



From The Author, For His Readers

"Impossible is Nothing"

It doesn't matter how your day ended yesterday, just remember that today is a new day, a new beginning and a new start.

Always leave home with a smile on your face, no matter how great the challenges are at the back of your mind. It is important that your loved ones get the strength and motivation from you to lead a happy day as well.

Remember to stare back at your challenges, no matter how hostile and nerve wrecking they are. Your resilience, your perserverance, your grit, your mantle, shall bring them crashing down if not today then, tomorrow, because 'Impossible is Nothing'.

Credits

Co Writers – Saira Imran, Mashal Imran

“Impossible is nothing, if you just believe.” – Salim Ghauri

“The longer it takes to build something, the longer it lasts.” – Salim Ghauri

“Embrace failure as a stepping stone towards your dreams; with each stumble, you draw nearer to success.” – Salim Ghauri

“Luck did not knock on my door... I opened my door, stepped out and grabbed luck myself.” – Salim Ghauri

Prologue

My Ideal – My Hero

Fortunate are those who are able to walk through the journey of life under the guidance of mentors. My eldest brother, Shahab-ud-din Ghauri, has been my role model and I have always strived to emulate him to the best of my abilities. Years ago, my personal success came when this very brother of mine said with a gleam of confidence, “Salim, I have full faith in you and your capabilities. You will always have my unconditional support.”

As a man of vision, he saw something in me that I was unable to see in myself. Unknowingly, he gave me the assurance I needed to propel my success. To my young eyes, Shahab Ghauri manifested a perfect blend of practicality laced with the right amount of idealism. This combination inspired those around him to dream big. He envisioned me as someone who could not only keep the family legacy alive, but also carry it forward and immortalize it.

Today, I feel proud, knowing I honoured his faith in me. The entire family is indebted to him, and we pray for his health, Ameen.

NETSOL – A Tale of Seven Brothers

The miraculous success of NETSOL cannot be attributed to a single entity. This is the story of one family's legacy, built upon the values of unconditional love, trust and unity.

Our tale reminds me of the famous fable of a bundle of sticks. On his deathbed, a father asks his sons to bring him a bundle of sticks. He hands the bundle to each one of his sons, challenging them to break it. Despite their best efforts, none of the children succeeded in the task. The father then untied the bundle and handed each son a single stick, which they were able to break easily. He tells his children, "If you are divided among yourselves, you will be no stronger than a single stick in that bundle."

Truly, in unity is strength. NETSOL's first client was brought in by Naeem Ghauri (Chairman, NETSOL), while our international footprint was cemented by Najeeb Ghauri (CEO, NETSOL United States). The company is the tale of seven brothers who joined hands to make a common dream come true.

A deadly combination forms when experience merges with the fresh perspective of youth. At NETSOL, we see exactly that. The older generation's decades worth of hard work and labour is complemented by the younger generation's new ideas and forward thinking. This mantra promises a bright future for NETSOL.

Why Did I Decide to Write this Book?

After years of tenacity and endless hours of drudgery, here I was, surrounded by the fruits of my labour. Rather than enjoying the sweet taste of this reward, why did I decide to commit to an endeavour as painstaking as writing another book? To me, the answer to this question is as important as the book itself.

Let's pause here and ponder as to why any of us are alive in the first place, doing what we consider important. What is the purpose of our existence in this world?

There is no better source than the Holy Quran to illustrate the answer to this question. The Quran illustrates how the very creation of man triggered inquisitiveness and curiosity amongst the angels. However, it was soon evident that with the creation of man came the birth of the universe itself. Everything we see around us, the world as we know it, was shaped by God's decision to bring us into being.

Since their creation, human beings have been striving to make this world a better place but have not been able to succeed fully in this mission. The reason behind that is that everyone is not the same, nor does everyone have a shared mission. This concept is evident in the field of business.

Before initiating any endeavour, the first thought that crosses an individual's mind ends up shaping his or her character in society. There are two kinds of people who start a business:

The first are those who focus primarily on the objective of making money. When the objective is as myopic as simply making money, the individual will be willing to go to any means, ethical or unethical, to achieve it. This may include going as far as endangering others.

Who are these people? What is the thought process that shapes their actions? If these people entered the field of education, they were thrown out of from its noble contours. If they entered the field of journalism, they were ready to give up on the sanctity of their motherland. These people are unscrupulous – they are ready to compromise on anything as long as it rewards them financially. They are traders, eager to barter traditions, values and ethics for a profit. They are ready to pollute and corrupt our collective moral fibre, not even hesitating to engage in gruesome actions from child labour to human trafficking. Unfortunately, it is these beastly beings who are sitting in the lap of luxury, rolling in money. They are responsible for the degeneration and disintegration of society as we know it.

The second type of people are those who start businesses driven by a desire to help those around them and contribute to the betterment of mankind. They are motivated to elevate living standards and propel the progression of society. A fitting example of this category of people can be seen in Europe. They are fuelled by ethics and integrity. With the result that despite not being solely profit-driven, they did not experience financial failure. They ended up achieving the best of both worlds. Not only did their businesses thrive and prosper, but because their intention was so pure, they gained the respect and trust of those around them as well.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand the motive or objective behind any business as your actions will be determined by your intentions.

Those with a narrow-minded vision seek only to accumulate wealth through business, achieving nothing beyond hollow financial gain. Such '*saiths*' oppress their employees, slashing salaries, cutting costs, and

making deductions wherever possible, even at the expense of their staff's mental well-being. Such employers are disliked by all.

However, God has the last laugh, and those Midas' greed and Scrooge's avarice end up with nothing but only, heaps of money. Not only do their own children wish to be disassociated with them. They live gloomy, solitary lives filled with loneliness, and perhaps, if they have a conscience, they experience regret and repentance when it is too late. The sighs and anguish of those they oppressed at work come back to haunt and torment their souls.

Let me share another anecdote. A billionaire owner of a housing society in Lahore passed away. When this self-proclaimed king of real estate died, there were only a handful of people present at his funeral. Many were the same employees he had tormented during his lifetime. Instead of prayers, they heaped curses at him and his organization for decades of unfair treatment, fraud and oppression. Not even the deceased's own children – the recipients of his inheritance – attended his funeral. Now, tell me, was such an existence truly worth living?

On the other hand, there are people who think about the greater good, and uphold an excellent code of conduct, dignity and steadfastness in their business. Material wealth does not sway them from remembrance and fear of God. Allah has clearly explained in the Holy Qur'an that money is a great test for mankind. The temptation of wealth can make or break an individual. Those who are able to resist this lure and focus on treating others with kindness and respect go down in history with a lasting legacy. The prayers of the people they have helped during their lifetime become a continuous source of blessing for them, even after they have left their mortal coils.

So, whether you are an entrepreneur, a business owner or a CEO, regardless of whether you are successfully operating a business or just in the starting phase, I hope this book will help you decide what you want to leave behind in this world. Do you want to be remembered solely for your money? Or do you want people to remember you because of your good name, good deeds and fear of God?

There have been, are, and will continue to be hundreds, thousands of millionaires in the world, but history remembers only those who broke the barrier of their caste. They eliminated the “I” from their thinking and focused on the “we” and “us”. They gave more importance to those around them, than they did to their own selves.

This book encapsulates the essence of my experiences. What I have described here are the thoughts and stories that have crossed my mind countless times over my years of doing business. I have mentioned some of them on various forums, but never with the depth or completeness that I have in this narrative.

I was motivated to pen down this book because there was a thirst inside me to give back. Times are changing, and so are the requirements of success. Adults in all walks of life, including business, have a heavy responsibility. They must record document their experiences for the benefit of the younger generation. If someone takes the right path by following in your footsteps, there can be no greater source of happiness. I hope that after reading this book, readers, especially the youth, will feel inspired.

If you are motivated and eager to make a name for yourself in this world, this book is for you. If you aspire to excel in life and want to know where and how to build a successful enterprise, I urge you to read each page

from beginning to end. I am confident that every minute you invest reading this book will pay off.

My intention is not to boast or sing about my success at all because in a larger picture I know it is miniscule. The purpose is purely to describe the experiences that has brought me. I want you to treat the story of NETSOL as a case study. I have gained valuable wisdom as a result of decades in the field, and wish to share this hard-earned perspective and knowledge with you.

In these pages, the focus extends beyond my personal story as I have incorporated inspiring examples of successful personalities from different parts of the world. Everyone, including myself, will benefit by seeking guidance from their experiences.

People from all over the world have accomplished extraordinary feats and had their work leave a lasting impact. I consider them as heroes not only for their own countries, but for all of humanity. Those who have managed to achieve remarkable heights in technology have transformed the way we perceive and navigate the world today. Thanks to the innovations of these tech giants, we are living in times of modernity and ease, with several problems experienced by previous generations resolved forever. The lives of such brilliant achievers serve to inspire the youth of today and tomorrow.

The overall environment of a country plays an important role in the development and success of business. Every society has its own unique temperament, and without a doubt, we are prisoners of our culture. In some cases, extremist mindsets narrow our understanding of our culture even further, acting as a deadly poison for not only any business, but a collective society, to thrive.

Any country can experience crises at one point or another, however, a business does not necessarily cease or fail during a crisis. If played right, a crisis can even create new opportunities. For instance, COVID-19 had a devastating impact on countries across the globe, including Pakistan. There were several business closures, but along with that, new businesses emerged as well, and old ones that were able to pivot and adapt flexibly to the changing circumstances came out of the crisis stronger than ever before. E-commerce, for example, flourished during the pandemic. Hence, we must understand that good businesses do not 'end', but keep changing their forms.

In the same vein, political instability also affects business culture. Even when there is a war in a region, the arms trade is on the rise. Uncertainty also causes booms and busts in business. If the relations between Pakistan and India are tense or there is political instability, new generation of social media like vloggers/bloggers end up creating thriving business opportunities. Thus, not only increasing the ratings but also gaining good profits. This is because everyone wants to be informed and those in the news industry are able to capitalize on this need to make good profits.

Institutional weaknesses within the government can hamper the success of businesses as well. If there is transparency within systems, decisions will be made on merit, and corruption will be eradicated fostering a business-friendly environment will be created within the country. Moreover, multinational companies prefer to invest in countries with favourable business environment and fewer legal complications. In case of Pakistan, red tapism and institutional failure makes it difficult and challenging to attract external businesses, as well as promote new business ventures domestically. I feel there is a dire need to improve

these systems. Although this is primarily the government's responsibility, businesses need to raise their voice as well should also share their concerns, and use their experience in the market to identify and recommend policy-level changes.

While e-culture and digitization have overcome the limitations of boundaries, the government can never be completely excluded from business activities. Third world countries, such as Pakistan, require strong direction from the government to truly harness their potential. For example, there is a chronic shortage of jobs available for the youth in the country. Several people have turned to avenues such as freelancing to survive in these difficult times. However, the problem will persist, unless the government invests in the skill development of youth through establishment of training institutes, where students can be made ready for the job-market through an education in industry-related skills. Concurrently, the government must focus on introducing employment opportunities in such sectors. Times are changing fast, and our reliance on an outdated education system threatens to make us obsolete. It is the need of the hour for young people to develop their skills parallel to obtaining their degrees.

After reading this book, you will have a good sense of where your future lies. Are you born to work on someone else's orders, or is there an entrepreneur hidden inside you? The decision is yours. Not everyone in the world can start their own business, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, it is crucial to recognize when one is being exploited and to seek to join a team where one feels valuable and respected.

Planning and strategy are important formulas for success in any field. There must be a balance between working hard and dedicating time to

your family and friends. Despite my work spanning the globe and hours spent transforming NETSOL from a dream into reality, I considered it my utmost priority to never neglect my family. Spending time with your loved ones has healing powers – it refreshes the mind and soul. Family can offer counsel, listen in a manner that is free from judgment, and pass sincere suggestions. Recognizing this is key, and taking everyone along on the journey makes it easier to reach the final destination. Just as sharing ideas with loved ones holds value, engaging in gossip with others causes nothing but chaos and should be avoided.

Life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is a model for all Muslims. I personally focus on applying what I learnt from his actions in my everyday life, and urge everyone to do the same. Every moral advocated in this book is derived from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (PBUH), from giving importance to family, conducting business with good intentions, respecting contracts or treating employees with kindness. These are the golden rules that I was taught by the Holy Prophet (PBUH), the epitome of mankind.

The human eye should have the power to see through the flesh and recognize the soul hiding underneath. Whether you are an office boy or a managing director in any company, your core problems will be the same as anyone else's. Words will hurt you or please you in an identical way. Never forget this, and treat others the way you would want to be treated yourself. The famous philosopher, Immanuel Kant, advocated we should only act in a certain way only if we are willing to have everyone else act the same way as well. In interpersonal relationships, Kant's maxim implies that we should not be rude to others, unless we would be content knowing everyone is being rude to each other, including ourselves.

Never look down on someone because of their position. This is the first principle of teamwork. When hard times befall a company, a united team does not scatter like leaves, but comes together like a resilient tree to face the storm and emerge from crises. During COVID-19, as my team and I fought for survival, we held onto each other's support, ensuring everyone's needs were taken care of. The biggest asset for a CEO is the loyalty of their team. Once you have won their loyalty, there is no stopping progress.

This book holds particular significance for the youth because it does not only record the stories and events of the past, but it talks about the business world in a manner that is relevant to the current times. Which skills are essential to learn, how to make money, what should your approach be in the field of your interest – these are all questions that have been answered in the coming pages. From the perspective of business, the environment necessary to start an initiative, the factors that have helped businesses excel and those that caused others to fail, the formulas for success – you will find all these topics discussed. This book is a synthesis of experiences and research, inspiring the reader to not only absorb the information provided, but also understand the methodology and thinking behind it.

Historically, traders guaranteed a society's survival and success. The economy plays a decisive role in the dignity of an individual and a nation. Weak countries are actually weak economic countries. They have to take loans for their survival. The quagmire of debts is equivalent to a compromise on freedom and independence. The solution to all these problems is business. With the promotion of trade, the economy grows and countries stand on their own feet. A study of economics should be a part of every student's basic education. The business world also needs

fresh blood, but the condition is that new talent must match the requirements of the industry. Synergy between education, skills and industry will contribute to a thriving nation.

As a businessman, I believe that patriotism and loyalty to one's country must be driving forces to make a difference. This book is my way to giving back to my people, recognizing the part I play in the fabric of Pakistan and the responsibility I have to inspire others to dream and think big.

“Business, when driven by purpose and integrity, serves as the cornerstone of self-reliant, empowered nations that foster innovation, and nurture prosperity.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 01

Business as the Foundation for Economic Self-Reliance

Among all the sources of livelihood in the world, business is the biggest and most crucial. Not only does it bring happiness and prosperity to an individual, but when done right, it extends these benefits to others around and the entire country as well.

In prosperous nations, there are enough business opportunities for all. However, it is a bitter reality that individuals from third-world countries often face poverty and under-development due to lack of supportive business environments for growth and progress.

From a religious standpoint, in recognizing the importance of business, Allah says:

“Do not consume each other’s wealth by unlawful means, but profit by trade with mutual consent.”

(Al-Nisa)

The Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said:

“A true and trustworthy merchant will be with the prophets, the righteous and the martyrs on the Day of Judgment.”

In another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

“Sustenance comes from twenty gates, nineteen of which are open to traders.”

Do not ignore the importance of key words, like “unlawful means”, a “true and trustworthy merchant” and “nineteen out of twenty” opportunities in the context of business.

As human beings, we crave to have financial independence, to have enough spending power and wealth to manage our life’s expenses without being dependent on anyone.

In this regard, trade has been widely utilized as a source of poverty reduction and economic growth of a country. Thus, increased trading activity is often linked with economic development, while the reverse is linked with economic regression.

A nation that takes a keen interest in business and trade will always thrive. On the other hand, nations that lack such an enthusiasm will inevitably rely on others within the economic system, leaving their culture, civilization, economy, politics and religion susceptible to takeovers from outside forces. Targeting such vulnerable nations, totalitarian forces establish control, inhibiting the self-reliance and independence of their people.

All in all, a nation lacking a flourishing trade landscape will inevitably become subordinate to others one day, even if not today. Until that day arrives, people of such a country will remain economically miserable and perpetually dependent on external help for survival.

Business frees a man from shackles of slavery, as it allows one to be their own boss. In any other kind of work, one is a subordinate at the behest of a superior’s orders. The monotony of this work cycle can impose a psychological burden. The constant fear of losing this job one fine morning or not doing enough to ‘please the boss’ can obstruct the quality of the employee’s output and hinder long-term success.

Moreover, the amount of hard work one puts in is often not rewarded fairly. The biggest advantage of owning your own business is that you can tirelessly work day and night to propel it to the heights of growth, confident that your hard work will never be in vain.

The more you work hard, the more you will get the reward. The world is full of examples of individuals who began their lives with a small business, but not only gained financial sovereignty, but also built a name and goodwill for themselves globally. Few sectors offer as many opportunities for growth as the business world.

As Muslims, the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) serves as a beacon for us, setting an example in every sphere of life. As far as livelihood is concerned, he had an affinity for business from his early days. He made his first trade journey for Hazrat Khadijah (R.A) at the age of 25, executing the mission with diligence and competence. His slave, Maysarah, accompanied him on this journey and testified to his excellent behaviour and affairs. The Prophet's (PBUH) honesty greatly impressed Hazrat Khadijah (R.A), to the point where she offered him marriage.

The Prophet (PBUH) not only interacted with customers in a gracious manner, but also established rules for conducting business with complete sincerity and transparency. From his life, we learn that by practicing justice and upholding integrity and strong values in matters of trade and business, a person attains both success and honour.

Within Pakistan, there are many obstacles in the way of doing business, which explains why the overall mentality of youth is not inclined towards this direction. Pakistan currently has a large percentage of young people, with more than 64 percent of the country's population below the age of

30. However, the tragic reality is such that we are wasting the power of youth and under-utilizing the transformative potential they have.

After completing their traditional education, young people rush to avail employment opportunities, finding it challenging to embark on their own business ventures. This is because our curriculum does not inspire them to dream big. As Ralph Waldo Emerson famously said, “We are shut up in schools and college recitation rooms for ten or fifteen years, and come out at least with a belly-full of words and do not know a thing. The things taught in schools and colleges are not an education, but the means of education.” The sad truth is that education systems do not encourage or prepare young minds to think out of the box, thereby hindering their potential to spread their wings and fly in the long-run.

Job-hunting is a serious dilemma for thousands of fresh graduates who enter the practical world every year. When they enter the job market, they find that getting a job is not an easy task at all. Depleting economic conditions of Pakistan hits them in the face, where investment is low and number of job seekers very high. The media often reports incidents of more than 30,000 people applying for government jobs with only 12 seats. Similarly, thousands of applications are submitted for a handful of posts in Public Service Commission examinations. There are simply not enough jobs to attend to the youth market, as a result of which there are thousands of unemployed degree holders, from Bachelor's to MBAs. Master's candidates are applying for Class IV posts in Pakistan. The situation is similar in neighbouring India, where applications are submitted by Ph.D. candidates for the job of a peon.

On one hand, securing a job can be a headache. On the other hand, those who miraculously find a job, are frustrated because the work they do is

not in line with their passion or creative thinking. Today, well-educated and talented minds have compromised their wants to fulfil their needs, working at jobs that not only diminish their sense of selfhood, but also negatively impact the organization when they work half-heartedly.

Apart from this, most of the employees in Pakistan are treated as personal servants, wherein they have to perform additional tasks unrelated to their contract just to keep their hard-earned job. It is not uncommon for companies to hire a single individual when they have the capacity to hire two. This translates to overburdened employees and blurred work boundaries, with overtime hours and burn-outs on the increase.

Despite all of this, the remuneration an employee receives at the end of the month is mere peanuts and certainly not enough to sustain one's livelihood. Employers often demand extra services without providing commensurate compensation or rewards. Salaries are typically fixed and unrelated to an individual's performance. Only a few offices have a rule that ties good performance to additional pay or bonuses. The psychological impact of this is a complete lack of motivation among employees. After all, who would want to work hard if there is no incentive to do so? Most workers are constantly angry and frustrated, unable to do anything to better their circumstances except complain.

In a country like Pakistan, the brutal reality is that if you want to have a prosperous life, it is nearly impossible to do so with a nine-to-five job. A house is a basic need of every family, but in big cities, a five Marla house costs around Rs.15 million. Now, let's do the math and consider an example of a family with only one bread-winner. How much would this person have to save from their salary every year to buy a house? Keeping

in mind that the value of property continues to double every few years, with little or no adjustments to remuneration packages. Amid rising inflation and increasing prices, a person's purchasing power diminishes every day, making a basic necessity like a house seem like a luxury.

The bottom line of this whole discussion is that obtaining a job may not be the ultimate solution to your problems. If you want to live a life of purpose and satisfaction, consider doing business. Be brave, take risks, gain experience and change your mental approach. Learn to say 'no', and do not be afraid of facing failure. Engage with business people to increase your knowledge. Study the autobiographies of entrepreneurs, come up with your own ideas, and research how to start a business, implementing it successfully.

Many people perceive a business only in terms of investing and making a profit. From the outside, observers often wonder, 'where did all this money come from?' however, no one truly realizes that this profit comes precisely because successful businesses never thought about making money in the beginning.

The first priority of any successful businessman should be to understand the problems faced by people in the area, country or region in which they want to operate. What follows is a three-step plan: identifying the problem, finding its solution and later, selling that solution.

Through this approach, not only will the lives of people be benefited, but profit will inevitably follow, resulting in a win-win situation for all.

Entrepreneurs have to think like social workers. They build facilities and make money. Money made by robbing people does not last forever, but money made by providing convenience to people builds empires and produces billionaires. Take a look at the list of the richest people in the

world today – these are the people who have amassed wealth by simplifying processes and creating ease for others.

We use the internet every single day, but the idea of connecting the whole world through this means came to Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook (now Meta). He effectively pinpointed a problem, created a solution that worked, and enjoyed the rewards by becoming a billionaire. Following the success of Facebook, he expanded his empire and acquired WhatsApp and Instagram as well. Through Zuckerberg's creative thinking, a common man's limited mobility suddenly became limitless.

Similarly, services like Uber, Careem, Bykea and Swvl were started, providing economical and easily accessible travel facilities to the masses. These applications connected people, sky-rocketing their founders to the heights of financial success.

Such examples highlight the importance of understanding why one must engage in a certain kind of business, followed by where and when. It is certain that profit will come when you solve people's problems. However, you must carefully analyse the business you are planning to do and the area you are going to do it in. Are your services really needed there or not? Spending hours debating your own idea is the first step towards starting any business. You must survey the challenges people face on a daily basis and ask yourself what would make these challenges easier. For example, if the internet service is affected in an area, then you have the scope to do business by providing internet there. If your solution provides ease to people, they will become your customers.

Once you have decided what business you want to do, clear planning must follow accordingly. Determine the volume of your business, assess the required capital and manpower, and outline your expenses. All of this

should be laid out in black and white. Your business should start within your grasp and remain there. Otherwise, your initial investment might sink in a few days, leaving you with nothing to salvage.

For example, one of our acquaintances had the idea to make high-quality clothing. However, he started his venture in a backward area where people did not wear such expensive garments. The area was primarily agricultural, focused on crop cultivation as the main economic activity. The businessman's idea flopped because he made the mistake of not studying all factors beforehand. Not only was the purchasing power of his targeted customers limited to begin with, but their priorities and attitudes were not aligned with the business either. The businessman's funds ran short, forcing him to take loans within a short period. With no hope of recovery in the near future, the business had to be closed.

Let me tell you another story of Cornelius Vanderbilt. Instead of a chequebook, this man used ordinary plain paper that was readily accepted by bankers. However, it took decades of hard work for him to reach this point in life.

The roots of his success and the beginning of his story dates back to his father, Alfred Vanderbilt Sr., who famously drowned when a German submarine blew a hole on his ship – the RMS Lusitania – in 1915. Despite being a famous sportsman, he could not swim. As the ship sank, Vanderbilt Sr. disregarded his own safety and helped his fellow passengers to get on lifeboats. He gave his own lifebelt to a young mother who came running to him for help. This move meant sealing his own doom, as he knew he would have no chance to survive when he could not swim. A few minutes later, the ship sank and took Vanderbilt Sr. along with it. He died a brave death. A statue of Vanderbilt Sr. still

stands in front of New York's Grand Central Station to honour and preserve his memory.

In his early days, Cornelius Vanderbilt worked with his father who operated a boat that ferried cargo between Staten Island, New York and Manhattan. He did not receive a traditional education. He gained knowledge only through his travels and worldly experiences. At the age of 16, he borrowed US\$ 100 from his parents to start a passenger and freight service, offering lower fares to the masses compared to his competitors. Within a year, he was able to pay back his loan to his parents, and even hand them an additional amount of US\$ 1000 as their share of profits in the business' operations. Vanderbilt Jr. used his experience transporting cargo around the New York City harbour to learn about ship design and the ins and outs of these vessels.

As a young man, Vanderbilt Jr., took up work as a ferry captain for a wealthy businessman who owned a commercial steamboat service. Through this job, he gained practical experience and learned the skills needed to thrive in a burgeoning steamship industry. Within a few years, he went into business on his own, building steamships and operating ferry lines around the region. His approach to business was fierce, aggressive and competitive, to the point where his rivals paid him heavy sums of money not to compete with them. By the 1840s, he had a fleet of 100 steamships and became the biggest employer in the United States. Not only did he offer reasonable rates, but also focused on comfort, size, speed and luxury in the steamship industry.

His breakthrough moment came when he launched a steamship service from New York to San Francisco across Nicaragua, which was much faster

than the traditional route across the Panama. His innovative idea was an initial success, helping him become a millionaire.

Cornelius Vanderbilt was far-sighted enough to realize that the future of the transportation industry lay in rail, not water. Hence, he started investing in railroads at a time when this sector was still emerging. He focused on improving services and upgrading equipment while offering low fares. Within the first five years of his railroad ventures, he generated around US\$ 25 million and was instrumental in the construction of Manhattan's Grand Central Depot (replaced by the famous Grand Central Terminal today).

He passed away at the age of 82 as the wealthiest man in the United States, renowned as one of the greatest shipping tycoons and railroad barons of all time. At the time of his death, his estate was valued at a whopping US\$ 100 million.

What stands out about Vanderbilt Jr. is his approach to life and business. Unlike his peers, he never owned grand homes or engaged in gratuitous luxuries. For example, when he was terminally ill, his doctor advised him to drink champagne to which he replied, 'can soda water not work?'. The point to notice here is that avoiding extravagance is a common characteristic of the world's richest and most successful people.

Before engaging in any business venture, he conducted thorough research and meticulous planning, seeking evaluations and opinions from trusted associates. An astute and intelligent businessman, Vanderbilt Jr. coupled his sharp instinct with benefit of luck in several successful ventures.

This inspirational story teaches us to plan for the future while living in the present. If you've begun as a rental car driver, do not confine yourself

to that role indefinitely. Envision introducing a rent-a-service, observe different kinds of vehicles you see on the road daily, and dream of offering the service of those vehicles to the public. Similarly, if you start a grocery store, strategize to elevate it into a full-fledged mart.

In business, even a single rupee holds value, so it is important to spend wisely. Consider a newspaper, where every centimetre of blank space matters so one cannot waste any.

After the creation of Pakistan, Nawa-i-Waqt was the largest newspaper in the country. Following the death of Hameed Nizami, the first editor of the paper, Majeed Nizami took over all managerial operations. His mind-set was an economic one. As a starting point, he took a pencil and highlighted all the unnecessary paragraphs he could spot on the front page of the newspaper. He calculated the amount of space and urged his staff to rethink the way content was being printed. He pointed out how many advertisements could be replaced by the superfluous paragraphs he had just removed, with these centimetres of space translating to actual revenue and profitability. Such thinking is not stingy – it is practical. It shows the importance of cutting corners wherever possible, without compromising on the quality of the final output.

At the same time, never allow others to take undue advantage of your position. Recently, a senior journalist wrote a column in a newspaper on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, where he spent several sentences describing which famous personalities had sent him Eid cards. This information did not fall under the ambit of politics and journalism, but rather personal publicity. The editor of the newspaper deducted this personal advertising fee from the columnist's salary.

This is the way to do business, in which one's actions and decisions are guided by financial discipline.

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“Success requires staying in harmony with nature. Keep your next move a secret, as there is wisdom in silence.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 02

Is Business a Science or an Art?

Business is a multifaceted discipline, encompassing both scientific principles and artistic elements. Science ensures efficiency and reliability, while artistic flair adds a unique touch that fosters customer loyalty and engagement. Science provides the foundational knowledge, while art involves the creative application of that knowledge.

Dear friends, after you have chosen the business you want to pursue, it is crucial to assess your skills and abilities to ensure you can succeed in that field. Furthermore, it is essential to figure out how much money you can invest in the business. Ideally, you should aim to pursue a business that requires minimal capital investment while still being highly profitable.

The common perception is that doing business requires a lot of capital. However, the reality is quite the opposite. Individuals who believe that working with more capital is the key to successful business are often those who lack knowledge and understanding of the business world. Those with even a basic understanding of business science do not begin their work with significant investments. Rather, they start small, and gradually grow their business overtime. You can work with them even if you have minimal resources. For instance, if you have a bike, you can register on platforms like Bykea, Uber or Careem and boom – you have a job. Similarly, if you are a homemaker looking to make money from home, you can register on Foodpanda and offer your healthy, homecooked meals to the public. When you are determined to achieve

something, opportunities present themselves, often with divine intervention.

When cash is limited, a viable business strategy involves borrowing. However, it is crucial to manage your finances carefully to ensure timely repayment. Operating your business with honesty and integrity helps build a positive reputation in the market, which then becomes a valuable and indispensable asset. Eventually, if your dealings are good, you can also collect supplies on advance cheques, and make payments using the money earned from your business.

Keeping detailed records of all services provided is crucial. Whether you manufacture or sell products, maintain comprehensive records of purchases and sales, including dates and customer information. Organize all purchase and sales receipts diligently. Make sure to not overlook financial transactions, including income and expenses. Keep thorough records to track all financial activities accurately.

To prevent losses, avoid spending money on unnecessary luxury items. Every expense must be accounted for to make accurate predictions and calculate net profit. Additionally, allocate a portion of your income to a 'rainy day fund' - savings that can provide support during challenging times.

The secret of success of famous companies across the world is timely delivery of services to customers. In Pakistan, the prices of transport-related applications like Uber and Careem experienced a massive hike recently, which led to the creation of an application called InDrive. InDrive tapped a unique market – those customers who are able to bargain well and negotiate the rate they are willing to pay.

A business is born when you are able to present your idea effectively wherever you see space. If people resonate with your vision and believe in you, progress can accelerate rapidly.

Do not let jealousy cloud your view of fellow marketers or entrepreneurs who are pursuing similar interests or started earlier in the market than you. Instead, seek to learn from their strategies. Building positive relationships is just as vital in business as it is in personal life. Remember, your peers have equal rights and importance in the business landscape. Many of the rules of the business world correspond to the rules and regulations of ordinary life, and open-minded people go far. Envy and hiding one's success are outdated notions. Embrace innovation and new ways of thinking within your product, as well as within your attitudes. A good relationship in the market will give you the critical information you would miss out on if you stayed away. Being at the center of the action allows you to grasp the group's direction. You can gauge where people are headed and what they are thinking about. If your experience does not match the market environment, bring people into your team who are young and up-to-date. Ask yourself: Who has an understanding of technology and product? Who knows how important it is to stay online? Who can use the power of social media to boost the business?

If your competitors provide home delivery service, why should you be left behind? All of this will only be possible if you cultivate a culture of information sharing with everyone. Even the most intelligent people make mistakes, but they openly acknowledge those and strive for improvement in the future.

Successful individuals are continuously engaged in self-improvement, refining their perspectives, and reevaluating their understanding of

challenges. Their perspective is always growth-oriented – they are not afraid of the unknown, but excited to embrace it. Even if they feel like they have solved a problem sufficiently, they accept new ideas, new information and new concepts. They engage contradictory perspectives with open-mindedness, ready to change their ways of thinking if need be. Know that if you are unable to accept criticism, you will never be able to live up to your full potential. There is never a bad time to be creative as the discovery is usually sudden. Smart people always think of fresh ideas and strive to refine them for further improvement.

Do not view work as a burden and deprioritize it on days when you are not feeling your best. Every day, a new idea is born in business and innovative strategies develop consistently. Keep an eye on the little things that are often overlooked. Every new undertaking begins with a small step and progresses into a significant stride. Things that are carelessly considered insignificant often lead to a big loss. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to minor details and developments in the business. This is the secret to the success of famous companies.

Keep things simple and surround yourself with people who possess skills you lack. This way, you can avoid mediocrity and focus your energy on areas where you excel, thus maximizing productivity and success. Above all, work together with your team. The secret to Steve Jobs' success at Apple and Pixar was that he fostered an open work culture where people could mingle and share goals. Business is not done in isolation, but by collaborating and working hand in hand with workers. It is crucial to instill a sense of collective growth, where everyone understands that as the company grows, so do they. Conversely, if the company faces setbacks, everyone shares in the loss.

Often in life, we encounter challenging situations where the easiest option might seem to walk away from our job and quit. It is in these times that one must remember to stick firmly and vehemently to one's goals. In case of failure, do not give up – pick yourself back up and try again.

Companies also have a responsibility to change the world through their work. It is a debt owed to them by their community, co-workers, customers and others around them that they must repay. Many businesses in Pakistan prioritize social work side in addition to their daily business operations. Various entrepreneurs are delivering three meals a day to patients and their families in government hospitals. Free ambulance services are provided across the country.

Taking the example of NETSOL, ensuring the well-being of our less privileged employees is a significant priority for our company. Every day, we provide free lunches for our employees. Through the NETSOL Education Support Program (NESP), we not only empower bright young minds to complete their education, but also offer them employment opportunities at our company once they have completed their studies. For instance, the daughters of one of our security guards enrolled in NESP, completed graduation, and are now working at NETSOL as software engineers.

These accomplishments exemplify the true purpose of life. Remembering those less fortunate not only fosters business growth, but also accumulates blessings and the wealth of prayers, which have always proved to be invaluable in challenging times.

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“The business world is akin to a vast ocean. Only those who possess unwavering belief can navigate it successfully.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 03

A Dream that Changed the Destiny of Pakistan’s IT Industry

Walt Disney famously said, “All our dreams can come true, if you have the courage to pursue them.”

NETSOL’s name speaks for itself today, but this success did not come overnight. The path from a mere dream to a tangible reality was a lengthy and demanding one, fraught with uncertainty, risks, and obstacles.

Let me share the story of how a dream transformed the IT industry of Pakistan.

The Power of Dreaming

In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a landmark speech regarding the end of racism in the United States and provision of civil and economic rights for all people. This speech began with four words – “I have a dream” – and this is the title by which the iconic address is still known today.

Dreams are the first and foremost step to success. If you do not dream, it means that life is stagnant. Since my early years, the dream of becoming a thriving entrepreneur resided in the recesses of my mind. I would revisit this dream daily, waiting for the opportune moment and platform to give it expression. Eventually, NETSOL became the manifestation of my aspirations.

I was brimming with ideas and passion but with little direction. It was not until 1993 that the vision of NETSOL first came to my mind. I had been working as a consultant with a large company in Australia – BHP Steel – for seven years. It was a wonderful job and I felt content with my work as a consultant and the company was also pleased with my performance.

In April of that year, my boss, John, assigned me a high-level task. I was asked to prepare a conference room from scratch and install forty state-of-the-art computers inside. As an IT in-charge, it was my responsibility to supervise any computer-related work at the company. This was the time of PCs, not laptops, so procuring forty large machines was not a walk in the park. I managed the entire operation and bought new computers, which were installed and connected to a single network. The entire process took around four weeks.

Once the task had been completed, I asked John if any further assistance was required from my side. He was happy with the arrangements, but to my surprise, asked me to lock the conference room and give him the key. Despite asking John about the purpose of the room twice, he remained secretive, not wanting to disclose what he was planning yet. It was clear he had something big up his sleeves, and his decision to keep it confidential made the wheels of my mind turn. For days, weeks and months, the room remained locked whenever I passed by it. My curiosity grew, and I often wondered about what could be brewing in John's mind.

One morning, my questions were finally answered when I noticed the conference room door slightly ajar. I peeped inside and was surprised to see people who looked exactly like me – the same complexion, the same accents and the same appearance. However, I quickly realized they were

not Pakistanis, but Indians. Each individual was seated at a computer, absorbed in work and looking extremely busy.

Upon witnessing this scene, I immediately headed to John's office and inquired about the individuals and their activities. His response marked a pivotal moment in my life. He explained that the company had acquired a significant software from India. Personnel from the Indian company would be stationed at our premises for a year to oversee the implementation of this new system.

This conversation altered the trajectory of my life. As I returned to my office, a cascade of new questions flooded my mind. Why were the seats in the conference room not occupied by Pakistani workers? What barriers prevented Pakistani professionals from attaining recognition in the global IT sector? What obstacles hindered our country and its people from developing and exporting software to markets like Australia? Was there a single Pakistani company capable of performing such tasks and offering services to the international market?

It was eye-opening for me to see a room full of individuals who looked just like me but realize just how far behind them my country and I actually stood as professionals. Importantly, my reflections were not influenced by the age-old narrative of India-Pakistan rivalry; rather, they were driven purely by a business perspective. I found myself evaluating the skills and capabilities of one country against another, and I became acutely aware of the substantial gap within my home market.

