business success, social responsibility, and regional roots. A growing number of business families are also managing their assets together – alongside or not infrequently, in place of the original family business.

However, owners often neglect to manage their family offices as professionally as they do their companies. We are therefore increasingly being asked the following questions: Do family offices also require an owner strategy? If so, what should it consist of?

The first question can be answered quite quickly: If an owner strategy ensures the family can successfully perform its dominant owner role, then this is no less true for a family office than for a family business.

6 ROOMS – 20 QUESTIONS

The second step is also simple in essence. The existing logic of our owner strategy house with its six rooms also applies to the family office.

Here, too, the aim is to answer the following questions in a facilitated process together:

- **Membership**
  - Who can participate in the family office?
  - as a shareholder
  - as a client
  - How do we organize membership (family lines, pools, legal entities)?
  - What rights and obligations are associated with each status (including distributions and exits)?

- **Self-image**
  - What is the purpose of the family office?
  - What are its objectives?
  - Which values are to be considered in achieving these objectives?

- **Owner business model**
  - Single- or multi-family office?
  - How or where do we want to be invested? Why?
  - What other activities does the family office engage in (e.g., services, philanthropy)?
  - What guidelines do we define for management?

- **Corporate governance**
  - What is the ideal legal structure for our family office?
  - What criteria do we use as a guide?
  - What is the optimal governance structure (management and control) for our family office?
  - What role can the family play and what role does it want to play in governance?

- **Family governance**
  - How do we ensure the necessary cohesion and sufficient commitment (emotional value) for the family office and its services or components?
  - How do we guide the owners and the next generation to their respective responsibilities in a professional and planned manner?
  - What is the role of the partners?
  - What do we do in case of conflict?

- **Roles**
  - What are the roles?
  - What are the requirements for them? And who decides?
  - Who fulfills them?

- **Corporate governance**
  - How do we ensure the necessary cohesion and sufficient commitment (emotional value) for the family office and its services or components?
  - How do we guide the owners and the next generation to their respective responsibilities in a professional and planned manner?
  - What is the role of the partners?
  - What do we do in case of conflict?

**It all means nothing without successful implementation**

The result developed together must then be implemented, e.g., via a family constitution for the family office, various legal and organizational acts, asset allocation measures, or family education programs. A professionally executed combination of owner strategy, action plan, implementation, stocktaking, and corrective measures helps lay the foundation for a sustainably successful family office.

**A PROFESSIONALLY EXECUTED COMBINATION OF OWNER STRATEGY, ACTION PLAN, IMPLEMENTATION, STOCKTAKING, AND CORRECTIVE MEASURES HELPS LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR A SUSTAINABLY SUCCESSFUL FAMILY OFFICE**

Prof. Dr. Peter May is founder of PETER MAY Family Business Consulting and honorary professor at WHU Otto Beisheim School of Management. Contact: p.may@petermay-fbc.com
ANY ORGANISATION WHEN IT TRANSITIONS FROM BEING A SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ORGANISATION WHICH IS MICRO-MANAGEABLE TO LARGE sized ONE NEEDING A TEAM OF LEADERS WILL FACE MANY LEGACY ISSUES

ACE MACHINING
AND
EMPowering
THE SHOP
FLOOR

Ace Micromatic Group

is a group of independent machine tool companies that were started at different points of time by individuals which emerged into a group with cross holding. Some of the companies in the group have been in existence for over 40 years now producing technologically advanced products catering to different markets in and outside India. It’s the largest machine tool group in India and one of the top 50 globally. Vishwas Puttige who plays a key role in steering the group to new frontiers spoke to FAB about his vision, and personal values and the challenges created by the current pandemic in the company which prides itself as being the top machine company on the shop floor.
THE PANDEMIC GAVE US TIME TO INTROSPECT AND ENHANCE OUR SKILLS. A LOT OF US SPENT TIME TRAINING AND LEARNING NEW ASPECTS EITHER IN TECHNOLOGY OR MANAGEMENT.

FAB: WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO JOIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS? Vishwas Puttige: The Ace Micromatic Group and its individual companies are run professionally and never as family businesses. While we were growing up, our father (who is the promoter of one of the companies in the group) out of concern that we would get complacent, would always tell us (me and my sister), we as the next generation have nothing to do with the company or the business. Even if we do aspire to join, there would be no differentiation between us and the other non-family members joining the company. In my 4th year of engineering when I started appearing for interviews as a part of the campus recruitment process, my father discussed the subject of me working in the company. It needed multiple rounds of discussion spanning over many months for me to decide to join the business but it happened after completion of my post-graduation.

FAB: HOW DID YOU GET INDUCTED INTO THE BUSINESS? Vishwas Puttige: Upon completion of my undergraduate program in Engineering and before going to Australia to pursue my post-graduation, I worked as a trainee engineer in AMS for 6 months. This allowed me to understand different aspects of production, design, manufacturing and planning. This experience later helped me correlate many concepts that I learnt during my Master’s program. My doctorate program in Engineering bolstered my belief in research and technology development. Upon return, I joined the R&D department of AMS and supported the existing team in execution of various R&D projects. I also spent a portion of time understanding more about the production process and different products being developed. The induction back then was very ad-hoc and need based since there was nothing specifically available for a family member.

