

# INVESTING IN PEOPLE

By ROSHNI HANNON roshni.hannon@gmail.com



adjusted children and a stable household. What is that saying ... "Happy Wife, Happy Life."

Vik Patel agrees. Not only about the happy wife, happy life stuff.

But he knows that to run a successful business, you have to invest in people. Patel is Pinellas County's biggest Dunkin' Donuts franchisee. He diversified his buzz by moving into the beer world. He opened his first Brass Tap in Oldsmar. He is fast-tracking that business as well. But as committed as he is to the bubbling beer scene and our over-caffeinated and doughnut-obsessed society, he keeps his eye on what matter most: people. He said something during his presentation to the Indo-US Chamber last month that perked my ears. He said "do the right thing, and the money follows."



A businessman who invests in his people AND does the right thing. I'd say he's found the holy grail. In today's day, typical employee benefits no longer differentiate a company as much as they used to. Companies are realizing they must offer unique advantages that other businesses don't to keep top talent. Investing in your employees is not a new strategy, but there are different ways of creating loyalty among your top performers.

1. **Thought Leadership**  
I've learned that one of the biggest employee motivators is a sense of pride in their work. If your

teammates feel they're truly the best at what they do, that goes a long way. Encouraging and investing in your employees can be both a big motivator and a great boon to the company.

The more an employee leads her space, the more opportunity and credibility she brings to her company. Look at your VPs or directors, and put a plan in place to share their expertise with the public. Sure, you could worry about them leaving to start their own ventures or join another company, but if they're the right people for your business, it should make them more loyal to your company.

## 2. Personal Branding

This ties into thought leadership nicely because you can build your employees' brands as they become thought leaders. Maximize the value of the content they release or the awards they receive. Mad Bear Productions has been fantastic at doing this. Since I have come on board, the CEO, Glenn Zimmerman is so great about making sure I update my LinkedIn and other social media profiles. What you'll notice is as you increase their brands, you will see your company's credibility skyrocket. Investing in the branding of your employees is almost as important as the overall branding of your company. When your partners or customers deal with your company, they deal with the people who lead it.

## 3. Unique Culture Benefits

Normal benefits like 401(k)s and insurance are important, but it's also vital to provide benefits that set you apart. Invest in events and benefits your employees will brag about to their friends. You will instill a sense of pride in the company and probably obtain a few more applications from talent — without spending a dime on recruiting.

## 4. Personal Time Investments

This is the hardest investment, but it's also the most valuable. My CEO makes it a point to spend time with the Mad Bear team outside work. He knows our families and what's important



to each of us. As a result, we are loyal. It is a big investment, but also well worth the time.

## 5. Network Expansion

Many leaders are scared of the thought that their employees could develop massive networks. Job opportunities will eventually come their way, and they could easily be lost. However, if you invest in the above benefits, there should be a trust created that makes that less of a worry.

Make it a point to continuously introduce your employees to influential people you know. Who knows, they could develop a relationship that turns it into an opportunity you might have missed. You want your company to stand out from the dozens you're competing against — to do that, you have to help your employees stand out. Your team really is your most valuable asset, and your team will keep adding value once they feel your loyalty is as strong as theirs.

At a time when most people are cutting back, dare to do something different. Make an investment in your people. The return is certainly there.



Rima Sanka

## MEET DR. RIMA SANKA

The spotlight is on Dr. Rima Sanka this month. In addition to being a busy mom of two active kids, Dr. Sanka is also a member of the private practice Advanced Allergy and Asthma Care. Since she joined, the practice has expanded to four locations throughout Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco counties. Dr. Sanka is trained in allergy immunology, which allows her to treat adults and children with allergies, asthma and immune deficiencies. She is also leading a statewide movement to expand and revise current legislation to allow for proper implementation of stocking epinephrine in the public schools, allowing any student with undiagnosed anaphylaxis to be treated without fear of liability. The revised legislation has passed through two committees so far and is expected to clear the last step soon.

Five years ago, Dr. Sanka started a group called ICICLE (Indian Cultural Learning In a Cool Learning Environment). It has grown from six families in South Tampa to more than 40 families. The group is all about making Indian culture fun and educational at the same time. In her free time, she enjoys pursuing health and fitness and is training for her first 15 K run to support cancer research through Miles for Moffitt. She always enjoys new challenges and two years ago, completed her first sprint triathlon. She is proud to say she still holds her high school long jump record in track and field!

Contact Dr. Sanka at [advallergy@yahoo.com](mailto:advallergy@yahoo.com) For more information, visit [www.allergydoc.us](http://www.allergydoc.us) or on Facebook: [Advanced Allergy and Asthma Care](https://www.facebook.com/AdvancedAllergyandAsthmaCare).

