



Young minds big ideas

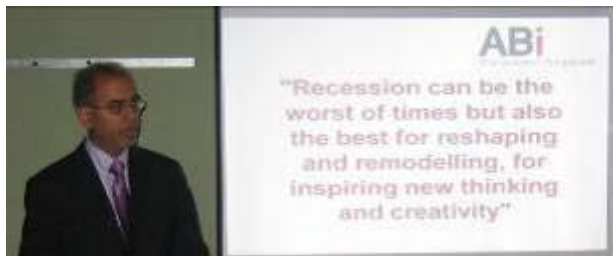
8th October 2009, Development House, 6.30 pm

Given the current economic climate, many young people are either not in jobs, thinking of switching jobs, or are wondering how to be more successful in setting up a business, making profit and surviving the recession while doing so.

Asian Foundation for Philanthropy's 'Young Minds, Big Ideas' series addressed the issue of youth and employment, from an ethical perspective. The event, part of AFP's Sudarshan programme (funded by DFID), looked at three main areas, working in the UK, working in India, and a success story of a young person who works in both continents and has been extremely successful.

The event began with an interactive activity that asked attendees to choose 'What makes a successful business' from a list, which consisted of legal structure, profit, ethics and values, staff and opportunities in other countries. Most chose profit or staff as their answer. The truth is that all of those are important, and one is completely related to the other.

An introduction from AFP Director Bala Thakrar, who spoke about the changing business climate, and why youth as the future leaders should always approach their work as **'business with a**



heart', led to a talk by Vijay Amin (left) of ABi associates. Vijay looked at opportunities in the UK and highlighted what is needed to be successful, as well as what is needed to start a business.

He also looked at where the opportunities are, saying 'there are three things we need, health, food and education, hence it is not surprising that a lot of businesses work in these sectors'. To succeed in business, one needs to be innovative, and try to find their niche. Vijay also mentioned that it was important to test out business ideas, either through test trading, market research or through moonlighting, where you can see if your business idea will work.

Vijay made a strong plea on the business of ethics. He stressed that people do need to make money, but how they do it is as important. He reiterated, **'You can't be good at home, but bad at business. You can't decide one day you will do one thing, do another thing the next day. Ethics guide all aspects of a business and should not be forgotten'**.

Kishor Tailor, independent consultant and advisor next spoke about markets beyond those of the UK, predominantly India. He highlighted that small to medium enterprises (SMEs) are global players, 80% of

whom employ less than 5 people. So, when people are thinking of their own businesses, they need to look beyond the usual and often saturated markets.

When China and India are mentioned, people often shy away. When Kishorbhai (right) asked the audience what their perception of India was, there were calls of 'Hot, enterprising, chaotic, smelly'.. perceptions he describes as inherent to India's charm. India as a country is growing tremendously, and many British SMEs have now outsourced and taken advantage of the Indian labour force. He then sign posted people as to where to go when thinking of working with India, and ended by giving a stark warning about working ethically. **'When working in India, remember there are unethical practices – child labour, health and safety, remember that there are these challenges and it is up to us to overcome them.** But don't give up on India, as its double digit growth means it is the place to be'.



To further reiterate Kishorbhai's message, the third speaker Mohitt Joshi (below, left) took the floor to talk about his journey working in UK and outsourcing to India. Mohitt at a young age decided he didn't want to go to University, instead wanted to start his own business. He built up to this by working as a salesperson and getting field experience, before leaving to start Pumasource with partners. The idea of



India came about, but Mohitt was vehement that they would not do any outsourcing that was voice related.

Pumasource took the data capture route, and set up their offices in rural Punjab in an area called Nangal. The first two years were a huge struggle, especially as British companies had huge issues with India. However, with faith in Mohitt and his work, the turnover rose rapidly year on year. At this point Pumasource began developing its own offices in Nangal, which are state of the art facilities.

Mohitt stressed that along all this, the ethos of being socially responsible was always inherent. As he employs women, he ensures that they have safe transport to get home. Pumasource has increased the quality of life of people in the area, as his story of the man who couldn't afford shoes but in six months was able to build his first brick house ascertains. Pumasource was also present at a local Red Cross fair, where they offered on the spot jobs to those who passed a simple computer test. **Mohitt runs Pumasource on a strong ethic, because as he said ' it makes good business sense, its a good thing to do, and if you give good you get good'.**

The audience was very interactive, with people wanting to know how one overcomes Indian bureaucracy (Mohitt: You need to forget how things work in the UK. It's a completely different culture), as well as the approach of Indian consumers and corporate in India to ethical business (Mohitt: It is more apparent in cities; Kishorbhai: There is an active NGO sector in India that is also gaining momentum) not to mention that a lot of ethics are inherent to India's cultural beliefs.

The audience also wanted to know if people were implementing more renewable energies in India. The speakers mentioned that Indian environmental legislations are good, as it aims to subsidise eco-friendly

boilers, solar panels which are increasing incentives to start up renewable energies. Implementation however, still needs some work.

Feedback from the evaluation forms found that most increased their understanding of working in the UK and in India, with attendees 'getting a greater insight' and finding the talks 'inspirational'.

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