FAB: TELL US WHAT EXCITES YOU THE MOST AT ACE MICROMATIC GROUP? Vishwas Puttige: Ace Micromatic is a group of individual companies started by unrelated individuals who came together because of technical passion and common belief of values and principles. Their engineering strength and customer focus has made the companies most sought after for their respective technologies. The culture of individual companies and the group which has been nurtured for many decades is very unique. In the group, each leader has led by example and not just been preachers. At a group level, consensual decision making and respect for each other in the family has been the backbone of the group. The prime focus has always been on customer success and technology development more than profitability. Being one of the most ethical groups in the country AMG has earned the respect of not only customers but all other stakeholders.

FAB: ARE THERE ANY LEGACY ISSUES THAT BOther YOU? Vishwas Puttige: Any organisation when it transitions from being a small and medium sized organisation which is micro-manageable to large sized one needing a team of...
leaders will face many legacy issues. However, these are issues which one has to understand and work upon. There is also the fact that when the organization becomes bigger it loses its agility and complacency sets in. This also needs to be controlled through right measures put in place at the right time. Sometimes when organisations get larger in size decision making process is long and the methodology is complicated. Legacy is also suffixing the values and philosophy that differentiates us from other companies, but at times it becomes difficult to carry forward the values that create a unique culture through the years.

**FAB: THE GEN-NEXT COMES INTO THE BUSINESS WITH THEIR NEW IDEAS. HOW DOES THE GEN-NEXT GET THE NEW IDEAS IMPLEMENTED?**

Vishwas Puttige: In many cases, these ideas are shot down as being too ambitious or very unconventional! But in most cases if the idea is implementable and can add value to the existing system then it is encouraged. The opportunity to drive that idea into execution is also given to the gen-next in many cases. In most situations a team of competent members are put together to bring the idea to fruition. Ideas from anywhere in the organisation are encouraged irrespective of being a family member or not. However, implementation of the ideas depend on the practicalities and viability of them.

**FAB: WHAT ARE THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE GEN-NEXT OF FAMILY BUSINESS OWNERS?**

Vishwas Puttige: The gen-next mostly aspire to sustain and grow the organisations. In most cases sustaining itself is a challenge. With the market dynamics changing in such a short span of time, ensuring the business is able to consistently grow is an imperative change that happened during the pandemic. The ability of a business to understand a certain phase of a curve, today many startups are valued much higher and reinvent themselves with innovative products (or services), to be sustainable, existing traditional businesses have to be ready for unanticipated external factors that may influence the market. Technology obsolescence is faster where for some products, lifecycles have gotten shorter. For businesses it has become a global village which means not only has it opened up opportunities to many members to demonstrate their leadership skills and crisis handling skills. It also taught us to be better prepared for situations like this and to have plans ready for unanticipated external factors that may influence the future.

**FAB: WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT BUSINESSES OF THE FUTURE?**

Vishwas Puttige: As explained earlier we are living in a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) world today. Newer dimensions such as user experience are significantly deciding the product's or service's performance in the market. Technology obsolescence is faster where for some products, lifecycles have gotten shorter. For businesses it has become a global village which means not only has it opened up opportunities overseas but also brought in competitors. There are plenty of new opportunities arising in every walk of life. The conventional thinking and traditional ways of doing things are being questioned by the gen-next. With the backing from interested investors today, people are willing to take risk of incubating and transforming their ideas into businesses which can scale up in a short span of time.

**WITH THE BACKING FROM INTERESTED INVESTORS TODAY PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO TAKE RISK OF INCUBATING AND TRANSFORMING THEIR IDEAS INTO BUSINESSES WHICH CAN SCALE UP IN A SHORT SPAN OF TIME**

Vishwas Puttige: When a scenario planning that was in place for such a situation, however, the practicalities of this plan were missing. So a modification to this plan was necessary which was done and executed very professionally by a special task force that was formed with employees. Systematically each aspect of situation was analysed and set of actions were initiated at the beginning of the lockdown to explore the concept of “work from home” which was unheard of in the manufacturing sector. Salaries were dispersed on time to employee members during lockdown and payments to vendors were made on time so they could stay afloat. Similarly, all precaution and sanitation measures were put together by the team ensuring a smooth return from the lockdown. This situation provided a platform to many members to demonstrate their leadership skills and crisis handling skills. It also taught us to be better prepared for situations like this and to have plans ready for unanticipated external factors that may influence in the future.

**FAB: WHAT ABOUT HANDLING A CRISIS?**

Vishwas Puttige: Every business has a crisis management plan. Did the plan come into action during the pandemic or did you have to create a new plan? What are the lessons learnt about handling a crisis?

