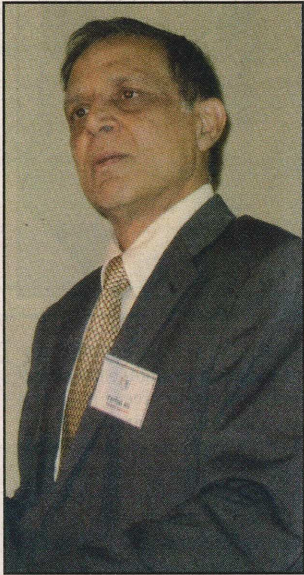


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Farhat Ali



Manu Shah

BY K.B.NAIR

SANTA ANA, CA - In its bid to embrace a larger segment of the entrepreneurial community TIE Southern California has planned to arrange an extra meeting every month and also move out from its customary venue in Cerritos to other locations in the city. With this objective in mind, the first for the month of August was held at the Darya Restaurant here on August 6.

Keynote speakers Farhat Ali and Manu Shah provided listeners with practical suggestions on the path to success from two diverse perspectives. Ali is President and

CEO of Fujitsu America, a conglomerate which provides the world with PCs, Servers & IT Services with 175,000 employees world wide in 70 countries. He outlined his philosophy on the reason for its success and its continued dominance. On the other hand, Manu Shah, Chairman and CEO highlighted his principles which have steered MS International from a garage operation to become the largest distributor of natural stone in North America and led to his being named the Ernst & Young "Entrepreneur of The Year 2007 winner."

Opening the double header,

Point the Road to Success

Farhat Ali, Manu Shah Point The Road to Success

Farhat Ali emphasized personal development as key to success through acquisition of skills and relevant experiences. However, with all the technology and experience one can imbibe, success can only come if one gets a clear understanding of human nature. This is an important ingredient in the mix to which sufficient attention is not being given. He believes every individual has the opportunity to succeed, they have the ability to excel in at least some area if not all and can get ahead with determination and perseverance as exemplified by Tiger Wood who practices and improves every day in spite of being at the top. Quoting Tolbert Mccarrol, Ali warned "Either you grow or you die, there is no middle ground. The way one continues to grow is by not being afraid of stretching out to one's 'uncomfortable zone.'

Some points he brought up in his Responsibility, Reality and Relationship theories for success were that things don't just happen, one has to cause them to happen, there are multiple right solutions to every situation, that we live in a world of interdependency and it is important to have mutual respect for each other's views. He added that the success of any corporation rests on its employees and therefore extreme care must be taken at the time of hiring to the competency, the proper fit of the individual to the company's philosophy and most importantly the person's 'passion.' Management, he said, should encourage this 'passion' in their employees, enhance their ability, provide an environment to reach their potential and reward them fairly. In his concluding remarks he reiterated 'the customer is always right' and that lis-

tening to clients and understanding them is critical to gain their trust which is the key to the ultimate success of the organization.

In a presentation relating his success story, literally carved in stone, and in divulging the secret to the "Keys to Entrepreneurship" Manu Shah said the very first step is "marry the right person." While this remark caused a ripple of amusement among the listeners, Shah was not joking, at least as far as his Company, MS International is concerned. It was his wife Rika who started the company to keep herself occupied and it was only after seven years employment as an engineer that he realized he was sitting on a gold mine and decided to concentrate on the business she had initiated. In an economy which frustrates most, Shah finds opportunities. He said there has been no better time for more attractive interest rates and lower priced commercial properties. Negotiation power is at its peak with suppliers and transportation companies willing to strike deals at rock bottom prices. With capital being available in plenty for companies which have survived and with the competition brought to its knees, he said this so called lean period is the best time for making money for those who can spot and seize on opportunities.

Reflecting on the significant factors which determined the achievements of his organization, Shah expounded that planning and goal setting remains an essential virtue, an exercise he indulges in all the time. Instead of adopting the herd tendency to follow trends, MS International has emerged victorious by seeking out opportunities. He also recommended a gradual approach to expansion by 'remaining like a small fish in a pond, agile, flexible and undetected' until it outgrows it and then moving to a larger one at that stage. At the same time he strongly supports in-

novation and encourages risk taking and is the first to concede mistakes will be made, but are necessary for growth. Adaptability he said is crucial for survival and even though his business deals in the 'stone age' his IT capabilities is one of the most sophisticated which make MSI one of the most loved by giants like Home Depot etc. He reminded budding entrepreneurs that employees are an asset and not an expense and to choose them carefully to ensure they mesh with the culture of the organization. It is a mistake he said to seek short term huge gains, and instead the dividends would be greater by working towards a long term partnership with vendors and customers which would pass the test of time. He also urged everyone to read, listen and learn as there is always scope for improvement and greater opportunities. In closing his advice to those on the verge of entrepreneurship was choosing a line in which they are confident they can outrun the competition and if not to look for one in which there is little or no competition whatsoever.

In the absence of the President, Sumita Batra, President Elect Navneet Chugh made the introductory remarks and expressed happiness on seeing a more mainstream audience. He hoped TIE's decision to take the event to new areas would encourage even more entrepreneurs to join the fraternity. He announced the November meeting would be held for the first time in Woodland Hills in the San Fernando Valley.

On August 19, Rajiv Trivedi, Executive VP of La Quinta will speak on "Franchising: The New Solution" at the Sheraton Hotel in Cerritos.