

# THE VIEW FROM HERE

***Strathclyde MBA graduate Inderjit Singh is one of Singapore's most famous entrepreneurs and politicians. He explains what drives him – and reveals his passion for writing***

**P**EOPLE HAVE called me a 'serial entrepreneur' but, at the start of my career, I had no plans to start my own business. My mindset was

one of solving problems – problems that other people thought couldn't be solved. I was interested in thinking outside the box and being creative.

I studied an engineering degree in Singapore and then I did my Strathclyde MBA here in Singapore through distance learning. We had a lot of opportunities to interact with the professors and I found them very open and keen to see us succeed.

I began my career in 1985 with Texas Instruments, where I progressed to the role of Director of Operations. I could see opportunities and in 1998 I left to start my own business, manufacturing semi-conductors. The MBA was really useful, particularly in terms of how I organised the business. People can have good ideas but knowing how to develop them is often the hard part.

Being of service to others has always been important to me and, when I graduated, I took on volunteer work as a community leader. Later, I was invited to become involved in national politics. I'd always seen politics as community service on a larger scale so I was pleased to take part. I've now served with the Parliament for four terms.

One of my biggest political interests has been promoting entrepreneurship and making Singapore a more business-friendly environment. Most entrepreneurs say that the biggest challenge is

trying to raise funds – I faced the same problem and had to raise most of my funds from Taiwan when I started the United Test and Assembly Centre (UTAC) in 1998, so I worked with a range of experts to look at ideas for tackling that, and travelled the world to study other financing models. When I returned, we published a report and presented it to the Government. They started implementing the ideas that we came up with and the business financing environment today has been transformed. Today, I'm proud to say that financing for start-ups and most small and medium enterprises is no longer an issue in Singapore.

One of the other challenges I faced was regulation and, as Deputy Chairman of the Action Community for Entrepreneurship, a national body tasked to help entrepreneurship bloom in Singapore, we helped reform many regulations. The Government is now very receptive and Singapore has become one of the easiest places to do business. The economy is doing well too. When the financial crisis first hit in 2009, the Government was quick to secure jobs and throw a lifeline to

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companies. We were among the first to enter recession and the first to get out. Even last year, we grew by 15 per cent, which is very impressive.

One of the keys to success in business is getting the right people. If you want to start a big company, you need talented people that you can work with comfortably. You also need investors who are in tune with your thinking. When I did my first major start-up, I had a very small stake in the company. When the company became big and successful, others took over and I had no control. I had to leave and start again. So be careful who you choose as your partners.

My next big focus is Africa, with my Solstar brand of consumer electronic products. I have very little time for hobbies but I enjoy writing. I wrote a book called *The Art and Science of Entrepreneurship*, which sold out on its first print run. I've also written several bedtime stories for my children, which I may publish too. ●

## BIOGRAPHY

Inderjit Singh was born in India but has lived nearly all his life in Singapore. After qualifying with an engineering degree from Nanyang Technological University, he achieved an MBA from the University of Strathclyde. After 13 years at Texas Instruments, he launched his own company, United Test and Assembly Centre, which has grown to be one of the largest semi-conductor companies in the world. He has since developed countless other businesses in Singapore, earning himself the title of serial entrepreneur, and has served as a member of Parliament for 16 years.