However, not once did I think that a Pakistani company should be sitting in the conference room, and it should be mine. I would have been proud to see any business from my country making a global name in this sector. I immediately made calls and did research, hoping to find a single

company operating in Pakistan that could compete with the Indian company in the conference room but sadly I could not find a single one.

What I could not foresee at that time was that my contemplation after this incident ended up changing the landscape of Pakistan's IT sector.

The importance of taking risks

For the next three years, I was driven by a sense of urgency to find answers to the questions that had consumed my thoughts. Seeds of an idea had been sowed, but the path to turning it into reality remained unclear.

I knew I had two options: the first was to continue working and dismiss the thoughts swirling in my mind, allowing them to fade into the background over time. This seemed like the sensible choice. The second option was to leave everything behind, burn my bridges, and return to Pakistan. It meant taking the biggest risk of my life, but also the opportunity to alter my destiny.

I just could not allow my fears and anxieties get the better of me and hinder my dream. I was prepared to take the challenging path and give it my all. As Esme Bianco summarizes it, "You cannot get anywhere in life without taking risks."

While it seemed like I had a choice, I knew I could not live with myself if I gave up and did not even try to see if I could make a difference.

I recall frequently counselling myself, asking myself what would happen if I actually accomplished my far-fetched dream, whilst imagining the impact it could have on my country and rest of the world. But, the thought of failure also haunted me. "It would leave me a wiser person," I reassured myself.

Looking back at times, I am still amazed by the courage I summoned to make that decision.

When one is living a contented life, surrounded by family and friends with a decent income coming in, there is no problem. There is no deep-seated desire to change one's state of affairs. The thought of working hard when one is satisfied from all corners is close to impossible.

It is only the ones driven by raw hunger and desperation who are able to create something for the world to see.

In Australia, I had a loving family, supportive friends and abundant comfort. I was living a happy life. Why would anyone in my position wish to ignore everything and embark on a new path? Such a person does not take risks, especially if such risks can jeopardize the safety and security of one's daily life.

Regardless, I could not shake off the feeling that I needed to give it my all. I wanted to dive headfirst into the waters of uncertainty, doing everything I could to tackle a challenge that had no guarantee of success. Back then, those who found out I was leaving Australia to try my luck in Pakistan thought there was something wrong with me. They asked me tens of questions, wondering what could have possibly motivated me to take on such a big gamble with my life.

This is true even today. If a Pakistani making a living in Seattle or Berlin announces they are moving back to their home country, those around him wonder if he is delusional.

I was surrounded by immigrants who had moved abroad to earn money and make a comfortable living. None of them had even remotely

considered putting their lives on jeopardy for the sake of their country. In fact, I could not think of a single such example anywhere.

What I was aiming to do was unheard of. I had to work not only for myself, but for Pakistan, and establish a company that could hoist the banner of success globally. It was nothing more than a madman's dreaming at the time.

When Allama Iqbal envisioned a united subcontinent, he was mocked and ridiculed by the Hindu press. When Imran Khan dreamed of providing free-of-cost treatment to cancer patients in Pakistan, many deemed it impossible. Similarly, when Samina Khayal Baig expressed her desire to climb Mount Everest, she was initially ridiculed for dreaming big. The same applies to countless other visionaries who dared to defy the odds.

When I dreamed of revolutionizing Pakistan's IT sector, I noticed a similar lack of belief in my vision among those around me. There was widespread scepticism about my plans, but I knew I could not let these voices discourage me.

I remembered the story of Dashrath Manji – the 'Mountain Man' – who spent years cutting an entire mountain to create a path through it so people of his village could access facilities, such as medical care, from the city. A task that seemed so daunting, so overwhelming, became doable because he never gave up hope. Madness can strike at any moment – the ones who run after their ideas relentlessly are often the game changers of the world.

I had left Pakistan in 1973 and never turned back. It had been twenty-two years since I last saw the sight of my home country. Ironically, Australia felt like home to me, while Pakistan felt like the foreign land.

My contacts in Pakistan were negligible. I had no friends, or social network. In fact, I did not even have a plan. Questions to which I had no answer to, ran through my head: How to do business? How to hire a team? Whom should I intend to partner with? The only sliver of hope I had was that my brothers would believe in me and help me. My story still feels like a bizarre and surreal fairytale, but it is actually a reality.

This is how I came to Pakistan armed with a single dream and nothing but faith in my abilities. Some desires affect your heart and mind so deeply that no logic in the world can stop you.

Translating a Dream into Action

In 1996, NETSOL was born!

I spent day and night absorbed in realizing my dream, to the point where I lost track of time and became unconscious of my surroundings. Work became the sole purpose of my existence.

The biggest mistake business owners make is to worry about earning from day one. When the company was in its early years, our focus was on learning as much as possible, rather than making money. We got the job done for less, prioritizing practical experience, building relationships and making a name for ourselves in the market.

It takes effort to create unique ideas and quality. You inevitably bear losses as difficult decisions have to be made. NETSOL went through all of this and more. We resisted the temptation to bargain and never compromised on product quality. Today, I can proudly say that our sacrifices paid off, and only a handful companies in the world can match the quality of products that NETSOL offers.

NETSOL received its very first project in May 1996, purely on the basis of my brothers' goodwill in society. However, we ensured we did not get used to walking with the help of a stick. This was a services project – unrelated to NETSOL's primary goal of software development – but gave us an invaluable opportunity to establish a strong connection with the customer.

Building relationships is an invaluable investment. We used our initial projects to impress our customers with our performance. Slowly but surely, we were able to build our image as an honest, professional and dedicated service providers.

I would like to share another incident from my early days, a high-profile client – a German company based out of Singapore – engaged us to build digital planners for them, which we delivered free-of-cost. Once we had won the client's favor, we worked on leveraging this goodwill to convince them to let us build a software for them.

I desperately wanted them to give NETSOL a chance. I already knew that the client liked me, so I used that to my advantage, asking them why they consistently sought our services but had not considered taking our relationship further by entrusting us with software work as well.

There is a world of difference between a phone call and a meeting face-to-face. I travelled to Singapore every month just to meet this client and show them my consistency. I still remember the exact route I used to take. A Thai Airways flight used to run from Lahore at 12:00 pm, reaching Bangkok in four hours. I then took another flight from Bangkok to Singapore, arriving at 11:00 am. I would change my clothes at the airport and reach the German company's office right around lunch time.

Every time, I would walk straight to the CEO's office, and enjoy the look of surprise on his face.

"Salim! Wonderful to see you. Did we have any appointment today?", he would ask.

Upon hearing we did not, he asked me what I was doing there.

"I just came to have lunch with you," I replied cheerfully.

During our meals together, I would enjoy sharing stories while subtly reminding him of my eagerness for work, expressing my desire for an opportunity to prove myself. He would smile and avoid my requests. I knew the client was concerned NETSOL did not have enough experience and the software we would develop might not work. Without him mentioning any of these reservations, I would make sure I would alleviate his concerns with my words. I highlighted the progress we were making back at home and made sure my passion and commitment was evident, hoping those qualities would compensate for the company's newness in the market.

I would catch a same-day flight back to Lahore and head straight to work without stopping at a hotel or taking a break. Financial constraints meant there was no room for living expenses, and I would always travel economy class.

For approximately five months, I repeated this journey, fully aware that I was spending my precious time and resources, but believing strongly in the investment I was making.

In 1997, after several follow-ups and months of hard work, the call I waited for finally arrived. The German company had a software project

for us. I knew if we managed to execute this project well, this would be the break that NETSOL needed.

This is exactly what happened. We completed the project for US\$ 90,000, instead of the market rate of US\$ 300,000, but stipulated that the rights would remain with us. The client was overjoyed with our performance. NETSOL's success soared after this project, and we never looked back. One successful project followed another. The ball was finally rolling.

Whenever there is a new project in the market, companies bid to win it, and the project team evaluates their options. Our Lahore office started hosting several teams for meetings. From 1997 to 2000, we made three different agreements with a single customer. We entered into contracts on 30% value only. We agreed to work on minimal quotations. However, we maintained that the rights of the product will remain with us, and we would be able to sell it to anyone outside. This was highlighted in every contract we signed.

In 1998, we set our sight on making our company a regular entity. We started taking certifications from various authorities. NETSOL became the first company to be ISO certified. While this was expensive to achieve, such international certification reaps rewards by helping in processing and improving quality. One of the first things clients ask for before engaging a company is certification, for security purposes. Having these measures in place help us demonstrate our capacity and professionalism from the get-go. Our competitors noticed this and followed suit, seeking similar certifications. Essentially, we paved the way in the market.

Before engaging any client, we prepare implementation plans as well as back up plans. We give the customer complete assurance and make

them aware of the entire process, and we commence work only upon receiving their approval and satisfaction.

Gradually, NETSOL transformed from a one-man show to a full-fledged institution. We recruited an HR professional and initiated the establishment of new sections and departments. We implemented a transparent accounting system, and I take pride in the fact that it is so robust that cheques do not even require my signature.

In 1999, my team and I went to New York for the Stock Exchange. A year later, we won a project worth US\$ 2 million, which helped us finally make up for the initial work we had done on low costs. Again, the rights of this project remained with NETSOL. This was the biggest breakthrough for the company since its inception.

Never Give Up!

Before I knew it, a decade had passed.

In those ten years, I gave up on several experiences any other person would cherish. Birthdays, weddings, celebrations – I eliminated the notion of ‘fun’ from my life and focused only on my obsession to reach my destination. My only memories from that decade are related to work, captured in the form of words in my diary. I remember one particular year in which I had to travel to twenty-eight foreign countries, often more than two a month.

Drew Barrymore said, “Life is very interesting. In the end, some of your greatest pains become your greatest strengths.” In hindsight, this is the exact story of my life.

In 2006, I experienced a full-circle moment, when NETSOL had an opportunity to work in Australia – the place where everything started.

It was routine for me to visit project site in person, whether in Pakistan or abroad, and get acquainted with the team there. I travelled to Australia and had dinner with the group of twelve highly qualified individuals carrying out the company's work there. I got to know the team one-on-one and sought feedback about progress. I was thrilled to know the client was satisfied with the quality of services and everything was going well.

In the midst of the conversation, I suddenly became silent, and felt tears of joy fill my eyes. I still feel so overwhelmed by that feeling and its effect on my entire existence...mind, body, heart and soul. My team around me asked me what I was thinking. I was unable to express my emotions, but to this day, remember the feeling that enveloped my heart.

I was contemplating the years and years of hard work that had gone into reaching this reality. I shared the entire story of NETSOL's conception and my hope for Pakistanis to break into this global market one day. I revisited the feeling I had when I saw the Indian company thriving and wished for our own country to reach similar heights of success. I expressed that sitting at this table, with this team, was the realization of the idea that had taken flight over a decade ago. I had finally achieved what I had dreamt of achieving when I was right here in 1993. Years later, Pakistanis had finally filled the same space as others, making our country proud. Not only had we sold our software to an Australian company, but our team was teaching them how to use and run it. What I was feeling was pure joy, satisfaction and gratitude for the long journey so far.

My team was incredulous to hear this story. What amazed me was that this was no random narrative I was sharing, this was the reality of all the experiences I had gone through for years.

Dreams hold a special significance in Islam. The story of Hazrat Yusuf, who had the knowledge of interpreting dreams, has been mentioned in great detail in the Holy Quran. Hazrat Yusuf's exceptional quality led to his release from prison. He interpreted the dreams of two prisoners in the king's prison and soon enough, every word he said proved to be true. Hazrat Yusuf then interpreted the dream of the King of Egypt, successfully predicting seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine to be ended by a year of abundant rain. The King released him from prison, with his honour and reputation restored.

Dreams are only merely imaginings until they become a reality. It is said that if a person's hobby becomes his profession, he does not have to work for the rest of his life. You must dream of the reality you wish to live everyday. If you make your desire your everyday life, your work will be filled with joy and dedication. You will want to put in hard work everyday, and be better than you were the previous day. NETSOL is the story of this exact feeling.

NETSOL's environment is ideal because it is not an organization that was started with the intention of making money. Rather, it was a sacred mission in which the element of patriotism was prominent.

Today, NETSOL is making millions of dollars, but what means the most to me is that a Pakistani company is providing its services all over the world. This accomplishment is a matter of great pride for my country, and the elevation of Pakistan on the international landscape is my greatest reward.

“An entrepreneur is humble and enters the world of business leaving his ego at home. This individual listens and readily accepts good advice, never claiming to know it all.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 04

The Story of NETSOL

My friends, regret is one of the worst feelings. A dream left unexplored, an idea forgotten, a vacation to paradise not taken.

It is my life’s mission to live without regrets. I am always ready to fail to follow my dreams and pursue my ideas, no matter how ambitious or ludicrous they may seem to anyone else.

The biggest impediment stopping our dreams from coming true is the hard road we must follow to transform them from ideas to a reality.

I repeatedly tell young entrepreneurs that lady luck does not knock your door, you have to leave the comfort of your home and loved ones to go out and grab your luck. When you leave your home the first time you may fail, and then again, the second time, maybe even the third time. I promise you though – lady luck will be yours if you do not give up.

Establishing NETSOL was nothing short of a miracle.

I came to Pakistan with a dream and mission, landing straight at my brother, Shahab-ud-din Ghauri’s house. I had no resources, contacts or work experience in the country. My tangible assets were a laptop and around US\$ 5000 in my pocket. For me, the biggest sign of hope and strength was my brother’s blind faith in me. Without asking any questions, he agreed to invest in me and support me every step of the way.

Even though the business environment inside Pakistan was not perfect, the situation itself was better than it was before. Although political instability was rampant, the premier of the country was business-minded. This translated to a positive ecosystem for work, and encouraged many people to start their own businesses.

I had knowledge and skills related to new technology, especially computers. However, my weakness was my lack of familiarity with the people and environment at the local level.

I am a great advocate of hard work, as I believe it always speaks louder than words. Working hard always came naturally to me. I withered storms and hardships that had trained me to survive in tough environments and ingrained in me a sense of relentless perseverance, dedication and commitment to my work. Without this quality, trust me my friends, the circumstances left no stone unturned to try and break me.

“Fear” was not a word that existed in my vocabulary. I had been hardened by the challenges that had gotten me this far. The tougher the circumstances became, the greater my performance and capacity to succeed.

As I faced this new challenge in front of me, I had made up my mind that no matter what the circumstances, I would put in my maximum effort, and let the results do the talking. Starting a new business is a game of nerves and only the ones with nerves of steel can carve iron in the field. The rest will crumble under pressure.

I valued every second of my day. In my spare time, I focused on improving my skills too. I knew I wanted to pursue the field of computer science, so I tried to learn as much as possible. I realized one can never

truly know enough – knowledge is limitless. I still believe and practice the same thought.

If you want to make a name for yourself in the business world, you must first become an expert in business. Without acquiring basic knowledge, you can buy and sell things, but you cannot make a name for yourself. I understood this very early in my career. The sooner every entrepreneur realizes this, the easier it becomes to set goals and strive towards them.

Later on, I applied the same approach to my company and employees, prioritizing their skill development.

Our whole life is an amalgamation of experiments, therefore, never be afraid to change and experiment. Until you try something new, you cannot do anything valuable. It is far too easy to follow the pack – it is only those who think differently that stand out in a crowd. Whenever an idea crossed my mind, I made sure not to let it go to waste. If I saw potential in it, I always took a chance and worked towards executing what I had envisioned. I never wanted to be haunted by “what ifs”, imagining how my life could have ended up differently if I had taken one risk or another. I did not wish to have any regrets in my life.

As I have shared earlier, one of my greatest achievements is my ability to let go of fear. Max Lucado expressed it best when he said, “Storms are not an option, but fear is.” Being afraid inhibits a person’s true potential, it has a paralyzing effect, and forces one to be overly cautious at all times. Sometimes, restraint can be a good thing, but to always hide behind the dread of what will happen if one takes a risk is limiting. A person burdened by such fear can never go beyond the confines of a certain circle, be it social life or business. I believe that every achievement lies on the other side of fear, and that has been a big contributor to my

success today. Learn to defeat and crush it – trust me, this mission is possible.

Successful individuals are often open-hearted and open-minded. Instead of settling for comfort, they aspire to build homes atop mountains, embracing challenges and reaching new heights. They embody the spirit of Allama Iqbal's *shaheen*.

Openness to take risks is pivotal in fulfilling one's destiny in life. I think back to the time when I left my stable job to venture into a business environment where I had no prior experience.

The principle is the same, if you have the courage to defy the odds, success will follow. This is where the story of NETSOL begins.

1995: The Foundation

Once I had decided to set up NETSOL, it took me an entire year to complete basic requirements, such as registration of the company.

Several critical decisions had to be made. As a starting point, I had to decide where to set up an office. Initially, I wanted to choose a location with minimal rent, so we could save money for other expenses. I was considering options in areas such as Garden Town and Barkat Market in Lahore. However, my brother, Shahab, did not like this idea. He made me realize I was approaching this matter from the eyes of an outsider, rather than a city local. He advised me to set up shop close to our residence, so if need be, I could run to the office and deal with whatever needed my attention. Problems such as commuting to a far-off place or getting stuck on the city's infamous traffic would be resolved. As always, his advice was correct and based on a lifetime of experience.

I took his guidance and looked for an office space in the Defence area of Lahore, which was the same vicinity where our home was located. However, the task was not at all a simple one. I finalized a rental agreement with a property agent in Y Block, assuming things would operate as professionally as they did back in Australia. However, after initially agreeing to an advance amount of Rs 2.5 lakhs for the year, the property agent refused to sign the contract, simply changing his mind. Little did I know, this was just the first of many major setbacks I would encounter.

Feeling extremely disappointed by this turn of events, I resumed my search and eventually settled for a less optimal location in G Block. I knew a lot of work would have to go in to improve the condition of the space. I negotiated the rent at Rs 80,00 per month, ensuring we had sufficient funds for renovations while also allowing us to build some savings. I did most of the repair work with my own hands, ensuring the foundation of our office was solid.

After a year of hard work, in February 1996, our new office was finally ready. It would be an understatement to say that it felt like a dream come true. I could not imagine any other location for this workspace, and even felt grateful for the initial setback we faced with the first location we had considered. With two cabins and one shared workstation, it was the perfect office for my small team as we had to embark on this adventure together.

At the start of the business, my initial capital was around Rs 2,000,000 or around US\$ 50,000, which was generously provided by Shahab, my knight in shining armour. This was not a lot of money for what I was setting out to achieve, but still felt like a priceless treasure. I had to cover

all expenses, including rent, employee salaries and building renovations, within this budget. There was not a single rupee to waste. However, I had faith in God and my tenacity.

During those early days, I only had two suits that I wore on alternate days. I was my own boss. It seemed I had cloned myself to multi-task, but that was not the case. You cannot even imagine how much I pushed myself into doing everything by myself, from leading meetings to running errands like an office boy. I was also in-charge of my company's marketing and promotions. One of the first things I did was to call everyone I knew, or barely knew, to share the news that I had started a company in Lahore as I wanted to emphasize on relationship building.

We initially named the company 'Network Solutions', offering networking and software development. However, people's reaction to this was not what I had anticipated. It seemed like there was a grave gap between what I was promising and Pakistan's business culture and market trends. This was my mistake - I had not conducted proper research or collected data before starting work.

My first priority was to secure work. I met with as many acquaintances of my family as possible, recognizing the importance of building contacts. I understood that people tend to support and provide assistance to those they know. However, the jobs we obtained were not sufficient to facilitate the rapid growth I envisioned for my company. The work we found only covered our basic expenses. In each meeting, I emphasized the significance of technology in business. Unfortunately, Pakistan's business community was not yet prepared to embrace this approach.

Things kept getting worse.

I was going to office one day, struggling to put on a brave face when there was hardly any light to look forward to. I noticed the company's office boy, sitting at the entrance of the building looking extremely perturbed and worried. Upon asking him what had happened, he shared that a gentleman had come to meet me, but had found me busy with work and meetings therefore, he kept waiting. While the office boy found himself occupied with other office chores and could not keep an eye on the visitor, the latter disappeared. It suddenly struck him that my laptop was nowhere to be found after the gentleman left the building.

This meant that my only asset, my laptop, had been stolen. I felt as if my world had just crashed.

The office boy expected me to scold him, to yell, to cry. Rather than doing any of these things, all I could muster was exasperated laughter.

"When it rains, it truly pours", I remember myself thinking. At the time, I could not think of a single person I could contact for help. Most people did not even know what a laptop was. I knew I would never be able to recover the machine.

As human beings we all have a threshold of tolerance and patience to endure tests and hardships. Looking back, I feel had it been anyone else, he would have taken this incident as the final straw and packed up his bags, bidding farewell and good riddance to his workplace and employees. I did not say anything at the time, but truly, this loss, coupled with the empty well of professional prospects, severely demotivated me and crushed my spirit.

For many days, I did not tell anyone at home that not only had I not earned anything from work, I had lost my most expensive possession as well.

Rather than giving up, I forced myself to intensify my efforts. I continued to meet more and more people, making as many calls as I could. I did so mechanically, clinging to hope for a miracle or divine intervention.

I remember convincing my wife to start calling me at my office. She agreed, but was curious why I made such a request. In my heart, I knew exactly why. Have you ever experienced the deafening sound of silence? I have, when days passed with our office phone gathering dust. Therefore, when she called, I felt hope. I would imagine the ringing to indicate a client asking for my company's services. I still remember that the ring of that call used to feel like music to my ears.

During this time, the situation in Pakistan looked very different than what it is today. Multinational companies doing business were not abundant. However, I knew the direction the market would go in, even if it felt premature at the time. My experience working in Australia made me realize conditions were rapidly evolving and we were on the brink of the era of IT.

My foresight guided me, but in the present day, I found myself sitting in an empty office, absentmindedly playing with a pencil on the table. I dreamt of the day people in the business sphere would recognize the importance of IT and turn to me for work.

Whenever I got a call from home, I would tell my family I was busy and would be back in the evening. Even as I said those words, I was well-aware of how much busier I could become and how much later into the night I might have to stay at work due to the tasks awaiting completion.

One day, my wish finally came true.

1996: The Long-Awaited Ring of the Telephone

Usually, my wife called the office phone at a specific time. It had become routine.

I remember the day the phone started ringing outside the regular time slot. That call – that one call – changed the destiny of the IT sector of Pakistan.

I picked up the phone and was surprised to hear my brother, Naeem Ghauri, on the other side.

Back then, Naeem was working in the IT Department of Mercedes-Benz in London. He asked me about work and how it was going. I masked reality by sharing everything was fine, but I am sure he could sense the truth behind my words. He told me he had been transferred from London to Bangkok and wanted to start a leasing company for Mercedes-Benz. For this, he needed my IT services.

Naeem tasked me to find out about people within Pakistan who could operate the AS400 computer. He informed me that he had already informed his colleagues at Mercedes-Benz that he had entrusted this task to the most capable person for the job. I promised him I would not let him down.

After I hung up the phone, I sat there in silence too numb to react and register. When the impact of that call finally sunk in, I wondered if this was the business growth opportunity I had been looking for so long. On the other hand, I wondered how I could find people who could operate the computer they had asked for, when I did not know how to operate it myself. Were there any such people in Pakistan? Could I find them? As you can imagine my mind was a whirlpool of thoughts and questions. My mind flashed back to the time when I had lost my laptop, and seeing the

confusion on people's faces when I tried to describe what a portable computer looked like.

I knew that fulfilling this responsibility in an environment like that of Pakistan was a monumental task. I scoured every nook and corner of Lahore but was unable to find a single shred of hope. No one was familiar with this kind of technology.

Suddenly, I was all too aware of the risk I had taken. I left Australia and started working in a country that still needed to make leaps and bounds in the IT industry. I was in a state of war with myself – I wanted to keep believing in why I had done this in the first place, but also wanted to throw in the towel. I felt utterly depressed. However, I did not give up.

It is a fundamental trait for any entrepreneur to never succumb to circumstances. They must not panic under any conditions and should keep themselves, as well as their team, motivated. Finding a way forward, even when all doors seem closed, is the hallmark of a leader, and others will follow suit.

When I exhausted all options in Lahore, I set my horizons broader, and turned to Karachi. I travelled there myself and after gruelling sessions of man hunt, managed to locate the bio-data of the required people for the job. I met them and verified their merit before calling Naeem victoriously.

During the call, I had a chance to speak with Naeem's boss as well. From the get-go, it was evident that he knew me well and had a positive impression of me. He asked me whether the required persons had been found, and was pleased to hear I had discovered four outstanding individuals for the job. I told him the team would be formed soon.

After completing the initial requirements, I was ready to travel to Bangkok for my first business meeting. I was no stranger to hard work. I had attended several meetings before. However, what was different this time was that I was travelling to a meeting to represent my own work and my own company. The sense of ownership I felt filled me with a sense of pride, nervousness and drive. I was on my way to meet the head of a company as the head of my company – as two equals. I still cannot describe the feeling in words.

I realized that I did not have any ‘profile’ of myself. There was no printed material. The company’s brochure – still operating under ‘Network Solutions’ at the time – was the only description of myself I had. I got my picture printed on the same brochure.

I also wrote the address of my home in Sydney, Australia on the brochure, with the intention of informing the reader that the company had a presence globally as well.

However, I knew the facts. Network Solutions did not have a single big project under its belt. I could make sure the colours and headings of the brochure stood out, but aesthetic changes could not hide the reality that we had a long way to go. All I knew I could demonstrate was everything I wanted to achieve, everything I believed we could accomplish in the future.

Trust me, this is not just the story of Salim Ghauri or NETSOL, every big name has a similar story. Miracles are always born out of deprivation and the irony of circumstances. They are also born out of hope and belief, brought about by the dreamers who have been given a vision by God.

On May 4, 1996, I had my meeting with Eugen Beckert in Bangkok. This meeting marked the first time a company invested in me, and by extension, my company, purely on the basis of faith in my abilities.

I stayed in the same hotel where Mercedes-Benz had its office. I had worked with global companies before, and was quite familiar with the environment outside Pakistan. Yet, as I walked to my meeting, I was a bundle of nerves.

Here is another memory from my personal diary that shall trigger a smile, a laugh and maybe some pity as well. Till date I am unable to forget it! The meeting was arranged at the hotel's swimming pool, but I had dressed up as if I was going to meet the Prime Minister of Thailand. I had not anticipated how humid Bangkok would be. The hair gel I had applied in an attempt to look professional and immaculate melted. I was sweating profusely in my suit and tie and feeling suffocated due to heavy humidity. I did not even have a handkerchief to make amends.

Upon my arrival, I was surprised to see two men in casual shirts and shorts. Initially, I could not even recognize them, as my eyes swayed the crowd looking for someone dressed like me. It was not until one of the men beckoned me that I realized I was looking in the completely wrong direction.

They asked me if I was Salim Ghauri. Upon hearing that I was, one of them introduced himself as Peter, while the other, I presumed, was Eugen.

"Salim you are not dressed for the pool side meeting", Peter said with naughty smile on his face.

“Actually, I was just trying to impress you. Did I succeed or not?”, I responded wittily.

Peter laughed, and thus began our lifelong friendship. He asked me to remove my coat and tie and relax. Within minutes, we were chatting like we were old friends. Peter and Eugen opened the folder with information about the company and began reviewing it. Eugen saw my picture on the brochure and jokingly told me I was more good-looking in real life.

As we discussed work, I shared details of the manpower I had sourced, showing them each team member’s CV and highlighting their strengths. Before I knew it, we were signing a one-year contract worth GBP 40,000 on a hotel napkin.

The feeling of signing your first international customer cannot be described in a few words. It was a very happy and emotional moment for me to sign my name on a contract of this scale and scope. The pride and joy I felt at the time cannot be describe. Let’s just say for the first time, I saw a glimpse of a bright and shining future. Little did I know, this would not only change my own destiny, but transform the entire IT industry of Pakistan.

My journey began when I returned from Australia, fuelled by the ambition to establish a globally renowned IT enterprise. While this ambition may have seemed lofty and imaginative to some, I always maintained faith in myself. However, the dream of a single person transforming a country’s IT sector was met with disbelief from others.

I could spend countless pages emphasizing the significance of that day when I sat by the poolside with an executive from the most prestigious luxury car brand in the world.

Developing instant camaraderie with senior executives within the first few minutes is the key to cultivating long-lasting relationships. Within a matter of minutes, we were on a first-name basis, without any formalities like "sir" or "Mr. Kells" or "Mr. Beckert."

My friendship with Eugen Beckert endured for a quarter of a century until his passing in 2022. From our first meeting, Eugen and I got along like we had known each other for years. What we had in common was an ability to communicate well. He was a German, and I was a Pakistani. We both knew the importance of impressing clients from any race, nationality or ethnicity at the very first meeting. Over the course of time, Eugen and I became close friends. Eventually, he even became a part of NETSOL's Board of Directors.

In my life, I have adopted a principle of addressing my customers or acquaintances by their first names. Treating them as equals is the most effective approach to foster long-term relationships. Excessive use of formal titles like "sir" or "Mr." can create a sense of distance, causing customers to perceive you as a lesser vendor. By quickly establishing relationships on a first-name basis, you demonstrate respect through the delivery of quality services and goods, while your honesty towards your customers further signifies the respect you hold for them.

The team I had sent to Bangkok proved to be very hardworking and honest. They impressed the international stakeholders, completing their work a month before the scheduled time.

The senior members at Mercedes-Benz were extremely impressed and increased their faith in me following the successful execution of this contract. From there on, I knew the star of destiny had finally started to shine.

Eugen (CIO, Mercedes-Benz) started contacting me whenever Mercedes-Benz needed work. We formed an untenable business relationship.

Once, I asked him how he took a leap of faith and assigned such a big project to a new company like mine.

He replied, "Consideration is given to people, not companies. I believed in the fine reputation you had built after working for years. Even more than that, your self-confidence made me believe in you." I still remember these words as clear as day.

From then on, every time I went to Bangkok for a meeting, Eugen insisted I be his guest, rather than stay at a hotel. Whenever I met him, I discussed my passion, which was to develop software, but I noticed he would often ignore this part of our conversation.

One day, Eugen mentioned he wanted an electronic diary. I made sure his wish was fulfilled. Getting this diary made in Lahore was expensive, but I knew this was a token of my gratitude and respect for him. I printed a guide on how to use the diary and took the entire package to Singapore myself, despite Eugen insisting for me to send it to him by post. When Eugen saw the diary, he was extremely satisfied with the quality of work, and asked me how much it cost. I refused to accept the money, and told him I made it just the way I also make software. I wanted him to know the quality of software would be just as good, if he ever decided to invest in us.

Instead of worrying about money, I adopted a relationship-building policy. This is a key advice I would give to anyone starting a business. Money is temporary, but relationships are forever, and they can never be borrowed. Success is not about making money, but about winning people's hearts.

I worked very carefully to build a relationship with Eugen. I would fly to Singapore to meet him without any fixed schedule, even though there was no direct flight facility from Pakistan. I chatted with him over lunch and flew back home.

I followed this strange routine for months. You have to do something different and unique to win hearts and trust. All too often, people hope to win a lottery, or look for shortcuts in life.

I believe the wheel of success is just like the wheel of water – for the wheel to turn, water must exert force. Similarly, you must persistently push forward with your hard work. This is how the wheel of success will gain momentum.

It is God's promise to man that hard work does not go in vain. Indeed, my personal experiences reinforce my belief in this truth.

1997: Making a Mark

After the company's first break with Mercedes-Benz in Thailand, I knew we had to prioritize providing top-notch service to our customers. Recognizing that honest service would foster their continued trust in us for future needs, I drew upon my experiences in Australia.

During my time as a freelance consultant for BHP Steel, I was initially hired for a six-month assignment. Despite successfully completing the project, they chose to extend my contract for an additional six months, even without a new assignment at hand. Curious about their decision, I asked my boss, John, why they wanted me to stay on. He simply smiled and explained, "Salim, you have taken excellent care of our IT department, and our users are unwilling to let you go." Motivated by this response, I remained with BHP for the next eight years, solely because I

consistently provided them with my best service. The scarcity of competent service providers became evident; if you excel in your field, customers will be reluctant to part ways with you.

Drawing from my experience at BHP, I made it a priority to ensure that our customers became loyal to our services. Additionally, I consistently reminded them of our expertise in software development.

On January 21, 1997, at last, I received a long-awaited phone call.

It was Eugen on the other line. He asked me, without any greetings, if I could develop software for Mercedes-Benz Taiwan. I could not contain my excitement and replied, "Of course, I'd be thrilled to develop the business software."

He told me he needed the software to be developed in Chinese, and shared some further objectives and specifications before hanging up.

The moment I got off the call, I took out my diary and wrote, "Yes! Finally, the chance we had been waiting for."

I called my family. Each and every one of my family members were so proud to see my dream of several years – a dream I had worked night and day for – finally becoming a reality.

Eugen communicated more details of the project via e-mail and I immediately started working on a plan to implement it. I needed resources, manpower and capital. However, I knew I could do it all. My passion for my work has inspired me to do things and achieve milestones a rational person could never even dream of.

Several times during the course of work, I thought that the name 'Network Solutions' was too long and drab. I combined the two words to form 'NETSOL'. This was announced as the company's new official

identity. In the same year, this name was registered. The company that started with just about five people was about to surprise everyone with its future achievements.

In order to implement this new project, I needed a manager who also understood the work. This is how Shahid Kamal joined NETSOL. I also knew I needed to hire more people to undertake the work. As I was making these critical decisions, Eugen announced he was coming to Lahore. I was extremely worried, and wanted him to leave feeling confident and satisfied that he trusted me right.

Load shedding was rampant in those days, and there was no alternate power system in the office. Apart from this, the condition of Lahore city at that time, which we could not fix, was also a cause of concern. The struts were broken. The condition of the airport was also dilapidated. There was only one good hotel – Pearl Continental – and the path from PC to our office was rocky and full of bumps.

Impressing my German and Taiwanese guests was my main priority. I incurred some immediate expenses, ensuring the office building was in the best shape possible by getting the renovation work done. I rented a generator, which cost PKR 10,000 rupees per day. This was a huge investment at the time, but I knew it was necessary. I also knew it will take few minutes to start the generator, so I installed a UPS at the office as well. This helped me ensure there were no interruptions in power supply.

I wanted to prove to Eugen and his colleagues that despite its flaws, the environment of Pakistan had certainly improved, and we could achieve the task ahead of us. I went to pick them up at the airport myself. They were saved from the waiting line and taken from the plane to the car.

From PC, I took a longer, but safer route, crossing Jail Road and Cavalry to arrive at Defence in the smoothest possible manner.

However, I had no magic wand and could not control everything. When we arrived outside NETSOL's office, a donkey cart passed by Eugen and his Taiwanese team members. I felt embarrassed, even though I was not to blame for this. To my surprise, all three of them enjoyed the incident and chuckled.

While we presented our solution to our guests, we had a power breakdown every half hour. I could hear the AC switching off. I waited to hear the sound of generator starting and used the AC remote control to seamlessly turn on the cooling every time. Our guests did not realise that we were facing electricity issues at all, as our computers and room lights were on UPS.

After the meeting, Eugen told me he was very impressed with Lahore, especially my office. He particularly praised the uninterrupted power supply at NETSOL, as he had heard this was a common issue plaguing the country at the time. I smiled at these words. Only I knew how hard I had worked to provide a positive atmosphere and make a lasting impression.

When one of my Taiwanese guests asked me why every place had an armed security guard stationed outside, I made sure to mention that this was merely customary, and not indicative of any pressing security problem in the country. In Taiwan, the concept of guns was unfamiliar. I explained to him that in Pakistan, carrying a gun was a popular hobby and more of a cultural tradition than a security measure. There was nothing inherently dangerous about it.

The purpose of recounting this entire incident is to emphasize the importance of not lamenting over circumstances or allowing weaknesses

to serve as excuses. If you possess the skill to maximize the available resources, then nothing can hinder your business growth. It is our responsibility to create an environment where customers feel reassured and their concerns are addressed, fostering their willingness to collaborate with us.

I remember an incident where four women from Thailand came to Pakistan for business with our company, but the immigration officials at the airport stopped their entry and started interrogating them for half an hour. They thought that if they came from Thailand, they would belong to some other 'profession'. This situation caused a lot of embarrassment. They were educated, professional women, who were travelling for the purpose of work. My manager, who had been waiting at the airport to receive them, shared that it took a long time for them to come out. After they were finally allowed to go, the damage had already been done, and they felt deflated at the country and its discriminatory environment. They still remember this incident vividly and recall it with a sense of unease whenever we meet today.

I had managed to overcome key weaknesses barring the success of Mercedes-Benz's project. However, NETSOL was still understaffed. To overcome this, I asked my nephews and friends to come to the office for a day, and bring their own computers. This helped create an image that the company was fostering, and we had enough manpower and resources to implement large-scale projects and clients.

I remember one of our main goals during Eugen's visit was to present our plan for the execution of the project. This was the responsibility of NETSOL's manager, Shahid Kamal. However, the day Eugen and his team reached Lahore, Shahid's brother-in-law passed away. When he called

me, I felt deflated, mourning the loss but simultaneously worried that no one else was prepared to deliver the presentation as efficiently as Shahid could. Late at night, I sat down and tried to make as much sense of it as I could. I was usually calm under pressure, but this time, I felt genuinely worried.

I reached office early in the morning, and found Shahid sitting there before me. I told him that it was not appropriate to come to the office despite such a huge tragedy at home. He replied that would leave after the meeting was over.

I thanked Allah for blessing me with such sincere team members, whose hard work, sincerity and dedication contributed significantly to the company's growth in its earliest stages. When one's staff considers a company their own, and associates its success with their own, then no one can stop the company from moving forward. Our team is like a family, and that has been one of the main ingredients of NETSOL's success.