Vishwas Puttige: There was a scenario planning that was in place for such a situation, however, the practicalities of this plan were missing. So a modification to this plan was necessary which was done and executed very professionally by a special task force that was formed with employees. Systematically each aspect of situation was analysed and set of actions were initiated at the beginning of the lockdown to explore the concept of “work from home” which was unheard of in the manufacturing sector. Salaries were dispersed on time to employee members during lockdown and payments to vendors were made on time so they could stay afloat. Similarly, all precaution and sanitation measures were put together by the team ensuring a smooth return from the lockdown. This situation provided a platform to many members to demonstrate their leadership skills and crisis handling skills. It also taught us to be better prepared for situations like this and to have plans ready for unanticipated external factors that may influence in the future.

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Vishwas Puttige: To be sustainable, existing traditional businesses have to reinvent themselves with innovative products (or services), innovative ways of attracting customers and stay ahead of the curve. Today many startups are valued much higher than the traditional businesses who have been in existence for many decades. The ability of a business to understand a customer’s needs ahead of its time will decide its future.
MY FAMILY IS ACTIVE IN BUILDING MATERIALS. WE ARE A GLOBAL LEADER IN THE MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ADVANCED PLASTIC PIPING SYSTEMS.

Edouard Thijssen’s FAMILY is a global leader in manufacturing and distribution of advanced plastic piping systems. Edouard, besides being a part of the family business, also set up and runs Trusted Family - a firm that helps family businesses communicate better internally and externally, using technology. FAB spoke with Edouard about his vision for the future.
so when I was young, I did not immediately realize the family business connection.
I got a gradual exposure to the family business through storytelling from my parents, which probably starting around the age of 15.
And when I turned 18, my parents sent me to a family business conference, organized by the family business network.

Edouard Thijssen: At the Family Business Network (FBN) Conference, I learned about the universal challenges of family businesses:
Over the generations, all business families face similar challenges:
• The family gets bigger.
• The family spreads out in different cities and countries.
• Family members start to have different ownership stakes.
• Less family members have an active role.
As a result, communication and decision making becomes a lot more complex.
At the conference, I also met Edouard Janssen, who is a member of another Belgian business family, and we started brainstorming if we could use technology to help with communication & decision making.
After the conference, we started meeting regularly, and came up with the idea to build a mobile app and online platform to facilitate governance and communication within our own families. After a successful launch, we realized that many other family companies around the world had similar challenges, so we turned our idea into a company: Trusted Family was born from that brainstorming!

FAB: YOU ARE THE FIFTH GENERATION IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS. WHAT WAS THE EARLIER BUSINESS OF THE FAMILY?
Edouard Thijssen: My family is active in building materials. We are a global leader in the manufacturing and distribution of advanced plastic piping systems. We provide people around the world with sustainable innovative solutions for water and energy.
Belgium is a small country, so we went international very early.

FAB: GROWING UP IN A FAMILY BUSINESS, WHAT ARE YOUR OWN EARliest RECOLLECTIONS OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS? DID TECHNOLOGY PLAY A LARGE PART IN YOUR FAMILY BUSINESS?
Edouard Thijssen: No family members work in the day-to-day operations of the business, so when I was young, I did not immediately realize the family business connection.
I got a gradual exposure to the family business through storytelling from my parents, which probably starting around the age of 15.
And when I turned 18, my parents sent me to a family business conference, organized by the family business network.

We think technology is a tool that can help families work more formally, create more transparency, and create more accountability. For example, having written minutes of every important meeting or decision, or by sharing updates of what’s going on in the business with family members who don’t work there or who live abroad - trust will be enhanced!

FAB: TRUST IS ALSO IMPORTANT AMONG THE CO-OWNERS OR PARTNERS IN THE BUSINESS. HOW DO YOU BOTH ENSURE THAT TRUST DOES NOT GET BROKEN BETWEEN PARTNERS/CO-OWNERS?
Edouard Thijssen: If something is important, you need to have someone in charge for it, and a budget for it!
We believe trust & good family relationships is key for long term family business success, and so we advise the families we work with to appoint someone in charge of family, shareholder & board relations. It is not a full-time job, but by having someone in charge for it, you make sure there is a strategy in place! This will help to build trust between the growing number of partners & shareholders.

FAB: HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT THE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION BETWEEN PARTNERS DOES NOT AFFECT THE BUSINESS OR THE TEAM AT WORK?
Edouard Thijssen: With a growing number of partners & shareholders, everyone has to understand that it’s impossible to agree on everything. The key is to look in the same direction, and have one common vision, and then to agree on responsibilities of who is in charge and accountable to help us get there!

