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India native leverages technical skills, connection to homeland in ventures



The life of entrepreneur **Nipa Shah** has been a mixture of old-world sensibilities and a 21st-century appreciation for technology and the global economy.

Shah, president of Novi-based **Jenesys Group LLC** and founder of a new chamber of commerce for the Asian Indian community, is taking advantage of her connection to her homeland and a knack for technology refined while living in the United States.

Jenesys Group, an online marketing and Web site development firm Shah started in 2004, provides Web site development services, utilizing a staff of 20 part- and full-time employees in India. The company's clients include lawyers, marketing companies, other Web site development companies, radio show hosts, hardware and software retailers, and many other companies in diverse market segments.

Using Indian programmers is attractive to U.S. companies because, in many cases, high-quality work can be done for a relatively low cost, compared compared to work done here. But, Shah says, companies looking to connect with suppliers in India need to navigate cross-cultural issues – and that's where she comes in.

"I know the culture," says Shah, referring to her supplier base in India. "When you work in corporate America, you understand what people want and how. In India, when someone nods their head, it's not necessarily them agreeing to what you are saying, it's just the culture is one where people can't say no."

Shah says Jenesys works on as many as 20 to 25 projects at a time, each one taking about a month to complete.

"We take away the hassle of project management," says Shah. "Our clients spend their time working with their customers and we do the programming that makes things work."

Now, Shah is turning her attention to connecting Asian Indians and others to each other. Last fall, she founded the **Michigan India Chamber of Commerce (MICC)**, set up to provide networking and business resources to companies in Metro Detroit owned by those in the Asian Indian community. She also is working with Sue Voyles, president of Canton-based **Logos Communications Inc.** on an advertising-supported blogging portal – www.thebloogle.com.

Shah said she founded MICC to improve communication between diverse groups within the Asian Indian community.

"Everyone in our community talks about the lack of trust that prevents us from doing business with each other," said Shah, 44. "I also see that although we are educated and affluent, we continue to live in our social sub-communities that are based on religion and social class. To bring about unity, an organization like the Michigan India Chamber must exist."

The blogging portal was formed as "an alliance with writers and journalists and people who are experts in their own fields."

Those ventures seem to be a natural extension of Shah's life story. When she came to America

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from her native India in 1985, Shah arrived here to join her husband in an arranged marriage. But, she came equipped with a bachelor's degree in biochemistry, which allowed her to work in cancer research. And she later earned a master's degree from Lawrence Technological University while working as a chemist in an automotive emissions testing lab.

This year's sales for Jenesys should come in at about \$125,000 to \$130,000, sustaining the 20-25 percent yearly increase Shah has enjoyed since she launched the company. Shah expects a growth rate of 25-30 percent to continue for at least the next couple of years, a healthy increase she attributes in part to what she offers local companies.

Admittedly, it took Shah some time – about "about a year and a half" – to work out the kinks in her business, working through those cultural disconnects that have plagued others. "Today we meet or beat our deadlines," she said.

-- By **J.D. Booth**, *Daily Dash* contributing writer

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