

## RECAP: MARCH MONTHLY NETWORKING MEETING

This month's business and networking meeting was held on Wednesday, March 21, at the headquarters of Homeowners Choice Insurance, featuring a presentation from Matt Becker, Chief Operating Officer of the 2012 Tampa Bay Host Committee, Inc. Becker's presentation centered on the scale of business opportunities potentially available to the local community during the upcoming Republican National Convention in Tampa from Aug. 27-30, 2012. The Host Committee — a non-partisan entity — is tasked with "promoting the Tampa Bay area to the approximately 50,000 guests that will be arriving for the convention."

Becker spoke in detail about the Small Business Network, "an exclusive program to promote and cultivate Tampa Bay's diverse business community representing small, women, and minority-owned companies." The audience Q&A session covered topics such as the looming application deadlines, valid merchandise categories, and the structure of the vendor directory, which will be published online.

For more information, Matt Becker can be reached at [info@2012tampa.com](mailto:info@2012tampa.com) or call (813) 400-2300.



## INDO-US CHAMBER MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: JYOTI PATEL

Each month, the Indo-Chamber of Commerce holds a raffle at our business networking event for the opportunity to be highlighted in this spot. This month's winner is Jyoti Patel, an Independent Financial Representative based out of Tampa.



### Tell us about your business...

"I am an independent financial representative. After understanding the financial needs of the client, I create an individualized roadmap to help individuals and their families meet their goals. I work with clients to identify and prioritize their wealth management goals, effectively preserve and transfer their wealth, and achieve the best possible insurance protection that is best suited for them. In addition, my team includes a seasoned estate planning attorney who handles important legal aspects of estate planning."

### Why is it important to secure insurance?

"The most valuable asset now in individual estates is not only their home, but also their hard earned assets and retirement accounts. These assets need to be preserved and enhanced for family wealth protection. I help clients preserve and enhance those assets for their heirs through wealth transfer concepts using life insurance, annuities, and long-term care insurance. Remember, life insurance can help take care of family needs as well as help to transfer wealth to beneficiaries. Adding long term-care insurance can help preserve it in the unfortunate incidence of serious health related or unexpected expenses."

### What are some of the current trends in the industry?

"Due to our depressed economy, low interest rate environment and expected higher estate taxes, a greater number of families are using life insurance vehicles to protect, transfer and leverage existing assets to the next generation. Life insurance is also

being looked at as an alternate asset class in client investment portfolios due to the product guarantees, high internal rates of return, and as a means to reduce exposure to the volatility of the market. 'Indexed Universal Life' products have gained popularity for tax advantaged cash accumulation due to the downside market protection and upside performance potential it offers. There has also been a surge in linked benefit products that combine life insurance and long-term care insurance into one product. If you don't use the LTC benefits, you don't lose them as the benefit will pass to your heirs through the life insurance death benefit."

### What differentiates you from your competition?

"I am an independent agent that has lived in Tampa and worked with the local community for many years. Being an independent agent, I have the ability to choose among many insurance companies' products that best suits the individualized need of my clients."

### What do you hope to gain from joining the Indo-US Chamber?

"As a member for several years, I can attest to the countless benefits of joining the Indo-US Chamber of Commerce. As membership has grown, so too have the opportunities for mentorship, business strategies, networking, and access to some of the area's top corporations. My goal in the Indo-US Chamber is not only to be an active member, but also to contribute time and resources to the next generation of Indo-US members so that our community continues to grow and prosper."

For more information, contact Jyoti Patel at (813) 810-4727 or [jjyoti1life@gmail.com](mailto:jjyoti1life@gmail.com)

## INDO-US CHAMBER PROFILE: DR. AKSHAY "A.K." DESAI

Dr. Akshay "A.K." Desai is currently the Chairman of the Board, President and CEO of Universal Health Care Group, Inc. based out of St. Petersburg, FL. Founded in 2002, Universal now serves 200,000 members and has grown from an initial presence in three counties in Florida to a presence in 20 States and the District of Columbia. The company is one of the largest employers in downtown St. Petersburg, with approximately 1,200 associates and has annual revenue of about \$1.5 billion. In February, Dr. Desai was appointed as Finance Committee Chairman of the Republican Party of Florida—the first Indian-American in the U.S. to serve that position for any major political party. Dr. Desai was kind enough to grant the Indo-US Chamber of Commerce a closer look at his lifetime of achievements. The following is a portion of the Chamber's insightful interview with Dr. Desai.

### How did you initially get involved in politics?

Dr. Desai: "I got involved in politics when I lived in Washington D.C., completing my residency in Geriatrics and pursuing a Masters degree in Administrative Medicine. As a student, I did not have the financial resources to actively participate but, by virtue of having the opportunity to live in the political power-center, I was still able to become engaged and involved by attending various hearings and events. As a matter of fact, my initial interest in politics actually began in Surat, India, where I attended political rallies and debates."

### Tell us about your recent appointment as Finance Committee Chairman of the Republican Party of Florida.

Dr. Desai: "It is a distinct honor to be nominated for this position. I have the responsibility to harness financial resources for the party's causes in order to effectively put their message forward. I never planned or sought this position but was nominated by the party hierarchy and the Governor of Florida as a testament to my loyalty, dedication and hard work over many years. This is an example of the great society that we live in which favors meritocracy—when you are prepared to work hard, titles will follow you instead of you chasing them."

