



MR. RELIABLE

Paras Shahdarpuri leapt from a life in politics to building a brand worth billions. Enjoy lessons from a legend as he unpacks his unique spin on business

PARAS SHAHDADPURI / FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN NIKAI GROUP

Paras Shahdarpuri's tale of entrepreneurship has all the hallmarks of a best-seller, with the Founder and Chairman of the Nikai Group considered a living legend in retail circles thanks to his common sense approach to business. However, Paras' story is fabled as much for the company's ongoing success as it is for its unconventional beginning.

Based in Dubai, Nikai boasts more than 400 own-brand products across electronic appliances, home entertainment and white goods, with direct operations in more than 60 countries and 60 million satisfied customers worldwide. Successfully plugged in to some of the most competitive global markets – including the US – it is now entering a rapid expansion phase into African and Asian markets, with the Magreb countries a special focus. 'Superbrand' status was conferred on the group in 2011 and 2016 to 2018 inclusive by the international Superbrands Organisation and Paras has been showered with accolades and prizes,

including the prestigious Bharat Shiromani Award.

The decorated chairman we meet today wasn't always intent on a life in business. Indeed, Paras' professional life started in politics, as a diplomat serving the Indian Government, however the prospect of resigning himself to a life of bureaucracy and the inevitability of early retirement did not appeal. Paras says: "That job came with limitations. At that time, you had to retire at the age of 58. Now I am 72 years of age and I'm working a full 12-hour a day."

Rather than surrender to the status quo, while in his 50s Paras decided to quit his job and start his own company – a risky move for someone with no prior business experience. "When I was working for the government I was not taught about revenue growth and profitability," he says, "so when Nikai was born in 1995, my expectations and goals weren't that high to be honest. I wanted a modest start – which is something I definitely had. But →



Friends in high places

“ You need to have a sense of anticipation...this means always having something called Plan B at hand... ”

as soon as you are engaged in a particular business, you try to find out how to grow better and become more robust. I have been actively learning at every step of my business career, from how to tackle obstacles one by one, assess where opportunities lie, and how best to harness and extract those opportunities.”

Nikai is one of the top-selling electronics brands in all of the UAE’s major retailers, namely LuLu and Carrefour, and despite stiff competition from major Japanese and Korean brands Nikai’s prominence in the market has not been compromised. Paras believes this boils down to three things: preparation, anticipation and supply chain competence. “You need to have a sense of anticipation,” he explains. “This means you always have something called Plan B at hand, ready to react in case problems and difficulties occur. I hope we never need to go to plan C.”

The ability to predict and consequently cater for ever-changing consumer appetites and demands has stood Nikai in good stead over the last 23 years. Flexibility is clearly a key aspect of Paras’ modus operandi, as is monitoring and managing a fully integrated supply chain. “The supply chain is an integral part of our success story,” he says. “It is a completely integrated process and we always consider the whole chain. How happy are our suppliers, our dealers or our bankers, for example? And, of course, how happy are our consumers?”

The close relationships Nikai enjoys with its suppliers is a result of the company’s founding ethos: reliability. Indeed, the company’s tag line is ‘Mr. Reliable’. Although Paras acknowledges that the moniker is “not very gender neutral”, he maintains that it encapsulates the philosophy and company culture he has created at Nikai. Suppliers can rely on Nikai to distribute their products efficiently and operations are excellent, something Paras believes stems from Nikai’s form of conduct. “If you call yourself Mr. Reliable, then you better be reliable – there’s nowhere to hide”, he says.

These tight-knit relationships also pay dividends when it comes to the “superb first-class attention” Nikai receives from its suppliers. “They give us very preferential treatment at a very good cost, which we appreciate hugely,” says Paras. “It’s a big advantage for us as we are able to offer some of the best prices in the world and remain competitive in the market.



Award-winning service and products



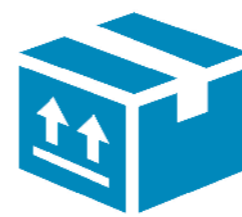
Paras Shahdadpuri: one of India’s top leaders

Plus, we have our own method of determining quality, our ‘inspection mechanism’, so we can ensure that our products are as good as any Japanese or Korean brand.”

Paras’ background in politics has undoubtedly influenced and informed his shrewd approach to business. Looking to build your own global brand? Paras offers the following advice: “Keep abreast of potential issues in

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the area you are dealing with, such as political problems, the geo-political situation, market trends...and remember not to put all of your eggs in one basket. You also have to stay on top of tech development.” As we all become increasingly dependent upon technology, we can feel safe in the knowledge that there will always be one man we can rely on to stay ahead of the curve. 🚀



2011

Own-brand products



60 Million

Satisfied customers



50s

Paras founded Nikai