

Not even Horatio Alger could make up a story like Jay Chaudhry's. A boy from a tiny town in India comes to the United States, works his way up in the corporate world while earning a fistful of advanced degrees, starts his own high-tech business and becomes a multimillionaire? Please.

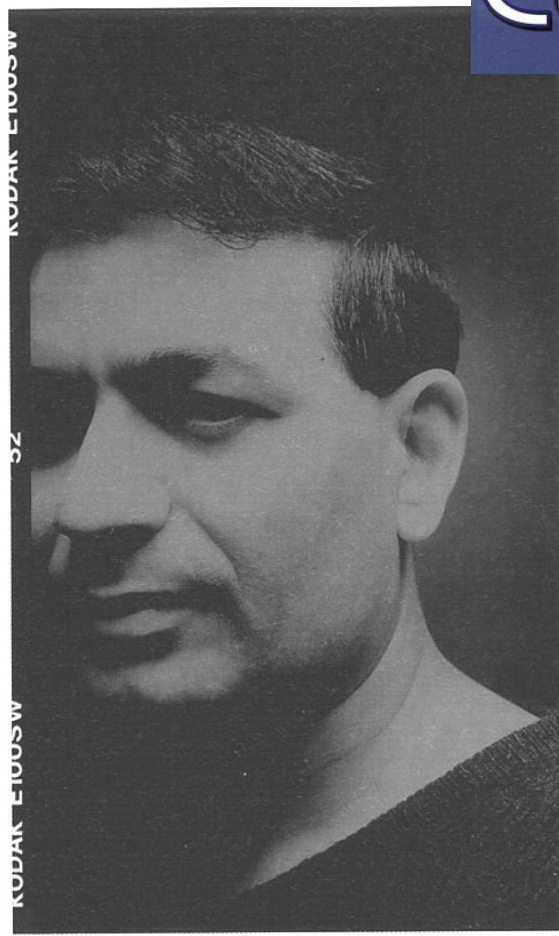
For a sequel, not only has Chaudhry launched two new tech companies, he's also making efforts to help both entrepreneurs here in Atlanta and students in his faraway hometown.

The small, northern Indian farming village of Una is light years away from the United States. As a child, Chaudhry says he didn't show signs of being a budding entrepreneur — there's no Indian equivalent of a lemonade stand in his past.

Instead, he grew up watching his father, a farmer, work hard day in, day out. Chaudhry took that example to heart and now says, "The harder you work, the luckier you get." Scholarships were his launching pad: "Without that, I wouldn't have made it."

Chaudhry continued his education in the U.S., earning Master's degrees at night in computer engineering, industrial engineering and business while working during the day. During his corporate career, which took him to IBM, NCR, Unisys and IQ Software, Chaudhry first discovered that he liked sales more than writing code (his first job), and then that he preferred marketing to sales.

He also learned the advantage that comes with such diverse experience. "Most people are either technically strong or strong



Launch Specialist

BY MIRANDA HITTI

in business, sales and marketing. If you can have both sides, it can make you exceptionally successful. That background gives you an edge," Chaudhry says.

With both sides of his brain fully engaged, becoming an entrepreneur was the next logical step. For a self-described risk-taker, the comforts of the executive suite couldn't compete with the white-knuckle energy of a start-up. And if it didn't work out, Chaudhry did have a safety net: With his experience, he knew he could get another job.

Many entrepreneurs venture down that road, but few succeed. Chaudhry took a three-pronged approach to his first entrepreneurial effort. First, he looked for an unclaimed niche — he didn't want to be a

"me, too" business. He settled on creating an Internet security services company, which he called SecureIT, in 1997.

Second, Chaudhry put that niche under a microscope, focusing on it intensely. Better to be 100 feet wide and 1,000 feet deep, rather than 1,000 feet wide and 10 feet deep, he thought, preferring to offer clients complete end-to-end services in his niche.

And when the time came, he chose a partner with a well-known name — VeriSign. Chaudhry says VeriSign wanted to "get married," and insists he wasn't playing hard to get when he declined at first. "From day one, we were dreaming of an IPO," he says of SecureIT. But after taking a closer look at the extensive process of preparing for a successful IPO, Chaudhry reconsidered and VeriSign acquired SecureIT in 1998.

The company's stock soared — the valuation hit \$1.3 to \$1.4 billion, and 70 of the 80 employees became millionaires. "Suddenly, there were all these new SUVs in the parking lot," Chaudhry says.

That success whetted his appetite, and Chaudhry is again walking the entrepreneur's path — this time, starting CoreHarbor, an e-commerce ASP specializing in business-to-business e-procurement. Chaudhry is also chairman and co-founder of Air2Web, which enables businesses to extend their Internet services to hand-held wireless devices, and he is chairman of eLaunchpad, a new incubator he started with fellow serial entrepreneur Palaniswamy "Raj" Rajan. He and "Raj" also work with budding entrepreneurs in the local chapter of TIE (The Indus Entrepreneurs).

Chaudhry is also helping his community back in India, where he donates money for education. He won't name a dollar amount, but does allow that he has built a school and started a computer science college there. "I have a passion to help students in my village," he says. "People who want to learn should be able to."

One thing Chaudhry has learned is to focus on the present. Ask him where he'll be in five years and he says that's too far off to predict. How about years from now — any ideas for more companies incubating in the back of his mind? Chaudhry nods, but he's not talking. It's a sure bet that when he's ready, everybody will be talking about it.

Reach him at jay@chaudhrys.com. ☺