### Do you think there is a way to make a difference at the grassroots level?

Dr. Desai: "Absolutely, this is the level at which it all begins. Although financial resources are important to get your message across, you can still achieve the same end goals when you ignite ideas with passion and hard work."

### You have played an active role in politics, has it helped or hindered you in the business world?

Dr. Desai: "At times when I talk to peers, I get a variety of answers. To debunk any negative perceptions, there are some instances where you lose a bit of your personal freedom and miss out on some aspects of family life. However, when you are active, it gives you tremendous access to how Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. really works, it helps you to network more effectively, and it gives you a clearer idea of how to run a business. I approach it as a 'call of duty' to make dreams and opportunities available for future generations. Your viewpoint and vision expand, allowing you to think bigger. It opens up a new world—opportunities that may have been missed if I had remained passive."

### What is your advice to young professionals/entrepreneurs who are excited to make a difference at this juncture?

Dr. Desai: "Volunteer your time, even at the grassroots level. Read, speak, and discuss current issues and ideas amongst your peers in order to broaden your horizons and 'get a seat at the table' to truly make a difference. Follow your passion, e.g. if you have a real zeal for education, attend public Education Board meetings and express your viewpoint—you will be making a positive contribution to your community and onward. The alternative is to be passive and play the role of 'Monday Morning Quarterback' which is just to talk yet do nothing. My advice would be to stop complaining, take on challenges, become action-oriented and inspire others."

### Speaking of local entrepreneurs, how can local businesses benefit from the RNC convention in Tampa?

Dr. Desai: "The opportunity for the entire Tampa Bay region is going to be huge. In terms of scale, this event will be three times the size of the recently hosted Super Bowl. There are also marketing opportunities to reach out to people beyond Tampa Bay, as traffic increases so does the share of people trying to benefit. As a member of the Convention Host Committee, we are making huge outreach efforts to encourage local business owners to provide goods and services that will be needed for the event. Attendees will include the most prominent high level corporate representatives which will bode well for the benefit of our business community."



Dr. Akshay "A.K." Desai, CEO, Universal Health Care Group, Inc.

### Have you mentored any young people?

Dr. Desai: "Not per se, but as a member of the State Board of Education, my passion has been to encourage financial literacy for high school graduates by working with various groups. I want to help young people manage their day-to-day decisions, including how to manage their credit cards, etc. When I do have the time, I make myself available as a sounding board to help advise and guide folks by helping them talk through and evaluate issues."

### What materials do you read?

Dr. Desai: "I am a voracious reader and go through four newspapers daily: Tampa Bay Times, Financial Times, New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal. I also enjoy The Economist magazine and I'm currently reading the book 'Currency Wars' by Professor James Rickards."

### India is growing by leaps and bounds - would you consider this an asset or threat to the U.S. economy?

Dr. Desai: "Definitely an asset. As two established democracies, we share a very strong bond via several treaties and serve as strategic partners. This is a mutually beneficial relationship where, as India grows, it opens up new markets as well as opportunities for the exchange of ideas and technology."

### Do strategic opportunities exist between India and the Tampa Bay area?

Dr. Desai: "Yes, for instance look at the information technology industry. We have so many companies (and Chamber members) in Tampa that have back-office operations in India. However, we operate in a global economy and so I would encourage members not to get blindsided and look for additional opportunities in countries and regions beyond India, such as Southeast Asia and South America."

### What do you see as the greatest challenge for Indian-Americans to achieve success in today's world?

Dr. Desai: "We need to become more engaged in the mainstream after the typical '8AM-5PM' workday ends; in essence, become less introverted. There is nothing wrong with this as you should be proud of your culture and heritage, but don't let this preclude you from missing out on opportunities that are right in front of you. Be a proud American citizen while also respecting your past. The perception of a 'glass ceiling' that hinders growth is simply a state of mind, where if effectively reframed, you can take control of your own destiny to steer toward success and learn from failures."

### Can you share some of the principles that help to guide you in life?

Dr. Desai: "I believe that life is all about investing in experiences. Success should be equally balanced with responsibility, a sense of duty, and an active social life. When I founded Universal Health Care, my personal ethos was to maintain a firm clarity of purpose of the mission. I strongly believe that competence, confidence, and conviction all come from within, based on our own knowledge and experiences gained throughout life."

### Do you have any final thoughts for our Chamber members?

Dr. Desai: "Members should cherish the hard work of the original founders of the organization. As a former Board Member, I have seen significant effort and financial resources devoted to building a consistent standard for the Chamber over the years, including its networking events and the 'Banyan Ball'."

The Indo-US Chamber of Commerce is a non-partisan organization with no mission or affiliation to any political party.

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## 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."

Attend the next Indo-US Chamber networking event for the opportunity to have your business highlighted in this space!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Business & Networking Meeting Wednesday, April 18, 2012

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

HCI Building (5300 W. Cypress St., Tampa, FL 33607)

This is a **FREE** event. Dinner will be served. No RSVP required.

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