FAB: TECHNOLOGY IS OFTEN DERIVED BY THE PATRIARCHS AS A NEEDLESS EXPENSE. THE INHERITORS OR THE GEN-NEXT ARE USUALLY MORE OPEN TO IT. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO GET THE PATRIARCHS TO SEE THE BENEFIT OF INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY?
Edouard Thijssen: Technology is a tool to achieve goals. The biggest challenge for a patriarch or matriarch is how to keep the family together, and how to keep the family business successful over the generations. With increased complexity, every generation has to reinvent how they communicate and make decisions. Technology is the perfect tool to help scale communication and decision making by making sure all family members have access to the right information at the right time! Once they see what technology can help achieve, they often become open to it!
WE BELIEVE THAT COMMUNICATION, TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF TRUST IN A FAMILY

FAB: WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF A PANDEMIC. HAS THIS PANDEMIC CHANGED THE WAY FAMILY BUSINESSES LOOK AT TECHNOLOGY?

Edouard Thijssen: This pandemic has been unprecedented in many ways, and has impacted family business on many fronts:
• Difficult to meet in person for meetings, and to bring the family together given restrictions on travel in many parts of the world.
• Difficult to share sensitive information & to have critical discussions that were typically taking place during in-person meetings.
• Difficult to keep up with the uncertainty and the speed at which the world is being impacted.
• Difficult to manage the pressure on the shoulders of the current family leaders, who have to take very important decisions in a very uncertain context.
• Difficult to manage family dynamics between the family members that have an active role, and those that are non-active.

Family businesses from all over the world accelerated their digital transformation and adopted tools to help with virtual meetings, and central platforms to store and distribute information to their key stakeholders.

FAB: HOW DO YOU SEE TRUSTED FAMILY PARTNERING WITH FAMILY BUSINESSES GOING FORWARD?

Edouard Thijssen: Family businesses play a major role in the global economy, but many of them fail to stay together for more than 3 generations. We believe good communication and decision making are key for long term family business success. We already work with leading family businesses in over 25 countries and are working to scale to the next level to become the main operating platform for any family business in the world.
Queen of Platters

Devyan Bhatnagar is the creator of 'Grazing Platters' which are exclusive, finely created and mouthwatering to say the least. These platters are meant for people with taste and connoisseurs of good food and wine. Each platter is a creation of arrangement and variety appealing to the taste buds. Cheese is the centre piece of her platter canvasses.
Devyani is also a mother of a 13-year-old and a corporate wife. She wears many hats including working actively with children in helping them build a habit of reading through her classes called ‘Joy of Reading.’ FAB spoke to Devyani about her passion and drive to create something that appeals both to the senses and the taste buds.

FAB: You make exclusive food platters. What gave you the inspiration to make these platters?
Devyani: A couple of years ago, while we were travelling in Australia, I was introduced to a vastly different thinking in terms of food, and health consciousness, with the focus being on very high-quality ingredients and produce. And then, I discovered the cheese platters being served at parties, which were very different compared to what cheese platters were all about in India. The more I tasted, and sampled from those platters, the more inspired I became to create these platters in India, using local Indian ingredients. I like to think of myself as a creative person, with a love for playing with colours and shapes and arrangements of food. So, both these things came together beautifully for me in helping me create the ‘grazing platters’. When I create these platters, I quite literally paint with colours, shapes, textures, flavours and use my imagination to create a palette of remarkably interesting food for your palate!

Grazing platters are all about sitting, and grazing, and sipping and talking. It is about spending an ideal evening with friends and family. You gaze and graze away during such evenings. ‘People eat with their eyes first’, as they say and that is my motto for creating these platters.

As a hostess, I truly know the pain of running about and following up on things when one is hosting. Hosting then becomes a chore instead of a welcome event! So, grazing platters provide the hostess with relief and time to welcome and mingle and sit down and relax with the guests.

FAB: What kind of ingredients go in the making of these platters? Do you cater for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian customers?
Devyani: In a ‘grazing platter’, there are a total of nine ingredients, with 3-4 varieties of each ingredient. There may be anything from 25-35 ingredients in a single plate. If nothing else, they provide for exploration of the taste buds, by combining various items with cheese.
to just meeting people they genuinely cared for. Small intimate gatherings with time to spend with each other, to hold a conversation, to fully understand, to comprehend and to empathise was the new dynamic in this pandemic. The grazing platters provide the perfect environment and spread to do all that and soon they became a ‘must-have’ at many parties.

**FAB: ARE YOUR PLATTERS APPETISERS WITH DRINKS OR A MEAL? BY THEMSELVES? GIVE SOME EXAMPLES.**

*Devyani:* Ideally, they are the appetisers with drinks, and you need nothing else but those. They are healthy, and fresh, the cheese is portioned to smaller sizes making for easier ‘pick and eat’, and the variety is amazing. An average platter may have anything from 25-35 ingredients in a single plate. If nothing else, they provide for exploration of the tastes buds, by combining various items with cheese. Try some cheddar with an apple slice, topped with a walnut or a small cracker dippit in hummus, with some berries on top. You could add some camembert to a cracker, and drizzle some honey. You could pick a radish slice to refresh your palate, some grapes to draw on the juice to invigorate you while you settle on a piece of pecorino followed by a bite of dark chocolate!