Our meeting with Eugen and his colleagues lasted for two days. Our presentation went smoothly, leaving the delegation impressed and satisfied.

To win a war, first you have to win several battles. To win those battles, you have to be well-equipped with a defense, as well as offense, strategy.

Luck is not enough to be successful. You have to think smart. You need to keep an eye on the future. My estimates for the project cost were around \$200,000. I knew my customer will not spend that kind of money on a small company like ours. So, I was prepared with my own plan to offer a discount. When we shared our cost of developing the solution,

with the complete number of people required and number of days we needed to produce the software, Eugen agreed with our cost estimate. He said he agreed that this is what it would cost, but his budget was only \$90,000.

In fact, I was waiting for this moment. I told him I understood his budget limitations and wanted to do this project regardless. I leveraged this to my advantage – we agreed on \$90,000, but I made Eugen agree to allow NETSOL to sell this solution to other companies after it went live in Taiwan. I knew if we did that, we could recover the gap in our cost of \$200,000. He thought for a moment and then agreed, wondering who would possibly buy a Chinese version of a very specialized software. I also knew that no one would buy this particular software, but I was aiming to get Intellectual Property rights of a very special financial domain.

This was biggest decision in NETSOL's history. Over the next five years, we signed and developed six different software solutions for Mercedes-Benz in four countries. Every contract was signed at a discounted price, with the condition that NETSOL would keep the rights to re-sell the software to anyone, even competitors of Mercedes-Benz. Interestingly we were not able to sell to any other company in those five years. This made it easy for the client to keep agreeing to giving us the rights of the software.

I remember I used to get very frustrated that why we were not able to sell this software to companies outside Mercedes-Benz. It proved to be a blessing in disguise, as nature wanted us to acquire the business knowledge and rights of the software. Our first sale outside Mercedes-Benz was to Yamaha Australia at a contract for a small amount of money.

However, this was the beginning of our products' recognition in the financial market.

So far, we have sold over \$1 billion worth of software in the last twenty-five years. Our decision to sell our software for lower rates to Mercedes-Benz 1997 onwards, while ensuring we were allowed to re-sell what we developed, is the key to where NETSOL is today. It is because of that idea that our company is one of the biggest names in the IT world.

After the contract was settled, I assembled the team and developed the required software within five months. The task was arduous, especially because it was in the Chinese language, but we made sure to work diligently and not compromise on quality. All the requirements that were given to us as instructions were taken into consideration.

When this software was completed, our team went to Taiwan to install it. My joy knew no bounds. It was a historic occasion when a Pakistani company provided services to an international giant like Mercedes-Benz. Not only that, but the task had been completed in a way that Mercedes-Benz became our regular client. Business relationships thrive when standards are maintained and trust is not compromised. We took care of these points in every way.

If I had failed, perhaps the story of NETSOL would also have ended with me. However, the success of this project strengthened my partnership with Eugen and put our company on the map. I continued to travel to Singapore to meet him and get more work. Meanwhile, I established a separate software development unit within NETSOL.

I could not help but look back upon my decades of struggle from Romania to Australia, Thailand to Taiwan. I faced problems with language, food,

accommodation and bills. I used to avoid sleeping in hotels to save money. The difficulties had been endless, but only helped me persevere.

In 1997, NETSOL was hired for another large project in Thailand. This day felt like another momentous celebration. To top it all, I received a call from Eugen for a project in Australia. The Mercedes banner had been tasked with developing the software for Australia over a period of seven months. The Software Rights Agreement was set out in such a way that the rights remained with us. NETSOL successfully completed this project as well, slowly making our company indispensable to Mercedes-Benz. Winning the trust and confidence of such a big company was a game changer in those days.

My dream of witnessing a Pakistani company that could provide cutting-edge services in Australia had finally materialised.

1998: NETSOL Goes to the States

My elder brother, Najeeb Ghauri, was based in the United States of America. Whenever he came to Pakistan, he would get emotional on his return. He wished to have an excuse to keep coming back home. It was the pull of the motherland.

This sense of nostalgia and patriotism bred a new idea: He decided to expand the scope of NETSOL to the United States. For this, he worked smartly. He created a company in America and floated its shares.

Najeeb already owned a company there, named 'Miraj Holding', which was primarily a textile business. In the documentation of the business, however, it was clearly written that the company also provided technology-related services. Using this as our way in, Miraj Holding's first tech contract was signed with NETSOL America. It included those

investments that would be made in the technology sector in Pakistan. The idea was well-received within the United States. We had decided to fly high, but our destination was still far ahead.

At the time, NASDAQ was the largest stock market for IT companies in the world. We decided to be a part of it, but found out it was necessary to show a revenue of US\$ 100,000 simply for registration. Najeeb and his wife put their life's savings for this cause and provided the funds we needed. Three days before Christmas, we found out our company had been registered on the stock market.

This is how a Pakistani IT company broke through a cluster of Indian companies to make its name on the international stock market. NETSOL's achievement was featured on the front page of newspapers everywhere and signified a great moment of pride for the entire country.

During that time, Yahoo, Intel and other new and emerging companies dominated the stock market, with everyone rushing to work with them. Yahoo's shares were easily worth US\$ 1000. However, NETSOL, even with shares ranging from US\$ 5 to US\$ 80, managed to gain its fair share of attention. Investors could not ignore the name of NETSOL and were forced to start considering opportunities within Pakistan. The world could see, as clear as day, that Pakistanis had entered the field of IT and were advancing rapidly.

We pitched our company strategically. We told investors our software was better than anything provided by Indian companies. We highlighted the benefits of spending in Pakistani rupees and selling services in US dollars, due to which we were able to attract the attention of investors.

In 1998, NETSOL required a senior consultant in the UK. I knew that Shahid Kamal, my trusted manager, was the best person for the job and

sent him there. While this was the right decision to make, I was left with another issue: who would take his place in Pakistan?

So far, I had been fortunate to find trustworthy team members. Both Pakistanis and foreigners I had the opportunity to work with had become assets to me.

I wanted to replace Shahid with a business-minded individual, foreseeing the speed at which NETSOL was expanding. This is how Sajjad Kirmani became a part of the company.

Sajjad used to work in the IT Department of Coca-Cola during those days, but was planning to leave and do his own thing. I had a discussion with him and was impressed by his mind and passion for his work. There and then, I asked him to join NETSOL and run it like his personal company. The offer was on the table, and to my surprise, Sajjad readily accepted it.

Once Sajjad joined the company, I felt I had finally won a vacation from work. He was a teacher of every art. He was unparalleled in solving problems. I have no qualms in saying that if it was not for Sajjad Kirmani, NETSOL would not have been able to grow at the scale that it did.

Like me, Sajjad's principle was also to never compromise on quality.

I always believed that if we wanted to become a globally recognized company, we had to prioritize obtaining quality accreditations.

One of the first project I gave Sajjad was to achieve ISO certification. As NETSOL started expanding its business across Asia and beyond, consistent quality improvement and maintenance of high standards became imperative. Following audits, NETSOL was able to achieve the ISO certification, winning a strong reputation for trustworthy services in the market.

My next target was Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI), which was a process improvement framework to streamline costs, reduce rework and defect rates, and improve overall timelines and quality. In order to implement this framework, I realized that training my staff to this level would not be possible within Pakistan.

In the meantime, NETSOL established a separate quality assurance company. Our commitment to providing excellent services never faltered even during the most difficult of circumstances, such as 9/11, which changed everything for Muslims in the United States. As we navigated those extreme times, we still refused to cut costs or withdraw our focus on quality. It was considered very strange in the market that everyone else was concerned about safety and survival, while NETSOL was investing in quality and improvement. Rather than getting discouraged, we consciously chose to continue working as per our plans and targets. No crisis could deter us from the progress we were making toward our goals. Sajjad supported me wholeheartedly in this vision.

I decided to combat the hate and intolerance around us at my own level by promoting positive news and turning to the power of media for awareness. In Pakistan, we ran a full-page ad in Dawn, the country's largest newspaper, informing readers that NETSOL was Pakistan's first IT company certified by the formal 9001-ISO. This was very well-received and helped attract new interest locally. I developed a relationship with the media in Pakistan, and regularly gave interviews and appeared on talk shows. I had a knack for speaking, but was not motivated by self-interest or a desire to promote myself. Rather, I realized this was the best way to make people aware of the company, and help them realize that the future of the world belonged to IT. I hoped that youth, in particular, would engage with this content and make the right decisions for their

future. My appearances garnered positive reviews, and media channels began inviting me regularly as a result. Over the years, NETSOL's publicity continued to raise awareness of its work.

This trend continues today. As a result, people consider it a privilege to work within NETSOL. We attract top-quality talent, with the best professionals in the market turning to us for employment opportunities.

We won the attention of several influential personalities as well. At the anniversary of NETSOL, Pervez Musharraf came as a special guest. At the inauguration of our new office building, former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz graced the occasion. We wanted to be known not only for our excellent services, but our social image as well. This helps you build a reputation and continue gaining more and more work.

1999: Formalizing an HR Department

As a company grows, the need for manpower increases as well.

For the past few years, NETSOL had been operating with a limited team of employees. We had never required a formal Human Resource Department to keep track of our workforce.

However, I remember the incident that made me realize establishing an HR Department was imperative. One day, a person came to our office with a letter in his hand. To my utter shock, the letter was a 'job offer' from NETSOL, which he handed confidently to Sajjad, asking him when he could start. Upon investigating, Sajjad found out that one of our junior staff members had gotten his hands on the company's letterhead, and taken advantage of this by drafting a fake job offer for someone at the cost of PKR 10,000.

To prevent any such incident in the future and formalize internal processes, we turned our focus on setting up a proper HR Department. I knew the exact person to execute this mission.

I had family relations with Tahir Malik in Australia, a trustworthy man and an extremely skilled HR professional. Without another thought, I travelled to Australia to meet him, and brought him with me to Lahore.

Convincing him to leave his life and move to Pakistan was not easy. I held talks with him and his wife, convincing them to take a leap of faith. Eventually, Tahir agreed, and got a residence near our office in Lahore. He became a valuable part of NETSOL for seven years, supporting us fully in every crisis and challenge we faced during the course of that time.

Tahir helped us streamline processes within the company. In times of financial crisis, Sajjad and Tahir went above and beyond, paying NETSOL's employees' salaries by taking loans on their personal credit cards. They ensured that morale never wavered. Such is the invaluable contribution of sincere and selfless team members.

Tahir's transition to Pakistan was not seamless. The new environment was the opposite of what he had been used to in Australia and required a very different kind of perseverance and ambition. Social norms were hard to adapt to, people's attitudes were complex, and there was a myriad of day-to-day challenges he had to deal with every day.

The struggles disheartened him, and he came to me one day, ready to return to Australia. I left everything and sat down with him. We had a long discussion, where I made him realize I had been in his exact position many times in the past, but decided to power through. These conversations are also a part of our memories today.

The same year, we were offered another project in Thailand for a cost of US\$ 100,000. We accepted this new job, but as always, maintained our condition that the rights of the software would remain with NETSOL.

Realizing that I was responsible for not just my own livelihood, but also the bread and butter of several employees, made me take financial management seriously. I adopted a forward-looking approach each time we took on a project. I did not accept any job that did not translate to learnings, services or products that could be used in the future. I knew a single decision could push us from the throne to the floor, and wanted to make sure we were treading carefully.

All caution went to the dogs when martial law was imposed in Pakistan. The impact this political situation had on the business community was dire. International investors who had scheduled visits to the country had to cancel. All the blood, sweat and tears we had put in to convince them that Pakistan was an investment-friendly environment went to waste. Suddenly, the risks were paramount and uncertainty was abundant. They saw Pakistan as nothing more than a tragic victim of instability.

A Case of the Y2K BUG

There was a sense of apprehension at the turn of the millennium. After 1999, people were confused as to what was next. They felt there was no mention of the year '2000' in the computer, meaning that the future of IT was bleak and would be disrupted. People felt that everything, from the banking system to airport elevators, would come to a standstill.

Indian companies started taking advantage of this situation, claiming they would go into the software and alter history to preserve the future of mankind.

We, too, could have benefited from this situation if we wanted, but we knew that all these things were temporary. We kept our head down and kept focusing on what mattered. Instead of wasting time, we decided to create a product.

2000: The Hunt for a Big Contract

NETSOL had been working for Mercedes-Benz for four years now. During this time, our reputation soared due to the quality and timely delivery of all the contracts we entered into. I was on the hunt for our next big opportunity.

I had my eyes on the 'leasing side', otherwise known as contract management. I talked to Eugen, and he advised me to stay away from things that would be too difficult. However, when I strongly expressed my desire, he supported me.

We had the opportunity to sign a software contract for Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand and Australia. The main requirement for this was that we had to satisfy the heads of the company operating in these three countries.

A presentation had to be organized for this. I needed a chartered accountant who understood the nuances of the task at hand. I hired Mian Iftikhar Taj, an excellent Chartered Accountant who specialized in leasing systems. He worked tirelessly day and night to create a detailed presentation for our clients.

Iftikhar and I arrived in Singapore to meet with the board. I was extremely nervous. Swallowing my nerves, I introduced our work to the heads of the company, after which Iftikhar presented the material he had worked endless nights to complete.

We left the room knowing we had given it our all. As we waited to hear the company's final decision, I thought back to the time I waited outside the hospital room, while my wife gave birth to our daughter. I felt a similar sense of anxiety, excitement and helplessness.

We soon found out we had won the contract. This was a massive achievement under NETSOL's belt.

We had to deposit US\$ 500,000 in cash as collateral for three years of work. When signing the agreement, as always, I made sure the rights of the product remained with NETSOL. It is interesting that none of the products I had confidently reserved our company's rights for had been booked yet. However, I believed in the quality of what we had created, and kept going.

We were able to complete the lease software successfully.

I tend to celebrate success quietly; I am not one to clap or yell with joy in the face of victory. However, I never deny my team members the chance to enjoy themselves. I recall the conclusion of this project being a wonderful and memorable day for all of us.

Projects kept coming in, and our hard work was finally paying off. The connections we had diligently cultivated were now showing their impact. Our customers were satisfied with our work because we understood their present and future business needs. Simultaneously, there was trust in Allah, which was the real thing. He always watched over us, ensuring there was a light at the end of the tunnel.

In the same year, we got information about a tender in Dubai. I knew as a matter of fact that several of our Indian competitors were participating. Motivated, I decided that NETSOL would also give it a shot.

We prepared a presentation and travelled to Dubai to deliver it. When I entered the room, I saw that out of 22 people, only one was Pakistani. 18 were Indian, and the rest were white. The Indian companies were of CMMI LEVEL4. Our presentation was well-received, but we were unable to bag the high-level contract.

This incident made it clear to me that to take the company to the top, it was necessary to compete on international standards.

I have always been a realist, wise enough to remember the shortness of my bow even when I had secured a hunt. I always asked myself: why did Mercedes-Benz work with us? I knew the answer lay in our hard work and professional attitude. The quality of work was a by-product.

Using the same ingredients, I built a relationship with Yamaha. Yamaha bought our product, and helped us sky-rocket the success of NETSOL.

The Search for a New Home

As time passed, we decided to change our office and move to a bigger building. Our initial team of five members had now grown to 150. We needed more space to accommodate the company's new employees. Our new building had a seating capacity of 300 people. We invited the American ambassador to inaugurate it. Now our level was that of an internationally competitive company.

Our work continued to improve steadily, and the demand for our developed software was on the rise. However, NETSOL had not yet secured significant projects in Pakistan. The majority of customers were still from foreign countries. We experienced a steady influx of international clients, with one leaving and another walking in, by the grace of God.

There is a science to renting and owning an office, and clients take notice of this as well. If a client discovers that the office is rented, it may affect their morale negatively. However, if they know the company owns the building, they can be confident that the people they are working with will not run away.

With this in mind, I used the company's earnings to buy a 9 Kanal plot, in Cantt area. My dream was to someday build NETSOL's office here. This dream materialized a few years later. In 2004, we were able to move into a newly established building on our own piece of land with a team of 200 employees. This move had a significant impact on our work. Growth quadrupled and team members worked with a renewed sense of motivation.

However, there was one problem. The office building was far away from the main road. To add to this, in 2008, the Government of Punjab wrote a letter to us stating that they needed the land in front of our building for their development efforts. Although we had plans for the future on this piece of land, we respected the Government's request, and sold the property to them.

As we finalized our contract with the Government, we received an offer to purchase 24 Kanals of land right next to our office building, which we accepted. Later, when the Ring Road passed through this area, the location of our office became lucrative, and the issue of our building not being in a 'prominent' spot was also resolved.

Our new office was very well-designed. I hired Javed Mirza for this task, the same man who had helped me design my own house. I told him I wanted a modern space at par with any building I had visited abroad. I strongly believed that the state of an office, where an employee spends

several hours the day, had a profound effect on their performance as well as mental health. If the condition of the office was bad, then the quality of the work done would inevitably suffer as well. On the contrary, a state-of-the-art work environment would help employees feel proud of coming in to work every day, motivating them to work hard.

A comfortable space is the right of every single employee, and I was determined to provide the best possible facilities to my growing team. We arranged for lunch to be provided to everyone, and inculcated a practice of eating together. Not only was this done to assist employees facing any kind of financial stress, but I also wanted my team to feel like a family, and sharing a meal helped build connections and comradery.

NETSOL also offered interest-free loans to employees who wanted a bike to commute to the office. We arranged a transport facility for the ease of mobility of female employees, offering them free pick-up and drop-off services. Additionally, we established a baby day-care center within the office premises for employees with children.

Apart from that, we regularly organized parties for the team on various occasions to help them feel refreshed and charged. Organizations that treat their staff like robots often lose quality workforce very quickly. Unlike such places, NETSOL has always prioritized its employees, and I believe this has been key to our success.

I always believe that employees need the freedom to work in their areas of expertise. Good performance comes from autonomy and the joy of doing what one enjoys. Moreover, I never wanted employees to operate in stressful environments, where they felt tensed, overworked or harassed with unreasonable demands.

Unfortunately, the overall work environment in Pakistan tends to be like this. There is a prevailing belief that it is better to keep employees on a tight leash, and pulling each other's legs is common. In most workplaces in Pakistan, employees are not appreciated publicly for fear that they may demand a better pay or more benefits in return. This demotivates them and inhibits their potential to excel. Furthermore, the criteria for success in many companies is not how well one performs. The better connections one makes and the more time they spend on impressing their seniors, the higher their chances to stand out. This buttering has nothing to do with their performance, and this is why the quality of institutions gets compromised.

Today, I am proud to say that NETSOL has a culture comparable to any international workplace. From day one, NETSOL treated its staff exactly the way they would be treated in a developed country. We empowered them with the freedom to be creative and flexible, to do what they were best at. We provided opportunities to our employees to be experts and show their talent. We do not have a practice of questioning them for no reason. Outstanding performers are publicly recognized and rewarded to reinforce the notion that hard work yields rewards.

“My whole life transformed once I changed my perspective. Experiences serve as great teachers. Learn from them and avoid repeating mistakes. That, my friends, is the key to success.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 05

COVID-19: One Crisis, Many Lessons

COVID-19 was a global health crisis that continues to impact nearly every aspect of our lives. No one could have anticipated that a virus would come out of nowhere and transform the world as we knew it. The pandemic not only shattered the economies of many countries, it impacted work-life balance. Social distancing restrictions curbed leisure, travel and social life across the world.

NETSOL had a presence in China with over 56 team members working there when the outbreak first struck. As team lead, my first priority was to bring them home, safe and healthy.

In March 2020, while the situation was still novel, NETSOL recalled its staff. Travel restrictions had not yet begun. We were able to accomplish this successfully.

My next priority was protecting the business from damage. How could a team of hundreds of employees work together amid a contagious virus on the loose? How could we maintain business relationships? Our customers' businesses and profits depended on our software. They had billion-dollar portfolios. I found my mind racing to the worst possible scenarios, such as their software crashing and no one being at the NETSOL office to help them sort out any backend issues.

Crisis situations truly compel you to think critically and prioritize disaster recovery efforts. We knew it was our responsibility as service providers

to be available round-the-clock. By entrusting us with software, they had essentially given us responsibility for their operations. We were under contract to help them manage their work in a smooth and efficient way.

NETSOL had customers all over the world. We were accustomed to our clients in China calling us at different hours than our clients in Australia. We had to be available at any hour of any day, ensuring uninterrupted services.

Rather than panicking, we embraced this challenge head on. Within three days, we installed systems inside our homes. Connections were made and work started off from home.

On March 15 2020, NETSOL shut down in-person operations. This was days before the Government's official announcement for nationwide lockdown on March 23. For us, securing the health and safety of our employees came first, no matter what. As a result of timely action, none of our team members fell prey to the virus during this time of fear and uncertainty.

We did not lay off anyone during this time. While workers were being fired left, right, and center in the market, and the remaining ones were finding their salaries reduced, we knew we had a loyal and dedicated team we could not treat unfairly. We pitched in from our personal accounts where necessary but made sure that our employees received their monthly incomes uninterrupted.

Decision-making skills are exposed in such emergency scenarios. This crisis tested how mature an organization NETSOL was and how well-integrated its internal systems were.

From the safe space of our individual households, we catered to the needs of our customers in Malaysia and Singapore. It was an entirely new experience. Due to COVID-19, the business world was evolving, with time-old practices such as office attendance being reimagined.

Through our good management, we were able to get through this time. However, the cord was cut for many businesses around me. Institutions went bankrupt, operations halted. Our travel agent, who used to have billions of billings each month, found himself selling burgers to earn his daily bread.

In a crisis, the higher the position, the heavier the responsibility. CEOs were the targets and it was a test of their abilities. Many became red-faced and many lost their jobs because they could not face it. These crises are signals to us that man should be ready for change at any moment.

The world of technology is changing rapidly. To keep up, individuals must constantly learn new innovations. It is important to never get used to stability and always keep one foot ahead of the game. As a business leader, my biggest takeaway from the COVID-19 pandemic was to prepare my company and people to face any such challenge in the future.

One must prioritize health as much as work. It does not waste your time, but develops your decision-making skills. An active and healthy CEO can run things better than a tired and sick CEO. I wake up at six in the morning and give myself plenty of time to exercise. It washes away any negative energy, helping me stay motivated and energized to face the day. I have found that absence of any toxicity helps one in their work, benefitting the business as a whole.

Also, never lose your calm, even when engaging with an annoying client or customer. I can handle pressure well, so if someone comes to me having made a mistake, I refrain from wasting time over the spilled milk, and focus on solving the issue at hand. Do not blame the wrongdoer, which is the traditional method, but find ways to turn the mistake into a learning opportunity.

It is the age of media. During the COVID-19 lockdown, when everyone was confined to their homes, people had ample time to use social media. Small issues often became magnified. I recall a negative campaign launched online regarding NETSOL's alleged salary cuts. I remained unfazed and did not give it a second thought, knowing it was untrue, as did my employees who were directly affected. I chuckled, realizing that despite the negative publicity, NETSOL was gaining unwarranted promotion and becoming a household name.

I believe that Allah honours those who work honestly. False propaganda cannot harm you. The abuse of social media has become far too common and pervasive in today's times. If I am criticized for something I have done wrong, I am most willing to learn from my mistakes. There is always room for improvement. However, the criticism needs to be legitimate and based on facts. Otherwise, you are simply wasting your time responding to empty words without substance.

COVID-19 was not the first crisis NETSOL had battled. We had faced the challenge of 9/11 too. Uncertainty is an inherent part of life. Life is full of unexpected twists and turns, and we can never be sure what will happen next. Many of life's greatest opportunities and experiences come from taking risks and embracing the unknown.

Learning to cope with uncertainty is an important skill to develop. This requires learning to accept and adapt to change. Ultimately, the ability to navigate uncertainty can help us become more adaptable, resourceful, and better equipped to face whatever challenges life may throw our way.

The business world has its ups and downs. We had spent decades trying to build a name for ourselves through NETSOL and achieve this level of growth. We experienced several losses. However, post COVID-19, things were impacted in an unprecedented way.

As a weak economy, Pakistan was already running on aid and support. The pandemic worsened this dependence and had a significant impact on the business world as well.

During the life cycle of a company, often products are sold for exorbitant prices during their boom, but given away on heavy discounts at the end of the season. Ups and downs in profits are to be expected and are part and parcel of the game. However, COVID-19 did not spare anyone.

Many businesses had to close temporarily or permanently in the face of lockdowns, restrictions and reduced demand. Supply chain disruptions were far too common. Companies that offered any kind of services were particularly affected.

However, even in this global crisis, multinational companies like Coke, Pepsi, Unilever and cellular companies managed to stay afloat. They have built names so powerful, so domineering, that crises can merely shake them but not break them. All these organizations are well-planned and structured. They are well-positioned to succeed in the long run.

A crisis is the death of the day-worker. COVID-19 was felt by labourers first. According to one survey, 60% of workers were heavily affected by the pandemic. Such marginalized communities did not have any job security, making them the first ones to go when businesses found themselves drowning in loss and uncertainty. Their survival became a question, rather than an assurance.

For the first time, every individual started strongly considering running their own businesses, rather than being dependent on external forces for jobs and basic sustenance.

Crises often disrupt the normal functioning of society, leading to the acceptance of changes or practices that would otherwise be considered unusual or unacceptable. For example, in a country like Pakistan, most of the businesses are owned by *seth* mafias and we have inherited the culture of government institutions from the British. Being firm with employees to the point of harassing them is considered good management in such workplaces. No one could have imagined a world where employees would be allowed to work from the comfort of their homes but it became a reality during the pandemic.

COVID-19 made this option a reality, and a successful policy. The business culture changed forever. The world has become increasingly online. The role of physical activities is limited. Goods and services are being brought digitally at the private and government levels. Online culture has countless benefits, saving time and fares. The opportunity for people to work remotely also helped them spend more time with family at home and connect in ways that could not have been possible in the standard 9 to 5 routine.

However, it is essential to recognize that only a limited number of services and tasks can effectively be carried out from home. As a result, much of the work suffered during the lockdown, and millions became unemployed. The global oil business was destroyed when transportation stopped, and got sold at a bargain price. While prices dropped in this sector, they hiked in others. Everything related to COVID-19 treatment, from ventilators to access to hospital care, was available at double the rate. Useful medicine would 'disappear' from countertops and be sold by limited purchases at exorbitant rates.

When the COVID-19 vaccine was developed, the ordinary man was certain that the rich would snag any stock available, leaving them at the mercy of the disease. This idea created a strong feeling in people that they should also earn money so that the clouds of uncertainty are removed from their lives forever. Without a doubt, COVID-19 was a wake-up call for many.

COVID-19 spared no sector, wreaking havoc on the education system in Pakistan. With schools closed, children were left idle at home, and the private sector bore the brunt as parents refused to pay fees for schooling that was not taking place. Consequently, institutions struggled to pay salaries to their staff, who relied on fee collections for their livelihoods.

The virus put people all over the world on edge. Only when you feel helpless are you inclined to change the situation with all your might. The need to change the structure of the world was abundantly clear. Questions such as how to conduct business and how to navigate similar impasses in other aspects of life became prevalent concerns for many.

Lessons from the COVID-19 Crisis

The bottom line is to adopt effective and comprehensive principles in the context of changing circumstances to create a successful and sustainable business structure.

1. Make your preferences clear

Preferences require you to know your nature well. You should have strong decision-making skills. You should know which environment you can perform your duties best in. You should prepare yourself for crises and emergencies. Your choices are what make you successful and unsuccessful in your professional life, and this is the basis of a successful business.

2. Be prepared and plan for risk

After establishing your priorities, you have to prepare yourself to take risks for a successful business. The foundation of your work needs to be systematic planning. Establish good relations with your competing companies and institutions. Get to know and observe the experiences of others instead of shunning them. Formulate policies according to changing conditions and act accordingly.

Understand the importance of market service, research and welcoming fresh talent into the team. By being prepared for the future, crises like COVID-19 will not spoil your life. Remember, if you are in your comfort zone, you are only one step away from potential challenges.

3. Hard work is the best strategy

Rather than being idle, adopt an active, dedicated, and committed approach to drive your business towards success. Resistance to change and unwillingness to embrace evolving cultures are personal limitations,

not faults of the company, global pandemics, or government. Do not expect to be a burden on the company's budget without contributing. Instead, cultivate a passion for learning within yourself. Because the better you understand the system, the better you will perform.

4. With old traditions, embrace innovation

Do not limit your perspective and broaden your thinking because the company will always need you, and you will always be indispensable, if you have the courage to brave change. The same method to increase sales does not prove successful every time. Trends keep changing, making old formulas rusty and saturated.

Prepare an action plan in the face of changing circumstances and constantly improve quality and performance according to customer feedback. There was no option but to work digitally in the face of COVID-19. The same applied to the education sector. We have traditionally been accustomed to physical learning. We have kept our children away from potentially harmful technology, fearing the impact of mobile phones and tablets. However, the pandemic required us to adapt. Today, the entire universe of children's education is running on technology.

While we have the privilege to consider such options, it is a fact that a majority of public schools could not cope with the pressure of COVID-19, that too in a country where the literacy rate is already chronically low. Following the impact of the pandemic, it is likely to fall further.

While education is not the same as business, the literate class will undoubtedly take the reins of business tomorrow. Therefore, it is very important to pay attention to this aspect.

5. Give new people a chance, and trust them

Experience is vital, so is creativity.

If talented individuals with innovative minds are welcomed to a business, trust me, they will counter problems like COVID-19 in ways you could never have imagined through their intelligence and out-of-the-box thinking.

We need to give opportunities to our youth, so individuals with talent stop wasting their potential and can change the map of organizations by guiding them to success.

Stories from our Employees

Naheed Kausar describes the pressure of recalling NETSOL's staff from China, UK and Indonesia during the early days of the pandemic.

"Traditionally, our visa processes were successful in 99% of cases, with only a few out of a 1000 that were anomalies. We have a capable team that is constantly fire-fighting, able to navigate problems with paperwork or emergency billing. However, COVID-19 was a different beast altogether.

Amid uncertain flights and repeated cancellations, we were facing a war. Time was ticking and we knew we had to bring our employees back home. Our team worked around the clock, battling communication problems, booking hotels and coordinating with anyone possible to achieve this task. Not even once did the families of our employees burden us; they had faith in us and knew we were doing the best we could to help our team.

Salim's role was instrumental in helping us reframe the crisis as not one that was overwhelming, but rather one we needed to find a solution for, no matter what.

I remember another anecdote about a construction project, where all hell had broken loose. Things were going south, but Salim maintained a positive attitude, working round the clock with his team to win the contract. She remembers the mastery with which he disguised even the remotest ounce of stress, worry or tension, always appearing before others with a smile on his face.

Whenever a problem arises, it is our job to handle it. This kind of work requires complete dedication. Once, I received a message from Salim in the early hours of the morning, where he shared that the vendor had objected to the work we had put forward. I was on my feet immediately, ready to make amends. This is what we have to do, and this is the kind of professional Salim inspires us to be.”

Faisal Rashid Bhatti recalls the early days of the pandemic and how we made a strategy to combat it.

“There were a million questions in the air... whose salary would cut according to what level. With Salim’s guidance, we made sure the entire team faced this crisis together. Those earning in lakhs were willing to accept pay cuts to help those who were barely surviving in the face of hardships. We all understood the sensitivity of the situation. Our concern was to make sure work would continue.

COVID-19 made it all too clear we had been living in deluded times. If I wanted to buy a new car, I could easily wait and take one more year out of my old one. Life will not stop if I do not buy a new mobile phone. This is the attitude shift we had among all of us.

I remember we used social media as the only forum for the salaries of about forty people – one team among many. One of them took advantage of the situation and took a screenshot of our private

correspondence, which went viral completely out of context. NETSOL was presented as a company that was unfair to its employees, even though we had taken pains to ensure that was the opposite from the truth. The news hurt the country more than the company, because a majority of our customers are global. Rather than achieving whatever the employee who leaked the information had wanted, other companies found excuses and tightened their noose around their workers, cutting their salaries. So, one should think a thousand times before doing anything of such a nature.”

Hafiz Raza has seen several shifts in the IT sector over the last few decades.

“This sector has become more civilized than before. The options for work, as well as the scope of tasks undertaken, have increased greatly.

COVID-19 affected that, clouding the IT industry with crises. I remember when there were talks that NETSOL would also have to lay off its employees. However, I feel proud to this day how our whole team worked hard to bring the company out of the deep end.

The culture within software houses is unique. Many companies hire people on a temporary or project-based contract. As long as there is work, life is good, but if not, you face a mountain of problems. NETSOL does not think like this.

There are only so many people who can be employed. Even when their work is over, the company should not feel burdened. NETSOL has organized its workforce in a decent manner. When one project is finished, starting the next project immediately is a top priority. Or if there is any work left over from a previous project, it has been done.

On top of all of this, NETSOL focuses largely on capacity building and staff training, making sure employees constantly learn and improve themselves to be better than they were a year before.”

“Always give a chance to promising and intelligent people. Give them the trust, confidence and independence to perform, thrive and flourish. A team of dependable and competent employees can take business to the pinnacle peak of success.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 06

A Day Labourer's Mindset is an Obstacle to Success

Unfortunately, we have cultivated a culture, be it among politicians or businesspeople, that lacks planning. There exists a single-minded desire for absolute authority and dictatorship, with opinions of others considered unnecessary and superfluous.

In contrast, our Holy Prophet (PBUH) emphasized the importance of consultation for achieving optimal results and outcomes. We have neither felt the need to understand religion, nor adapt ourselves in line with the demands of evolving circumstances. This is why there is stagnation in every sphere of life and there is no way out of it.

Our rural areas are overpopulated and joint family systems very common. One person in the household earns and eight to ten people depend on him. Some misinterpret religious teachings and believe that there are only four days of life, so there is nothing to be gained by working hard. The working class works for four days and then sits for a week to break bread. We have not yet been able to teach our people the lesson of living life according to a specific plan. Harming and backstabbing others is a priority for everyone. To achieve success, a shift in mindset is imperative.

There are so many wonderful and awe-inspiring buildings in the world. These are not carved by some heavenly beings. These painstaking

labours have been achieved by those whose focus was not just survival, but a desire to convince future generations that someone lived here. I encourage you to think back and wonder, who had the selfless desire to leave this world a better place, a more beautiful place, than the one they had seen? These individuals even inspired others to do the same. For example, the Mughals built masterpieces in the Indian subcontinent to leave their mark, irrespective of whether or not there were there to rule the land physically. Their focus was not simply on their tenures as *badshaahs*; they maintained a broader vision and within their lifetimes, sealed their immortality. They left behind monuments that are still talked about today.

Those who believe in subsistence have never added any colour to life. Different thinkers always gave new and beneficial gifts to the world. All the big names associated with politics, literature, philosophy, arts, sports, law, and medical science worked day and night to build their reputation within their fields. Such people introduced innovations and created such impact that the world was stunned!

These were the people who not only thought of today, but also kept their perspective set on the future. They were able to challenge themselves and exceed their own, and well as others' expectations. Such people chose the difficult path instead of settling for the ease of their livelihood. This sacrifice helped them make things easier for themselves and society. As a result, the world remembers them.

Why is it important to make money and become rich? Many people try to justify their laziness with richness of the heart. However, if any of your friends or loved ones needed your financial support, then the wealth of heart will not be enough.

Shakir Shujaabadi is a great name for Saraiki Wasib. He is also called Allama Iqbal of Saraiki poetry. Despite being blessed with abundant talent, the tragedy is that he lived in conditions of extreme poverty. Misery waits for no man, and it is up to us to challenge the nature of our fate. A high-quality lifestyle necessitates access to resources, facilitating the procurement of daily sustenance with greater ease than would otherwise be possible. Undoubtedly, economic power has remained crucial throughout history.

In his book, "*Sarr Utha Ke Jeo*", well-known intellectual writer Qaiser Abbas has divided the world into five types of people based on their level of prosperity:

1. Extremely poor people
2. Poor people
3. Middle class
4. Rich people
5. Extremely rich people

Where do you see yourself?

Regardless of where you are, I promise you, you can join the ranks of the 23 richest people of the world. After all, what is wrong with it?

Poor people can think only up to a week. These people spend their hours keeping track of weekly income and expenses. They are stuck in the clutches of day to day and week to week, not daring to think beyond that. Their mission is to somehow get through Monday to Sunday.

Middle-class people think month-wise. Getting paid every month, running out of money before the month ends, borrowing and then

waiting for the next month. Thinking ahead of this 30-day timeline is scary to them.

Rich people plan for the long-term. For them, a plan needs to be in place for at least a year. They look at the lasting effects, rather than the immediate impact of things. These people have the power of patience. They rise above temporary comfort and focus on the rewards of the future.

While the main goal of the middle-class is comfort, the rich have their set on freedom. They aim for liberation from electricity bills, house rents, children's fees, marriage and death expenses, inflationary pressures and vagaries of time. This is the reason why the problems of shortage of flour, search for water, load shedding of electricity, and inflation do not affect them.

The real reason why the poor wish for the leisure and comfort of the middle class is because they believe in scarcity thinking. They blame their circumstances, and feel that their lack of money is due to limited opportunities for success in the world. They feel that money is not in such abundance that everyone can get their hands on it. This scarcity mindset often stops them from trying, settling them in a rut of less resources and limited prosperity in their life.

The rich have discovered the truth: money and prosperity are abundant and anyone can have them. If you just want to make ends meet, you will make ends meet. If you want to become something better, your living conditions will improve through your hard work and efforts. If you want to be counted among the richest people in the world, adopt a regime and work day and night.