## DOUBLE DOSE OF INTELLECT THIS MONTH: PAT BHAVA AND RAM KANCHARLA

The Indo-US Chamber has two powerful speakers lined up for March. Both topics mean a lot of things to a lot of people: kids and our economy. Pat Bhava is the creator of the PikMyKid App, which gives parents and teachers peace of mind by streamlining the students' dismissal process, and providing real-time updates to parents



Pat Bhava

and generates records for school administration. The app is available free to public schools nationwide. But parents who download the app, pay \$3.99. Bhava has more than 19 years of experience in both the government and private sectors. He also is an ex-Naval fighter pilot and deep-sea diver. Ram Kancharla is the Vice President of Planning and Development for Port Tampa Bay, Florida's largest port. He will be talking about what's in store for all the Channelside development and his vision for the port. For more than two decades, he has overseen the port's capital improvements, strategic planning, economic development, transportation planning, capital resource management, regulatory compliance, and inter-agency coordination and outreach.



Ram Kancharla

Kancharla has a Master's in Business Administration from the University of South Florida and is certified by the American Association of Port Authorities as a Professional Port Manager. He is active in the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce, Tampa Bay Partnership, Government Finance Officers Association, and American Association of Port Authorities, and he advises or serves on the boards of Floridians for Better Transportation, Tampa Bay Economic Development Corporation, Florida Ports Financing Commission, and USF Center for Urban Transportation Research. Kancharla is also a Global Advisory Council member for Barranquilla-based Innovation in Logistics, Supply Chain and Port Management (LOGPORT) and U.S. Maritime Administration Strong Ports focus group member. He is an active Rotarian and serves on several community boards, including Feeding America.

You don't want to miss this event. Join us March 16th at the HCI Building at 6:30 p.m.



## Upcoming Indo-US Chamber Events:

### 14th ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Date: Friday, March 4  
Time: lunch/registration at noon followed by shotgun start at 1 p.m.  
Cost: \$150 per player or \$500 per foursome  
Location: Wentworth Golf & Country Club, 2990 Wentworth Way, Tarpon Springs  
For information: Call Kamlesh at (813) 841-9216, Jal Irani at (813) 451-8229 or visit [www.indo-us.org](http://www.indo-us.org)

### MARCH NETWORKING EVENT

Date: Wednesday, March 16  
Time: 6:30 p.m.  
Location: HCI Ballroom, 5300 W. Cypress St., Tampa  
Speakers: Pat Bhava, creator of the PikMyKid App; and Ram Kancharla, Vice President of Planning and Development for Port Tampa Bay.

## INDO-US CHAMBER MISSION

"To provide an active forum in which Asian American professionals and business owners, through an exchange of ideas, with a unified voice, can communicate, interact, and secure a position within the business industry and become a source of inspiration by promoting professionalism and excellence through education and community involvement."

## INDO-US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jal Irani, President

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## LIMP HANDSHAKES AND LOOSE HUGS

By ROSHNI HANNON

Since I left my life in television and entered the business world, I spend a lot of time networking. It's the nature of what I do now, and I love it. I love it because I genuinely love observing people, meeting people and making connections. But in my new endeavors, I have noticed an epidemic: the limp handshake and the loose hug. It's terrible. The limp handshake makes me paranoid. Do my hands look dirty? Did I remember to wash them after the bathroom ... wait, did I wash them after I picked up the dog's business? Of course I did. This is just a bad handshake! Getting a handshake right is hard. I have come palm-to-palm with many an awkward shake. So much so, that I've named all five of them.

1. The Boiled Spaghetti: Cooked to perfection. It falls into your palm soft and flaccid. You're

afraid to squeeze it for fear that you'll break it. So, you release it and it just falls. Just like the massive pool of spaghetti that noodle just got dropped into, the person with this sad handshake will be lost and sadly forgotten.

2. The Seizure: This person takes the "shake" in handshake seriously. It's the vigorous hand hold and the vicious up and down. Your poor arm feels like it might be dislodged if things continue a moment longer. Who knows if its nerves, over-caffeination or excitement ... whatever it is, it's awful. And it hurts.

3. The BOGO (Buy One Get One Free): I am guilty of this one, so I've been told. I suppose people don't want me to shake their single vulnerable hand in two of mine. Like I'm scooping it up like a wounded bird. You mean you don't feel reassured or embraced? Ok, OK. I'll stop.

4. The Fondler: You know who you are. You slip your palm stealthily into mine, while your other hand rests on my shoulder or grabs my elbow. I feel a bit violated. Maybe I'm overreacting, but I don't trust this person as far as I can throw them ... shake them off ... whatever, you get the picture.

5. The Pump Fake: Save this for the football field or maybe the dance floor. This just stinks and it's so awkward. I put my hand out for the shake and you come in for the hug. So, I drop my hand for your hug and you go for the shake. The result is an awkward mixture of body convulsions and nervous laughter. Game over. Just stop.

So until we perfect the handshake can we agree on the "fist-bump", or perhaps the Indian prayer gesture — and just let our name tags do the talking?

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