Would you still want to have dinner after this healthy and filling platter? I seriously doubt that!

**FAB: YOU ARE A CORPORATE WIFE, AND YOU HAVE A YOUNG SON, HOW DO YOU MANAGE YOUR TIME BETWEEN YOUR VARIOUS RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXTENDING YOUR BUSINESS?**

*Devyani:* There is only limited time in a day because for me family is a priority over work. To establish a balance between my family and professional commitments has been quite a journey for me, and I am happy to say that I have found the perfect balance. I have chosen to do work with ‘value’ rather than chase ‘volumes’. Since everything is hand-made, and put-together by me, I prefer to do smaller volumes, but these are of higher value. Each and every platter that I put together, makes me proud and feel fulfilled by the work done. That is value for me. The energy generated from each platter gives me the motivation, it invigorates me to give more the next time. I choose to be inspired every day with the value I bring to myself and to my work, rather than rush to give large numbers.

**FAB: UNLIKE OTHER FOOD BUSINESSES WHICH CATER TO A WIDE AUDIENCE, YOUR PLATTERS ARE AVAILABLE TO AN EXCLUSIVE SET OF CLIENTS.**

*Devyani:* Yes, business was affected during the pandemic, but around Diwali it started picking up. People wanted smaller platters for 6-8 people and/or honey, varieties of crackers and chips, nuts and vegetables, pickled vegetables and olives, dips, jam cuts. I can customise to the platter making it a purely vegetarian or a non-vegetarian platter of delight.

Most of the produce is fresh and a lot of it is sourced from my kitchen garden.

**FAB: WAS YOUR BUSINESS AFFECTED DURING THE PANDEMIC? OR DO YOU FEEL WITH MORE PEOPLE ENTERTAINING AT HOME PLATTERS ARE THE THING TO EXPERIENCE DURING THESE TIMES?**

*Devyani:* Yes, business was affected during the pandemic, but around Diwali it started picking up again. People wanted smaller platters for 6-8 people and sometimes even for just 4 people. I think, people moved from parties that involved gathering a crowd
IN 1983, the year the internet was born, Honda invited my father to Japan for a final meeting. That was the year that the Indian government permitted joint ventures in the two-wheeler sector, as my father had anticipated.

Draft agreements on the proposed joint venture had been exchanged previously. My older brothers, Raman and Pawan, were actively involved in the project from the very beginning, right from the negotiation stage. Amit Chaturvedi, who joined the company around that time would later say, “When I came on board, the joint venture agreement with Honda had still not been signed. The draft of the joint venture used to come from abroad. I was told that it was seen by family members and sent back to Japan with changes; there was a lot of back and forth. It was top secret.”

Amit still recalls his interview with my father. “I was interviewed for the job of project manager for the Hero Honda Motorcycle project in June 1983. Ramanji interviewed me, found me okay, and told me I would have to meet his father. The meeting was set up at the Hero Cycles office on Asaf Ali Road. It was a very hot day. … Chairman Saab had not come to the office as yet. He came in around 1 p.m.; he was wearing a light grey suit, and as soon as he came in, he took off his shoes. He asked...
HONDA EXPLAINED THEIR DECISION. THEIR TEAMS HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY HERO'S ENGINEERING CAPABILITY. THEY CHOSE TO PARTNER WITH THE GROUP BECAUSE THEY SAW SCALE

A lot of questions, especially about my experience of working with the Japanese on a joint venture. By this time, the phone came in and asked Chairman Saab about lunch. He ordered a south Indian lunch. ‘A short while later, the interview over, Amit Chaturvedi got up to leave, but my father asked him to sit down and share his lunch. Chairman Saab had no airs about him, recalls Amit.

A three-member team led by my father left for Tokyo. My oldest brother, Raman and Amit Chaturvedi, accompanied him. Describing the trip, Amit says, ‘Ramanji, Brijmohanji and I went to Japan in October 1983. Ramanji was keen that I go, even though Chairman Saab was a little hesitant, but he went along with Ramanji’s view.’

At precisely 2.30 p.m. on the following day, the Hero team sat across the table from the Honda representatives. Simultaneously, the family got together in the conference room at their headquarters in Ludhiana. Telecommunications in India had improved to the point that they could monitor events from 5,850 miles away. Honda had a surprise in store. They told the Hero team that they were ready for a joint venture in motorcycles. At the same time, they would also be entering into a joint venture with the Firodia group to manufacture scooters. The Hero team’s jaws dropped. They had come to discuss a venture for scooters, but now were being offered motorcycles! For a few stunned moments, my father stared at the telephone all through the afternoon and early evening, they were no nearer to reaching a decision. At this point, my father’s instincts took over. He knew that the family’s appetite for risk was limited, but if he wanted a collaboration with Honda, it was time to take another leap of faith. Infusing as much confidence in his voice as possible, he declared: ‘Let’s do this. Dekhi lagey. Cycle aur moped banayi hai, yeh bhi bana lenge’ (Whatever happens, we’ll see. We’ve made cycles and mopeds, we’ll manage this as well).

