



The secret of my success

Self-made millionaire Kavita Oberoi talks to **Zee Magazine** about how to make it, and how to give it away

Being passed up for promotion may seem like an odd way to get on in the cut-and-thrust world of business, but for Kavita Oberoi, it proved to be just the spur she needed.

Having studied Applied Chemistry at university, Kavita went on to work for Bayer Pharmaceuticals where, despite establishing herself as one of the company's leading medical representatives, she was denied a step up the career ladder. Undaunted, she decided to go it alone and set up her own IT training and business consultancy. Eight years on, and Oberoi Consulting is a major player in the industry and its founder and managing director, at just 38, is one of the UK's leading female business brains.

Indeed, if the face looks familiar, that's because the hugely successful businesswoman featured in the last series of Channel 4's *The Secret Millionaire*, where wealthy benefactors go undercover to seek out deserving recipients.

Here the Derbyshire-based entrepreneur and philanthropist offers an insight into the personal traits, trials and triumphs that have helped her forge a thriving business of her own.

How did you develop such a keen business brain?

My father was an amazing businessman. Having come to England in the 1960s and rapidly built an extremely successful business, he then encouraged our whole extended family to follow in his footsteps.

I started working with him at an early age. For a while we lived above our shop in Bradford and as young as two I'd go into his office and play on the typewriter and phone, and pretend to sell. My training started early.

You've reaped the rewards of your success. What keeps you motivated?

The fact that I don't have to answer to anyone. I make my own decisions and plan my own

time. I love having the freedom to be innovative, and then getting to see my ideas go into practice.

What is the toughest aspect to striking out on your own?

Managing staff and ensuring that your company's objectives are achieved through the actions of others is the greatest challenge. In the past I have found it extremely difficult to relinquish control and delegate tasks to my staff. I have very high standards and feared that if they made mistakes, they would prove costly to the company's reputation. However, I have had to let go and now understand that mistakes only help people to learn and develop, thereby enabling the company itself to grow.

What part have family values played in your drive to succeed?

They are very important to me as happiness and contentment at home make for success in business. In the past the "woman's role" was very much seen to be in the home. The attitude was that women should not go to work and certainly not be educated. I was the

first in my family to do both thanks to my mother's empowerment.

You're a wife and mother to daughters, aged eight and 13. How do you juggle family life with a thriving business?

I break the days down into slots. When I get back from work, everything stops to prepare the family meal, then, after helping with my children's homework and extra curricular stuff, work starts again into the early hours! I do have a helper these days, but at the end of the day, if you want success in all fields you have to just get on and do it.

Why did you decide to appear on *The Secret Millionaire*?

In January last year I went to Mumbai on a trade delegation and on one of the days we visited several charities. I met a very humble and inspirational lady who had set up the National Spastics Society in India. She had a disabled daughter and soon after her daughter's birth she travelled to India where she was shocked to discover that disabled children were made outcasts. She fought for a policy change for 35 years and has now won.

I found her so inspiring and felt I had achieved little in comparison. When I returned home I was on the lookout for an opportunity that would allow me to do something to help others and out of the blue came a call from the makers of the Channel 4 programme.

What drew you to the charity *Sisters With Mercy*, one of your main beneficiaries from the show?

It was difficult being an Asian woman as a young student but with my mother's support, I was able to achieve my success today. When I met *Sisters With Voices* I really connected with them as I could see they were empowering young girls to achieve their full potential.



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