

Redefining His American Dream

How a Boy from Pakistan Became a Man of this Country with an Unstoppable Purpose

Most people who've come to know Najam Usmani, either by way of his gifts or the honor of his company, will tell you that his spirit is contagious. He's a self-proclaimed entrepreneur, who found excellence in his DNA through hard work, determination and the notion that failure was never an option. This is the story of a man who lived what he thought was the American Dream, until he realized instead that his American Dream is tied to his legacy and the unselfish road ahead – giving back and paying forward what he earned and learned over the past thirty years.

Perfect Stranger

Growing up in Pakistan as the oldest son of eleven children, Najam took on jobs and became a tutor at an early age to help his parents. He dreamed of one day going to America, but when he shared his dream with others, they laughed and said it would never happen. Najam faced the challenge with fearlessness and naive determination.

Najam came to the U.S. from Karachi, Pakistan at the age of 19, where his only reference to the American way of life was the TV sitcom, *Perfect Strangers*. Minnesota State University Moorhead is not the windy city he'd seen on television, but nonetheless, he settled in to gain an education and pursue the American Dream. He self-funded his education as a finance major and computer science minor, where he bucked the belief that technology is the target. Instead, he felt that it's the people using it, and making business run, who are at the core of everything.

"Human connection is essential no matter how technologically savvy we become," says Najam. This is a belief that led him toward a lifetime of connections, collaborations and exploration.

After college, he did everything from stocking shelves to selling insurance. Then Najam focused his career on Information Technology (IT); and in 1996,

he was one of the first 500 to be named Microsoft Certified Service Engineer (MCSE) by Bill Gates, which allowed his career and income to soar and his focus to shift to a new entrepreneurial spirit.

Years later he bought his first Jackson Hewitt Tax Service franchise, which is where he learned that it's people he likes to lead. He built his business on ethics, integrity and handshakes, asking his employees every day, "How may I help YOU?"

"Motivating my employees to help them reach their goals was way more gratifying to me than growing the numbers," says Najam. "In the end, it was the best thing for the company, too," says Najam, who multiplied his business to nearly 50 franchises in his people-centric organization.

Philanthropy and Flipping Houses

As a side business, Najam began dabbling in real estate. He enjoyed bringing people together to accomplish something tangible. Epic Holdings was not your ordinary real estate company – it was a tightly knit team that moved fast and made a profit – of which five percent was allocated toward community charities.

"We acquired and rehabbed about 50 properties including single family homes and townhomes in just three years," says Najam. "We were beautifying neighborhoods, but we were also changing lives." He trusted and empowered his team to do extraordinary work together and began his practice of giving 5% of the profit to local causes.

According to Najam, he found his purpose through the joy (and success) he realized by helping people. Whether supporting education initiatives from the Governor's office, or serving local charities like Loaves & Fishes, Allegro Foundation...A Champion for Children with Disabilities or Steve Smith Family Foundation, it was more satisfying than any other bottom line benefit he knew in corporate America. To him, THIS was the American Dream.



Impacting the Next Generation

With children of his own, he noticed the need for nurturing greatness in young people, specifically high school students. Najam's idea of bringing mentors and high school kids together brought about the birth of Champ Camp. He covers all the costs and will be taking it to colleges and universities free of charge with plans to register as 501 (c) organization.

"Champ Camp was started to fill a gap in our education system and give kids face-to-face exposure with professionals in all areas of business," says Najam. "They can ask questions at our high octane events, where they dress up and spend the day at a country club meeting mentors."

It wasn't until he was invited to speak at his college alma mater that his purpose grew, and his scope expanded to include college students. He realized that his life learnings could be a big benefit during this critical stage in life – from deciding a career path to being the best employee to grow your career.

"I'm now extending Champ Camp to Universities," says Najam, "because I want young adults to know that having an entrepreneurial mindset doesn't



Senator Tim Kaine



Impacting young lives at Champ Camp

mean you have to fund a start-up. If kids develop that mentality before they enter the workforce, they will take pride, take initiative and set goals as if it were their own business.”

Najam is not a motivational speaker nor a Life Coach, but he does hope that his life events will inspire others to create greatness.

“This is MY American Dream—I want my life to be counted,” says Najam. “If we don’t invest in our next generation, who will?”

Bringing Back the Human Touch

Najam Usmani is a natural born teacher who loves to share colorful stories and lessons learned from his vast experiences. He found that success comes from being truthful, compassionate and doing your best at every job. Serving others and seeking win-win solutions has always been his goal.

Najam believes that greatness begins with gratitude and is forever grateful for this country. He and his wife Farah were recently awarded the 2018 Mayor’s International Community Award for Global Leadership by Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles.

Najam Usmani can help create a winning mindset and a culture of cooperation in your business. For more information visit najamusmani.com or call 252.592.4810.



Creating a culture of collaboration in the workplace