The decision was taken. It was yet another turning point for the Hero Group. The family were now committed, come what may. It was a big investment for a company of Hero’s size, but they would make it work.

Honda explained their decision. Their teams had been impressed by Hero’s engineering capability and had chosen to partner with the group because they saw scale. Yes, it was an unexplored market for Honda. But with a strong partner, they were convinced that their motorcycles could make a mark in India. None of the existing players, although admittedly, strong brands, could boast the combination of quality, economy, fuel-efficiency, distribution network and after-sales service that a Hero-Honda JV could potentially pull off. India’s rapid increase in population was bound to be matched by an exponential growth in demand. If Hero was making a leap of faith, so was Honda.

At the negotiating table, my father – his convivial personality notwithstanding – proved a tough customer. He focused on micro-details. Amit would later comment that he believed the granular approach was deliberate. My father was deeply aware that Hero was on the brink of a great sea change. He also wanted a sari guard, because he imagined women sitting pillion. He made it clear to the Japanese that he wanted the CD 100.

Frame and a bigger seat, so that two people could sit comfortably and ride safely. The idea of the motorcycle as a single-rider vehicle, as compared to the scooter which was a vehicle for two, had to change. He also wanted a sari guard because he imagined women sitting pillion. He made it clear to Honda that he wanted the CD 100.

He was also insistent on fuel economy; the vehicle would have to deliver 100 km to the litre. A long argument ensued. The Japanese held that it was impossible for a 100-cc engine to give 100 km per litre (kmpl), at best they could manage 80 kmpl.

My father stuck to his guns. The engineering and R&D teams were summoned and, finally, after much wrangling, they compromised on 80 kmpl.

My father was dogged in other ways as well. He insisted on vegetarian Indian meals, which meant that the Honda officials had to find Indian restaurants. He didn’t like tea with powdered milk, so fresh milk had to be procured. Amit says he later realized that those moves were tactical. ‘His very tenacity won him a lot of respect from the Japanese. I had negotiated with the Japanese during the Escorts JV, but I had not seen them show as much respect for Indians as they had for Chairman Saab or Lal Saab (as my father was known) ... they had figured that he was the driving force behind Hero and could have emerged in India.’

For ten whole days, they remained in Tokyo, seeing very little other than the walls of conference rooms. They went through the agreement line by line, full stop by full stop, comma by comma and even held discussions on whether a certain word should be in upper or lower case. The JV agreement between Hero and Honda was signed on 24 December 1983. A week later, the Memorandum of Agreement was done and dusted. Off went Raman, Rana (some years out of engineering college in Kurukshetra) and Amit to the Registrar of Companies, to submit the documents. Hero Honda Motors Limited officially came into being on 19 January 1984. The partners would each contribute 26 per cent to equity and Hero Honda Motors (HHM) would pay Honda a technical fee and royalty. A whale had partnered with a sprat, but the latter, it would later emerge, was the smartest fish in the waters.

Sunit Kant Munjal is the youngest son of Brijmohan Lal Munjal, the Founder of the Hero Group. Besides setting up many new enterprises and providing strategic input for the Hero Group, he was previously Joint managing director of Hero MotoCorp (formerly Hero Honda) and is now the Chairman of Hero Enterprise, with interests across diverse service and manufacturing businesses.
IS RETIREMENT A DIRTY WORD?

By Robert Powell

For my father-in-law, while he was proud of the career, he had built at the bank which employed him, his retirement was something he looked forward to, and was clearly delineated by his exit from the workforce. There were parties and family functions celebrating the fact that his working life was over. He has not done a day’s paid work since, and has spent his time playing golf, managing his investments, and travelling with his lovely wife. He lives a happy, healthy, and active life.

MY FATHER-IN-LAW RETIRED one day almost three decades ago, shortly after his 55th birthday. I use the words “one day” advisedly, because one day he was at work, and the next day he was not.

He had spent his entire working life employed at the same Australian bank and was treated well by his employer over a long period, and he rewarded them with his loyalty. For his generation, it was normal for someone to stay at the same company their whole working lives. In fact, it was considered a badge of honour to have stayed at the same company for a long period, signifying that his contribution had been valued.

For his generation, it was normal for someone to stay at the same company their whole working lives. In fact, it was considered a badge of honour to have stayed at the same company for a long period, signifying that his contribution had been valued.

IT WAS CONSIDERED A BADGE OF HONOUR TO HAVE STAYED AT THE SAME COMPANY FOR A LONG PERIOD, SIGNIFYING THAT HIS CONTRIBUTION HAD BEEN VALUED

Not only the retiree, but also the family who is impacted by the retirement.

