

A Bridge Between Hollywood and Bollywood

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 11 April 2012 21:40 -



Anjula Acharia Beth is the CEO and co-founder of Desi Hits, a Bollywood media company. Desi Hits was founded in 2006 and is a multi platform media company that acts as a bridge between Hollywood and Bollywood. The company is financially backed by some of the biggest names in the music industry including Jimmy Iovine and works with celebrities like Lady Gaga, MIA and Justin Bieber on strategic marketing and media plans that cater to India and the growing diaspora.

Please tell us something about yourself and your company?

Desi Hits is a multi platform media company that creates and curates east/west fusion pop culture content from Bollywood to Hollywood. We have worked with some of the best talent from these two

worlds, such as Lady Gaga and Shah Rukh Khan creating original content for an eclectic audience. In addition we have a record label with Universal Music Group and we just signed Priyanka Chopra (who is one of the biggest female actresses from Bollywood...she literally has a billion fans!) with Jimmy Iovine from Interscope records and American Idol! We also consult major celebrities and brands on reaching India and the South Asian Diaspora.

My family has been a huge influence on the way I express myself as a woman. They raised me to always be independent, yet mindful of others. My mum taught me to really value the modern world we live in and embrace the freedom it offers – meaning that I would never have to be in any situation I don't want to be in because I'm equipped with skills and the education to change my destiny. She taught me to be in control no matter what.

My father, in his own career, broke the mold (he was a noted scientific photographer and the first person to take a picture of the brain!) He really taught my sister and me to fight for our rights, always be good people, and fight for others when they aren't able to do so themselves. I'm fiercely independent and driven because of the lessons I learned from my family and the guidance they have given me.

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How did the idea for desi hits come about?

Desi Hits! was a wonderful accident. My husband Ranj Bath and I were born and raised in the UK, 2nd generation “British South Asian”. We spent our lives fusing two cultures (music in particular) together, he DeeJayed back at college and I was writing articles on the subject. We moved to the US six years ago, and four years later we came across a bunch of kids in the US that had not been exposed to the whole fusion music scene that was so massive in the UK - which fuses together all genres of music from HipHop, Reggie to Bollywood, Bhangra and house beats creating a sound and culture that really reflects the bi-cultural and eclectic lifestyles that most cool young Desi’s are living across the globe.

It started out as a tiny podcast, which my husband was inspired to do with his love for technology and music – it was a short radio program showcasing the best of the fusion music scene coming out of the UK. It grew popular very quickly, and was recorded in our spare room on a laptop. Shortly after, we contacted my husband’s cousin Arun Sandhu, who had been a VJ for channel V, and had done a whole heap of TV work in the UK and India – he’s a natural presenter, and given this was his profession we asked him to do a bi-weekly show from the UK, as he was in the hub of this scene. Arun then became our 3rd co-founder and really is the “face of Desi Hits!”.

What is the start-up capital of your company?

We started with a small amount of our own cash but very quickly raised a \$1m round, and shortly after another \$5.5 million.

What is the business model for desi hits?

There are multiple revenue streams, including sponsorship and advertising for our content. We also do a lot of consultancy work, and charge consultancy fees for celebrities and brands that require our services to market and launch their products in India or to the global south Asian diaspora. We also have a label deal with Universal Music Group, which is an added revenue stream and allows us to participate in revenue created through artists we break on our platform, Desi Hits is more focused on the brand side of working with these artist and creating revenues through more 360 degree deals.

What are your future plans for the company?

We really want to just continue to build the company and make a real dent in global pop culture. We’d like to continue helping brands and celebrities reach this lucrative and exploding demographic, which is 1/5 of the world's population.

What have been your key learnings since starting desi hits?

Most importantly (if you can) take funding from VC’s that understand your business and can help you grow. Take your time to hire the right people and figure out the right revenue model for YOUR

company from the start...it can evolve, of course, but keep your eye on the \$. Many VC’s will encourage you to build out the distribution and just scale – until the market crashed I was told to not worry about revenue and to just build scale. I think we learned the hard way not to think like that!

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What have been your biggest mistakes so far?

Scaling up too fast and then hiring the wrong people to meet that need.

What are some of the biggest challenges you face with desi hits?

Essentially it's hard when you are doing something that nobody has done before, and the technology isn't there to support it – e.g. broadband penetration and smart phone limitations in India have certainly held us back over the years. Secondly, mainstream channels in India are only now catching on to the fact that there is more to life than Bollywood!

From a creative content perspective, we took on a huge challenge to change pop culture globally from east to west, for example... by bringing indian fusion content to the west (Slumdog Millionaires

Jai HO! with pussycat dolls!!), or taking western content to India (A Bollywood inspired version of Lady Gaga's Born This Way and Judas, even Britney Spears' collaboration with Sonu Niigaam). India

is predominately driven by "Bollywood," so our fusion content, we know, is a natural progression as western brands and cultures penetrate India to a greater degree.

This takes time and it has to be done in the right way. Mainstream US pop music is still very niche in India, but we are about to change that with our signing of Priyanka Chopra, who is one of the biggest celebrities in India and she will bring pop culture right into India with a bump!

Who is your role model ?

I think Jimmy lovine is someone I really look up to and respect. He has the rare quality of really understanding pop culture, content, and technology and how they work seamlessly together.

The last

person I thought was like that was Steve Jobs. Jimmy takes creative risks and is willing to venture into new markets, which I love.

Anything else you'd like to add...

To my fellow entrepreneurs.... If you don't get it right the first time you will the 2nd or 3rd or 4th. Don't stop building and challenging the way things are already done.