The world is full of examples of humans achieving the most impossible things. Their achievements end up transforming the very definition of what is possible, encouraging the human imagination to think broader and more creatively. I assure you, you could be among this group of thinkers and achievers.

Those who lament over problems often find themselves trapped within them. Conversely, those who actively seek solutions can surmount any obstacle and ultimately reach their destination.

There is a certain kind of magic and power in long-term thinking. If you make it your habit, it will make you a rich man. Narrowing your focus to simply a day or week will put you in the ranks of labourers, paupers and beggars. If you change your thinking, your approach to life and actions will change as well. Maintain a positive mindset, and focus on the answer rather than dwelling on problems.

I recommend enriching your thoughts before accumulating wealth. Read helpful books, associate with humble and successful people and avoid hypocritical thinking and people. Do it today, and your tomorrow will be better.

“Pursuing a job or embarking on a business – both pathways underscore the importance of discipline, teamwork, and gradual progress, reminding us that dreams must align with the realities of dedication and adaptation to succeed in the evolving landscape of work and entrepreneurship.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 07

To Do a Job or Own a Business?

Nature has its own unique system of working.

It is fascinating to see examples amongst many animals who abide by the code of rules and laws. We can learn so much from the animal kingdom – whether it is leading with discipline or keeping a watchful eye on one’s pack.

If you look at a pack of ants, the little creatures form an organized line, carrying scraps of food to their home to enjoy together. Bees work together to create intricate hives, producing honey like clockwork. A pack of wolves is led by an alpha. The weak and sick placed strategically in the middle, and the end populated by the strong ones. This ensures no one can attack this group from up ahead or behind.

All the numerous creatures created by God follow a code of law. The universe operates according to these unspoken and unsaid rules.

It is a rule of life that everyone is meant for work. However, anyone can do business, but not everyone can do a job. This is because a job is contingent upon specific skills – abilities that need to be actively nurtured and developed. As early as school, parents and teachers need to recognize what skills children possess. They should cultivate these abilities to benefit these young minds in the long run.

A job teaches an individual how to work within a team. As an employee, a person learns how to operate within a hierarchy. How does your supervisor treat you, and how do you treat your subordinates? What does it mean to report to someone and be held accountable for the work you produce?

The number of experiences one gains at a job are too many to count. Above all, a job helps you gain perspective – perspective to decide the next move.

A business includes many decisions that you already learn from experience at a job. Dealing with people, managing staff, assessing the right price to charge a product for, how to manage financial matters – these are all skills not typically taught in school, but you will acquire them by working under a boss.

Entrepreneurs in Japan, help employees who have had more than ten years of service to start their own businesses. This is considered enough time to have mastered a particular task and build a niche.

If you enter into business without acquiring the necessary skills, you will not just fail, but incur losses. I recall a gentleman who worked with me expressing his desire to start his own business. I encouraged him to go ahead, but before doing so, pay two years of groceries, school fees, utility bills, house rent and other expenses to his wife. A business has risks, and the effects of these risks should never hit home.

It is a misconception that having a job is wrong. You work nine to five, then go home and spend time with your family in the evening. Could there possibly be a better schedule than this? Over time, you are even able to improve and hone your skills enough to earn a salary of Rs. 10 or 20 lakhs.

Not everyone can be Bill Gates, nor does everyone aspire to be.

Develop your skills to such a high level and strengthen yourself to the point where you feel compelled to take on the task. Business is not for the weak; I worked for seventeen years before starting my own. Moreover, I cultivated my skills in IT by providing consultancy services to several international clients.

On the other hand, those who start successful businesses often drop out of school to pursue their ventures and are able to achieve their goals because their passion makes up for their lack of technical knowledge in the field.

I am sure you have all heard of Airbnb – the world's most famous hospitality service. Would you believe that the founders of this incredible platform had no prior experience in the hospitality? With backgrounds in design, Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia found themselves struggling to pay rent in 2007. At the time, a major design conference was coming to town, and hotels in the area were fully booked. Brian and Joe saw an opportunity to offer air mattresses on their living room floor to conference attendees who needed a place to stay. They quickly built a simple website called "Air Bed and Breakfast" and managed to rent out space to three guests. This is how Airbnb began.

According to a study by Harvard University, if a business does not face crises within the first three years, it is likely to close within ten years. Lucky are those who suffer at the beginning of the business and get it right.

For NETSOL, the first few years were extremely challenging. However, time was our teacher. Business start-ups without management skills end up losing money and sinking their capital. Crisis management is an art

that comes only with experience and learning. This period of struggle helped me grow as a businessman, and laid a strong foundation for the company's future.

In Pakistan, over the last five years, a prevailing culture, especially in universities, encourages students to start their own businesses in their seventh and eighth semesters. While the thought behind this is valid, it is important to let young graduates step into the real world first, gain experience in their industry of choice for five to ten years, and then when they are ready, start a business. This is how they will maximize their chances to succeed.

The caveat of starting a business after seeking experience first is the freedom from the shackles of comfort. If a person spends ten years at a job, it is all too easy to fall into the rut of an everyday routine. This individual will get used to things, and despite becoming an expert in the field, not be able to utilize their potential to thrive. This is why only a few job seekers ever venture out of the circle they drew around themselves after their studies.

The way of earning money has changed a lot. In the modern era, people are finding unconventional avenues for income generation through technology and mobile applications. With a good idea and a unique concept, individuals can explore platforms like YouTube and earn millions of rupees.

Mubashir Siddique, a young man from a poor family, hailing from a remote village in the Narowal district, is simply one of many examples of such success stories. Mubashir started recording himself while making traditional village food in a rural environment and uploading it on

YouTube. People, including my family and myself, liked his videos so much, that he earned millions of rupees through his YouTube channel.

TikTok has offered young people a new platform to show off their creativity and become 'TikTok Stars'. Overnight, people can become rich. A single word, sentence or dialogue can go viral and spread like wildfire.

Social media channels abound with success stories of young individuals, proving that channelling one's talent into a source of income is not difficult.

Designing your future by relying solely on business tycoons as role models is a grave mistake. Out of eight billion people in the world, how many have succeeded in business? I assure you, it would not amount to even one percent of the total population.

In 1975, Bill Gates had predicted that there would be a computer on every desk. This was before the PC had arrived in the global market. His prediction was merely a product of his vision and foresight. Confident in his idea of where the world was going, he started his own company and named it 'Microsoft', meaning little thing.

Similarly, Steve Jobs was driven by his vision for the future. He believed the future belonged to technology, and saw potential in creating user-friendly computers that could be accessible to everyday consumers. He introduced a range of gadgets, including the mouse, to our daily lives.

Both Bill Gates and Steve Jobs have made significant contributions to the world. In my opinion, Jobs is one step ahead, because he revolutionized our approach to technology. I am confident that future visionaries like these two will emerge, but it is important to remember that statistically, they will be anomalies.

India has a population of around 1.5 billion people. Out of these, mere thousands will become successful entrepreneurs at best. What about the rest of the masses?

Remember, it is important to encourage dreams, but these dreams should be grounded in reality. In front of my own eyes, I have seen father telling their sons, “Become the next Bill Gates or Salim Ghauri”. Whoever your ideal is, keep in mind that success in business does not come overnight. It takes years and years of hard work, effort, persistence, consistency, perseverance and continuous learning.

After completing their studies, a young graduate sees two ways to earn a livelihood – either seeking a job or starting a business. Since business requires capital, many young people forego this path. Perhaps, they have their sights set on the easier way out, their mind made on securing a stable income by finding a decent job.

Becoming a government officer is an option that excites most people; what they do not realize is that a daily wage earner makes more money than a gazetted officer in the Government of Pakistan. If youth is given a proper business education, I am sure the long queues for jobs will be shortened considerably. The culture in Pakistani society is such that government officials hold a higher social status. People treat them with reverence, and they also enjoy certain protocols. Due to this, young people idealize such professions. However, upon closer examination, bureaucracy proves to be nothing but a deception in terms of facilitating an easy life.

Honestly, those who work for a salary cannot even build their own house in their lifetime. On the other hand, Allah Almighty has endowed

business with so much scope for progression that even a bicycle can become a Land Cruiser over time.

Three things are essential to run any business: a plan, training, and capital. However, I would argue that the requirement for capital has almost disappeared with the advent of technology. Now if you have skills, you can earn money with almost zero start up costs. Simply post what you have online.

Similarly, many people believe that formal education is essential for business. However, I believe that practical skills are more important. We all need to understand and accept that technical education is needed more than formal education. The positive development in Pakistan is that people are slowly realizing this. Lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic made it clear, especially to institutions and people, that only those who had skills could survive during the transition to work from home. If you just have a degree, it's a piece of paper, but if you can provide any service, you will always be useful. So, always try to combine your degree with a skill.

Clients will seek you out, and your work will speak for itself. You will not need a CV or an interview.

In cases where people want to start a business but lack capital, they struggle to make a proper business plan. You can consult a specialist, or realize that entering the market and providing your services for free in the short term is not a loss, but an investment. If someone has capital but no skills, they can seek an expert and go into a partnership.

The Government of Pakistan provides interest-free loans to the youth. An excellent example of a positive step is the Naya Jawan program, which helps to train, guide and utilize the talent of youth in various fields.

It is important to realize that businesses can be game changers for the entire country, not just limited to urban areas. A large portion of Pakistan's population lives in rural areas. The Government is cultivating interest in livestock among village youth by providing facilities from consulting to investment.

Thanks to social media, rural business owners have started recognizing the significance of their work. Visits of the Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner to the market are incomplete unless a trusted greengrocer sits in front of them on his stall. When photographs of these business owners go viral on social media, they are portrayed as respectable individuals who are not beholden to anyone.

People are more and more inclined towards running their own initiatives. Many young people earn their degrees, and then start side businesses, such as opening food outlets, developing web channels or providing tailoring services. They earn more from their entrepreneurial endeavours than from their jobs.

A business is an asset, while a job is temporary. Many jobs have a strict requirement that employees cannot have their own businesses while they are working at the particular company.

When the employee leaves this world, his family benefits from the job are either too minimal to count, or disappear completely. One of the great advantages of having a business is that it creates jobs, and one does not have to worry about your son or brother begging for a job from the outside. You have to persevere. You can employ your children or relatives along with you, and the family of a successful entrepreneur can easily afford the basic necessities of life.

Since the income of an employed individual is fixed, whenever the Government announces a reduced budget or inflation occurs unexpectedly, their hardships increase. If they are lucky and do not experience pay cuts from their company, their overall purchasing power goes down, as income remains stagnant while expenses around them increase monumentally.

Occasionally, employees are offered raises on an annual basis, following strict adherence to rules and regulations. However, surviving the months until that ray of hope manifests is a brutal challenge for most. On the other hand, entrepreneurs have numerous opportunities to increase their income. There is no limit to growth in business. You can go far with your thinking and hard work.

We need entrepreneurs to reduce the unemployment rate in Pakistani society. We have to think and decide that if we only produce experts in business management, engineering, commerce, or computer science, where will they all get jobs? If our universities produce entrepreneurial engineers instead of just producing engineers, the same graduates will be able to maximize their contribution to the country by actually creating employment opportunities for others as well.

In cricketing terms, this is the era of all-rounders. A young person should be prepared for any situation, and it is very likely he or she will be judged on the basis of more than one skill.

If an all-rounder in cricket is not able to perform well in batting, he can still make the day a good one by bowling to the best of his capacity. What matter is that he is able to do both. If your art is limited to only one skill, then after failure in it, you have no back up.

Before the advent of computers, newspapers hired scribes whose job was to write the entire contents by hand. Once technology made this scribe's job redundant, he had two options: either learn how to type on the computer, or quit the job.

So, adapting to changing circumstances, learning new skills, and multi-tasking are extremely important. In any task, there are difficulties, be it employment or entrepreneurship. Our youth should be able to counter these challenges by being flexible. If they get an opportunity to do business, they should choose a sector in which they have relevant skills, and ensure it is relevant to the needs of the times. Then there are also online freelancing facilities. If your talent can be sold, take the time to provide services online too, and maximize your earnings.

Small Business, Big Problem Solving

Start ups always start small. However, sometimes they grow so fast, that time itself halts and watches their speed in awe.

With a clear dream in my head, I said goodbye to my job in Australia, and set out to make NETSOL a reality.

How could a person with no capital dream so big?

Blessed with the support of my brother, I started working. However, those times were extremely challenging. We lived hand-to-mouth, meticulously scrutinizing and deliberating over every rupee spent. We held our breath constantly. Office expenses, including those for meeting with clients, were kept to a minimum. Our team was understaffed, to the point where I had to call in family and friends to act like busy team members when I had to impress my first international delegation.

Slowly, with the passage of time, we progressed, and our circumstances changed.

As the story of the tortoise and the hare teaches us, slow and steady always wins the race. It is not necessary that you take a long leap on the first day; instead evolve gradually. Think about each step and then take action. This is especially crucial, if you lack personal capital and rely on investor support to carry your work.

Every era poses unique challenges for both big and small businesses. What remains constant, however, is the need for businesses to address the common man's problems, regardless of their size.

In today's digital age, having a massive office or a large team is no longer a prerequisite for success. All you need is an internet connection, a laptop, a phone, and you are all set to make your first million rupees.

My vision for NETSOL was born from the sight of a room full of Indian youth working in an Australian office, igniting my desire to see our own talent thrive in a similar setting.

As I witness the reality of this dream many years later, I fervently hope and pray for the youth of Pakistan to dominate the future. With the right guidance, there is no doubt that our intelligent and bright minds can establish a reputation across the world for being the cream of the crop.

"In the pursuit of entrepreneurship, one must follow an unusual path with hunger, desire, and passion, leveraging creativity, hard work, and resilience to transform dreams into reality." – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 08

Salim Ghauri – The Entrepreneur

To me, the definition of an entrepreneur is someone who follows an unusual path to achieve success. This person has hunger, desire and passion to create, fuelled by a vision and a dream.

Pakistan has a significant youth population. Providing jobs to thousands of unemployed people is a big challenge for the Government. The question is, what is the solution? Who will provide a platform for youth to showcase their talents?

The solution is entrepreneurship, which requires active participation from individuals within society for its successful implementation.

People need to come forward with creative ideas and take risks. Start working and when your work demands attention, double your efforts. When work increases and more manpower is needed, employ degree holders or talented youth who can contribute to your purpose. There are no shortcuts to success. Like Vidal Sassoon said, "The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary".

Entrepreneurship seems to be the only way to meet the challenges of the future. All you need is an idea. Then work day and night to get your idea accepted. Once this is done, you will be on the path to success regardless of your academic background.

My degree was in engineering, but I had spent years developing my skills in the world of IT. I left my job as a transport manager and started

working as a data entry operator. This was a massive pay cut for me, but I had developed an interest in IT and knew I needed to grow my capacity in this field through experience.

Never focus on earnings more than a desire to learn; always put learning first and I promise you, earnings will follow. You will be an expert in the field, and be able to set your own rate and earn the right price. It will not matter if you are working alone, in a team or five or with a whole company.

If you have expertise in a position that solves people's problems, you will always stay relevant and valuable in the industry. Sell solutions; that is smart business.

When you make an unconventional decision, you have to suffer the consequences. After deciding to get into IT, I worked day and night. Initially, the results were not encouraging. I started to regret my decision. Every night, I would fight with myself, battling against the negative thoughts arising in my mind. Every morning, I would freshen up and continue progressing toward my mission.

I was living in Australia, but my mind would always go back to Pakistan, my homeland. I was filled with a desire to contribute to change the fate of my country. This longing to give back translated to the birth of NETSOL.

An entrepreneur should always be focused. Once he has made up his mind, he must persist through any storm to reach his destination. Success is not handed to anyone on a silver platter. It is a goal that must be actively pursued, every second of every day.

When I started NETSOL, I wanted to transform the IT landscape of Pakistan. The risks were high and I did not know which direction to take. However, the moment I started my own company, I never looked back until I succeeded.

It was a long wait until NETSOL got its first contract. Meetings were held, which seemed futile because they ended without any contract signed. We kept pushing, refusing to be discouraged by the difficulties we encountered along the way.

Getting a job required time and resources. Against all odds, we did all that we could. This included me flying to Bangkok once a month to have lunch and then come home, only to show that I was present and committed. Every time there was a slim chance to win work, we were informed that a delegation would need to visit our office here. However, we faced the challenge of meeting their needs and requirements with our minimal resources?

The first door to success is always locked with a stronger lock than the rest. To open it, you have to push with all your might, doing everything you can to break it open.

The level of success of an entrepreneur depends on his attitude, thinking and target. If your target is just to make a living, you will never realize your full potential. If your vision is to think bigger, you can achieve the impossible.

The Holy Qur'an states: "And that the man will not get but what he endeavours."

Indeed, our hard work paid off eventually, and NETSOL started shining as a prominent star in the sky of the IT world.

Passion and consistent hard work pave the road to success. Never worry about what anyone else in the world will think of you, especially when you are struggling. They are the same people who will stand in a queue to congratulate you when you succeed.

In my experience as an entrepreneur, I never stopped working hard. I maintained my work ethic and put in diligent efforts consistently. Every time anything went wrong, I would take full responsibility for it. I never made excuses, nor looked for scapegoats. By doing so, you are losing sight of reality, and wasting the opportunity to learn from your mistakes.

I believe this quality – the ability to get back on my feet and learn from my mistakes – was instrumental to my success. I made a promise to never repeat the same mistake twice.

Dreams keep people alive. If I think about where we started, our present reality seems unfathomable. A company that started from a single room is now one of the world's leading IT companies. The dream was ambitious, but we never stopped chasing it.

The world is changing every moment. Along with this, business opportunities are also being created. If you keep a close eye on the way society is moving, you will be able to notice gaps between what is offered and what exists. This is your window of opportunity. If you do this, you will be able to contribute meaningfully to the world. This is the beginning of entrepreneurship.

The world is now without borders, with paths open for your endless success. Entrepreneurs are those who have a zeal for trying something new, do not fear risks and can embrace change with a smile. If there is a loss, they have the ability to bear it. Their sights are set on results. People

can try to erase their name, yet they will continue to shine, making the name of their country proud globally.

The future of IT is bright in Pakistan. India is far ahead of us in this matter, because they understood the potential of this field early on. It took a while for our country to reach this point. IT companies are doing excellent work in Pakistan, but their scope needs to be widened to accelerate this sector.

IT will become the backbone of the Pakistani economy in the coming years, and the Government has started recognizing this. Steps have been taken to make start-ups in the IT sector tax-free. Another positive step is that freelancing courses are now being conducted at the Government level. Brain drain is combatted by empowering youth to earn dollars while staying within their own country.

The media does not present a good image of Pakistan. What is ironic is that this does not just pertain to international media – our own channels portray the country in a very negative light.

I was once invited to a program on Dunya TV. The other speakers on the show were politicians who criticized each other, picking fights over non-issues. I felt embarrassed, and wished they were presenting Pakistan in a better manner for viewers to see and learn from.

I am a businessman. I know the degree to which the country's economy is working. I see hope. I focus on the light, even on days when there are clouds covering the sun. Why do we not focus on reasons to be hopeful about Pakistan, rather than displaying everything that is wrong?

At the international level, Pakistan has become synonymous with terrorism. The country's image is overwhelmingly negative. Isolated

incidents are used as grounds to speak against the entire community at large.

In reality, we know that Pakistan has a wealth of offerings for the world. Globally, Pakistanis are making a name for themselves in various fields through their hard work. If based abroad, they are bringing their expertise in areas from science, technology, medicine, engineering, academic and entrepreneurship.

The Pakistan that is shown in the media is different, and the Pakistan you see with your own eyes is something else. Living here, I know for a fact that the future is bright.

The Importance of Consultation

Najeeb Ghauri, CEO, NETSOL United States, shares the following:

“The understanding between us seven brothers is great. We know each other like the back of our hands.

The best thing about Salim is that he welcomes consultations. He gives importance to our words, making us feel heard. Despite being in different countries, with Salim in Pakistan and me in the United States, we have always made it a point to communicate with each other.

In the expression of various ideas, I do not remember there ever being a disagreement. Matters would always be settled through consensus.

Whenever there is any problem, Salim makes it a point to have a conversation about it. If it is personal, he will make sure to take calls privately. We always share our opinions with each other and make sure they are taken into account in decision making.

Memorably, we fought the battle to take over Chevrolet together. Naeem and a team of lawyers were there with me. Salim had the difficult responsibility, on top of getting the actual work done, to maintain the morale of the employees in Pakistan. He did this splendidly, counselling them every step of the way and encouraging them to keep fighting.

He fights every situation as a team. This is why we are still working together after 25 years.”

Work Experience in Pakistan

Omar Ghauri, COO, NETSOL, elaborates on NETSOL’s experience in Pakistan.

“Our target in Pakistan was the public sector, especially the military. Our work here was predominantly from 2005 to 2012. We worked with C4I, a subsidiary of the army, and also developed the driving license system of Punjab and the State Bank’s CIB system.

On my request, we stopped pushing this, because we faced many payment issues, and quickly realized it would take a while before people in Pakistan would develop a proper understanding of the work we do. If you want to run an app in the world, first, you have to register it in America or Europe. I recommended that we switch our strategy and concentrate on exports. By focusing on the booming market internationally under Salim’s leadership, we were able to transform NETSOL into a global brand.

Back when we started, we did not have anyone at the Government level or private sector to encourage. However, I see a positive change coming. I hope in the future, NETSOL will be able to provide software solutions to new and innovative companies here, just as we are doing abroad.”

Extraordinary Decisions

Boo Ali Siddiqui recounts the number of extraordinary decisions that had to be taken for NETSOL to get where it is today.

“One of the most make-or-break decisions we took was to go to the stock exchange. Salim, and his brother Najeeb Ghauri, were leading this initiative. The science of the stock exchange is different. You have a lot to say and show there. I think it was a very important move.

NETSOL was the first Pakistani company to be listed in New York in 1999. Later on, in 2005, it was also listed on the Karachi Stock Exchange.

Our status changed completely. Customers were willing to pay higher rates, and our financial landscape transformed. We were able to get money easily from banks. Our profit rates skyrocketed. Overall, under Salim’s leadership, we were able to pull off a powerful move that allowed NETSOL to rise quickly.”

Leadership Skills

Boo Ali Siddiqui shares more about Salim Ghauri’s leadership skills.

“The CEO is in the driving seat. Salim’s humility is his most significant quality. His willingness to consult with others, listen to their ideas and seek their feedback improves the overall quality of the output as well. He never makes sudden decisions.

Allah has a special grace for helping others. Salim provides opportunities to people. He leads people with kindness. He wants to spread awareness and help those who are disadvantaged. For this, NETSOL started an education support program. We provide funds to the children of the staff

up to the intermediate level. Even if they want to study abroad, a scheme up to a Master's has been made.

We have dealings with various schools that we fund directly. Arrangements have been made with a school in Kashmir for the education of the children by making payments for five years. The promotion of education is Salim's first priority.

I remember, in 2001, Salim faced an extraordinary amount of pressure. Despite this, he never lost his patience. During this crucial time, we reduced overheads, but never burdened employees with work pressure beyond their scope, or let them be affected by pay cuts. We made sure salaries always reached them on time, even when the company was going through tough times.

These are all challenges from the past. Alhamdulillah, everything is under control and much better now.

My relationship with Salim offers me valuable professional and personal experience. I have never even considered another job or doing anything else."

Navigating Crises

Sajjad Kirmani describes how Salim Ghauri handles times of crisis.

"There was a time when it felt like pressure on NETSOL was at all-time high. Just as we hired more staff, our work reduced. Our financial situation worsened, making it a challenge to pay salaries.

When we started working in America, our operations were halted due to legal complications there. The shareholders wanted to take over the company. There was a negative media campaign about the company. There was no shortage of hard times.

Under the leadership of Salim, our team always came out of these crises. We would adopt any possible solution to get the job done. We reduced expenses to overcome the financial crisis. We always treated our employees like a family, as a result of which they stood up us during tough times.

Those working at NETSOL were not afraid or selfish. They were steadfast in the face of challenges and worked together to overcome them. Seeing big companies shut down left, right and center, everyone realized that the entire world was going through a recession. Even though we were a small company at the time, we were able to manage the crisis.”

Laying Down Roots

He adds,

“NETSOL was initially registered as a state agency. No one knew who we were or what we did. This is how we started. Eventually, we established an office in Y Block, DHA. Our story continued from there.

I joined NETSOL in 1998. Before that, I was an IT Head at Coca-Cola Export Corporation. I was on good terms with Salim, often meeting him at the office of Coca-Cola. During one of those conversations, I shared that I was tired of the monotony of my work over the last five years, and was considering quitting.

Salim placed all bets on me, and offered me a position there and then. His faith in me inspired me, and I decided to take a risk and join this completely new company. Everyone in my family was against my decision. However, I felt this is exactly what I needed, and it was a sign from God to take a plunge.

I started at half the salary I was getting at Coca-Cola. The environment, with its myriad of challenges, was the polar opposite of what I had experienced at a multinational company. However, as I look back, I do not regret my decision for a single moment.

With time, NETSOL blossomed, and I was able to stand alongside the team to enjoy the fruits of our hard work and labour.”

Supporting Employees

Faisal Hasan admires the way Salim helps his colleagues in all matters, be it professional or personal.

“One of my early assignments was to create a business plan for NETSOL in Pakistan. I discussed my draft with Salim, who taught me extremely important lessons. He explained the science of sales to me and helped me realize that there was a huge difference in the behaviour of customers in Lahore vs customers in Faisalabad. Even within Lahore, things would have to be marketed differently depending on the area we were targeting. This is just one of his many excellent pieces of advice over the years.

Once, I suggested fundraising to help meet the company’s financial needs. He told me to do my work, do it well, and not worry about anything else. He repeated this to me many times over the course of a few years. I am sure even if I go to his office today, his mantra will not have changed. He will say the exact same thing to me, even today.

I spent all my life doing a job. Eventually, I left NETSOL, focusing on various personal projects. In my endeavours here as well, I realized I was applying many of the same lessons I had learned from Salim. I seek a lot of inspiration from him. He is a natural born teacher.

I can never give any advice to him; I am constantly on the receiving end. If I were to give him any suggestion, it would be to set his profile to private on Facebook. Too many people take literal inspiration from him, copying his words and taking credit for them. Others envy him. I wish he would protect himself a little more.

Of course, he would never think badly of anyone, which is why he would consider any such threats exaggerated in nature. He is an amazing human being and I am lucky to have had the chance to work under his leadership.”

Setting Boundaries

He further explains that there is a big difference between professional and personal life.

“During work hours, a person has to carry themselves in a certain way, focusing primarily on the tasks for the day. I believe one’s true personality is visible outside the office.

I see Salim as my friend and a proud Pakistani. He is like my brother. In life, I have guided and consulted him at various stages. Similarly, not just me, but also my wife, has sought his counselling on several matters as well, such as training our children, what to teach them, how to raise them well.

My biggest learning from Salim is the way he has kept all his brothers together, despite the scale and scope of NETSOL’s activities.

Generally, one sees that after marriage, problems start happening in homes. The joint family system disintegrates like a gust of wind. But Salim Ghauri’s quality is that despite the blessings and position of the world, he has maintained the importance of family. He keeps everyone together.

Everyone has their own opinions and preferences. Balancing them is not an easy task, especially when your family is also a part of your professional activities.

Salim maintains a strict boundary between work and his personal life. If his brother works with him, he will interact with him like a colleague. Once he goes home, the status of the brother is restored.

Salim never mixes these roles, and I believe this is why he is able to secure the respect of his family in the workplace as well as at home.”

Never Pausing

Ali Aurangzeb narrates the story of a time when emergency work popped up on Eid.

“One of our clients needed some urgent work from us, but failed to remember that everyone in Pakistan had a public holiday to mark the occasion of Eid. I remember Naeem and Asad Ghauri highlighting this, asking Salim how we could get the work done when everyone was at home celebrating.

Salim personally called the employees who were needed and requested them to make themselves available. He gave them his house number and address, inviting them there. This way, it became an employee reunion on Eid, but we also managed to get the task completed.

Salim is an expert in adapting to any situation. He makes the client feel respected and ensures the work is delivered. He treats his employees with the same regard.”

Deciphering the Psychology of Employees

He adds,

“We bother Salim when we cannot do anything. He always solves the problem within two minutes whenever he comes. This is his special trait. He is able to understand our problem instantly. He knows which tone to adopt, how to approach a tone and when to talk to someone. I would call him an expert in human psychology.”

The Value of Time

He concludes,

“Salim is always in a hurry. If you have to talk to him, you will get only two minutes. If you are able to communicate your train of thought within this span of time then good. He will understand, and give you a solution to your problem. He does not believe in wasting time and words.

One who spends time with a dervish nature like Salim lives an optimistic life anyway. His success story itself is an inspiration for others.”

“In the ever-evolving digital age, the boundless opportunities of the internet have revolutionized entrepreneurship, with countless success stories serving as an inspiration for young people to harness their talents and create an impact on the world.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 09

Internet Trends

When I created NETSOL, I worked very differently compared to how I work today.

Before the internet age, I often travelled to other countries just for one-on-one meetings with potential clients and demonstrate my commitment.

Today, the digitization era has narrowed distances and opened up the virtual world, helping us save valuable time. Not only is it one of the key factors in driving today’s economy but it has made global communication simple and accessible. I still believe there is no substitute for a meeting, but now, significant time and cost can be saved by scheduling video links.

The need for high capital to start and excel at a business has diminished. The internet enables you to accomplish so many tasks for almost no investment.

NETSOL had to fight tooth and nail at a time when there was no other option. The environment, however, has transformed today, making our previous efforts seem like arduous stories from another lifetime.

Businesses of every size, scale and scope can be found on the internet. In traditional markets, there is a wholesaler, who is able to make money even if he does not have a product ready at the time. Similarly, on the

web, you can provide your services even if you do not have a product to sell. Even if a product belongs to someone else, you can connect the seller to a buyer and make money through this.

For example, on 'Shopify' you can create your online store. You can learn how to sort things here efficiently and then market your items. Once a customer is found, you can supply the item from the relevant company to them.

Thousands of people in Pakistan are currently earning dollars through Google's AdSense program. Any educated person who believes they can contribute positively to others must join this service in their spare time, which can also provide a decent monthly income. Currently, thousands of people in Pakistan are connected to this program, including computer science / IT-related people, creators, teachers, writers, bloggers, journalists, housewives, students, doctors, part-time professionals, and others.

Now, the question is how much income it can generate depending on one's skills. Many people in Pakistan earn anywhere from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 1 million per month.

In today's modern era, there is hardly a person who is not using a software program. Software has revolutionized every aspect of life, from communication to photography and video production to graphic designing and animation. It has altered the way we work, communicate, learn, entertain ourselves, and navigate through daily life.

All those individuals who have received basic training in software development can make this their full-time career, using it as the base for their business. Since it is a service sector, it does not require a lot of capital to start a business. All you need is a laptop.

Nowadays, there are many examples of people who managed to become entrepreneurs despite having limited financial resources. The example of Bill Gates is before the whole world. He developed a Windows operating system, and within a few years, became a multi-billionaire. Windows became the cornerstone of Microsoft, the company he co-founded, and propelled it to extraordinary heights.

Mark Zuckerberg, founder and CEO of Meta (previously known as Facebook) dropped out of college to launch a social networking platform. See where he is today. He disrupted the landscape of online communication and redefined the way people connect and interact. Facebook quickly became a global phenomenon, connecting billions of individuals worldwide and revolutionizing the way information is shared, communities are formed, and relationships are nurtured.

Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat are smartphone applications taking the world by storm. All of these were developed by groups of two or four people based on just an idea and, within hours, became the most downloaded apps.

Colonel Sanders, the founder of KFC, tried to sell his fried chicken recipe after retirement. He faced difficulties, and no one liked his idea. When he got successful, all his critics disappeared. Today, KFC restaurants can be found in most countries of the world.

Success stories, such as the ones above, inspire us to believe in the impossible. The profits generated from goods that are produced on a small plot of land can sometimes surpass the profits of industries spanning thousands of acres. If these are not miracles, what are they?

While these people were coming up with innovations, traditional business was still going on in the world, things were being sold in the

markets and people were making profits. When they entered the market with their new ideas, they were able to change the way businesses operated before them, and make a name for themselves worldwide. If the owner of KFC spent the rest of his life relaxing on a pension, no one would have known his name.

A traditional life is a stagnant one. The tides of existence carry you along without offering you a distinct sense of self. However, liberating yourself from conformity and embracing a unique perspective allows you to transcend the ordinary, and leave a lasting impact. As John Mason Good said, "Happiness consists in activity. It is a running stream, not a stagnant pool".

To unleash your creativity, suitable platforms are necessary to showcase talent, which were lacking in Pakistan before. Fortunately, the internet has resolved this issue. Now, individuals possessing any form of talent have the means to freely express and share their gifts with the world.

If you have capital, you can do business. Innovate, be creative. If there is no money at all, then sell empty IDs. Everything is sold in the electronic market. Look at NETSOL as a case study. Learn from it, as if it is an academy for new thinkers. How it came to be and how it thrived. You will get inspiration and motivation.

I am sharing my story to show you all that even Salim Ghauri is a simple human being just like you. I have been awarded special abilities by Allah, just like you. The Almighty has granted them to other human beings as well. However, using these abilities is at our own discretion. I promise you that you, too, can make a name for yourself by utilizing your talent and intelligence to create an impact.

“Dress smart, learn always, nurture culture, trust in your team, and be kind. That’s how you will succeed in business.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 10

NETSOL: Where Commitment Finds a Home

When initiating a business venture, one’s focus typically revolves around several big decisions: figuring out investment, selecting a business idea, assembling a team, and finding a suitable office space.

Even if you devote minimal attention to these factors, I promise you, many things become easier. For instance, choosing the right attire for a business meeting is critical. I narrated the story of my fashion faux pas from long ago – wearing a business suit to a meeting at a swimming pool. I was already nervous, and the sweltering heat certainly did not help. I was sweating from head to toe. The moment I saw my colleagues dressed in shorts waiting for my arrival, I knew I had dressed completely wrongly for the occasion.

This incident taught me to always select my outfit according to the nature of the meeting. This does not imply spending money on designer brands or expensive clothes. Wear what you feel comfortable in and look the best in. Your attire should match your personality, and most importantly, be in line with the occasion.

Therefore, a golden rule to remember is that in show business and other social events, business professionals are advised to avoid engaging in a competition centered around extravagant attire. Sometimes what is expensive is the opposite of what is tasteful.

I prefer fitted clothes not merely because they are in fashion, but also because they motivate me to stay active. I avoid laziness in my day-to-

day life. I love to accessorize my look with a good watch, something that synthesizes style with functionality.

At work as well, the dress code is appropriate and comfortable clothing. I do not need my male employees to feel hot in a three piece suit, or my female employees struggling to balance in a five-foot heel.

Our job is to conduct meetings and convince customers to invest in us. Our employees frequently travel from country to country for work. In such cases, one has to realize that a good personality is as important as good style. It can bring life to your arguments and inspire confidence the moment you enter the room.

I recommend everyone to avoid investing in fancy mobile phones they will never fully utilize. Have a simple mobile phone at hand, something that is easy to use, and does not require you to waste a world of time understanding its multifarious features and offerings. Mobile phones are often used as a status symbol – the bigger the screen, the better. However, real entrepreneurs never let such trivial concerns become a part of their lives. Their purpose is grander and far beyond material possessions.

Study Habits

Knowledge is power. Learning is always a beneficial endeavour, whether the information you gain is about society, your business, or the world. The pursuit of knowledge should be a lifelong endeavour.

As an entrepreneur, reading books on the lives of successful entrepreneurs helps me step into the shoes of others without even having to meet them.

One is always busy, but taking out time to read, study and improve one's knowledge is a worthwhile investment. Take time to keep yourself updated. It will make your work stand out.

Since I travel a lot, I use my time on flights to study. I always carry a book with me, as well as a mobile phone and tablet. I truly believe there is no cap on the amount of knowledge one can gain.

I love reading content on the topic of leadership. Apart from this, I know there is life beyond the business world as well. To remind myself to appreciate the colours of life, I enjoy consuming content about fine arts as well.

In our society, there exists a prevailing culture that tends to isolate business from other essential aspects of life. However, adhering to this mindset can lead to stagnation in terms of skill development and personal growth. A person who has a positive mind can always work better. For this, it is important to meet your family, friends and loved ones occasionally. Being refreshed increases the efficiency of work.

Earning money and maintaining a healthy personal life must go hand in hand. If you have to live an abnormal life in the name of business, then what is the use of making money?

Success is not a textbook formula. It is meant to be enjoyed. If you are successful, your life should reflect that. If you have abundant wealth but zero time to sit down, have a cup of tea and chat with your loved ones, your success is meaningless.

Relationship with NETSOL Staff

I have a strong belief that the office environment influences one's performance. This is why I never neglect the importance of maintaining a happy, healthy and productive workplace.

The common belief at NETSOL is that the typical office worker has multiple bosses. Anyone who meets the employee should walk away impressed with their work. This puts our team under pressure, but also motivates them.

In terms of organizational structure, every team has a head at NETSOL. The head is responsible for his staff's performance, and this is the person the team members are accountable to.

Whenever I meet an employee in the office, I never ask them a question about their performance. This is the domain of the head of their department. I use the time to inquire about their condition and well-being. This makes them feel connected to the office. They feel a sense of belonging.