Whereas retirement was once an event to be marked in a calendar, today it is regarded as a process which needs to be planned for. The phrase “transition to retirement” is now enshrined in Australian financial law. The better this transition is managed, the better the outcome for the retiree and their family. For many from the baby boomer generation, it is a harder transition than for others.

It seems that the idea of a sudden retirement is something created comparatively recently within Western civilization. In Australia, the age pension was introduced in the 1930’s to reward someone who had reached the age of 65 without dying... at a time when life expectancy was much shorter than today. But in many much older cultures, the situation is quite different.

On the Japanese island of Okinawa, the local dialect does not have an equivalent word for retirement, as the concept simply does not exist. The Okinawan custom is for people to continue doing whatever work that is meaningful to them, for as long as they are physically capable. Okinawans pursue their own personal “ikigai” which, loosely translated means “the reason to get up in the morning”. Coincidentally, there are more people per capita over the age of 100 living in Okinawa than anywhere else in the world.

Families in business can encounter succession difficulties when the incumbent generation have not adequately planned for the winding down phase of their lives. It can take years for this process to be effectively managed, and it is especially acute when the incumbent is the business founder. Often the reason why they started the business was to take control of their future, whereas a poorly managed succession could see them resisting any loss of control.

But the successor generation also requires preparation, particularly where the founder’s own “ikigai” is directly related to the business. Special problems can be encountered when both the incumbent’s and next generation’s “life meaning” is tied to leading the business. Business families who find themselves in this situation often benefit from the guidance of a qualified, independent family business adviser.

Robert Powell is National Head of Family Business Consulting at Grant Thornton Australia. He holds Certificates in Family Business and Family Wealth Advising from the Family Firm Institute, is a Specialist Accredited Adviser member of Family Business Australia, a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and a Fellow of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.
THERE WAS MORE THAN A FATHER’S LOVE FOR HIS DAUGHTER WHEN ARUN CHOUDHARY AND KHUSHBOO CHOUDHARY SET UP THEIR NEW BUSINESS. THEY BROUGHT DIFFERENT STRENGTHS TO THE TABLE. IT CAN BE NOTHING LESS THAN A ‘DELICIOUS’ PROSPECT WHEN TWO INDIVIDUALS OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS GET TOGETHER TO PUT FINGER LICKING CAKES ON THE CUSTOMER’S TABLE. AT FIRST GLANCE WHAT COULD BE COMMON BETWEEN AN INDIVIDUAL CLOSE TO RETIREMENT AND AN ENGLISH HONOURS GRADUATE GETTING TOGETHER TO START A NEW VENTURE. EXCEPT OF COURSES FILIAL BONDS. BUT THERE WAS MORE THAN A FATHER’S LOVE FOR HIS DAUGHTER WHEN ARUN CHOUDHARY AND KHUSHBOO CHOUDHARY SET UP THEIR NEW BUSINESS. THEY BROUGHT DIFFERENT STRENGTHS TO THE TABLE. ARUN WITH HIS BAKING SKILLS AND KHUSHBOO WITH HER BUSINESS ACUMEN DECIDED TO COME TOGETHER AND FILL IN THE GAP FOR QUALITY TEA CAKES OF ALL SHAPES AND VARIETIES. FAB CAUGHT UP WITH THE FATHER DAUGHTER DUO AND SPOKE TO THEM ABOUT THEIR UNUSUAL FAMILY VENTURE.
FAB: MR. MOUSTACHE CAKES! I AM SURE THAT ALL OUR READERS WANT TO KNOW THE STORY BEHIND THE NAME OF YOUR BUSINESS. DO SHARE THE STORY WITH US PLEASE.

Khushboo Choudhary: We are a father-daughter duo managing a home bakery that promises heavenly eggless treats for all the healthy dessert lovers. About the name of our brand, it is rather a funny story. My dad has a moustache and like every other Indian dad, it is a matter of pride for him. As he was going to look after all the baking activities, we decided to name our brand Mr. Moustache’s Cakes.

FAB: YOUR FATHER WAS IN THE ELECTRONICS BUSINESS AND YOU STUDIED FASHION. SO, HOW DID THE IDEA OF A BAKERY TAKE SHAPE IN YOUR MINDS?

Khushboo Choudhary: My father was always passionate about baking, healthy baking to be precise. He used to bake healthy and delicious cakes for my grandparents and us at home. After completing my formal education, I did several internships. The last job I did was as a manager in a women’s magazine. I always wanted to do something of my own. So, I thought why not take the concept of healthy baking to the people.

It was more about following our passion for both of us. So, my dad immersed himself in baking and I started to handle business-related things. My experience as a manager certainly helped us a lot. For my dad, he had no professional experience in baking, he is a self-taught baker.

