

INDIAN  
ICONS

# INDIAN ICONS

OF INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP





***Riaz Khimani***

*Managing Director,  
Rikan General Trading*

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It's not everyday you will find a man, so successful yet so down to earth. Riaz Khimani is one such gem. When asked about the most memorable moment of his career, he is quick to reminisce about his father and credit those who supported him in his entrepreneurial journey.

When he was starting out on his own, his father told him that he would give him all the moral support and guidance he could, except money, which he did not have at the time. At this juncture, Riaz approached his closest friends who pitched in to help with the startup capital he required, without any expectations of repayment or interest. They had seen his hard work and struggle and believed that he would be a success, with a little help and through his sheer determination and efforts.

This was a turning point for Riaz, who realized the value of relationships and contacts, and vowed to pay the gesture forward. "It taught me so much and changed the way I see others today, who struggle to startup and have entrepreneurial skills but just need a little push. It reminds me of my old days and I try my best to stand by such individuals and ventures," he says.

Riaz has been operating in the Gulf since 1996 and specializes in catering to the international hotel industry. His company Rikan General Trading, now employs over 300 people across four manufacturing units in India, as well as fielding a strong research and development team that works with hoteliers to design and create beautiful and user-friendly products.

He has also gone on to launch two CSR initiatives, through his company, Green Rikan which adopts eco-friendly and sustainable manufacturing processes in their units in India, and Caring Rikan which supports child education and medical aid in collaboration with recognized non-profit groups such as

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Medicines Sans Frontiers, International Red Cross and the Red Crescent.

It is evident from the company's performance that not only does Riaz have a heart of gold, but a clear vision to succeed. His philosophy of "Do good, and good will come back to you" transpires to his business conduct and corporate ethos, adding: "We have always watched, studied and foreseen the ever-changing dynamics and growth of the region. We have assured international quality with responsibility towards the environment by implementing ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 14001:2004. This region is taking quality products, consumer satisfaction and responsibility towards the environment very seriously. Besides this, we also foresee the market expanding on the middle and lower tier consumers and not only the ultra-luxury sector. Since our business is with hotels and thus directly connected with all tiers of tourism, we have created products ranges also for budget 3-4 star hotels and not just 5 star and ultra-luxury hotels that we earlier catered to."

It seems so easy now, but Riaz's business acumen stems from his early indoctrination into business with humble beginning at the young age of 19. Therefore his outlook on business and market opportunities reflects his determination and optimism, which holds true today. He says, "If you are prepared to work hard, be honest to your product and give it your 100%. There is no such thing as a failed business with a combination of these three elements. We must remember, that in a globalized economy the world is our arena. So with broader horizons come broader markets, no matter what type of business." For instance Rikan maintains its manufacturing units in India, which historically, geographically and culturally is the closest, and most friendly trade partner with the region. The region has traded goods and merchandise with India for centuries and still maintains that faith and goodwill, which is a great example of friendly trade and exchange of ideas and values and culture through business.

Looking to the future, Riaz adds: “As far as creating positive impact goes, besides being a company known for its customer friendly policies and great quality, we would like to be remembered first as a socially responsible company through our CSR activities. We strongly believe in giving back to the region and its people, who have been the backbone of our growth and success. We have various CSR initiatives, which donate to local UAE based organizations helping the children in Syria, Palestine and other parts of the Middle East.”

On a final note his message to aspiring entrepreneurs would be to most importantly follow the local laws and norms. “Respect the local culture, embrace it and study their needs that you can cater to. The region offers great leadership, freedom to conduct business and opportunities.” He also suggests re-investing a part of their earnings, finding opportunities to grow personally while giving back to the community.

Other than that there is simply no substitute for hard work, honesty and integrity, which is reflected in the success Rikan General Trading has witnessed till today.