These may seem like small things, but they are very important. There should be someone in the entire office whom staff feels comfortable talking to and sharing their concerns with, especially if they are under pressure from all sides. If they are not allowed to speak openly, work will never go well in a suffocating environment.

NETSOL staff works without fear. I have tried as much as possible to end the culture of leg-pulling from the office and foster a collaborative culture. This is also the main secret of our success.

Apart from this, if you give responsibility to the section heads, you are empowering them. Let them work openly. Whenever you talk to them, be decisive. Interruption during work is not productive. If you try to get

involved in their output, you will just end up confusing them and impacting the overall result. If employees are not given freedom, they will apply from place to place and leave you as soon as they get a good opportunity.

Apart from salary, a good working environment is critical. NETSOL is proud to have several team members who have been with us for over fifteen years. I believe, to a large extent, this is because of the atmosphere we have worked hard to build. It is an environment that no one wants to leave.

As a leader, I believe in delegating tasks. I assign work, discuss the results I expect, and then give full authority to the person responsible for the task. They are allowed to take decisions they deem appropriate, define their own short-term tasks and decide timelines that work for them, as long as the final product is up to the mark.

Obviously, there is room for error in this whole process. If an employee's decision does not produce the desired result, it does not mean that one should be shunned or disowned. You must have faith that the employee took that decision in good faith and it was for the benefit of the company. Risks are part and parcel of the process. If you can have this trust in your team as a manager, you will empower your workers, and they will soar to the heights of success.

No man is anything alone. It is through effective collaboration and collective effort that a company can reach the pinnacle of success.

Along with professionalism, understanding the science of behaviour is important. As an employee, I often thought an idea I had was simple and straightforward. However, my boss did not understand my thinking. I questioned whether this was because he did not know too much or

because I was not able to communicate myself in a comprehensible manner.

Many people in Pakistan think that if they were made the Prime Minister of the country, they could transform the country's fate, solving every possible problem we face. They question, "Why are solutions so obvious to me, yet so difficult for government officials to understand and implement?" The fact is that the government officials may know everything, the common man will never fully comprehend the myriad of factors that influence the decisions of those in power and the external forces at play.

It is up to you to create an environment where your team is truly comfortable. If they complain, do not ignore it. This makes things worse. In winter, if your staff wishes they could work better sitting in the sun, make it happen.

We impose unnecessary restrictions in the name of administration, which adversely affects the workers. Maintaining order at an organization does not require any kind of coercion, harassment or unfair treatment. However, in Pakistan, this concept has been subverted. From the early stages of a child's education, we inculcate the lesson that discipline requires punishment. Parents reinforce the same lesson at home. Eventually, the same mindset carries forward to our workplaces.

The leader who stands out among others is the one who takes the time to carefully consider matters and formulate policies from a thoughtful perspective. That's what NETSOL did.

Sometimes I also feign anger when necessary. But this happens very rarely. And only when the inevitable happens.

Lying and cheating are habits that can never be tolerated. Getting angry with such workers is a waste of time. You must have heard the saying, one rotten egg spoils the entire bunch. Get rid of anyone whose character is dubious, otherwise their presence will have a negative impact on the rest of the company. It is the job of a good administrator to throw this rotten egg out of the basket immediately.

If you ever make a mistake, correct it and use it as a lesson for the future. This is the only way a person and a company can move forward. However, if a worker makes the same mistake again and again, you must put your company's interests first and let that person go.

At NETSOL, we have strict rules in place against any kind of harassment. We prioritize the safety and well-being of our workers. If such a complaint is reported, our HR team takes immediate action. Without revealing names or publicly defaming anyone, the person responsible for the incident is fired. Our aim is to resolve the problem, not publicize it.

Another policy we have is that if a staff member wishes to go on leave, they will not be bothered with work-related matters. Furthermore, if anyone leaves NETSOL but decides to come back, we will welcome them with an open heart. We have had employees who had to leave the company out of necessity, but returned laughing as if an old family member had finally returned home. Such members are never the brunt of taunts or grudges.

Safeguarding human rights is of utmost importance to our company, and it is considered a top priority. I believe this concern for individuals is missing in most workplaces in Pakistan.

Fostering a holistic environment is essential. A company, as a whole, thrives when its individual components are working well. Every aspect is

important, from marketing to advertising, to work environment and employee performance. Together, these pieces form a perfect puzzle.

One more rule I believe strongly in is appreciating your team instead of taking credit for success. Wherever you sit, be sure to appreciate every single person who helped you get there. This works both ways – do not be too quick to blame them if there is failure. Accept your own responsibility. If you do this even once, your team will be ready to do everything for you in the future.

Winning the loyalty of your employees is very important. It requires an open heart. Showing them genuine regard and appreciation will win you their good favour. Rewards, through bonuses or certificates, should be offered for outstanding performance. I promise you, your team will feel inspired to keep working hard and making you proud.

My rule in recruiting new staff is that I never give too much importance to degrees and certificates, but only talk about skills. I know how someone can help my company excel. If they can work well, I am satisfied. Their marks in college take a back seat. In the practical world, talent, skills and potential matter more than being academically gifted. As a leader, always ask yourself: I am giving this person my money, what can they give me in return? Make sure the candidate is worth your investment.

Our government institutions do not perform well because the priority is given to degrees and passing exams, rather than skills that can be used. Even the most competent and brilliant officer is unable to perform well in the department in which they are selected. This is because there is a mismatch of the requirements of the job and the talent the candidate brings to the table. When officers are unable to demonstrate results,

they are transferred from one department to the other, unable to stay in one place for too long.

You will never be able to innovate unless you have in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. How is it possible for you to transform a neighbourhood, if you have no idea of its address in the first place? Without proper knowledge, you will always be dependent on others to succeed, farming only as much as the environment allows you.

Apart from this, whether it is in social life or the business world, we have a culture of hustle. People flock towards whoever is successful. Parents tend to hold their children back to a large extent, blinded by the fervour of turning them into doctors or engineers. This is despite the fact that students with costly degrees are now struggling with unemployment.

Even our farmer is a victim of herd behaviour. In such cases, when they collectively plant a crop and its prices subsequently decline, they are left disheartened, holding their heads in their hands.

Almost every other person within Lahore wants to enter the food business. Any street corner is full of restaurants and food courts. Competition is high, but there is also opportunity. If young people can innovate and market their fresh products, they can become successful.

At NETSOL, we have employees who have been at the company for over a decade. At the same time, we have fresh graduates, who are aware of innovations in IT and able to bring cutting-edge skills to the table. Both learn from each other. The old have no fear of the newcomers; they are not worried that their place will be taken. They use this talent to help them run new-age software. Those who are new are excited to learn from the wisdom of the old. Through this collective action, the company performs well.

My advice is: do what makes you happy. Dedicate your life to a job that resonates with your heart and soul. There can be no progress without passion. If there is no interest in the work you do, it will be nothing but a waste of time. In addition to your own personal and professional loss, you will negatively impact the company by being a half-hearted employee. The ones who truly uplift an organization are always those who are dedicated and derive joy from their work, rather than experiencing it as a form of torment.

NETSOL and the Online World

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the world has experienced a rapid transformation into a technology-driven realm. Virtually everything is now accessible online. The rise of social media has given birth to a new virtual society that encompasses individuals of all ages, from children to the elderly.

In this society, business professionals have embraced the digital landscape, establishing their presence on online platforms. Why should they stay behind? The realm of online shopping has flourished, eradicating geographical barriers between buyers and sellers. With just a single click from the comfort of home, one can order items from any corner of the world. The current generation has witnessed this remarkable shift, although the technology world has been pioneering such advancements for quite some time.

We established the NETSOL office in Pakistan, but our customers are based all over the world. Sitting here, in the comfort of our homeland, we build and sell software. The countries we sell our work to trust us and keep coming back to us with their business.

The advantage of this system is that expenses are incurred in Pakistani rupees and profits are earned in dollars. At the price of software, there is no other business in Pakistan that can give such a profit. People are making billions of rupees all over the world with the software we have made. Our software is integrated with both the lease and finance markets, allowing people to work with it.

Almost everything in Pakistan is imported from China. This remains the case for the rest of the world as well, with China becoming the primary supplier for several economies across the globe. However, you will be surprised to know that even China buys software from Pakistan. NETSOL has a strong and established presence in China, having built strong partnerships over several years. This once again proves that Pakistanis are at par with global competitors when it comes to technology.

An Office Boy's Tale

Mubashir Khan, one of NETSOL's most beloved office boys, reflects on his time at the company.

"The story of how I became a part of NETSOL is very interesting. I came for an interview with Shahid Mukhtar in 1996. As I sat there, responding to Shahid's initial questions about my background, Salim entered the room. He asked his colleague to leave, saying he would interview me personally.

Salim sat in front of me, holding a pen and asked me about my family. He wanted to know what my children were doing – were they studying?

Were they working? Eventually, he asked me what my remuneration should be. I humbly responded, “Whatever you find appropriate”.

He asked me again, “Son, tell me how much salary you will take.”

I was previously making less than half this amount as an office boy at a travel agent’s company. I thought to myself – this is now or never. I made a request for Rs 28,000.

Without any further questions, Salim signed some papers in front of me.

I worked at Salim’s office boy for six months. I looked after his things, arranged his paperwork and tried to make his life as comfortable as possible.

I would be lying if I said I did not make major mistakes. I remember there was another employee, Madam Anjum Khan, who owned an FX Suzuki. One day, I was tasked with the responsibility of getting her car’s battery changed. In my efforts to be efficient, I took the car key without telling anyone.

Initially I drove well, but on the way back, I lost control of the steering wheel. The car rammed straight into a shop, and to make it even worse, hit a police officer’s car parked next to a nearby electric pole.

People started gathering around. I was absolutely petrified. I thought my life was over.

I called the office and spoke to Faisal Mirza, who was in charge of administrative affairs at the time. Within minutes, Salim and Shahid were at the scene. They handled the entire situation. I was asked to return to the office and wait for them there.

I was confident that this would be my last day at NETSOL. Eventually, Salim and Shahid returned, the latter furious. Shahid was of the opinion that I should be held financially responsible for all damages incurred. My heart sank – how would I possibly arrange this much money? To my utter shock, Salim calmed him down, telling me he had forgiven me and I would not have to pay for anything.

By some miracle, even if they forgave me, I was sure my salary would be cut. A few days later, it was Eid. Not only was my salary full, I was also given holidays to celebrate the occasion.

I came back to office after three days and Salim met me as if nothing had happened. I have never met anyone as compassionate or kind as him.

Later on in life, I became disabled after an accident. Shahid used to visit me. Even though I could not work during that time, NETSOL continued to pay my salary.

After recovering, I returned to the office. Salim welcomed me back. Touched by his benevolence, I broke down into tears. I do not know how I would have survived that time in my life if he had not been there as my guardian angel. Salim handed me a box of tissues and my joining letter as a desk-based employee, asking me to focus on the future and get myself back on my feet.

I am proud to be a part of NETSOL to this day.

My tenure as an office boy was very short, but what is unbelievable to me is that whenever anyone in the company sees me, I am still remembered by my name.”

“Consistency, learning, passion, and ethical leadership are key factors in the journey of success.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 11

Blueprint for Achieving Success

Let's be clear: there is no single formula for success.

What we do have, though, are the life stories of successful people.

I have spent a lifetime in my field. I consider it valuable to channel my achievements into learning lessons for my readers in the hope that my journey might teach you something.

It is important to embrace the contradictions that make up life. To understand how to be successful, you first need to know the factors that cause failure. The lives of people who have 'made it' in this world as well as those who were unable to reach their goals are the perfect reference points for this exercise.

First and foremost, I believe consistency has played a huge role in NETSOL's success. Standing by one's dream against all odds is not easy. It requires a special kind of person – someone who is extremely sincere, determined and passionate about making it to the end.

I promise you, if your efforts are **constant, sincere and grounded by a faith in God**, you will succeed. A combination of these factors helped NETSOL get to this point.

During our entire journey, we tried to map out our plans as best as we could, leaving the rest on Allah. We never took anything for granted. We emphasized **consistent learning** as we moved from project to project, ensuring we made each customer our teacher. If we made a mistake, we

made sure to take time out and focus on why it happened and how to avoid it in the future. Similarly, if something worked, we did not let success get to our head, instead choosing to evaluate how we could improve even more in the future.

Like I said before, in the beginning, the goal should never be making money. Spending time and effort to earn a name and reputation in the market is a far greater endeavour. I advise you all to use this crucial juncture to **build relationships and focus on winning trust**. By doing this, we got so much work once we took off that we did not even have time to scratch our heads. Always remember that success requires passion and motivation, not money.

Do not neglect the importance of a **good workplace environment**. The role of leadership is critical in making this environment thrive and creating an atmosphere of positive competition. If the leader pays attention to the office environment as well as the finances, the efficiency of the work increases. As CEO of NETSOL, I have never ignored these key aspects of success.

It is inherent in human nature to strive for success in all aspects of life, dedicating our entire existence to its pursuit. The beauty lies in the fact that regardless of whether we achieve triumph or face setbacks, life bestows upon us invaluable insights.

Success grants us the teachings derived from failure as well as the rewards of wealth, fame, and honour. The crucial factor in the journey of success and failure lies in the selection of our path, which ultimately determines our upward or downward trajectory. Certain individuals possess the ability to envision their dreams vividly and skilfully decipher them into reality.

According to a Chinese proverb, he who does not have a smile on his face and good morals should not open a shop. A person with a **positive character and demeanour** tends to attract more favourable opportunities. This is because politeness is a critical factor to achieve success.

To thrive in business, it is crucial to **dedicate oneself to a single product or item**. By effectively marketing one item, success can naturally extend to other endeavours. Attempting to juggle multiple products simultaneously often leads to a loss of focus, as developing each one requires significant attention. It is important to recognize that we do not need to strive to master every skill or art form.

So, what is the difference between a dreamer and a survivor? What is the main difference between people who go to the gym versus those who sit around complaining about not being active? The decision to take action or remain stagnant depends on the **role models** we hold dear in our lives.

If our role models are those who evade challenges, constantly change their paths, complain, avoid taking responsibility, and make excuses, then we, too, are likely to adopt a similar approach and run away from adversity. Such people will seek comfort and take the easy route to escape, then advise others that there is no point in running after their dreams.

In the beginning, there were several turning points in NETSOL's history that made me think, "What is happening and why is it happening to me?" There was frustration, but I did not let it overwhelm me.

Financial problems drowned us, but we fought them. Crises embraced us but we faced them head on. What was driving us, during this entire struggle, was the dream of our destination.

If your role models are those who break the shell of difficulties and forge ahead, undeterred by storms, resilient in the face of hardships, overcoming obstacles and persisting towards their goals, who exhibit unwavering determination despite failures, and who remain steadfast in the face of disappointments, then you too shall undoubtedly remain resolute, unwavering, and stand tall.

The Lion of God, Hazrat Ali Ibn Abi Talib, was ill on the occasion of the Battle of Khyber. He was suffering from conjunctivitis when he was made the leader of the army by the Holy Prophet (PBUH). When this responsibility was entrusted upon him, he stood firm and resolute. Despite his illness, he refused to feel daunted by the terrible stories of his enemy Marhab's strength, war equipment and dominance. He faced the challenge head on, single-handedly pushing the Muslim army forward for days on end. As a result of his exemplary leadership and tactical brilliance, Marhab was captured at Khyber Fort and the Muslims won the war.

History tells us that four such seemingly impregnable forts were also conquered by Hazrat Ali, and the people besieged in the remaining forts surrendered themselves due to fear of him.

As one of Islam's most esteemed warriors, stories of Hazrat Ali's unmatched valour continue to serve as a beacon of inspiration. Even today, Pakistan's highest military award, Nishan-e-Haider, is named after him, meant to honour brave soldiers who fight and die in the Pakistan Army.

Humans will be divided into two tribes for eternity: those who persist and those who run away. Nature is always kind to someone who is consistent and hardworking. Many people do not succeed because they lack **perseverance**. A person who perseveres not only demonstrates their faith in the notion that their hard work will not be in vain but also anticipates receiving significant rewards in due course. This belief stems from the understanding that nature has a way of acknowledging and honouring diligent efforts.

Thomas Stanley, through extensive research encompassing numerous millionaires, made a fascinating discovery regarding the key element contributing to their success: **honesty**.

Stanley's meticulous examination of these affluent individuals revealed that their commitment to integrity played a pivotal role in their attainment of wealth and prosperity. Such successful people exemplified ethical conduct, operating with honesty in their business dealings and personal interactions. Such unwavering morality not only fostered trust and credibility but also facilitated long-term relationships and opportunities.

Many individuals aspire to be rich and successful, yet few consider the importance of attaining a respected standing within society. It is often overlooked that pursuing a reputable position can open up greater avenues for advancement. This is due to the fact that recognition and honour are consistently bestowed upon those who possess the necessary qualifications and virtues.

When one dedicates themselves to striving for merit and excellence, the rewards of success naturally follow. By diligently working towards deserving recognition, one finds themselves at the receiving end of

triumph. It becomes apparent that personal accomplishments encompass more than mere financial gains – respect and esteem become integral components of one's earnings.

It is vital to recognize that wealth alone does not encompass the entirety of one's earnings. **Respect** holds significant value, contributing to an individual's overall sense of achievement. Therefore, when aiming for success, it is essential to consider not only financial gains but also the attainment of respect and a distinguished reputation within society.

A **well-functioning and reliable team** plays a huge role in the success or failure of the business. Any organization thrives when team members consider it their own organization. A one-man show always fails. The bigger the business, the more important it is to have a reliable team running like clockwork.

To create such a team, you need a person in charge who possesses leadership ability. A good team leader identifies talented people and places them where they can deliver the best results. People forget the price they pay, but always remember the quality of your product. So, they never compromise on the quality of their products. Quality does not happen overnight, but it takes many years of hard work and sacrifices.

Is Higher Education Necessary for Business?

Being a successful entrepreneur **does not require any special degree**, but a recipe to help you find out whether your investment in any project or business will be profitable or not.

I would argue that commitment is more important than the degree one holds or the background the person belongs to. My qualifications were in another field, but once I started getting interested in computer

software and realizing the potential in this sector, I decided to embrace myself in the field completely.

You will find good business ideas everywhere, but **talented people who execute those ideas** are one in a million. Before estimating any business, I look at the boss and the team. It is important for me to know whether they are serious about the business or not.

The biggest challenge in business is taking investors from zero to billions and being successful. It is necessary to **devote complete time to the business** and have a dedicated style of working.

Great entrepreneurs **find solutions** to all problems, not pay others to solve them. A good entrepreneur does not rest until challenges are mitigated.

Technology is critical to success. The best approach is to assign one person entirely to all technology-related tasks for fast and efficient resolution of any problems that may arise.

At NETSOL, I added new blood to keep pace with the times. Old employees who were with me from day one maintain senior positions. I never discount the incredible value they bring to the table. Till date, they remain honest, sincere and committed. However, to make sure the company remained at par with changing times, I wanted to **recruit people who had critical knowledge of new technology**. The HR Department of NETSOL handled this task with full responsibility and recruited excellent candidates who were able to make sure we remained relevant and in touch with the fast-paced digital world.

Stagnant organizations tend to lag far behind in the race to compete. It usually happens that if there are pre-computer-age employees working

in an organization, they become insecure about the newcomers. They think that they will take their place. However, I did not allow such an environment to be created in NETSOL. New people who came in and had know-how of modern technology synthesized their knowledge with the experience of old colleagues. Thus, the company got the best of both worlds.

In order to maintain pace with the ever-changing trends, it is imperative for a company to make timely decisions. India has managed to surpass us in technology due to its ability to seize opportune moments and make crucial choices. Similarly, NETSOL outshined other companies in Pakistan by consistently making timely decisions to enhance its operations.

In the West, there is no involvement of religious ethics in business. The ethics that are defined as business ethics also have a concern for the profit of the firm or the capitalist. However, in Islam, **business is a part of religion**. This is why a reward is promised for halal means of livelihood.

In my approach to strategizing, I consistently evaluate the underlying causes that shape both the internal and external environment. This analysis enables me to develop comprehensive strategies for my organization, business units, and other departments. I remain mindful of the rights and responsibilities bestowed upon me by Allah. This recognition extends to the rights of the stakeholders involved, including fellow businesspersons, employees, suppliers, and customers. As a result, my strategy diverges from that of contemporary firms, as it cannot be founded upon animosity or ill intentions.

Our trade is not isolated from our religion; rather, it is an integral component of our faith. As a significant portion of our daily lives is devoted to seeking halal means of sustenance, this facet of our existence

holds immense importance. By embracing the ethical principles and teachings derived from our Prophetic tradition and Islamic values, we can elevate our trade to a realm of profound spiritual significance.

NETSOL adhered to these golden principles, incorporating them into every aspect of its operations. Both legal obligations and ethical considerations were meticulously observed, leaving no room for oversight. Furthermore, the company placed great emphasis on fostering a harmonious work environment that not only prioritized entrepreneurial endeavours but also nurtured human interactions. It was through this holistic approach that NETSOL achieved remarkable progress and growth.

“My entrepreneurial drive comes from my father, who navigated countless challenges with sacrifices, determination, and unwavering courage. From him, I learned the importance of perseverance, honesty, and integrity in business.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 12

Business Ethics and NETSOL's Policy

I inherited the passion for doing business from my father.

Against all odds, my father spent his prime years building a business. To ensure his success, he was never afraid to make sacrifices. He moved to Lahore with his family, even when he was pressed for resources. He faced the battle for survival head on, embracing the challenges life threw his way without backing down.

He taught me never to give up and to practice honesty and integrity in all dealings. In my entire life, I have rarely seen a person as hardworking or brave as him.

My father never neglected the education of his children. He provided us with the necessary resources to pursue higher education. He emphasized the importance of completing our studies and receiving professional training. Till date, I feel this was his greatest gift to my brothers and me.

Be it social life or business, I take my father's life as a beacon, remembering his words and the lessons he taught me. I feel the character of a human being becomes his identity in every aspect of life. It is this character that becomes the foundation of the position one builds and occupies in society.

Regrettably, in Pakistan, many people firmly believe that some degree of manipulation is an inevitable part of business. This slavish ideology and

mindset are deeply concerning. While manipulation may yield short-term benefits, it cannot establish a sustainable business enterprise in the long run. The necessity and significance of ethics remain constant from the inception of a business to its global expansion. Even if you have established a large company, adhering to ethical practices is crucial. Honouring business contracts, timely delivery of products, and refusing to compromise on product quality all fall within the realm of ethics. These principles must be upheld at all times. Failing to do so and compromising on quality for the sake of earning a few extra bucks will deter future business opportunities with others.

Since the very beginning, NETSOL has never compromised on quality. We made sure this remained true even as we battled one financial crisis after another. This is the main reason for its success.

Starting a business in Pakistan requires official paperwork. A special kind of patience is required to navigate through existing procedures. These complications sometimes turn away investors or even those who know the art of untangling red tape. However, these challenges, to some extent, are a part of the process. They pale in comparison to the larger task of building and sustaining a business in the long term.

While I strongly believe in the importance of transparency at every level, it is worth noting that improvements are underway. The government is actively providing facilities to investors and has even introduced the provision of Pakistani citizenship for those who invest their funds. Additionally, if a government employee visits your workplace, such as an electricity lineman resolving an issue, offering him tea or covering his travel expenses is considered a gesture of goodwill rather than bribery or corruption. Such practices are distinct from acts of bribery. By

implementing a system of rewards and penalties, bribery can be eradicated.

I have adopted this approach in my own business, where I incentivize my team for exceptional performance. I provide them with opportunities for entertainment. This motivates them and increases overall work efficiency. The power of money spent on incentives is greater than that of bribes.

Foreign companies think twice before engaging in contracts with Pakistani counterparts due to our reputation. They contemplate whether the Pakistani companies possess the necessary capabilities to consistently fulfil their commitments.

In our case, our international investors have access to our data, enabling them to evaluate our past projects and our potential based on our track record. When a commitment to uncompromising quality is upheld, securing work becomes more manageable.

I have personally witnessed business interactions across various nations, attending meetings and even traveling through desert regions. The wealth of knowledge I gained from these travels is my asset.

In light of these experiences, I can say that the resources that Pakistan has are hardly available to any other country. Despite being blessed with abundant natural resources, our country unfortunately fails to fully capitalize on them. We have yet to effectively translate these resources into tangible benefits for our people, particularly in terms of earning foreign exchange through exports. Without a significant boost in exports, the process of revitalizing the nation will be arduous. This reality is well understood by the business community, as they grasp the crucial role

exports play in economic growth. It is imperative for the leadership to also recognize this fact.

In today's interconnected world, where information travels swiftly, one's reputation holds unprecedented importance. Therefore, it has become unavoidable for the business community to prioritize and uphold business ethics, given the significance of maintaining a positive image.

The Importance of Trust

Khurram Iqbal, a business analyst at NETSOL, shares his reflections on what he considers to be Salim Ghauri's finest quality.

"The best thing about Salim is that he trusts his team. At my last job before NETSOL, I noticed if there was ever a problem, everyone tried to deflect responsibility of the mistake from their own head to someone else. This culture made me a fanatic – I was always too focused on the way it should be. It inhibited my creativity and performance.

NETSOL is a completely different space. Salim gives enough confidence to the staff that if something goes wrong, he has no doubt we will learn from the experience and not repeat the mistake. I have personally benefitted so much for this attitude of his.

Salim never gets angry – he has a smile on his face when he talks to you. This makes difficult conversations easy to get through. I feel confident and heard whenever I have a chat with him. More than that, Salim is an extremely successful person whose life offers so many lessons for young people. He shares pearls of wisdom in every conversation and interaction, and this is an invaluable gift for anyone in his company.

My biggest learning from the leadership of Salim is that one should never expect a definite result. No two situations are alike. One should always

try to do their best. At the same time, being accepting of human weaknesses and inevitable mistakes we all make is important.”

Trust Inspires Loyalty

Khurram Iqbal adds,

“I have received job offers from a couple of companies in the past few years. I have never once been tempted to leave NETSOL. Irrespective of how much I am making here, what matters most to me is the trust of my superiors. It makes me feel significant and respected. In my regular talks with my friends, I realize this is rare in a workplace. I would never give this up for anything.”

A Story of Departure and Return

Faisal Rasheed Bhatti, an HR professional at NETSOL for four years, shares his tale.

“During the early stages of NETSOL, it was a company familiar to only to a few people. My peers were working at renowned multinationals at the time, and the attraction of being associated with a reputable and well-known organization swayed me. I decided to leave NETSOL to pursue greener pastures – at least that is what I thought I was doing. When Salim came to know, he tried to stop me, but I paid no heed to his wise words. I was adamant to try my luck elsewhere.

It took one step away from home for me to realize exactly what I had been too blind to appreciate at NETSOL. Hesitantly, I told Salim I wanted to come back. To my utter shock, he welcomed me. He met me with pleasure, showing no sign of displeasure or animosity.

Salim gives value to working individuals. Only the jeweller can recognize and harness the diamond. My professional life transformed after meeting him.

I learned that whatever you do, you must have a purpose in mind. Be sure to evaluate the benefits of any action you take or decision you make.

Salim always emphasized the importance of tolerance, especially when it felt like life was coming to you from all sides. Slowly, this became a part of my personality, and I am so grateful it did.”

Forgiveness for Mistakes

Faisal Rasheed Bhatti adds,

“On a daily basis, hundreds of things would happen that could cause any ordinary person to be annoyed or irritated. Salim’s attitude was different. When dealing with a staff member who made a mistake, Salim never lost his cool. He guided the person step-by-step, helping them recognize and understand the mistake that was committed in the hope of mitigating any such risks in the future.

At any company, be default, whoever is at fault should be punished, and if the mistake is grave enough, then fired. However, Salim takes a different perspective, emphasizing the importance of understanding the reasons behind mistakes and how they occurred. Rather than focusing solely on reprimanding team members, he advocates for training and development opportunities. This unconventional thinking aims to empower individuals to become valuable contributors to society, rather than dismissing them outright. It is rare to find a company that genuinely values its workforce in today's business landscape, where the trend often leans towards terminating employees for minor errors, disregarding

business ethics. Salim, however, stands apart from the rest, serving as an exemplary institution.

I learned tolerance from Salim Ghauri. He taught me to recognize that everything in life has two sides. At any point, you can go to Salim and lodge a complaint. Rather than publicly demeaning someone, he will speak directly to the person in question.

When judging the merit of a candidate, Salim looks directly into one's eyes, providing a mere thirty seconds to make a lasting impression. If you are unable to be memorable, you will not benefit from a single minute more than he has allocated for you. Based on my observations, all the decisions made by Salim have proven to be correct.

In my opinion, Salim Ghauri is a very deep person. You need to look very deeply to understand the enigma he is.”

Leading with Confidence and Calmness

Shakil Khalid, a business analyst at NETSOL, shares his thoughts on working with Salim Ghauri.

“Salim Ghauri’s confidence is the impactful part of his personality. He does not panic while making a decision. No crisis can shake his faith.

In addition to clients, Salim takes great care of the comfort of his employees. He knows that scolding an employee for a mistake can negatively impact our confidence and performance. He never humiliates anyone. Rather, he endures calmly and teaches others to learn from their mistakes. He encourages his team to work harder and avoid future losses. He empowers us with the guidance we need to thrive.

Under his leadership, I see myself becoming a better professional everyday. This is why I have never left NETSOL. I have no interest in

leaving the country either. I believe living in Pakistan, with one's family and earning money with respect is a great privilege. Most of the people working with Salim have been working with him for decades because of the ideal environment he has provided to his employees."

Being Mindful of One's Circumstances

Shakil Khalid adds,

"I remember when NETSOL's contract with Mercedes was about to be signed. The team was going to Singapore for this deal – it was an exceptional moment for the company. I had to be there to see the project reach its end.

However, my wife was extremely unwell and admitted to the hospital. I did not know what to do.

I discussed the matter with Salim. Without thinking twice, he granted me permission to stay home and be with my family. He told me they needed me more.

He understood my circumstances and did not pressure me to travel, even though this meant I would not be available for one of the company's biggest moments. I remain forever indebted to him for his care and concern."

Muhammad Siddique, who started his career at NETSOL as an office boy, shares his experience.

"When my children were of school going age, Salim told me I needed to send them to quality educational institutions to secure a bright future for them. I told him I could not afford this privilege. Without a second thought, he told me he would bear all the expenses.

Today, both my daughters are studying in an American school, while my son is studying in another prime institution. NETSOL takes care of each month's fees like clockwork. As a father, I cannot even describe the feeling of knowing my children are on a path to making a name for themselves in the world.

This is not the only example of Salim Ghauri's kindness and empathy towards me. At my time at NESTOL, I have made many mistakes. Once I went back home to my village over the weekend, forgetting that I had the keys to the office in my possession. On Monday, all transport options were shut down to a city-wide protest. When employees reached the office, they found it locked and were outraged.

Everyone blamed me in front of Salim and asked him to fire me. He asked me why I was unable to make it to work and forgave me after hearing my side of the story. How can a person forget such examples of awe-inspiring compassion?"

“Leadership is a continuous learning process, marked by accountability, resilience, and the ability to inspire loyalty, all while prioritizing people over positions.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 13

The Importance of Leadership in Business

I never claim to be a successful businessman. My achievement is building a successful organization.

I encourage you to visit the NETSOL office and ask my employees what kind of a boss I am. While the employees currently working there might be influenced by their ongoing relationship with me, it would be beneficial to gather bias-free insights from former members who have since moved on from NETSOL.

The stories shared by NETSOL’s past and present team members in this book paint a picture of me as a leader. I learn something about leadership every single day. However, what has not changed in my multiple years of doing business is my desire to lead from the front, embodying the example I want my employees to emulate.

The true test of any leader is a crisis. I have always faced every challenge, big or small, head on. I have taught my employees to do the same – never hide behind anyone’s back, but rather, face the storm and walk away from it stronger.

Every single project in a business is important. A leader is someone who takes accountability, especially when things go south. It is far too easy to take credit on a job well done, but much harder to face the music if there is a fear of loss or an unhappy customer. In tough circumstances, I never

trickled down responsibility or blamed others on my team, but rather accepted the onus headfirst.

A good leader must become a shield for their team. This is because in times of crisis, your team will be down. It is your responsibility to pick them up, rally them and help them face the next challenge.

If things go wrong, always listen to the customer, even if their attitude is difficult to tolerate. A leader must swallow his or her pride and accept responsibility, going by the age-old motto of the customer always being right.

Without letting ego get in the way, stay silent. It does not mean that you are guilty. Often, customers may direct their anger towards you, blaming you for their own shortcomings. However, it is essential not to retaliate. Be prepared to accept their abuse and harsh demeanour. Allow them to express their grievances, and when they calm down, respond respectfully without engaging in a blame game.

Mastering this skill is not as effortless as it may appear, yet it is a vital art to acquire. Swiftly rebuking someone who has erred only serves to provoke them further. In team meetings, I also advise my team to let the customer express their concerns, even if they do so inappropriately.

I remember when a client in Australia falsely accused us of something we had not done. Rather than fighting back, we stayed silent and waited for the truth to come out. Meanwhile, the accuser was fired from his company on corruption charges. When we got our six hundred thousand dollars back, it was the sweetest fruit of patience we had ever tasted.

I believe a leader is someone who is able to inspire his or her team to stand by them in difficult times, and winning this loyalty is the biggest

challenge. Otherwise, in times of crisis, you will stand alone, with no one to rely on. History is witness to the fact that kings who did not have the loyalty of their subordinates lost their power.

The true test of leadership is revealed in either of two situations: one is when your company wins a homerun, and the other is when your company faces a big loss.

Boasting in the face of success does not make for a respectable leader. Similarly, being down or angry and lowering the morale of others in the case of loss, is another negative trait. A leader is above the metrics of success or loss.

A team leader must never be hypocritical, neither praising nor criticizing team members unfairly. A system of punishment and reward must be established that works. Adopt forgiveness and you will win loyalty.

The business world is round. An employee who leaves a company may very likely return. In such a situation, a petty leader might mock them or hurt their self-esteem. A good leader, however, understands a person's circumstances.

At NETSOL, if an employee ever wants to leave, it is not prohibited. Rather, a farewell is organized to part ways in a positive way. The employee is always told the doors of the company are open for him or her.

Closed-mindedness and triviality hinder one's ability to achieve greatness. Every individual deserves the freedom to live their life on their own terms, and exceptional leaders uphold this right. When someone decides to work remotely, their primary objective is typically to earn money. If another opportunity offers them greater financial rewards

than what you can provide, it is morally sound to either match the offer or allow them to pursue it. Normalizing this mindset is crucial for our culture.

My advice to new leaders, especially CEOs, is to keep in mind that success does not occur overnight. Lower your expectations and increase your effort. Provide your company with the time and resources it needs to thrive. Understand the needs of your employees – assign positions that are in line with their talent and interest. Keep job titles catchy. Make sure the work they do is psychologically stimulating, packed with learning. Take care of your team, and your own health too.

There are two types of leaders. One is born with the mentioned qualities, and the other cultivates and develops these skills over time. I consider myself a combination of both.

I grew up witnessing my father, an exceptional leader, interact with his employees. I attribute some of my skills to my genes, and others to the lessons I learned observing him in his element.

My father had his own business, albeit a small one. He had no prior leadership experience but learned how to survive and thrive in society. During difficult times, he did not wallow in self-pity, but kept his sight set on the future. From him, I learned the importance of strength, observation, patience, and a desire to move forward – qualities I consider synonymous with leadership.

Good leaders are on a consistent path of learning. They love to engage with literature relevant to their field, be it books or literature. One of my all-time favourite movies is called 'Invictus' – it is the story of how Nelson Mandela, the newly elected President of South Africa, uses the Rugby World Cup as a means to unite a racially divided nation. The movie

depicts two excellent models of leadership – one of President Mandela himself, and the other of Francois Pienaar, the captain of the rugby team. Both men are able to use their skills to achieve the impossible, transcending racial barriers and promoting national unity. This is an excellent movie, and a highly recommended watch, for anyone interested in seeing powerful leadership in action.

The Story of Mercedes-Benz

Winning this project was the culmination of a nearly two-decade long journey.

NETSOL signed a ground-breaking contract with Mercedes-Benz in December 2015 after working with them since 1996 – the very first year we had begun our operations.

In these 19 years, we had provided our services so consistently and efficiently that the client kept increasing our portfolio. Starting with one country, we eventually provided our services to them in 10 different countries.

In 2014, the client decided to come up with new software. Earlier, they were running their business on an old software, which was at risk of becoming outdated with the growing scale and scope of operations and speed of technological advances across the world.

NETSOL already knew that change was coming, so we started building a new system in anticipation of this contract. We were ready for a change.

Our early action helped us deliver a completely new system to the client by 2015. Based on this performance, Mercedes-Benz signed a new contract with us, adding two more countries to the list of 10 areas where NETSOL was already catering to the client.

Project Implementation

To implement the new software, I created a new team.

I knew this team required the best of both worlds. I selected employees who had been working on Mercedes-Benz's previous software, as well as completely fresh employees who were blank slates.

At the same time, we knew the old software was still in use by other customers. Hence, we made sure employees familiar with the system were available at the company.

No matter how old a customer is, you have to deliver quality services to them every day. Even if a client has been giving you their business for 20 years, never take it for granted or assume they will not look for a new service provider the moment you slip up.

Be aware that CEOs and senior management changes within companies. I remember one such company, where the team that had assigned the contract to me eventually left, replaced by completely new faces who had different standards. I understood what they wanted and adapted the quality of the product to cater to their specific needs.