FAB: WHAT WERE SOME OF THE EARLY CHALLENGES THAT YOU FACED AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

Khushboo Choudhary: This is my first time running a business and my educational background is in fashion so handling all aspects of business can be challenging at times. Next, baking or even cooking, in general, has not been my forte as I rarely enter my kitchen. So, to understand the ingredients and how they are used was a task. Then my dad and I have a very loving relationship, and since Mr. Moustache’s Cakes, it transitioned to this serious bond, where we sit to work and get tangled between disagreements. Dad has never had a partner at work before in his life. It was kind of hard for him to initially adjust with me. It was odd for him to see that someone else is

I WANT TO BE THE GO-TO-BAKERY FOR TEACAKES, AND WE PLAN TO EXPAND ALL OVER INDIA VERY SOON

SO, IT IS BOTH OF US GIVING ADVICE TO EACH OTHER AND LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER THAT GETS OUR BUSINESS GOING
Our personalities are completely opposite. He is a calm, sweet, and supportive dad, whereas I am a straightforward, energetic, and enthusiastic daughter.

Taking decisions besides him and that too his daughter. Sometimes the pressure gets to him to deliver orders in short span of time. He is slowly adapting to the social media world. I am slowly adapting to handle our finances. We are both improving and working on this day and night.

But the best part is my dad gave me an opportunity to start this, normally fathers are hesitant to let their daughters start a business from scratch because they are unsure of what the future holds for them. However, my dad on the other hand let me open the gate to a lot of opportunities to utilize my potential to the maximum.

FAB: How are the roles divided between your father and you?
Khushboo Choudhary: My father looks after all the baking activities and I take care of all business-related stuff be it Public Relations, Marketing, business development etc.

FAB: How do you handle conflicts/differences of opinions between the both of you?
Khushboo Choudhary: Our personalities are completely opposite. He is a calm, sweet, and supportive dad, whereas I am a straightforward, energetic, and enthusiastic daughter. As any father-daughter, we have differences in our opinions. At the end of the day we end up resolving all the arguments because we both know that we are learning something new every day.

Without a doubt, it is a different feeling to have your dad as the co-founder, who has your back no matter what and that gives me comfort and the confidence to be ambitious.

FAB: Do you give any advice to your father regarding the business?
Khushboo Choudhary: Yes, I do. My father has a long experience of dealing with people. But at the same time, my experience as a manager helps us to resolve our day-to-day issues that we face both in baking and while dealing with customers. So, it is both of us giving advice to each other and learning from each other that gets our business going.

FAB: What advice do you have for women who want to be entrepreneurs?
Khushboo Choudhary: I would ask them to fight on. Stand firm to your ideals, and remember you have a voice—use it. You might be pressured into remaining subservient, but isn’t that just proof of you being a threat? Use this to your advantage and keep going!

Believe in the skills that you have worked so hard on, believe in yourself, and your potential. It can get difficult, especially when surrounded by many naysayers. What helped me was the support of my friends, so you should reach out for that validation now and then, let them be your support system. Trust me, this will help you gain confidence and mental peace like nothing else.

FAB: What is your vision for your business?
Khushboo Choudhary: I want to be the go-to-bakery for teacakes, and we plan to expand all over India very soon. I am still gaining information as to how to run a business and so is my dad, he is learning new recipes and techniques every day. We aim to promote healthy cakes and bridge the gap between unhealthy cravings and healthy choices yet still sweet. In this time of everyone being health conscious, we want to add to this cause by making it easier for them. You still eat your sweets but stay fit as well!

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FATHERS AND SONS DYNAMIC IN FAMILY BUSINESS IN REEL AND REAL LIFE

By Juggi Bhasin

The first serial ‘Succession’ deals with the fascinating relationship of media baron Logan Roy with his three children. The high point of the series is the complex relationship of Logan with his eldest son Connor. In many circles the eldest son usually gets tipped to be the natural successor to his father. But not so in this case. The father eliminates his eldest son to a working manager and certainly not a successor to his empire. The son in response plots and plans to unseat his father. The father responds by blackmailing his own son for a crime he had committed in his foolishness and forces him to do his bidding. The eldest son gets his revenge by implicating his father in a corruption scandal! Strong stuff this and one might wonder can such a scenario play out in Indian family run boardrooms? Here is what we know of the relationship trajectory between fathers and sons in the Indian business context. It is no secret that the man on the top is one extreme reality of the same in ‘Succession’ no one wants out, his own equity share and wants to start a start up is coming out that thrown together in such an extreme situation many families have bonded well and come closer together. Many patriarchs have preserved their fractured relationships with their sons and a spirit of give and take has been seen in family charter meetings and plotting the course of the family business in the future. Moral of the story is quite simple really. When human beings be it, they may be creators or inheritors are faced with an existential threat there is convergence of interests and a will to survive and weather the storm. Sometimes some good emerges even from the misery that affects us.

The serial underscores the point again that troubled relationships between the creator and the inheritor can spell doomsday for a family business.
UNSTOPPABLE
the story of what a man
can achieve if he pursues
his dreams relentlessly.

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The brand is motivated to contribute a part of its sales to enhance the overall beauty of a girl child and empowering them by extending new opportunities.