Our industry is a highly technical one, and our software forms the basis of a client's entire business. A technical glitch in the delivery of our system, even for a single moment, can result in losses amounting to billions of dollars for our customers.

Our system is the basis upon which the client signs their contracts and carries out financial transactions. Ensuring our customers' satisfaction and upholding quality standards is a constant challenge for us – one we are mindful of and prioritize at all times.

Quality of Work

There is a reason Mercedes-Benz is the best in the business. The team behind the name is smart, rational and resourceful.

When Mercedes-Benz wanted to change their system in 2014, they did not put all their eggs in one basket. Considering that the project was worth well over a 100 million dollars, it would have been imprudent for them to have done so.

Any good company has proper procedures in place for procurement of services. Despite working with us for years, Mercedes-Benz asked themselves, what if there is a company better than NETSOL in the market?

They prepared a Request for Proposal and took it to the market, assessing at least five companies for the job. This included many of our major global competitors.

However, they still put their faith in us at the end of the day. They could trust the consistency of our services and knew we were unmatched in terms of quality.

Even the system they were looking to replace was working so well, that they did not want to consider starting afresh with another vendor when the stakes were this high. Why break something that was not broken?

This is how they came to us with papers to sign in 2015.

NETSOL's Commitment

NETSOL only makes promises it can actually deliver.

Before committing to a deadline, we make sure an appropriate design is in place to deliver the services within the set timeline.

Starting with the composition of the team responsible for executing the entire task, as a leader, I decide who to place where. I ensure the project can be executed not just on time, but ahead of time, to accommodate any changes the client might want.

The software we provide is highly technical in nature and requires proper expertise. Often, it takes about two years to implement a new system. Even then, the customer hires new people to test the system to ensure the software is compatible with the business.

NETSOL is one of the top companies in the world specializing in such software. We operate our own training center where we hire and train individuals ourselves.

Building our employees' skills such that our company is able to deliver top-tier services and meet its commitments is something we always prioritize at NETSOL.

Rewarding Excellence

NETSOL's work is predominantly international.

Pakistan is not yet ready for the technological advances being made across the world.

In a world where China is willing to invest up to 40 million dollars on software projects, we principally decided to not offer our solution to Pakistani companies at a lower value. This was simply because we were not willing to cater a large number of customers at a given time. Whenever we had customers interested in our work, we politely declined their offers.

When the company can only deliver four systems a year, the compensation must be worth the efforts that are put in. Otherwise, our team will not be motivated to deliver quality.

As a company, we have recruited top talent from both Pakistan and abroad. Domestically, we offer salaries higher than those in the banking sector to ensure our employees are fairly compensated for the quality of services NETSOL expects.

Not a Company, but an Institution

You have two options: establishing a company or founding an institution. While both can generate income, a company primarily focuses on making money without necessarily leaving behind a lasting legacy.

In Pakistan, there are only 15 to 20 names that have been passed down through generations, which seems inadequate considering the population of 220 million. It is unfortunate that many business owners in Pakistan tend to handle everything themselves, which is a tragic situation. To overcome this, they should empower and collaborate with the best individuals, allowing them to contribute and ensure continuity.

Personally, I am currently delivering a leadership lecture to my team at the training center. By creating an institution rather than just a company, I aim to foster an environment where others can work and carry on even after me.

The Value of Skilled Workers

Once, someone asked me what the most complicated element of my work was, and my answer was simple: my workforce.

My work depends entirely on people. I am surrounded by exceptionally talented individuals who possess unique personalities. I wholeheartedly

encourage my team to question and challenge ideas. I appreciate it when my subordinates openly express their disagreements or raise questions, and I empower them to do so. During meetings, I always gather 10 to 12 most senior employees who discuss tasks and brainstorm solutions for problems.

Everyone at NETSOL knows that if someone agrees with me merely for the sake of agreeing with me, they will risk losing my favour. I always acknowledge that I am not the most intelligent person in the room. I expect talented and qualified individuals to bring forth better ideas than mine.

At times, I purposely present my opinion to see who impresses me the most. Those who fail to do so are not invited to subsequent meetings. I value individuals who challenge my ideas and support their own perspectives. I emphasize to my team that they are 100 times smarter than me, which is why I need their expertise to make decisions. I feel genuinely proud when my team proves me wrong based on their own merits, as it signifies my success.

If one does not surround themselves with skilled team members, there will always be a risk of stagnation and an inhibition of growth and innovation. The cases of Kodak and Nokia serve as case studies on complacency. Despite being among the biggest companies globally, Kodak failed to adapt to changing times, overlooking emerging trends and suffering a loss of reputation. Another instance is Nokia, a brand I used for a considerable period. However, in the past eight years, I discontinued using Nokia due to its inability to meet my modern-age requirements.

IT Industry in Pakistan

Pakistan is gradually making strides in the field of IT development. The country is filled with talented individuals, and overall conditions have improved significantly since 2009. With the restoration of peace, companies are thriving, and Pakistan is steadily becoming a part of the IT service provider community.

The IT industry has undergone substantial transformations over the past two decades. The question now is how we can scale this system. It requires the collective courage of the people to step forward and establish institutions rather than just companies.

Fortunately, Pakistan has investors who can inject capital into this industry and engage in profitable business ventures, as the profit margins in the IT sector are quite high. The recent acquisition of daraz.pk by a multinational corporation is a positive development in my view. It serves as an inspiring example that encourages others to create similar companies. With the influx of financial resources from this acquisition, Daraz will be able to establish more companies, contributing to the growth of the ecosystem. We should aim for similar acquisitions, such as Uber's purchase of Careem, as it would further propel Pakistan's progress. Such advancements will boost trade, foster the emergence of new companies, and propel Pakistan forward.

What is The Difference Between a Boss and a Leader?

Someone said very well that there is a distinct difference between sitting next to a boss and sitting next to a leader. When in the presence of a boss, one often realizes their exceptional capabilities and efficiency. This individual exudes importance and leaves a lasting impression. However, when seated next to a leader and engaged in a conversation, one begins to feel a sense of personal capability, potential, and empowerment. A

leader's guidance and motivation instils a belief that much can be accomplished.

Although the terms "leader" and "boss" are sometimes used interchangeably, delving deeper into their meanings reveals significant disparities. Both leaders and bosses hold positions of authority within a company or organization, overseeing a team of individuals. While a boss primarily issues directives, a leader goes beyond that by demonstrating how and why tasks should be done. A leader actively listens to subordinates, encourages their ideas, addresses their problems, and offers constructive criticism. It is essential to recognize and appreciate the distinct roles and implications associated with each term.

The role of a boss is that of a managerial position within an organization. It is a designation given based on seniority or authority, indicating a person who oversees employees, issues orders, and supervises the work of subordinates. The term "boss" primarily signifies someone with a certain level of authority and a team working under them, responsible for directing their efforts towards the growth and well-being of the company or organization. However, these terms assigned by the authority in any company do not necessarily reflect personal characteristics, values, or abilities.

On the other hand, a leader goes beyond the traditional notions of authority and management. A leader possesses the ability to envision improvement and actively guides their followers towards a better future. Leadership is not about dictating or asserting authority; instead, it involves setting an example through one's personality and work. Leaders are dedicated to transforming their vision into reality by placing value on people.

The distinction between a boss and a leader lies in the fact that leadership is not conferred based on authority or seniority alone. A leader emerges through their personal abilities, values, and qualities. They display compassion, empathy, and the ability to connect with others to foster success. A leader possesses an open-minded approach, embracing diverse perspectives. They encourage their followers, welcome their ideas and criticisms with an open heart, and push them to achieve greatness. Leadership is often seen as an inspirational force that comes from God.

Understanding the distinction between a leader and a boss allows us to recognize their respective roles in the workplace. While both leaders and bosses have subordinates and hold a certain level of authority, their characters and approaches differ significantly.

A boss often creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, attempting to exert authority through coercion, which can result in a lack of respect in certain situations. On the other hand, a leader guides and educates their followers, demonstrating how and why work should be done. Leaders lead by example, working alongside their team and motivating them. Being a boss primarily involves giving orders, whereas being a leader involves mentoring and inspiring others. Ultimately, a leader's influence on their subordinates tends to be more effective than that of a boss.

The story of NETSOL is essentially a tale of leadership. As a leader, I take great pride in leading this company, as it has brought prominence to Pakistan. It has shown the world that Pakistanis are capable of such achievements, proving that intellect and talent are not exclusive to any particular race or ethnicity.

When I observed the work of Indians while being in Australia, an idea struck me, which I implemented, and I witnessed my Australian team working in the same manner. This experience reinforced my belief that with a visionary leader, anything is possible in the world.

When a leader sets the right example and provides a conducive environment, the team follows suit, leading to remarkable outcomes. At NETSOL, I have never adopted a traditional boss attitude. I share the burdens of my employees and lend a helping hand in resolving any issues they face. Whenever I come across a team member unexpectedly, I inquire about the well-being of their family. This simple gesture brings them immense happiness and boosts their energy for work. The power of kind words is remarkable, and a good leader knows how to utilize them effectively.

A leader possesses an open mind, welcoming new ideas and embracing constructive criticism. They strive for growth, eagerly explore new concepts, and are unafraid to experiment. This fosters a creative work environment where the entire team feels supported, resulting in increased productivity and better outcomes. In contrast, a boss often believes they already know everything, dismissing new ideas and resisting experimentation. Consequently, the team feels pressured, and neither a creative work environment nor enhanced employee performance can flourish.

At NETSOL, the heads of each department enjoy complete autonomy in making decisions, empowering them to take appropriate actions. We encourage the pursuit of new ideas, even if they fail, as we value the effort put forth. Everyone's opinions are treated with respect, and important decisions are made through consultation. In this manner,

employees run the organization as if it were their own, fostering collective development and growth.

Taking responsibility for failure is a crucial aspect of life. Only individuals with strong resilience possess this skill. In any company or organization, when a team faces failure, it is the leader who should assume responsibility and strive to rectify the situation. The leader must understand that it is their duty to investigate the reasons behind the failure and assess their own actions before evaluating others. They need to recognize that if a project falls short of expectations, it may indicate underlying issues within the workplace culture or system that need to be addressed before embarking on the next endeavour. Conversely, a boss is someone who will overlook such introspection, readily placing blame on others and disregarding the need for systemic or workplace changes.

Another distinguishing quality between a leader and a boss is their awareness and consideration of the personal challenges faced by employees or subordinates. A leader actively monitors and supports individuals who require assistance during difficult phases, displaying genuine empathy and wholehearted support. In contrast, a boss remains oblivious to the personal struggles of their employees, focusing solely on work-related matters.

Throughout history, numerous examples highlight how individuals have altered the course of events through their exemplary leadership skills. Whether in politics or business, those who commit to their guiding principles and exhibit effective leadership often find success within their grasp. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) stands as a prime example of exceptional leadership, establishing a state based on guiding principles that resonated globally. Figures like Quaid-e-Azam and Abraham Lincoln

also exemplify remarkable leadership. In the business realm, countless personalities have steered their companies towards success through their exceptional leadership.

One such inspiring example is Gibran Niaz, a software engineer who worked as a security guard at an American airport. Determined to change his circumstances, Gibran Niaz established a business called Utopia Deals, selling household garments and kitchen items online. Through relentless effort, he transformed his company into one of the top ten online sellers, serving six million customers and generating over \$360 million in revenue. It was the brilliance of his leadership skills that propelled him from being a security guard to owning an outstanding company.

Numerous other instances underscore how leadership skills have facilitated individuals in achieving remarkable success. A leader guides their followers towards a better life, imparting guiding principles that anyone can follow. In contrast, a boss remains trapped within their self-centered mindset, unable to see beyond their own interests. Leaders build institutions, shape nations, and contribute to the global system's functioning.

A leader is akin to a member of a family, while a boss operates mechanically, prioritizing deadlines over the well-being of others. They view work as an end in itself, devoid of compassion or consideration. I remember a joke someone once told me that aptly illustrates this: when an employee informs their boss of multiple injuries, including broken legs, fractured arms, and head trauma, the boss casually suggests coming to the office for a few hours, if not for the entire 9 to 5 day.

A leader shares in the hardships of their team members, recognizing them as fellow human beings rather than mere machines. NETSOL has embraced these principles, leading to exponential growth witnessed by the world—doubling by day and quadrupling by night.

Safeguarding Success

Asif Zafar, Head of IT Operations at NETSOL, highlights the importance of having a back-up plan, coupled with quick thinking, in a business.

“Since we work in the business sector, it is important to remember our company can go down for any reason at any time.

We must anticipate such situations and have a system in place to help the business get back on its feet as soon as possible without causing damage to our customers. This requires discipline. Companies develop different strategies for this, including developing backup systems.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in 2020, NETSOL already had a business continuity plan, otherwise called a Plan B, in place. We were able to make decisions quickly and transition to a remote work model swiftly. We provided laptops to our team members and were able to ensure their safety, while providing uninterrupted services to our clients at the same time. This was when companies around us were crumbling under the pressure of COVID-19, unable to figure out their next move.”

Salim Ghauri’s Leadership Qualities

Hafiz Raza, a Business Analyst at the company, reflects on Salim Ghauri’s role as a teacher and mentor to him.

“At the same time, we had a team of five to seven members tasked with customer interactions. NETSOL had a high-stakes meeting with a client in Bangkok the following day.

Salim Ghauri called all of us to him, asking us about our positions and assessing whether we would be able to effectively meet the demands he knew the customer would have. After a thorough discussion, he announced that no one would be required to speak in the official meeting the following day, as he would handle everything himself.

He used this a teaching opportunity, emphasizing the importance of patiently listening to customers while respecting them, especially if they expressed dissatisfaction or adopted an angry tone. The advantage of allowing the customer to express their frustrations is that it opens the door for a discussion on finding a solution. By proposing a resolution, the problem can be effectively resolved. As a team, we made sure to work on these elements moving forward.

Some years ago, I believed that there was no potential for growth. The future appeared uncertain, lacking a clear direction. I had travelled to Tunisia where a project of ours could not take off. The world was in a strange place after the 9/11 incident. My qibla was on the verge of turning during this dark time.

However, in such circumstances, guidance towards the right path becomes crucial. Salim, being not just a boss but a true leader, was someone with whom any problem could be openly discussed. He helped me regain my optimism, and today, I am thankful to him for always being a mentor to me, especially when times were hard.”

Muhammad Siddiq, a Business Analyst at NETSOL, shares more about Salim Ghauri’s approach to people.

“I would say that Salim’s infinite patience is his finest quality. Everyone values their self-respect, and I have always seen him acknowledge this.

He has never scolded anyone unnecessarily. As the leader of a large company, this is an exceptional and rare quality.

Even when NETSOL was going through hard times, as employees, we have never felt the effects of that first-hand. When I started, my salary was more than what I had expected. Even during COVID-19, there was no interruption in our remuneration. Salim's respect for his team is a major reason I have never considered leaving the company.

In difficult times, he resolves issues by discussing them with others. I think the main reason for Salim's satisfaction in the quality of NETSOL's work is consulting with people around him. He always takes everyone along. This is the secret of his success."

Shamraiz Abbasi, a Senior Program Manager at NETSOL, adds the following.

"A good CEO is someone who is able to identify things quickly. Salim Ghauri is an excellent judge of character. If he sees potential, he trusts people fast. He gives them opportunities to prove themselves.

This is how I was able to build a strong working relationship with him. Salim had faith in me, and because of his faith in me, I had faith in him as well.

Two years ago, I was worried when I was asked to report to some people who had less experience than me and it made me wonder if I had done something wrong.

I went to Salim for guidance. He listened to my problem, and asked me what was important to me. I told him it was the work I was doing for our clients that mattered the most to me. This was a reminder to myself as well, as I realized I had gotten caught up in politics that was not worth

my time or attention in the first place. Salim reminded me he trusted me because of my ability to deliver work to customers, he did not care who sat at what position. He only wanted results.

I am grateful to Salim Ghauri for always been available for advice and empowering me with his faith in my abilities.”

Shamraiz Abbasi, a Senior Program Manager at the company, reflects upon Salim Ghauri’s approach to difficult situations.

“There is no crisis we have faced where Salim has not emerged as a man. He keeps his knowledge updated. If there is ever a flaw in his plan, he works hard to improve it until it is bulletproof. As a result, I have never seen him execute something that has ever failed.

I remember during an exhibition with Hades in Singapore, a problem occurred in a dam causing the cost to increase more than the customer had estimated or accounted for. Salim was asked to resolve this matter. He began conducting his own research while maintaining coordination with the client and providing them with regular updates. He assured them that there was no need to panic and kept the focus centered on finding a solution, rather than dwelling on the error.

I recall we were able to bring things back on track in a very efficient way. His level-headed approach helped to protect the client as well as the company from chaos. He deals with every matter with understanding and rationality. He has taught us to do the same.”

Humera Mirza, Head of Business Information Management at NETSOL, shares a unique anecdote that demonstrates Salim Ghauri’s empathy for his team members.

“NETSOL provides transport facility for its staff. One day, I witnessed Salim calling over the van drivers to him, and instructing them to position the rear-view mirrors of the vehicles such that female passengers never felt awkward or conscious by their gaze. I felt that this gesture highlighted his respect for his team members, and his desire to make sure we all feel comfortable and safe at all times.

As a woman, I have never faced any bias at the workplace, which empowers me to perform to the best of my abilities. Salim is one of the most compassionate and caring bosses I have the good fortune of working with. He listens patiently and values the input of every team member. I have never seen him lose his cool in terms of crisis.

Lower-tier staff members, especially their children, hold a special place in his heart. NETSOL finances the education of several talented boys and girls, giving them opportunities to be interviewed and selected at official positions of engineers and developers following the completion of their studies. Like a guardian angel, Salim ensures that once positioned as officers, these staff members are given equal chances for growth and treated with respect by everyone. Comparisons of salaries is done to make sure that these kids are treated fairly as professionals.

Salim tasked me with the responsibility of interviewing these girls and requested me to build up their morale as they got familiarized with the work and new environment. He encouraged me to inform these staff members that we have a culture of complete confidentiality, if they wished to report any instances of prejudice or unfair treatment by any colleague or senior team member.

I feel lucky to be a part of an organization that knows how to value each and every member of its professional family.”

Zoha Shahid, from the Human Resource Department of the company, shares more about her experience as a female employee under Salim Ghauri's mentorship.

"I feel blessed to be a part of the NETSOL team.

When I was being hired, Salim Ghauri told me, "I want a place so secure that even my own daughters do not think twice before joining in"

As women, we feel safe and protected at NETSOL, which motivates us to do well. This is rare in most workplaces. Over the last five years the ratio of female workers has increased significantly at the company, demonstrating NETSOL's commitment to providing equal opportunities for all.

The NETSOL management pays attention to details, like hiring female guards and security to make all staff members feel comfortable. Issues that are mostly left unspoken at organizations, such as maintaining good hygiene and personal grooming, are also paid attention to. If we face any problem at all, we are encouraged to address it, so it can be handled immediately."

“Teamwork is where innovation blossoms, personal growth soars, and enduring relationships thrive, paving the path to success.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 14

The Importance of Teamwork

Henry Ford once said, “If everyone is moving together, then success takes care of itself.”

There are different perspectives on the importance of teamwork in relationships and business. I believe the benefits of working together are far too many to count. While collaboration alone is not the solution to every problem, it holds the potential of making your life easier and making those around you happier.

When two or more people join forces to reach a common goal, they collaborate, pool ideas and assume various roles and responsibilities to ensure their project is executed successfully.

Teamwork is not restricted to sports teams and large corporations. It also applies to many aspects of business and personal relationships.

The creation of NETSOL was a product of teamwork. If my brothers had not provided the capital, it might not have been possible for me to start this company. They became my partners, helping me take NETSOL from an idea to a reality.

As we battled for survival with limited resources, my brothers, who were now my colleagues, demonstrated remarkable ingenuity, fully grasping the delicate nature of our circumstances. We lived modestly on meagre incomes, utilizing any available workspace. Operating within our means, we worked harmoniously as a unified team.

We had to forgive each other whenever any of us made a mistake, remembering to remain unwavering in our loyalty to the company during times of crisis.

In the beginning, there was one challenge after another, but teamwork helped us cope with everything that came our way and kept the company running.

When NETSOL was facing a legal battle in the United States, Najeeb Ghauri (CEO, NETSOL United States) and his team fought tooth and nail to come out strong the other side. Our office was occupied during this crisis, but a makeshift workspace was set up at an employee's house. This helped everyone face the challenge together and keep morale high.

By working alone, you may have some ideas for solving problems that will eventually come in handy. However, a much better theory is working with a partner. This way, you can come up with at least twice as many ideas as you would have separately. The more ideas there are, the more likely you are to come up with a workable solution.

A thriving team is attentive towards its members' needs while ensuring their effective contribution to the organization through compassionate care. This principle holds true for relationships as well. When in a partnership, one must prioritize the well-being of both one's own self and the other person. Participation in a team necessitates selflessness and unwavering dedication.

Teamwork fosters bonds of friendship and loyalty. Collaborating as a team unifies individuals, encouraging cooperation and mutual support instead of rivalry. This cultivates a productive work environment where enduring friendships are forged. Unity not only enhances productivity

and efficiency but also fosters a sense of comfort and job satisfaction among employees.

In today's rapidly evolving world, innovation is a crucial factor for success. Teamwork promotes innovation by harnessing the collective knowledge, skills, and support of multiple individuals. When everyone brings their unique abilities to the table, drawing from diverse experiences, effective and prompt decision-making becomes easier.

Working together provides an opportunity for personal growth to individuals. A team environment is a learning environment. Each team member will have a variety of skills and experiences to bring to the table. By collaborating, each individual can quickly learn from the other, expand their knowledge and their skills, and discover room for growth and improvement.

Many people are creative and innovative. Above all, they find fulfilment in working independently, driven by their own ideas. In any business setting, when trust is placed in individuals and they are granted substantial autonomy in carrying out their responsibilities, they assume accountability for the organization. This approach holds the key to business growth and entrepreneurial success.

At NETSOL, I have always placed trust in my colleagues, providing them with the confidence to excel. They are empowered to make decisions within their respective domains. The exchange of ideas fosters continuous growth and improvement.

People will demonstrate passion and dedication in their work only when they perceive a sense of ownership within a company. Hence, it is crucial to establish an empowered team and foster a sense of ownership among its members. Managers within the organization should be given the

opportunity to pursue their passion and fulfil their commitments, thereby enabling the company to thrive. This approach benefits both the company owners and its employees.

NETSOL employees consider the company as their second home. From office boys to senior positions, everyone regards the company as a family, driven by the belief that the company's progress is the progress of each individual. We operate as a close-knit family, sharing both successes and setbacks.

If people from different backgrounds work in your company, this is also a positive aspect as it allows for different ideas. You are able to work outside of traditional and rigid rules, which makes us competitive in every sector.

The old employees of NETSOL were not familiar with the changes in modern technology, so the youth were recruited to fill the gap. But no one's job was in jeopardy. Rather, a combination of experience and innovation emerged that benefited the company.

People perform better when they are passionate about their work and derive satisfaction from it. When you build a strong team, you have the opportunity to collaborate with exceptional individuals. While faced with challenges at every turn in life, remaining dedicated and persevering with your team's efforts can lead to the realization of the organization's vision and mission. Purposefulness acquaints individuals with the essence of life, infusing vitality into all their endeavours.

When an individual ventures into the realm of business, it is natural to encounter fear and uncertainty. There are moments of hesitation when contemplating investments in various sectors. In such instances, it is essential to present one's ideas to the team, advisors, and friends,

seeking their opinions to arrive at a well-informed decision. It is never wise to make a choice without considering multiple possibilities.

Personally, I always consult my family before taking significant steps, carefully weighing everyone's input to reach a comprehensive conclusion. This approach greatly facilitates troubleshooting.

Aside from the value of seeking counsel, it is also crucial to listen to one's own intuition. When you have made the decision to enter a particular field, be prepared to confront challenges. Many entrepreneurs experience failures in their initial attempts, unable to make a substantial impact on themselves or their companies in the market. Some may barely manage to keep afloat. However, if you persist and maintain unwavering passion and dedication, success will inevitably follow.

A business will thrive only if it pays attention to employees, the environment and customers. Without considering these factors, any success will only be short-lived. Operating actively, efficiently, and profitably in a competitive market is undoubtedly a company's objective, but conducting business responsibly and efficiently is equally vital, transcending mere profit-making.

This is where the role of the employees working at the company becomes very important. The fate of any business rests on how well the employees are able to perform their duties. If the company spends money on them to improve their skills, this investment will never be wasted. As a result of employees' hard work and attention, the business will grow, helping you earn more profit.

At NETSOL, during work breaks when projects are completed and there is some downtime before commencing new projects, we conduct diverse training courses for our staff to enhance their efficiency and

performance within the company. Improving the quality of our human resources directly translates into improved work quality. There is a saying in Urdu that states, "One alone is equivalent to two eleven," emphasizing the importance of a strong and capable team. Working together is much more effective and productive than working alone, but it comes at a high price.

Instead of pulling each other's legs, people should try to strengthen each other's hands. I advise every team to give importance to common goals, rather than self-importance and self-interest. If disagreements arise, instead of making it an ego issue, accept the fact that people can think differently and move past such tensions.

There are several examples of companies that have achieved remarkable success by harnessing the collective talents of their owners and collaborating with the most accomplished individuals and organizations worldwide. Renowned names such as Bill Gates and Elon Musk stand at the forefront. Companies like Microsoft, Tesla, and SpaceX, associated with these individuals, are recognized globally. Their remarkable positions of influence are not solely attributable to their individual endeavours but also stem from collective efforts and effective teamwork.

It is essential to recognize that two factors alone have the potential to undermine any society: competition and comparison. Both aspects give rise to envy and pride, which can be detrimental to the fabric of any community. Our own success can only be realized by uplifting and including others on our journey.

Salim Ghauri is merely the name of the founder of NETSOL. The actual company is operated by a group of talented individuals, making us an organization.

The true mark of a successful company is how well it runs in your absence. If the ship sails smoothly, know you have succeeded in building a strong organization.

Institutions persevere beyond the lifetime of their founders. When embarking on the journey of establishing an IT company, it is crucial to maintain a ten-year vision. Building a successful company is a gradual process that requires unwavering dedication. Through consistent hard work, the product evolves and improves over time. There are no shortcuts or quick fixes in this endeavour. Achieving excellence necessitates a continuous cycle of refinement and iteration.

Stories of Fostering Teamwork Through Leadership

Saira Ishtiaq, the Head of Communications at NETSOL, shares the story of how she joined NETSOL and working with Salim Ghauri.

"I joined this organization through a friend, having limited knowledge about the IT sector. Previously, I was working in education, specifically at the Marketing Department of Limz. One day, my friend informed me he had submitted my CV at NETSOL.

Soon after, I received a call informing me that I would be interviewed by Salim Ghauri. At that time, I had no idea he was the CEO. I visited his office, where my CV was reviewed, and to my delight, he was impressed with my credentials. Salim particularly expressed his satisfaction upon discovering that I had excelled as the topper.

He asked me not to be intimidated by the tech sector, assuring me that once I joined the company, I would understand exactly what the work was about and what I needed to do.

When I asked about the salary, he agreed to the exact amount I had requested to be paid. Later one day, I asked him why he never negotiated. He said, until I give people what they wanted, why would they act the way I wanted them to? If they are not compensated according to what they deem fair, they will join under compulsion, and seek the first opportunity to go to someone else for their desired salary. This is how I understood why I got my asking price.

It has been years, and I still feel lucky to work here. As soon as you enter the NETSOL building, you do not have a traditional office situation. You feel a new kind of energy the moment you step foot in the building.

No one pulls each other's legs. In other institutions, the environment is the opposite. We value each other as a team. Be it a senior or junior, everyone has a place. Everyone respects each other. It is the effect of Salim's personality that he has made the culture itself such that walking together is the norm.

Salim works as a leader, not a boss. The best thing about him is his friendly attitude. He chats with the team, asks us how things are going, and helps us brainstorm ideas that make even difficult tasks manageable. He always builds up his employees, never putting unnecessary burden or stress on them. Ensuring the mental well-being of his team is something he cares about very much.

He handles any situation, especially difficult ones, very well. I have seen this to be a consistent quality of his.

He is not a traditional CEO. If he was, he would not be so successful today. His working style is unique. He has a deep-rooted passion for his work. At the same time, he is very personable and approachable. He keeps an eye on his team members. He knows where and who can do more good work and be more useful to the organization. He respects everyone and appreciates good work publicly, without being biased. He greets everyone in a kind and friendly manner – every employee at NETSOL can attest to the fact that they have a good working relationship with him.

He is a personality beyond protocol. You never have to make a lot of effort to meet him. If you request an appointment with him, he will call you and ask you to come to his office the same day. No other CEO I have seen or heard about does this.

On Salim's birthday, everyone from the janitor to the office boy brings him flowers and gifts. This does not happen anywhere. It is a sign of love and respect from the heart. His office is full to the brim with tokens from the entire team. I feel like this is his real success.

Salim is a balanced thinker. He stays positive. He never avoids individuals who may possess greater knowledge than him. Instead, he fosters an environment that encourages open collaboration and empowers individuals to work autonomously. By entrusting them with responsibilities, he evaluates their performance and values input from everyone. There is no need to approach the boss for every minor task, as he instils confidence in his team members. The trust he places in his team cultivates a sense of duty, leading to a harmonious work environment. When everything is running smoothly, it allows for personal time and self-care.

Salim has a keen eye for talent and possesses rational thinking. He is open to persuasion through well-reasoned arguments. If he is not convinced, he respectfully declines. He does not dismiss others' opinions merely to satisfy his ego. He actively engages with the media, participating in interviews on television, appearing in newspapers, and maintaining connections with media personnel. He has also been interviewed for the book "Hundred CEOs," an arrangement facilitated by me.

Salim cares a lot about his workers. He has supported me many times in difficult situations. He knows my husband personally, so we have a family connection beyond work as well. Once, when I had a quarrel with my husband, Salim intervened and asked Ahmed not to trouble me.

I remember when Salim entrusted the responsibility of the event arrangements for NETSOL's 20th anniversary to me. With approximately two thousand guests, managing such a grand occasion posed a formidable challenge. However, it ignited my motivation. The ceremony itself was spectacular, and even Salim Ghauri participated in a dance performance. The atmosphere was filled with joy, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the event. It deviated from the typical formal ceremonies that can quickly become monotonous. The appreciation received for this occasion was due to Salim's trust in me, which enabled me to excel in my role.

Another special thing about Salim is his attitude towards the youth of Pakistan. He is very fond of students, truly believing they are the future of the country. He wishes to do whatever is possible for them. Whenever he addresses youth at universities, he only shares events that will inspire them and help them move forward in life. He keeps his lectures informative as well as inspiring, making every second count. I have

witnessed these talks personally and am continuously impressed by his natural dialect and speaking style. I feel like it is the mark of someone who has truly lived a full life, and paved the way to success through hard work and a lot of effort.

Salim possesses a remarkable energy that resonates strongly with his audience. I have heard his success stories recounted in numerous lectures, to the point where they have become ingrained in my memory.

Alongside Salim, our team comprises accomplished individuals whose own journeys serve as a tremendous source of inspiration. However, Salim Ghauri's approach stands out. When he takes the stage, the audience becomes captivated by his charismatic speaking style. He delivers his messages from the depths of his heart, leaving a profound impact on the listeners.”

Khurram Iqbal, a Business Analyst at the company, describes how and why he has stayed at NETSOL for several years.

“It’s not like I have never thought about changing my career. I have even walked up to Salim’s office several times, ready to resign.

I have my own way of working. If someone interferes with my work, I find it difficult to tolerate. I remember discussing this with Salim. He is not someone who believes in confusion or holding things in. He encouraged me to speak openly. I told him if the responsibility of a project is assigned to me, then the authority should also be with me during the completion of the project. He agreed with my thoughts. I asked him for authority and he gave me the opportunity to work openly. His faith in me melted any anger I had away. Very few people in the world have this art of persuasion.

My personal opinion is that if you do not like your boss, you should quit. Otherwise, things fall apart. If NETSOL reaches the heights of development, Salim's broad vision and heart are behind it.

Another time, I was facing some problems at home, making it difficult for me to show up to work every single day. I was convinced I had to leave my job at NETSOL. However, Salim not only listened to what I was going through, but supported me and helped me navigate the situation. I will always be grateful to him."

Suhail Sarwar, a former Director at NETSOL, recounts his time at the company.

"NETSOL will always be my first love. When I joined the company, only twenty-two people were part of the team. Today, this number has quadrupled.

NETSOL was the first software company to operate in Pakistan. I remember the first project I ever worked on – it was developing a software for a German product. There was a lot of technical work involved. The job was extremely challenging, but the pleasure of coming to work every day is something I cherish to this day.

During my time at NETSOL, the company was growing steadily. The progress was very encouraging. If the company succeeds in front of you, every employee feels happy, just like members of a family.

I remember when 9/11 happened. It transformed the world. Businesses were affected everywhere. However, we were lucky to escape the situation relatively unscathed. As employees, I remember none of us faced any hurdles in terms of payment of our salaries. There were talks of reducing our pays during this crisis, but Salim made sure this did not

happen by filling any gaps from his personal credit. What a wonderful human being he is.

Salim's exemplary leadership helps him keep his team together. He does not compete alone, but increases his competitiveness by taking his employees with him. There are many people in the world who cope with situations by themselves, failing as team leaders. However, you can give Salim defective parts of a machine and he will find one way or another to make them work and deliver performance.

Trust me when I say every employee working with Salim Ghauri is a fan of his professional skills. He holds the status of a boss as well as a teacher for his team."

Majid Bashir, the Vice President of Engineering at NETSOL, shares more about initiatives launched at the company under Salim Ghauri's leadership.

"Salim believes in giving everyone an equal opportunity to succeed. He supports under-privileged staff members at NETSOL by not only creating positions for them to take home their daily bread, but also empowering their children by taking care of their studies. Office boys are getting an education at the expense of the company. It is Salim's wish to see the youth of this country become productive members of society.

NETSOL operates as an exceptional system, providing counselling and allowing opportunities for each section head to express their perspectives. Salim does not believe in a dictatorial approach; rather, his disposition leans toward democracy. Experts contribute their opinions on various issues, and these viewpoints hold significance in the decision-making process. The business, finance, and technical teams all offer their unique viewpoints.

Every individual is heard and considered based on the prevailing circumstances. At every point, I have found it easy to share my position and voice my thought on matters, while listening to other perspectives at the same time. I value fulfilling commitments and have imbibed this principle from the company's environment. It is essential to acknowledge that mistakes are a natural part of being human."

Abdul Wahab, the Chief Internal Auditor at NETSOL, shares how Salim Ghauri helps his team navigate financial crises.

"During difficult times, our focus would be on resources. Salim used to take loans from banks. Sometimes he used to manage the situation by paying from his own pocket. We never let our vendors down. We have all kinds of vendors, from software to groceries and computer items to Microsoft. We reduced our expenses and adapted ourselves to market conditions. We saved money wherever possible.

Salim never panics. He trusts his team and takes them along with him during the entire journey. He understands the importance of manpower. He believes in giving respect and not looking for mistakes. He is a leader who motivates the staff. This is the secret of his success.

He values his team members unlike any other boss I have seen. He tries to solve their problems as much as possible. I have seen so many old employees of NETSOL coming to visit his office and pay their regards. Whenever there is a company function, everyone gets together under one roof and feels happy to connect with each other.

There is a reason why NETSOL's team members have worked here for years, putting in long hours without thinking of leaving the company. A large part of this is the work environment. People are the ones who pull their legs or stick together when times are tough. Their attitude

determines how successful your company will be. At NETSOL, we have an excellent team culture, with everyone ready to support each other every step of the way.

Another important factor is how seniors behave when an employee is facing a problem. I have witnessed Salim Ghauri putting in a personal effort to listen and solve his team members' issues."

“Customers matter more than anything else. They are the lifeblood of any business, shaping its success and defining its reputation.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 15

Mastering the Art of Exceptional Customer Service

In my youth, I would anxiously wait for a call from my beloved.

Years later when I started NETSOL, I was much older, but still waiting by the telephone. This time, however, I wished the person on the other line was a customer, telling me they were in need of my company’s services.

In both scenarios, the hours would stretch endlessly, each minute feeling like an eternity. I would be scared to leave my chair for a single second, afraid I would miss the opportunity to hear the voice on the other end if I left my station.

For days, my telephone would never ring. If you remember, I mentioned the solution I had come up with to break this deafening silence. I convinced my wife to call me every day on my office number. The sound of the telephone ringing helped me cling on to hope – hope that one day, clients would be calling us left, right and center demanding our services.

My wife continued this practice for a long time, until finally, our office welcomed the music of business calling our name.

Customers matter more than anything else. In the early days, I picked up business from every nook and cranny. It took several years for me to secure clients that actually added to our business and helped us build a name for ourselves in the market.

This book is full of stories of how NETSOL deals with its customers. Getting our first international offer was a journey in and of itself. It required spending months traveling and putting in efforts for the client. Our formula was this: treat the customer with so much respect and give them so much value, that they have no other choice but to invest in you.

Since our journey began, we retained the rights of several products we developed, without our clients prohibiting us from doing so. This is an achievement in itself. Building enough confidence with the customer and having a relationship with them where they could trust us never to compromise on quality or misuse their faith in us is something we always work hard to achieve.

Another memorable incident I have shared earlier is when I knew the head of a company, I wanted to work with wanted a digital diary. This was a time when NETSOL barely had any work and very limited resources to spend. Nevertheless, I made a digital diary out of my own pocket and went to Thailand to present it myself. Rather than leveraging this to my advantage by asking for work, I waited for the tides to turn in my favour. Eventually, as anticipated, the client approached me, impressed by my behaviour and passion.

During projects, it is not uncommon for customers to exhibit abusive behaviour and attempt to shift blame onto the company. In such situations, even when the customer is blatantly lying about certain matters, I refrain from confronting them directly. Instead, I choose not to engage in a battle of proving them wrong during meetings.

This approach might leave my colleagues wondering how I manage to stay composed and silent in the face of false accusations. However, I believe in a more strategic and empathetic approach. I understand that

customers, especially when frustrated, tend to vent their frustrations and grievances. By allowing them the space to release their pent-up emotions, they gradually start to see reason and become more receptive to finding mutually beneficial solutions.

It is crucial to prioritize the customer's needs and concerns. Their satisfaction and overall experience should always be at the forefront of our interactions. Therefore, I make it a point to accommodate their schedules and be punctual for meetings, regardless of their requested time or location. I avoid making excuses or changing agreed-upon meeting times as it reflects a lack of respect for their time and can lead to frustration or a loss of trust.

Once the customer arrives, it is important to establish a positive rapport and maintain a helpful attitude. Offering discounts or special deals can be a gesture of goodwill to show our commitment to their satisfaction. However, it is vital to follow through on such promises. Failing to deliver on the offered benefits can create a sense of disappointment, potentially driving the customer to seek services from a competitor.

I have had meetings with clients that have continued for hours. During these meetings, conversation about work might only be for a few minutes, while the rest of the time is spent building a personal connection. We talk about life like friends. When it comes to finalizing contracts, this approach comes in handy, as we have already won the customer's heart. Once a genuine connection is established, any initial reservations or fears dissipate. I have been blessed with the ability to persuade – a gift I consider to be bestowed upon me by Allah – which I have tried to utilize in my business.

The point is, the advancement of any business relies on acquiring customers and retaining them. This realization should remain at the forefront of every business owner's mind. With the influx of various products into the market, competition has surged. No company can handle everything single-handedly, necessitating the presence of skilled salespeople to provide support.

Successful salesmanship is defined by effectively selling a product by satisfying the buyer's needs and proving its value. As a salesperson employed by an organization, store, showroom, or shop, it is crucial to gather all the relevant information about the product you are selling. This includes reading the product brochure and seeking guidance from senior salesmen or managers to grasp the item's strengths and weaknesses.

This knowledge not only enhances your own confidence but is also essential for effectively conveying the necessary information and qualities of the product to the customer. Without satisfactory and informative communication, the customer will not be enticed to make a purchase.

With this information, you will be in a position to adequately answer all customer queries. If you do not have detailed knowledge about the item, you will embarrass yourself in front of the customer and fail to earn their interest. This will not only affect the business, but you will also not be considered a good salesperson.

Drawing from my years of experience of introducing and selling NETSOL's products and services, I have come to recognize the paramount significance of understanding customer psychology. When armed with comprehensive knowledge about your product, engaging in persuasive

conversations becomes much simpler, ultimately leading to successful sales.

Salim Ghauri's Customer-Centric Approach

Khurram Saeed talks more about Salim Ghauri's attitude towards customers, as well as his own employees.

"It is worth mentioning that Salim loves Pakistan and wishes to build and promote the talent our country has on every forum. Since 2007, I have been a part of meetings with Salim. These meetings are nothing less than learning workshops. Employees also get a salary from the company and learn from him for free.

No one knows the psychology of how to deal with customers better than Salim. In every meeting, he shares his experiences. He always talks about respecting the customer, insisting on resolving any problem they might face on a priority basis.

From this, we learned that in no case will two plus two be four. Rather, you must always be flexible in your behaviour. Each customer will be different from the others. There will be new experiences in this field. We should be mentally prepared.

Salim always emphasizes teamwork. Even if your work ability is God-given, it is important to carry the team along.

His personality is rare not only in Pakistan but also in the whole world. He is someone who not only talks about values, but actively practices what he preaches.

I remember when one of our payments got stuck in Singapore. The work was expanding. The payment was very important, because we had several projects operating simultaneously in Australia, Korea and the

United States. Salim refused to get into a quarrel with the client. Instead, he found an alternate way of securing the amount we needed.”

Mohammad Amir shares more about Salim Ghauri’s way of dealing with clients.

“During my visits to Pakistan from Canada, I had the opportunity to visit the NETSOL office. Among the companies in Pakistan, NETSOL stood out for its exceptional performance. A desire was ignited within me, a longing to work for this very company if an opportunity presented itself. It was through a friend's recommendation that I learned about a vacancy, prompting me to apply. Guided by my friend, I made my way to NETSOL, eagerly seeking a chance to be part of the organization.

The head of HR was Tahir Malik, who has now passed away, told the team I deserved to be interviewed. He believed in me. When I joined the company, Salim was abroad for work. An immediate meeting could not be held with him. On his return, he called me to his office and had a detailed discussion. He shared his vision of NETSOL with me. He mentioned his future plans. Addressing me, he said that we need capable people like you in this journey of development. I felt extremely motivated to make a difference.

From day one, he made me feel included and a valuable member of the team. This is the feeling he creates for every employee at NETSOL. This is why we work day and night to deliver the quality of output we do.

During our meetings with customers, it is not uncommon for discussions to escalate and the atmosphere to become tense. Frustrated customers often expressed their grievances in ways that have been challenging to bear. However, amidst such situations, I always notice Salim's composed

presence in the meetings. He listens to the client attentively, and if their tone got out of hand, calmly advises them to take it easy.

If one wants to witness a person who possesses remarkable self-control, Salim Ghauri is the epitome. He never allows himself to be overwhelmed by the circumstances. He is a brave and philanthropic person who is not afraid to take risks. Every action of his takes into consideration the welfare of others.

In his long career, he made many decisions that we did not understand at the time. However, when they came into fruition, we were awe-struck by the breadth of his thinking.

I encourage everyone to read Salim Ghauri's book if they want to feel inspired and enjoy several interesting tales and experiences, he has accumulated during his time at NETSOL. There are lessons for youth and entrepreneurs. Since we have the privilege of working with Salim, we can enjoy the events recorded in the book even more."

“Success in business hinges on patience, knowledge acquisition, and customer-centric approaches that prioritize quality and reliability over quick profits.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 16

The "One-Wheeler" of the Business World

In 2001, I was looking for work. I had never worked in Japan before and was hoping to get a project there. We were in touch with the client and our hopes were high that we would secure the contract successfully.

However, I found myself on the other end of a call that proved to be one of the most challenging ones of my life. It brought news that shattered my expectations: I was instructed to halt all ongoing work as the project was no longer in progress.

During those days, work often commenced based on verbal communication before contracts were officially established. The language used by the customer held immense importance. In the early stages of our company, we undertook numerous projects without formal contracts, relying on mutual trust to see them through. We would inquire about the customer's requirements and provide a meticulous cost estimate. However, the Japanese decision to halt everything caught me completely off guard.

In the initial phases, our projects ranged from \$100,000 to \$200,000. While the monetary value may have been relatively small, the real significance lay in having work to accomplish. At that time, we were not primarily focused on monetary value; instead, our priority was to establish and nurture a loyal customer base. NETSOL emerged in the industry as a service provider company, driven by the determination to create strong customer relationships.

Our strategy was that our customer would provide their business specifications to us, and we take the responsibility of developing tailored solutions according to their business needs. In return, the customer is required to compensate us for our development efforts. Since the customer paid for these efforts, the ownership of the system – developed by us – belonged to them. In our line of work, this is called bespoke development.

In 1997, we faced a situation where we proposed a cost of three hundred thousand dollars to a customer for the work that had to be done, but their budget allowed was for only one hundred thousand dollars. Despite this gap, we wanted to work with this important, blue-chip customer.

This was a major decision by a very young company, which needed every single penny to build its foundation. However, we preferred to take the rights of the software, rather than the payment.

The benefit to the customer was that they were getting their business solution for one-third of the vendor's price. Against that, they had to give the rights to the vendor to resell to another customer.

Firstly, the customer could proceed with their work, and secondly, we gained the opportunity to sell the software to others. After discussion, the customer agreed to this arrangement, and NETSOL retained the rights. Our agreement was documented in a simple two-page contract, which stood in contrast to the extensive documents seen in contemporary times.

Unfortunately, the very first product we developed, and got the rights for from the customer, was not sold to any other customer.

We got another contract with the same customer, and again, the budget they could offer was low. We locked the contract on the condition that we would retain the rights I remember our customer asking us, “What will you do with this software? Even your first product was not sold to any other customer.”

Our next four contracts were signed in the same way, where customers paid us a discounted rate for our software, but NETSOL would retain the rights to sell the product to other customers.

Over this period of four years, NETSOL worked for the customer with discounted prices, but was able to accumulate knowledge of their business, and develop multiple solutions which were used by the customer. At that time, it seemed like a strange decision, where we were not getting paid enough for our efforts, and the software and products we accumulated were not sold to anybody else.

In the fifth year of this cycle, we were invited again by the same customer, to develop a major portion of the software solution that was the backbone of their business. This was an unprecedented opportunity for NETSOL.

NETSOL estimated the total development costs at five million dollars. The customer, however, offered two million dollars for the total solution development.

After a short deliberation, NETSOL agreed to develop the software for two million dollars, but requested to keep the rights to resell that solution to other customers. Having seen our previous performance, in terms of selling our products to outside customers, the customer agreed to this arrangement, allowing us to retain the rights to the software and sell it to other customers.

Currently, we have the most powerful system in the world. I am proud to say that the same system we developed before was sold for one hundred and twenty million dollars to the same customer fifteen years later.

Our decision to acquire the rights and the knowledge from the customer at that time is the key to NETSOL's success today.

For a considerable period, my focus was not solely on money. While we had a desire to earn, our approach differed from that of others. It revolved around patience. In this phase, the goal was not to make quick profits; instead, it was about establishing a solid presence in the market. Recognizing the power of knowledge, we utilized it wisely, leveraging the knowledge we had acquired in the early stages. This became a significant contributing factor to NETSOL's prominence in the software industry. NETSOL is among the select few companies worldwide that possess such software capabilities.

During the initial seven or eight years, monetary concerns were not paramount. We simply immersed ourselves in the work. Undoubtedly, we faced financial difficulties, but we remained undeterred.

In a service-based business, customers provide payment and share their knowledge with you, offering valuable learning opportunities for your team. However, when it comes to product development, the process becomes riskier and much more intricate. The question arises: where will the knowledge for product development come from? Even if there is information available on acquiring capital, obtaining it often entails significant fees and burdens.

Throughout my career, I have managed to acquire all three elements from customers: payment, knowledge, and the product itself. This has

allowed us to utilize the same knowledge and capital provided by the customer while retaining ownership of the product.

Today, there is no other company in Pakistan that possesses the same product. Although there are larger companies in terms of size, many of them solely focus on service provision and maintain a dedicated workforce for that purpose. In contrast, NETSOL stands out as the only Pakistani company that not only designs its own product but also successfully sells it to the global market.

Many new entrepreneurs tend to prioritize earning over learning, which is their biggest flaw. In contrast, I embraced a simple lifestyle, with just three suits and four ties purchased from Thailand for a modest amount. I travelled in economy class and booked the cheapest hotels available. There were occasions when I did not even stay overnight but returned on the same day without sleeping. During that time, I used the first car introduced in Pakistan, a Mehran. Despite the challenges, I persistently gathered knowledge, and this pursuit became the greatest risk of my life, ultimately yielding fruitful results in the future.

During their educational journey, most young individuals envision various dreams for their future. Sons may aspire to save money and take their parents on a pilgrimage to Umrah, while daughters aim to become self-sufficient and not burden their parents. However, when a job opportunity ends, all these dreams about the future can shatter in an instant. The mounting pressure of inflation and unemployment takes a toll on the mental well-being of young people, eroding their thinking capabilities, understanding, creativity, and decision-making skills. They often find themselves lost in the darkness of despair, unable to perceive the rays of hope shining through.

Unfortunately, the mental stress inflicted by these circumstances sometimes drives individuals to turn to drugs, while others are compelled to resort to theft or even robbery in order to meet their basic needs.

However, if these same young individuals adopt a positive mindset rather than being influenced by negative trends, they may uncover numerous opportunities for advancement that were previously unseen. Even in the event of sudden job loss and a scarcity of better employment options, it is possible to embark on one's own business, even if it is on a small scale. On one hand, this allows you to regain control of your livelihood, and on the other hand, you have the potential to create employment opportunities for those in need and unemployed. This is when the saying holds true that business and trade are the lifeblood of a nation's economic system.

It has been observed that nations whose people engage in business and trade as their profession tend to experience development and progress. Engaging in trade bestows leadership skills, acumen in buying and selling, the ability to navigate risks, the art of understanding various matters, the power to persuade through well-reasoned arguments, exposure to diverse locations and their conditions, and knowledge of current affairs and individuals. The opportunities to understand human nature and psychology abound. While traditional job prospects may be dwindling alarmingly, trade and business opportunities have multiplied significantly compared to the past.

However, before venturing into business, it is crucial to acquire education and knowledge in this field. Just as one cannot become a doctor without obtaining a medical degree, a successful entrepreneur

cannot thrive without obtaining a comprehensive education in business. It is essential to study entrepreneurship, which equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to initiate, sustain, and operate a profitable business that produces or distributes economic goods and services.

Only a few individuals are aware of the challenges faced when starting a new business, and a majority of people lack knowledge regarding the rules and regulations associated with entrepreneurship. This lack of business knowledge and experience often leads to untrained young individuals finding themselves unemployed once again. However, if you aspire to start your own business without having studied entrepreneurship, there is no need to worry. Follow these principles as your guiding light.

Regardless of the scale or nature of your business, its success hinges on meticulous planning. It is often said that the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of your business strategy determine its triumph. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive plan before commencing any business venture, to avoid potential issues down the road. This plan should outline the products or services you intend to sell. Begin by making a list of the skills you excel at or the areas in which you possess complete knowledge. Seek guidance from experts in those fields, obtain their insights regarding the market demand, and understand the advantages and disadvantages associated with your chosen path. This process will help you narrow down your options based on your abilities, interests, and skills.

Before launching your product, conduct a thorough market survey. Evaluate the number of potential customers for your product, identify

your target demographic, and gain a comprehensive understanding of their age group, preferences, and purchasing habits. Additionally, analyse the competition and determine how your product will stand out in the market.

By following these principles, you can pave a path toward a successful business venture, even if you have not pursued formal education in entrepreneurship.

Importance of Legal Documents

Many people tend to overlook the importance of legal documentation and instead rely solely on verbal agreements, leading to potential risks and fear of loss. It is crucial to remember that regardless of the size of the business, one should never proceed without obtaining receipts or completing the necessary legal paperwork. Furthermore, it is essential to thoroughly read and understand any document before signing it, as there may be hidden clauses or terms that could cause future difficulties. After signing, make it a habit to date the document and ensure that all records and contracts are organized and easily accessible in physical form.

Renowned businessman Warren Buffett, known for his expertise in business start-ups, advises against risking everything at once. He suggests protecting capital when starting a business by avoiding heavy initial investments and refraining from borrowing substantial amounts of money as initial capital. By investing less initially and focusing on hard work, you can minimize the potential impact of losses. As your business grows and becomes profitable, you can gradually increase your investment.

Maintaining the quality of your products or services is of utmost importance in any business venture. Many entrepreneurs start strong but struggle to uphold product quality, which eventually leads to a decline in their business. Put yourself in the customer's shoes and consider what you would do if you noticed a decline in the quality of an item. Customers tend to switch to other companies in search of better quality. In today's competitive era, maintaining product quality is essential for running a successful business. Ensure that the quality is top-notch from the very beginning to attract customers and sustain their loyalty. It is vital to remember that business success requires hard work, patience, and dedication. Overnight success is rare, so be prepared to put in consistent effort to achieve your goals.

The speed and uniqueness of your products and services contribute to the growth of your reputation and business. While accepting orders, be cautious and only commit to those orders that you are confident you can fulfil within the specified time frame. Avoid the temptation to accept large orders if you are unsure of your ability to meet the requirements or if it may compromise the quality of your work, as this can damage your reputation. Hard work and patience are fundamental to the success of any business.

In the early days of NETSOL, we were fortunate that we did not win some of the large projects we bid for. Later on, we realized that if we had won those projects, we would have been in serious difficulty, as we would have been unable to fulfil the demand of the customer at that time. Getting those projects could have strained our resources and potentially tarnished our reputation. Instead, we discovered our capabilities and focused on what we were proficient at, allowing our products to gain recognition swiftly.

When accepting orders, it is essential to secure payment in advance to mitigate the risk of potential losses if the customer fails to follow through. Additionally, it is important to understand that it is impossible to please everyone. Different individuals have varying tastes and preferences. Thus, offering a variety of options ensures that customers' diverse preferences are satisfied. While different people may prioritize packaging or quality, never compromise on the latter, as compromising on quality can significantly damage your reputation. Even during challenging times when funds were desperately needed, NETSOL prioritized improving quality, emphasizing the company's commitment to excellence over immediate profitability.

Risks taken by Salim Ghauri

Abdul Munam Javed shares the following:

“Salim never refuses anyone. He is a player who plays till the last ball.

I remember when a project was underway in Taiwan whose progress was not encouraging. Salim observed the whole situation but still dealt with the problem in such a way that we did not have to apologize. Rather, the customer and NETSOL remained amicable until the very end of the project.

Although the project commenced in 2001 with a deadline of 2004, it took seven years of patience and perseverance to see it through.

Salim took the lead and personally handled every challenge that arose. He possesses a deep understanding of how to cater to each client's unique psychology, knowing what the Chinese clients desire, how Australians think, and the preferences of Taiwanese clients. It was through Salim's strategic approach that the project in Taiwan, which was

on the verge of failure, was successfully turned around. Without his guidance, it would not have been possible. He maintains unwavering confidence in his team, consistently providing encouragement and fostering a positive mindset. His morale never wavers, serving as a source of inspiration for those around him.”

“Every day when you wake up, you have two choices... Follow your daily mundane routine set from years, or go out and follow your dream.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 17

Learning, Adapting and Succeeding

There is a parallel between individuals in the business world and those in the realm of politics. When a political leader garners popularity, a prudent approach to maintaining this favor is by establishing a political party, essentially transforming this popularity into a structured institution. In a similar vein, when a business owner secures a few contracts and performs commendably, a prudent concern would be how to channel this achievement into formal strategies that elevate the business and expand the success even further.

Reflecting on NETSOL's early days of securing contracts and actively engaging with them, we consistently pondered the means to elevate NETSOL beyond a mere company into a full-fledged organization. This led us to acquire international certifications to uphold the quality standards of NETSOL, while also providing training to our staff through renowned international institutions. The vision was not limited to a corporate entity; it aimed at shaping the future.

This approach holds the key to the triumph of any business venture. Restrictive thinking and a tendency to undermine others eventually lead to the downfall of your enterprise. Your reputation becomes a thing of the past. Amid moments of accomplishment, it is vital to recognize that times are evolving swiftly. Change is constant, and customer expectations evolve accordingly. Failing to adapt to these shifts will inevitably steer you towards failure.

The world is witness to a consistent pattern among unsuccessful businesses and entrepreneurs, leading them towards an inescapable fate of failure. Let's delve into the subtle elements that inadvertently guide you onto the path of failure. A staggering 80% of businesses worldwide meet their demise within the initial 18 months post-launch. In Pakistan, this failure rate escalates to 90%, translating to a disheartening 9 out of 10 businesses succumbing to failure. As per a comprehensive report by the Small Business Administration (SBA), a mere 66 out of 100 businesses manage to persevere for a mere two years, while the remaining 24 dwindle into oblivion within the ensuing five years.

This unfortunate downfall of small-scale businesses casts a shadow on the overall national economy and impedes the betterment of people's living standards. Especially in countries where governmental job provision is limited, small businesses present the remedy for substantial challenges. Unravelling the reasons behind these business failures becomes an urgent necessity, warranting comprehensive evaluation and resolution at the institutional level. Concurrently, entrepreneurs can actively participate in addressing these challenges.

To avert the impending failure, a critical first step involves gaining insight into the factors that obstruct the pathway to success. It bears merit to elucidate these factors, so readers of this book can steer clear of the paths of failed entrepreneurs. Instead, they can engrave their names in society as not just tales of downfall, but as narratives of triumphant success.

Not Determining the Destination

Starting a business invites contemplation on the scope of its expansion, the financial provisions required, and the pivotal factors that prompt one

to pursue broader horizons. It becomes imperative to predetermine these aspects.

A prosperous entrepreneur possesses the acumen to establish well-defined objectives. What tasks demand your attention? What drives their pursuit? Beyond the mere accumulation of wealth, what additional aspirations can your business harbour? Such queries embody significance not solely in framing objectives but also in formulating a more effective strategy to transform them into reality.

Finding Scaffolding

The triumph or downfall of a business hinges upon your mental disposition. Your proficiency in generating resources plays a pivotal role. A faltering entrepreneur struggles to uncover and secure fresh avenues for business growth. Conversely, a visionary mindset explores opportunities and novel prospects.

This broad thinking of a successful businessman gives birth to business expansion, whereas the former remains entangled in fruitless pursuits. Self-doubt renders them susceptible to dissatisfaction, often seeking external solutions to challenges and problems. This inherent weakness hastens the journey towards failure.

The Burden of Expectations

In the world of business, "*Khayal Chowdhurys*" tend to face failure. They do not invest the effort necessary to earn rewards. Their dreams take precedence over proper planning. Such individuals base their strategies on hope, rather than reality. This can result in a ridiculous overabundance of self-confidence, paired with a deficiency in practical optimism.

Working Without Skills

Acquiring proper training for your desired business holds immense significance. Even if it entails working without pay initially, the essence of learning should never be disregarded. The downfall of entrepreneurs often stems from overlooking the learning curve to save time.

People want to succeed solely on the basis of personal funds, stumbling when capital investment is involved. True professionalism evolves from honed skills and practical exposure. Conversely, an entrepreneur who faces failure tends to lack these essential attributes, leading to missed opportunities for success at critical junctures in their business journey.

Situational Awareness

Max Mckeown once said, “All failure is failure to adapt, all success is successful adaptation”.

Adapting to evolving conditions and needs stands as a cornerstone for fostering business expansion. Understanding public perspectives, consumer preferences, and societal demands necessitates proper assessments. Should the gap between the business and its consumers widen, the outcome often leans toward failure. For instance, marketing combs in a community of bald individuals would be a misguided endeavour.

Sustaining success rests heavily upon consistency. A tendency to frequently alter decisions and plans can significantly contribute to downfall. Consistency emerges as the bedrock of achievement across diverse undertakings. Regrettably, unsuccessful entrepreneurs often grapple with a pronounced inconsistency. Overwhelmed by minor

setbacks, they become prone to swiftly shift their strategies and decisions, seldom adhering to a singular steadfast approach.

There is Success in Honesty

With a quality product at hand, establishing a prominent presence in the market happens swiftly. However, whether operating on a small or large scale, the tendency often leans towards prioritizing profit over quality. A single interaction with a customer shapes their impression, and if the quality disappoints, their return becomes unlikely. The ill-advised pursuit of trickery and deceit can irrevocably tarnish your reputation and ultimately lead to an exit from the business arena.

Sell goods honestly. Transparency in transactions is pivotal. Success will surely come. This principle aligns with teachings from various beliefs, including religion.

Choosing a Location for Business

The choice of location holds significant sway over the establishment of a shop, be it through setting up a storefront or constructing a physical office building. Elements such as road conditions, accessibility, foot traffic, and provisions like parking and seating must be thoughtfully considered. These factors, in synergy, influence the outcome of your business endeavour.

A telling example is the instance when the Punjab government embarked on the Orange Line metro train project in Lahore. The city underwent extensive excavations to facilitate the endeavour. This process, spanning several months, prompted businesses to relocate to markets that remained accessible amidst the ongoing construction. A shrewd

entrepreneur discerns the importance of selecting an optimal location and orchestrating a strategic setup accordingly.

In contrast, a struggling entrepreneur struggles to discern a fitting location. This inability becomes a defining trait, causing them to overlook vital developmental prospects. Consequently, significant opportunities for growth elude them due to this very characteristic.

Satisfying the Customer

The crux of the success of a business hinges on customer satisfaction. Your customers' contentment serves as the cornerstone of success. With a focus on quality work, your reputation will organically spread, capturing the attention of those seeking excellence.

I consistently stress the significance of establishing a name for oneself. Establish your own distinct standards, and remain resolute in upholding them. This very principle propelled the success of NETSOL. Neglecting quality can drive customers away, cutting short any prospect of lasting relationships. The link between quality and customer loyalty is undeniable. Failing to maintain standards tarnishes your image, rendering you a non-preferred choice and diminishing your hiring prospects.

To truly stand out, fashion a product or service that radiates uniqueness, setting you apart from the crowd. It is only through such differentiation that your reputation flourishes. Regrettably, unsuccessful entrepreneurs often possess a limited mindset fixated solely on earnings. They neglect the fact that superior products or services are the true guarantors of robust earnings.

Non-Serious Behaviour

Your attitude is the deciding factor. A customer can accept a good product, rather than a great one, but will never put up with your frivolous attitude.

For instance, unavailability during crucial moments, tardy shop openings, frequent closures for vacations, inattentive listening to customer needs, or dismissing their concerns all epitomize such a poor attitude. Discrepancies between the product promised and delivered, deceptive practices, or adopting an indifferent tone further contribute to this perception.

These indicators collectively spell trouble for your business. Although it is a common practice in Pakistan to display notices in shops declaring no returns or exchanges for purchased goods, this approach should be reconsidered for customer convenience. A simple gesture of permitting customers to exchange items at their discretion can yield considerable goodwill. While only a fraction of customers might avail this option, your reputation stands to benefit enormously, leaving a lasting imprint on your business image.

Nonchalant conduct emerges as the arch-nemesis of success, particularly in the realm of business. An ineffective entrepreneur often exhibits this negligent behaviour across all aspects of their venture.

Creative Thinking

Stepping away from tradition holds its significance. Small touches go a long way. For example, elevate your marketing approach. Enhance your presentation.

Even for a tea shop, strive to present a stylish cup. Infuse creativity into your seating arrangements. Cultivate a tranquil ambiance in your seating

space. In today's social media-driven world, visuals wield substantial influence. Offer patrons a picturesque spot where they can sit, snap good photos, and inadvertently promote your establishment.

Steve Jobs aptly likened innovation to the ladder of success. Business achievements are not tethered to your academic degrees, but rather your astuteness and competencies. As Bill Gates affirms, he might not hold a university title, but those who do are often part of his workforce. Distinctiveness emanates from a diverse perspective.

A failed businessman often underestimates the significance of market research and knowledge, losing sight of emerging trends. Innovations in products and services introduce uncharted opportunities for entrepreneurs. Those who are oblivious to these prospects due to their narrow mindsets weaken their chances for success.

Importance of Personal Relations

In the beginning, all the work that NETSOL managed to secure was due to PR. At that critical stage, I refused to enter into purely transactional relationships. Rather, I chose to invest in the client. Over time, these connections organically translated into business opportunities, to such an extent that we found ourselves inundated with work.

Relationships hold paramount importance in the world of business. Nurturing these relationships is an art that demands considerable skill. This relational fabric weaves its significance across various domains, spanning from wholesale markets to end consumers.

When relationships flourish and trust is established, profits become secondary, because the market essentially propels the prosperity of your endeavours. Furthermore, should your product boast exceptional

quality, satisfied customers will inherently promote it. Additionally, customers interconnected through these relationships continue to gravitate toward your enterprise, fostering its growth.

The bedrock of business triumph is the interconnectedness of community and social contacts. Ineffective entrepreneurs often underestimate the potency of social connections. Their network tends to be limited, inadvertently constraining their business' potential reach.

Compromising on Quality

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, a global surge in inflation has become evident. The expenses tied to product manufacturing are on the rise, and businesses are grappling with the challenge of raising prices at a matching pace. This dilemma places the onus on consumers to absorb the impact.

Unfortunately, a commonly adopted recourse is to compromise on product quality. This, however, contrasts with the approach of successful entrepreneurs who steadfastly uphold quality, irrespective of circumstances. While crises come and go, the indelible mark left on your brand image by subpar quality is irreversible.

The secret of business prosperity lies in the steadfast commitment to enhancing the quality of products and services, even when times are tough. Unsuccessful entrepreneurs tend to disregard this pivotal aspect, ultimately paving the path to their downfall.

Self-Accountability

In the realm of business, you must consistently evolve your strategies and sales approaches. This world necessitates a daily analysis of operations. Each evening, it is essential to deliberate upon the areas

where performance excelled and where sales fell short. These aspects carry utmost significance, a fact keenly acknowledged by accomplished entrepreneurs. However, those who falter often evade accountability, avoid situational assessments, and resort to blaming colleagues when challenges arise. This harmful behaviour ultimately leads their ventures toward decline.

A failed businessman often disregards the need for self-education. This lack of knowledge becomes a prominent hindrance in his journey through the business world. A clear mission is a cornerstone for a successful entrepreneur to establish a potent strategy for their company or venture. This mission acts as a guiding beacon. Unfortunately, a failed businessman either fails to grasp the essence of the mission or, if he does, lacks the dedication to uphold it.

Contrast Analysis

Understanding the market landscape and the actions of fellow peers and competitors is paramount as it provides crucial insights.

Imagine entering a newspaper office, where every key staffer invests time and effort reading the city's array of newspapers before commencing work. This practice aims to gauge market dynamics, discern what sets their own publication apart, and pinpoint areas for innovation and elimination. This practice applies across domains; for instance, a cloth merchant discerns which boutique holds exclusive designs. Such awareness is pivotal.

Adapting to market shifts is inevitable. However, a notable trait of a failed businessman is their fixation on their own vision, unaware of prevailing trends. Their focus centers primarily on investment and profit. This "next IGA" approach—where the next investment mirrors the prior

one—often spells failure. Distinctly, some tasks are urgent while others are important. Successful entrepreneurs distinguish between the two. Regrettably, those who falter struggle to prioritize, misjudging immediate concerns and inadvertently side-lining urgent issues.

The Role of Memory

A good memory is an essential asset for fostering business growth. Commit calculations to memory, recite them and understand that not every detail needs to be documented. Remember the interactions and transactions you engage in. Keep a mental record of your customers, acknowledging those who have served you or purchased your products. This practice holds particular significance on the local level. Establishing familiarity with customers enhances sales by nurturing stronger customer relationships. A thriving business owner boasts a robust memory and an acute focus on minutiae. In contrast, a struggling entrepreneur might lack a sharp memory, resulting in the oversight of numerous crucial elements. Even in vital areas like accounting, this indifference becomes evident. Companies with ineffective business owners tend to demonstrate negligence in their accounting departments, a neglect that directly impacts the company's budget.

Team Selection

A powerful team is an indispensable pillar of success. The effectiveness of all operations hinges on a robust team. Handpicking individuals who resonate with the company's culture, environment, and demands is extremely critical. Any lapse in properly assessing a person's strengths, weaknesses, and potential during the hiring process is a hallmark of a faltering business. This oversight casts shadows over both the selection of candidates and the overall business.

A substantial chunk of a company's investment goes into its staff. Consequently, establishing sound procedures for recruitment and staff development is of paramount importance. An astute entrepreneur recognizes that nurturing an environment of training and support can elicit exemplary performance from skilled yet inexperienced individuals. Unfortunately, these critical factors often elude a failing entrepreneur's awareness.

As the influx of contracts grew for NETSOL, a demand for human resources became evident. In response, the company established a dedicated department to ensure the supply of quality manpower. This is a juncture where compromise could have proved detrimental for NETSOL. Furthermore, integrating non-professionals into your team might seem like a cost-saving measure, but it invariably jeopardizes the product's quality and your savings. As I mentioned before, quality should never be compromised, whether it pertains to personnel selection or product manufacturing.

Controlling Business Costs

Simplicity is a pivotal tenet in the lives of the world's most accomplished businessmen. They do not believe in ostentation and extravagance. Leading by example, they are hands-on in their endeavours. Unnecessary opulence is avoided, and their office environments echo this simplicity.

In contrast, unsuccessful entrepreneurs often prioritize personal prestige, inadvertently fostering a similar mindset within their teams. Office expenditures stand as a critical concern, yet an ineffective businessman frequently lacks a comprehensive assessment or measures to curtail these costs. Consequently, seemingly insignificant expenses accumulate, burdening the budget.

In my time with NETSOL, resource constraints prompted me to travel in economy class, forgo lavish accommodations, and opt for public transport to economize. Aligning actions with available resources is key. By doing so, problems tend to diminish, and opportunities emerge.

Lessons From Nokia

The memory of this company remains etched in the minds of mobile users. Nokia, which pioneered the mobile phone industry and gained substantial popularity, holds a special place, especially in Pakistan. Its phones were synonymous with quality and remain fondly remembered. Following Nokia's groundbreaking entry, other mobile manufacturers entered the market, eventually overshadowing Nokia's once-dominant position. Their complacency led to their downfall.

Nokia once enjoyed a market monopoly and could not have foreseen its eventual fade from prominence. Yet, their lack of innovation allowed newer players to capture attention with innovative and appealing mobile phones. Nokia's belief in invincibility proved unfounded; they failed to adapt to an evolving world. Despite attempting a shift towards Windows phones, the shift came in too late, resulting in their decline. Their inertia cost them dearly, as they failed to align with consumer demands.

While Nokia's competitors embraced the smartphone revolution, Nokia's phones felt outdated compared to iOS and later Android devices. Apple's iPhone set the benchmark for smartphones, while Samsung also made a mark with its innovation. Nokia's decline was not solely due to slow technology adoption but also their delayed embrace of Android. Samsung's success did not solely rest on speed; it was its ability to innovate that mattered.

In the market's eyes, Nokia became synonymous with an older era, whereas Samsung was seen as new and innovative. Nokia's inability to modernize its brand led to its downfall. Reflecting on its failure provides crucial insights. By reevaluating their strategy today and learning from competitors, Nokia could stage a comeback.

Kodak's experience in ignoring digital photography's rise is comparable. They refused to acknowledge the shift, eventually losing out to digital cameras and films. Rather than fully embracing change, they sought a hybrid solution, an attempt doomed to fail. The changing market landscape outpaced their efforts, revealing their inability to prevent customers from gravitating towards new technologies.

Microsoft, despite its success, could not dominate internet search like Google did. This stemmed from Microsoft's fixation on its existing business, resulting in them missing out on new avenues of success. Their failure to diversify led to Google's ascension in internet search, as Microsoft's Internet Explorer could not match up. Even today, "Google" is the go-to choice for online searches.

NETSOL's journey was started by a single proprietor from Defence, named "Salim Ghauri". Today, NETSOL is no longer a company, transcending this label. The credit for this transformation can be given to foresight and preparation for the future. Avoiding the fate of the examples discussed above, NETSOL understood the evolution it needed to undergo to be successful.

NETSOL's journey speaks volumes about adapting to the changing tides of time. It metamorphosed from a tiny company into a fully-fledged organization. As a leader, I ensured that every aspect of NETSOL, from infrastructure to staff, spoke to contemporary demands.

Recognizing my own limitations, I made a deliberate effort to surround myself with bright minds. The triumph of NETSOL is not solely attributed to me; rather, it is the fruit of tireless toil by numerous ingenious young minds.

Had I succumbed to narcissism during the early stages, NETSOL's trajectory could have taken a vastly different turn, relegating it to a historical footnote — a lesson for posterity on how not to do a business.

“Technology has shaped every aspect of our human existence. It is up to us, whether we want to embrace it, or risk being left behind.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 18

Navigating the Changing Landscape of Business and Education

The business landscape has undergone a profound transformation compared to the past.

Some years ago, many services relied heavily on manual labour, creating a lifestyle that centered around manual tasks. Both factories and banks adhered to traditional operational methods. The prevailing environment of that era necessitated a specific form of education to navigate it.

However, the present era has been dramatically shaped by technology, reshaping virtually every aspect of our lives, and it is evident that human resources will continue to evolve in the times ahead. This leads us to question whether our current education system is adequately equipping individuals to effectively contribute to the future landscape. This challenge is not unique to Pakistan but is a global concern, as the entire world system is undergoing a transformative phase.

The traditional definition of literacy has experienced a paradigm shift. In the past, literacy was confined to the ability to read and write one's own name. Contrastingly, contemporary society sees even those previously considered illiterate individuals proficiently navigating smartphones. For instance, my housekeeper, who has never gone to school, adeptly follows YouTube recipes and operates a smartphone. She is capable of doing the same things a ‘literate’ person can. Thanks to user-friendly mobile applications, she can both communicate verbally and in written

form. This exemplifies how the concept of literacy has evolved in the present day.

How well a person can utilize a device is a significant indicator of knowledge these days. This fact has changed the education system as we know it. In the past, education revolved around rote memorization of historical facts and dates. However, with the aid of modern devices, an entire wealth of information becomes accessible in mere seconds. Tasks that previously required committing continents to memory and transcribing them are no longer essential. Mobile numbers, once memorized orally, have transitioned to the online sphere. The necessity to retain mountainous data in one's memory has diminished as well. The advent of calculators, now housed within mobile phones, has significantly simplified these processes.

During a Board of Directors meeting at FC College, I emphasized that the current curriculum holds limited relevance. How can individuals secure employment without practical skills? Even within IT education, the syllabus often falls short of aligning with market demands. However, this does not mean we dismiss the importance of earning a degree.

A degree serves a purpose; it rectifies personal deficiencies and facilitates social development during the academic journey. The lack of a sixteen-year educational foundation can lead to shortcomings. Schooling is pivotal; it does not merely encompass education, but encompasses a comprehensive spectrum of learning experiences, collectively referred to as "schooling." It is through this holistic learning process that one becomes proficient. While studying imparts knowledge, true schooling nurtures capabilities. Individuals who exclusively pursue online studies lack this comprehensive schooling, hence their limitations.

However, our approaches to both degrees and education require a big upgrade. Suppose we want to develop skilled human resources tailored to meet market demands. The juncture has arrived where we must broaden our focus beyond mere degrees. In conjunction with formal education, equal emphasis should be placed on practical experience. It is imperative to avoid a scenario where acquiring a degree merely acts as a precursor to relearning essential practical skills from the ground up.

In addition to theoretical knowledge, practical skills hold immense significance. With the vast expanse of information available through platforms like Google, students possess the capability to delve into topics that surpass the scope of their current curriculum. By proactively engaging with different articles while simultaneously keeping abreast of global events, students can stay ahead. In the realm of traditional exams, while it is essential to adhere to the material taught by instructors, it is equally crucial to supplement this with self-directed learning. This fusion of established knowledge with the latest updates allows students to excel beyond their peers.

I consistently emphasize the power of knowledge whenever I am invited to deliver lectures or workshops at universities. A question I pose to students is about smartphone ownership. It is overwhelmingly evident that an astonishing ninety-nine percent of students possess smartphones. I inquire about their usage patterns – how much of their smartphone usage is dedicated to educational pursuits? I encourage them to dedicate ten to fifteen minutes after each lecture to independently explore the subject matter further through their smartphones. This approach circumvents a reliance on teacher-led lectures sourced from textbooks, which might contain slightly outdated information. In a world where transformation is a daily occurrence, the

internet serves as a valuable tool to bridge the gaps present in textbook knowledge.

The more knowledge you have, the more powerful you are. While a degree certainly holds significance, it should be viewed as a stepping stone, rather than a final destination. To make a mark in the competitive market, a continual journey of learning is paramount. Over the course of four years, your efforts must propel you to the forefront, and much of this voyage is a solo endeavour. The confines of a college or university are defined; they illuminate the path, but it is you who must traverse it with determination.

When we contemplate education, always remember it extends beyond textbooks. Institutions cultivate a culture of collaboration through group projects, the formation of societies, artistic pursuits, musical expression, theatrical endeavours, and sports. Each of these facets contributes to the nurturing of confidence, an invaluable trait that accompanies you throughout life. The discipline instilled during your academic years remains an enduring asset. Even during the disruptions caused by COVID-19, while traditional schooling might have temporarily ceased, the pursuit of knowledge persisted, albeit in a different form. The teacher-student connection experienced a hiatus, dampening the impact of formal education, yet knowledge continued to flourish.

An acquaintance of ours charted a different course for his son post A-levels, asserting that a degree was not a requisite for success. This sentiment appears to be in vogue nowadays, akin to a trend. However, I beg to differ. Although the child may amass wealth as he moves up the world, the void created by a lack of holistic education will linger.

Organizations have distinct life cycles, and it is imperative to navigate through these phases to shape a complete personality. Even in contemporary business circles, some advocate that one can excel without formal education since their business is their realm of expertise. This ideology is fundamentally flawed. The tenure of formal education carries immense weight; without it, personal growth remains incomplete. There is no substitute for the comprehensive enrichment provided by schooling. The shortcut might be financial gains, but it cannot replace the depth of experience. The intricate art of reaping the fruits of patience and hard work remains elusive to those who seek shortcuts.

The significance of a degree has encountered scepticism, with instances of world-renowned entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates and Elon Musk often cited to downplay its importance. However, my perspective contradicts this narrative. I vote in favor of degrees and schooling.

Let's take the example of the famous influencer and businessman, Azad Chaiwala. His position is that there is no need for a formal education – you can be successful without it, just by learning skills and earning money. However, I urge you all to realize that we do not go to school just to get a degree. Those who define the purpose of going to school so narrowly are doing a disservice to their children.

You go to school to improve your personality. It is the teacher's job to make all this possible during your time in the classroom. Earning money can be done without a degree, but becoming a good person is an enlightening process. There is no shortcut to it. The rare few, who are being to do both, cannot and should not be made role models for society. We must focus on creating a sustainable system everyone can follow.

Not everyone is destined to replicate the trajectory of Bill Gates. We must make sure that these individuals, who form a majority of the world's population, can forge a fulfilling and well-balanced existence.

As children embark on their educational journey, they acquire not only textbook knowledge but also the invaluable art of socialization. School lays the foundation for every practical stride in life, equipping them with essential coping mechanisms. Through this process, they cultivate a profound understanding of the significance of triumph and the resilience to rise from setbacks. Moreover, it teaches them how to navigate situations where they might face challenges like peer harassment, fostering an environment of respect and empathy.

Yet, schooling extends beyond the classroom's walls. It imparts values like respect for elders, discipline, adherence to laws, and a sense of patriotism—lessons that transcend textbooks. Examinations serve as formidable training grounds, honing the ability to manage stress and deliver under trying circumstances. They cultivate the skill to accomplish tasks efficiently, even when time is limited. The intricacies of harmonious coexistence within a group find their roots within educational institutions. These establishments are not just degree-conferring entities; they also contribute to nurturing ethical individuals. This, indeed, stands as the core essence of their syllabi.

The advent of the COVID-19 crisis has ushered in transformative shifts. It has divided the world into the pre- and post-COVID eras, bringing forth substantial changes, including within the business landscape. Gone are the days when establishing a business necessitated an office space, with the intricate requisites of furnishing, staffing, and substantial capital investments. COVID-19 altered this paradigm. However, it is crucial to

note that the concept of remote work is not novel. For a decade now, the United States and countries in Europe have embraced this trend, primarily for those dealing with substantial commutes between home and office. COVID-19 merely thrust this practice into the limelight, making remote work mainstream. Even businesses that initially believed in the indispensability of a physical presence in the market have come to terms with the feasibility of productive remote work. This pivotal shift has redefined investment dynamics as well.

In the current landscape, embarking on a business venture no longer demands huge capital. The realm of transportation is undergoing a remarkable transformation, as electric cars emerge as the new norm. Simplified to just two or three core components, any damaged parts can be effortlessly replaced. The added advantage is their independence from traditional fuel sources, rendering skyrocketing petrol prices irrelevant.

The advent of these electric vehicles heralds not just a shift in transportation but a transformation in the very culture of workshops. These futuristic electric marvels boast an impressive range of up to 700 kilometres on a single charge, a feat achievable within a mere three hours. Foreseeing the next decade, these vehicles are poised to integrate seamlessly into Pakistan's landscape, upending traditional paradigms.

As the automotive landscape evolves, it will inevitably reverberate throughout the domain of human resources. To stay relevant, one must commit to acquiring new skills, particularly those centered around technology. Even the construction sector will undergo a transformation, with a dwindling need for expansive office spaces as remote work becomes a prevailing norm. The perks of remote work are multifaceted

– not only does it conserve fuel, but it also slashes production costs and spurs the cultivation of innovative home-based workspaces.

It is essential to embrace these imminent shifts; adaptation is the key to staying aligned with the global trajectory. Failing to do so can lead to being left behind. A key factor in India's marked progress lies in its early integration of technology into the societal fabric. The landscape of business culture itself is undergoing a renaissance. Armed with this understanding, you are primed to enter the market armed with innovative concepts.

It is essential that we reshape our education system in parallel with these transformations. Immediate attention should be directed towards this, so our educational institutions can empower youth to not just keep up with the changes, but to flourish in this dynamically evolving world.

Chapter 19

Highlights from NETSOL's Journey (2001-06)

2001: The Year of Learning

Understanding Our Worth

I vividly remember Tom Martin, the owner of an American software company. My journey led me to reach out to him for guidance on marketing NETSOL in the United States. He kindly granted me an appointment, and I travelled to the States to showcase my software. Tom personally welcomed me at the Texas airport and then took me to his office. Stepping into his office, I saw a vision of the kind of workspace I had always dreamed of having.

As I entered his room, I handed over the software CD to him. Tom inserted it into his computer, and as he explored the software, he seemed genuinely impressed. When he asked about the price, I mentioned it was fifty thousand dollars. Upon hearing this, he returned the disc and mentioned that he could not sell the software.

He said, "Salim, the customers I deal with have huge portfolios. I cannot sell them a fifty-thousand dollar software to maintain a billion-dollar portfolio."

Although my business deal with Tom did not materialize, I learned a valuable lesson for my business growth: never to undervalue your work. I understood the perils of under-pricing something that was worth much more, realizing such actions can compromise both the intrinsic worth of a product and its perception by others.

Our endeavours in London were more successful. Naeem Ghauri (Chairman, NETSOL) was collaborating with Mercedes-Benz, and we

established our office in London to enhance our operations, leading to substantial revenue growth.

During that year, a widespread assumption gained momentum – the manual business world was transitioning into the online era. Companies worldwide rushed to invest in online shopping software, pouring millions into preparations for the digital age.

However, this transition was not without its challenges. The online culture was still in its infancy, and companies struggled with incomplete projects due to administrative difficulties and slow internet speeds. Amidst these obstacles, NETSOL flourished to some extent.

In 2001, the IT industry faced its first major challenge called the ‘dotcom crash’. Many companies left projects unfinished, while some even closed down due to investor withdrawal. The business environment rapidly deteriorated, causing projects worth millions for NETSOL to crumble overnight. The IT sector in the United States faced a grim situation too, with NASDAQ stock plummeting from 5,000 to 1,000 points. NETSOL was not immune to losses, but NETSOL’s setbacks were relatively minor compared to larger investors who suffered immense losses.

Welcoming General Pervez Musharraf to NETSOL

In the heart of February, NETSOL was on the brink of celebrating its fifth anniversary. Eager to celebrate this milestone, we decided to host a grand celebration. We extended an invitation to the President of Pakistan at the time, General Pervez Musharraf, to honour the occasion as the chief guest.

To our surprise and joy, he accepted. During the event, an extraordinary announcement echoed through the air—a groundbreaking declaration

that the entire IT industry within Pakistan would be exempt from taxes for the next 15 years. It was a momentous decision, and NETSOL deserves credit for influencing this pivotal decision that benefited the entire Pakistani IT sector.

President General Pervez Musharraf's attendance reflected his commitment to the country's progress. However, my perception of him underwent a shift when he held a referendum in his favor. Nevertheless, NETSOL's triumphant survival over its five-year journey stood as a remarkable accomplishment by then.

Following our company's entry into the American stock market, investor pressure began to mount. These investors started exerting considerable strain on Najeeb Ghauri (CEO, NETSOL United States). Despite his wealth of experience, the investors' demands proved challenging to fulfil at that juncture. The situation worsened progressively each day. The involvement of the "hedge fund" company added an extra layer of complexity to our predicament. On top of it all, we embarked on the development of software for Mercedes-Benz Singapore, right after the turbulent dotcom crash in the United States. We found ourselves caught in a whirlwind from all sides.

Financial constraints tightened its grip, leaving us struggling to pay our dedicated employees. It reached a point where the situation became dire, and there were insufficient funding even for salaries. Through collective efforts, the management and I resolved the salary crisis by dipping into my personal account. Yet, this was not a merely temporary fix—another month loomed ahead, and uncertainty clouded the horizon. Hope for improvement remained elusive, leaving us pondering what the coming days might bring.

The Value of Relationships

In life, financial crises often lead us to consider choices that we might never entertain under normal circumstances. A similar juncture arrived in our journey. When every avenue seemed blocked, consulting my brother, Najeeb Ghauri (CEO, NETSOL United States) led me down a rather unconventional path.

We reached out to Mercedes-Benz, seeking to reclaim the guarantee money we had paid. In retrospect, this request seemed almost illogical, as it was not even their obligation to fulfil. This venture appeared to be an uphill battle, but left with no alternative, I contacted Eugen Beckert (CIO, Mercedes-Benz). As anticipated, his initial response echoed the scepticism of others—what were we even talking about?

The demand to return the guarantee for a project slated to run for two more years raised valid questions, ones for which I had no concrete answers. The only anchor was the longstanding relationship we shared. It was a plea founded on trust and rooted in the belief that our bond held value. However, as this appeal came from a corporate giant, expecting such a substantial favor on an individual level seemed improbable.

As I conveyed the dire straits our company was facing, Eugen's hands were tied. He suggested a more expansive approach—approaching the Managing Directors in Australia and Taiwan, where the projects were active. Sharing my case with them proved to be a taxing endeavour, forcing me to swallow my pride and plead for assistance. Despite the painful process, my trip to Singapore was shadowed by hushed whispers, leaving my reputation in question.

In business, the thread of goodwill is finely woven, dependent on fair practices. Any misstep can unravel years of trust. Thus, with a mix of

anticipation and trepidation, I presented my case to the company executives. Their inquiry was pointed—would our company fold if they did not accede to our request? With conviction, I assured them that the company's survival was my unwavering commitment. The meeting's aftermath found me in another room, awaiting their verdict. Without legal obligation, their decision was uncertain.

Upon their call back, their response caught me off guard—they agreed to return the guarantee amount, but with a unique condition. The sum would be reimbursed in monthly instalments of \$100,000. Swiftly, I accepted. This marked another chapter in NETSOL's history—a moment where my argument held no sway, yet my plea was acknowledged. Reflecting on it now, it's perplexing how I compromised on my own dignity, all for the greater good of the company. The objective was to ensure job security for hundreds of employees.

Throughout this intricate journey, Eugen's friendship remained steadfast. His support during the meetings was unwavering, devoid of any deceit. Additionally, our longstanding approach of treating clients well, prioritizing their satisfaction over mere profit, paid dividends. Mercedes-Benz's satisfaction with our work and attitude paved the way for the favor we received during those trying times.

“Another River Was Facing Me”

The story of our trials and tribulations does not end here.

In the United States, a new obstacle emerged—our largest shareholder, led by Jonathan, filed a lawsuit against Najeeb Ghauri (CEO, NETSOL United States) and the company's board. The legal premise was that if a company holds 10% of shares, it can manipulate control by showcasing 51% to remaining shareholders. When they attempted to execute this

manoeuvre and gain control, an intricate legal battle commenced in the United States. Our legal team reassured us, asserting that our 60% ownership would quash their ambitions.

It gradually emerged that their motive was not rooted in company management, but rather in propping up the share price at any cost. Their ploy seemed more about recovering losses than about running the company. As they realized legal victory was improbable, their focus shifted to commandeering NETSOL's US office.

One day, Najeeb received a call—a representative from the Hatch Company had occupied our office. Swiftly responding, he, accompanied by a team of lawyers and security personnel, forcefully reclaimed the office. To our astonishment, one of NETSOL's board members joined their cause, even issuing a letter asserting Najeeb's dismissal in favor of Jonathan. All these actions were deemed illegal and were sensationalized through a media release, echoing worldwide.

Predictably, these events left our US-based employees distraught. Their anxiety was unsurprising—after all, their workspace was seized, casting doubt on their job security. Swift action was imperative to manage this crisis. While the legal battle was entrusted to our legal team, I understood the importance of sustaining employee morale. Inviting the team to my home, we collaborated, reinforcing our commitment to their welfare.

Meanwhile, Jonathan's team scoured office files, gathering evidence in their pursuit of ownership. The dispute garnered press coverage, with attempts to hinder our trading proving futile. It took three months for the court to resolve this matter. Investor pressure mounted as legal complications allowed Jonathan to maintain his stranglehold on the

office. General Pervez Musharraf's assurance that NETSOL's Pakistan office would remain unoccupied was reassuring. Despite negotiations, an amicable resolution remained elusive, compelling us to seek legal intervention. Both parties were tasked with proving fifty percent shares. Our legal team successfully refuted the opponents' claim, leading to the court's ruling that Jonathan and his colleagues vacate NETSOL's office within two hours. This marked a significant victory, sparing us from an immense crisis, forever etched in NETSOL's history.

Post-court ruling, NETSOL appeared rejuvenated in the United States. The arduous task of rebuilding the company and restoring investor confidence lay ahead. Lessons learned during this ordeal underscored the importance of ethical conduct, resisting wrongful actions and unlawful measures. Staying true to integrity eventually reaps rewards, even when the journey is strenuous. Maintaining moral fortitude in the face of adversity leads to eventual success , a lesson firmly ingrained in my beliefs.

This year unfurled a series of challenges. The aftermath of the dot-com crash was soon overshadowed by the tragic events of 9/11. With Pakistan bordering Afghanistan, the impact was profound. Pressure mounted to shut our Pakistan office, yet the unanimous decision of NETSOL's board was to keep it operational. My resolve to weather this storm remained steadfast, despite mounting concerns and cancelled orders. Amidst this uncertainty, our workforce, then in the hundreds, brimmed with anxiety about their job security. Acknowledging their apprehensions, we assured them that retaining their positions was a priority.

Reassured, employees redirected their focus to their tasks, allowing us to maintain product quality even during trying times. Striving to enhance our operations, we pursued CMMI certification, providing global training to ensure excellence. Amid these efforts, I recalled the need to solicit work from clients. As with the construction of Shaukat Khanum Hospital, where Imran Khan's relentless pleas were instrumental, I too reached out to acquaintances, often requesting work with fervour. This persistence eventually bore fruit in unexpected ways.

Networking brought me to Henry, the Managing Director of Toyota, Thailand, through a mutual connection, Peter Kells, the Managing Director of Mercedes-Benz, Thailand. Our initial conversations bore no fruit, but a persistent exchange of emails led to a breakthrough.

A chance email from Toyota's United States' office set the stage for a pivotal discussion. Our joint presentation at Toyota's Thailand office led to a positive outcome—they purchased our software. This instance exemplified the power of relationships cultivated over time, solidified through honesty and respect.

In this intricate dance of challenges and triumphs, the value of relationships and unwavering ethical conduct stood out. These principles, combined with unyielding perseverance, fuelled NETSOL's journey to success, teaching me the invaluable lesson that humility and integrity are the foundations of enduring achievement.

2002: The Year of Failures and Resilience

During this year, we expanded our horizons to Australia by establishing a permanent presence there. However, new challenges awaited us on this path. The financial landscape was different, and an opportunity emerged from St. George Bank in Australia. We dedicated ourselves to

securing this project, even going so far as to send a team of four to Sydney, at our expense. We tirelessly exerted ourselves over several days, aiming to meet their demands. Yet, financial constraints and high costs added pressure to our pursuit. Our determination to secure the work was unyielding.

The project was valued at two million dollars, and we spared no effort for it. After our efforts, we eagerly awaited their decision. Unfortunately, we learned that the bank had chosen another company for the project. This news was disheartening and led to a period of despondency among us. However, we must remember that outcomes are not always within our control. We can only give our best and leave the rest to fate. As they say, every endeavour holds some benefit, and if our prayers are not answered, it is because there is something better ahead.

This experience reflected a recurring theme in our journey. Sometimes, what we think we want might not align with what is best for us. In hindsight, we realized that even if we had obtained the software, we might not have been able to harness its potential effectively. Thus, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Allah's grace guided us to projects aligned with our strengths, bolstering our reputation and enhancing our performance. My goal of obtaining CMMI certification remained steadfast. Despite financial constraints, I resolved to undergo regular company audits to achieve this objective.

I sought expertise from Singapore to ensure a thorough evaluation. This pragmatic approach illuminated our standing and clarified our position. Effective leaders in business base their decisions on reality, not assumptions. In business, ignoring facts can result in immediate losses. My personal anticipation regarding the audit's outcome differed from

reality. Although I expected NETSOL to be at level three, the report indicated we stood at level two. This was an eye-opener, demonstrating the significance of acknowledging room for improvement.

Embracing this truth is the first step toward success. It takes courage to recognize areas that need enhancement, and this recognition fuels motivation. NETSOL became the pioneering Pakistani company to undergo regular operational audits, a decision that cost ten thousand dollars— a considerable sum given our financial constraints. Paying this bill necessitated careful financial planning and stretched our resources, but it was a pivotal step that we deemed essential.

Our goal now is to attain level five certification. This aspiration became clearer following the audit. Sometimes, enduring temporary setbacks can pave the way for long-term success. Despite the challenges, our commitment to growth and improvement remained unwavering, a testament to our resilience and dedication.

2003: The Year of Silence and Reflection

This particular year did not unfold ideally in any aspect. Instead, it marked a pause in the journey of progress.

The events that occurred seemed to move forward at a consistent pace. Challenges were proving manageable, and there were no major disruptions to the calm surface. Just as people experience various phases in life, companies also navigate their ups and downs. Some years propel them to the peak, while glimpses of such moments in the future remain unclear. At times, good fortunes shift unexpectedly, and crises emerge to shake the foundation. This year, however, lacked the typical vigour and excitement. Yet, amid this, some personal events unfolded.

One significant event was the passing of one of our dearest family members, our uncle. The year's highlight, though, might have been the absence of excessive workload, which allowed for contemplation and strategic planning. It is vital to carve out time from a hectic schedule to reevaluate and recalibrate our goals. Nature provides us with this chance.

During bustling times, the need for additional workforce intensifies, crucial for timely project completion. Even with money flowing, its impact might not be deeply felt due to ongoing expenses. However, when quieter years arrive, the same workforce that was once a boon starts to face challenges. Navigating the financial load becomes a burden. Personally, I prefer to shoulder this weight rather than resort to layoffs. If these team members have contributed to revenue generation during prosperous times, then weathering minor storms becomes reasonable. Your team comprises diverse individuals, and their collective efforts may have spurred exponential growth, sometimes even behind the scenes. If someone is part of your team, they should stand together through thick and thin. It is the responsibility of the organization's leaders compared to the employees.

Institutions can endure shocks, but if employees' salaries are suddenly halted, their families might face hardships. In such cases, a cushion should be provided, allowing them the choice to seek employment elsewhere. Yet, it is also the organization's responsibility to retain its employees for as long as feasible.

2004: The Year of Winning Back Fate's Favor

It is said that silence precedes a storm, but that storm does not always bring ruin. The turbulence that follows silence can usher in progress, unveil newfound opportunities, and reveal the doors of fortune. After a

quiet year, the subsequent year was marked by vibrant activity and growth.

During this pivotal year, NETSOL embarked on a pivotal journey into China. The catalyst behind this move was Dr. Wolf Bay, with whom I had cultivated a rapport with while he was the Managing Director of Mercedes-Benz in Taiwan. Following the establishment of Mercedes-Benz's presence in China, they sought our expertise to create software tailored for the Chinese market. Despite some concerns posed by the head office in Germany, we were granted the Chinese contract through divine blessings.

Venturing into such a significant market like China was a historic milestone, an accomplishment that we were deeply grateful for. Just as our entry into the United States market and our listing on NASDAQ had its own significance, our expansion into China was equally momentous. These are the chapters that stand out, etched in golden letters within the annals of corporate history, constantly revisited with pride.

Concurrently, in this same year, we celebrated the completion of our new office building. This ambitious project took five years to come to fruition. It was a period when the landscape around the NETSOL office was devoid of structures, and traffic jams were unheard of. A narrow path led to the building's location. However, during those five years, from the acquisition of the land to the building's completion, transformation was palpable. A proper road was constructed, heralding increased traffic and economic activities. Roads, often underestimated, play a pivotal role in stimulating commerce. As more people traverse an area, entrepreneurial minds flourish, igniting fresh ideas and fostering

business growth. Our new building was a true milestone, a testament to our progress.

The joy within our staff was palpable. The familial atmosphere that has been integral to NETSOL since its inception lent the move the sense of a family transitioning from a rented house to a permanent home. Radiant satisfaction was painted across every face. Personally, this development brought me immense happiness. We promptly set in motion plans to commemorate the inauguration of the new building. This celebration held special significance as NETSOL, being Pakistan's pioneering IT Company, represented the country's technological capital. This aspiration was shared with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, with the hope that he would grace the inauguration with his presence, understanding the historic importance of the occasion. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz embraced our invitation, and amid a grand ceremony, inaugurated the building. News of the Prime Minister's participation spread across the nation, acquainting people with NETSOL's mission. The Australian High Commissioner also attended. Zarvika McCarthy, delighted by the founder's Australian roots, wished us well in our journey. A new golden age had dawned.

2005: The Year of Accomplishments and New Opportunities

With the move to our new office building, a fresh surge of energy revitalized our endeavours. The team's confidence soared within the walls of the new establishment. The challenges that once plagued our office operations were permanently resolved, allowing our focus to focus on our work. A renewed enthusiasm enveloped us as new projects were undertaken and esteemed guests graced our premises, including notable figures like Ryan C. Crowe, the then US Ambassador to Pakistan.

As our workspace expanded, so did our workload, prompting us to bolster our workforce with HR's expert assistance. Our collaborations extended to Mercedes-Benz Japan, and we cemented agreements with Toyota in China. This year also witnessed our establishment of a modest office in China and the formation of our own UK-based company, "CQ System," designed to tap into the UK market. On the local front, we ventured into the Karachi Stock Exchange and even acquired an American company named "Maceo System." The year 2005 was replete with accomplishments, a splendid reward for the preceding period of quiet.

This resurgence of the company not only enriched our reputation but also conferred upon me a sense of personal honour in Australia. During a meeting with the Australian High Commissioner in Islamabad, the offer to establish the Australian High Commission in Lahore was extended to me.

Although an enticing proposition, I approached my family for consultation. A decision of this magnitude required thoughtful deliberation. Ultimately, I declined the offer, a choice I arrived at after internal reflection and discussion with my family. While I could have readily accepted such an esteemed role, my heart and my responsibilities lay with NETSOL. This episode underscored the intertwining of my identity with the company.

Becoming a part of the Karachi Stock Exchange marked a significant milestone. The listing process necessitated funds, which we aimed to raise through public avenues. At that juncture, NETSOL was nine years old, holding a prestigious CMMI Level Three certification. Throughout our journey, various factors attempted to discourage us, yet my resolve

remained unwavering. My secret to sustaining positive momentum was simple: keeping negativity at bay and maintaining an optimistic outlook. I held onto trust in my abilities, worked diligently, and surrendered the outcomes to a higher power.

Success, I believe, is rooted in focusing on what lies within your control. Leverage your strengths, forge ahead with unwavering determination, and refrain from dwelling on the uncontrollable. This philosophy has been my guiding light on the path to achievement. My journey's essence lies in understanding that obstacles can be overcome, and disappointments can be transformed into stepping stones toward an aspirational destination.

2006: The Year of Perseverance and Triumph

For years, I embarked on a relentless pursuit of a dream, making tough choices that not only affected my own life but also the lives of my team and family. These decisions were unconventional and often left people bewildered, questioning my path. Amidst crises that arose, I steadfastly upheld a commitment to unwavering quality. Some labelled me as eccentric, a maverick navigating an unconventional course outside the conventional market norms. Yet, I was resolute in my purpose, fully aware of the potential consequences.

Realizing a dream while sacrificing personal comfort and resources is no simple feat. However, the emotional swell that accompanies its achievement is beyond control. There have been instances in my life when emotions took hold, and one such poignant moment occurred when NETSOL achieved the coveted CMME Level Five certification.

Even though our initial target was not fully met, the significance was not lost on us. Our mission to distinguish NETSOL from its peers remained

unwavering. This commitment led us to incur expenses, escalating from ten thousand dollars to one hundred thousand dollars for the audit. Nevertheless, undeterred, we persisted.

With the help of an expert evaluator from Sweden, we meticulously navigated the assessment process. Upon its completion, the declaration came—a proclamation that echoed across the nation—that NETSOL was the first Pakistani company to attain such a prestigious level. At that moment, emotions overwhelmed me. Tears cascaded down my cheeks in unabashed streams, yet I paid them no heed. The mission I had set out to accomplish was realized, and the joy was simply irrepressible.

Few experiences compare to witnessing a dream, initially conceived with eyes wide open, morph into reality. It is a feeling that defies articulation. When the world sceptically declares, "It cannot be done," and you prove them wrong, the sense of accomplishment is indescribable. During that remarkable year, another congratulatory message arrived—an announcement that the Australian government intended to appoint me as Honorary Consul in Punjab. The acknowledgment from my homeland further emphasized the profound journey I had undertaken.

Amidst this whirlwind of sacrifices, persistence, and eventual triumphs, I learned that dreams are worth chasing, even when they demand more than you thought possible. The rollercoaster ride of audacious decisions, unfaltering commitment, and unexpected recognition highlighted that life's most exquisite moments emerge when one dare to defy expectations.

Following the attainment of the coveted Level Five certification, a tidal wave of opportunities surged in from China. The influx of assignments was so immense that the entire year seemed to be enshrouded in the

vibrant energies of China's business landscape. NETSOL was swept up in an unstoppable momentum, leaving little room to glance back. NETSOL, once weathering the tumultuous challenges of events like 9/11 and the dot-com crash, had now found its stride and was forging a path towards triumph. The turbulence of the past was fading into history, ushering in a fresh chapter characterized by relentless effort and achievement.

The pages of this new era were inscribed with a singular focus: work. The refrain echoed through the corridors of NETSOL — "We must see," and indeed, I witnessed it all first-hand. The hustle and bustle of the NETSOL's bustling endeavours were palpable, a testament to its ongoing journey of growth and success.

“Make your family your strength by respecting and valuing the input of every member. I believe multiple Ghauri hands help us lift much more weight than a single pair of hands ever can.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 20

The Family Factor in Business

In the world of business, documentation holds immense importance. Even in classic texts like the Holy Qur'an, there is a command emphasizing the need to write things down when dealing with each other. However, this practice is somewhat lacking in our Indian subcontinent. Many crucial matters, such as land transfers and agreements, are often settled orally, leading to problems down the line. Elders often fail to document their children's affairs, resulting in disputes over property and business divisions.

I know of a family that neglected the crucial step of documenting their investments in a business. Despite working together for thirty years, they never recorded how much each brother had invested. While love has its place, adhering to a clear procedure through contracts is equally vital. Even when brothers work together, the fear of future conflicts looms large, especially among their children.

Years ago, I discussed my interest in starting a business in Pakistan with my brother, Shahab Ghauri. I expressed my concern about the lack of capital, and to my surprise, he offered to invest in my venture. When I was worried about the risks, he simply said that in business, anything can happen, but he trusted my abilities.

After this conversation, I made the journey from Australia to Pakistan, where my brother handed me a cheque for two million rupees. We

agreed to be equal partners, with him respecting my autonomy in decision-making. It is often said that one should not mix business with close relationships like blood or friendship, and there is truth in that, but only when matters are clearly documented. This helps prevent potential conflicts.

Running a partnership, especially one involving significant capital, is no easy feat. Misunderstandings are almost inevitable as a business grows, and disputes can arise among siblings. These issues tend to intensify after marriage, and external factors can further exacerbate them. Friends or external parties may try to sow discord among partners.

In the current era, marked by challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone faces difficulties on both personal and collective levels. Common people's businesses were severely impacted, and even successful entrepreneurs could not escape its effects. Nevertheless, as economic activities gradually recover, business owners must balance their time between work and family.

The compulsion to work extensively is not solely due to external factors like the pandemic. Some individuals become accustomed to long work hours, spending 80 hours a week at the office and venting frustrations about colleagues at home. Our professional lives often influence our personal relationships, and success often comes at the cost of time, effort, and leisure.

In his book "Successful Business Man," Qamar Iqbal Sufi points out that a lack of clear purpose and time distribution can lead to failures in both business and marriage. Distractions hinder our ability to focus on specific goals, ultimately harming both our businesses and relationships. Positive

thinking alone is not sufficient for success; it requires goal-oriented action.

Lynn Taylor, in "The Strict Office Boss Quorum," suggests that excessively intertwining business with marriage can strain family relationships and lead to mental stress and overwork habits.

In today's world, where these issues are common, successful businesspeople like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs serve as models. They excel at separating work from personal life, making family a priority. They plan their time efficiently to maximize productivity.

Islamic teachings also emphasize the importance of family life, and we should not neglect our families in pursuit of economic success. When handing over a business to a family member or key employee, succession planning is crucial. This process involves documenting all aspects of the business, assigning responsibilities, and providing training for a seamless transition.

A study on family businesses found that only 30% of first-generation businesses successfully transferred to the second generation. Proper succession planning is essential for business growth. When selecting a successor for a key role, look for someone qualified and trustworthy who can uphold the company culture.

In matters of business, whether it is working together, investing in an existing business, or collaborating with family, the golden rule is to document everything. Shared responsibilities are only effective when everyone knows their roles. Additionally, if the business is to be passed down to the next generation, a clear procedure should be established. Proper agreements prevent conflicts and crises.

Omar Ghauri, the COO of NETSOL, emphasizes that crises are part of business, but unity within the family is crucial. Differences may arise, but open dialogue and a positive attitude can resolve them. Mistrust only worsens problems. Leadership and honesty are key, ensuring that everyone works together toward common goals. By following these principles, mutual differences can be resolved, and businesses can thrive.

“In the race of progress, it is not about falling behind, but recognizing the need to catch up and unleash the untapped potential of our youth.”

– Salim Ghauri

Chapter 21

Pakistan's "Youth Bomb"

In Pakistan's business circles, a recurring question pops up: Why are we falling behind India?

This question surfaces whether I am participating in a talk show or attending private gatherings. My response to this query is always straightforward: we are not trailing India; rather, India recognized the industry's demands two decades ahead of us. They delved into IT much earlier. India introduced IT to its youth in the fifties and sixties and began emphasizing its importance in schools. Unfortunately, we lagged behind in this aspect. Even our highly intelligent, degree-holding youth lacked basic computer knowledge. Additionally, many village schools in Pakistan lack computers and IT instructors.

Although there has been some progress at the college and university level, it is essential to take IT awareness to the grassroots level across the country. Traditional businesses are evolving, and the age of conventional thinking is coming to an end. The ability to innovate is now a valuable commodity.

In this changing landscape, those who recognize the shift are proactively involving the younger generation in their teams. This shift is necessary because Pakistan boasts one of the world's largest youth populations, and we are in dire need of fresh perspectives, ideas, and innovation. You do not need to work until old age to become wealthy anymore. If you

have a compelling idea, you can achieve financial success at a young age. Thus, it is the perfect time to harness Pakistan's youth potential.

Our youth are talented, as evidenced by the success of expatriates who excel abroad. It is a shame that we are unable to harness their talents within our own country. Both the government and business think tanks need to address this issue. Opportunities for growth are abundant, and we must empower our youth. Out of the 1.8 billion young people aged 10 to 24 worldwide, 10 million enter the workforce each month. To succeed, they require education, skills, and training, but are they receiving these necessities? Are they learning the right skills? Do they have access to career counselling? Unfortunately, in many third-world countries, including Pakistan, the answer is often "no."

Furthermore, the potential of these young minds often goes untapped in countries struggling with extremism due to limited resources and unemployment. In places like Nigeria, for instance, frustrated youth have joined extremist groups. Even educated graduates have been part of these movements, as they sought solutions to their problems.

It is important to recognize that youth exposed to weaponry can also excel in business if given the right guidance early on. Therefore, the key question is: What are we teaching our youth? They are not just future employees and customers; they are the dreamers, doers, and thinkers of tomorrow. They are the future business leaders who can create innovative solutions, make medical breakthroughs, revolutionize transportation, build sustainable economies, and contribute to a more peaceful world.

In our rapidly changing world, globalization and technology are reshaping the global economy and the skills required to thrive. Today,

the quality and effectiveness of education, skills, and training are more critical than ever.

I frequently visit educational institutions to share my experiences and insights with students. These sessions are not driven by financial gain; instead, my aim is to guide and inspire young minds, helping them understand the right path to personal and professional development. The purpose of writing this book is to raise awareness about the importance of IT and how it can be leveraged to work smarter, not harder, in business.

While we have technical education institutions, our culture still leans towards encouraging young individuals to become bureaucrats and issue orders, rather than becoming experts in their chosen fields. The massive crowds at competitive exam coaching centers are evidence that our youth lacks proper guidance. Meanwhile, technology advances have made many job roles within organizations redundant. Mobile banking and online platforms have reduced the need for a large workforce. As a result, unemployment is rising, and job opportunities are shrinking.

In such a scenario, we need a well-coordinated system in place, with the government taking responsibility. We cannot allow our youth to feel lost in the sea of uncertainty.

To involve youth in the IT sector, we need initiatives to raise awareness about IT and related fields like data science, computer science, and software engineering. Youngsters should understand the minimum education requirements and where to acquire relevant skills. Every business seeks a workforce equipped with modern technology skills. There are opportunities for fresh graduates to gain hands-on experience and contribute to the nation's growth while enhancing their own skills.

I hope that after reading this book, young people will be inspired to change their perspectives. The words within these pages reflect not just the content of a book but the real-life journey of a practical individual who began from scratch and made a name for himself worldwide.

“In the world of business, recognizing the need for change and effectively navigating the complexities of human interactions are the true hallmarks of leadership and success.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 22

The Businessman as a Psychologist

In the year 1998, a customer from Germany came to Lahore and spent two days with me. When he was about to leave, he said something that left a lasting impression. He asked me, "Why do your people tend to be defensive?" Naturally, I asked him to elaborate, and he explained that whenever he pointed out something wrong or criticized a task, people would immediately start making excuses and giving explanations. He emphasized that it's okay to admit mistakes. Hearing this observation about my people from a German was quite eye-opening. It made me realize that, indeed, we often react that way.

From that day on, whenever I interacted with a customer, I made a conscious effort to listen attentively to every word they said, even if they were mistaken. My team members would be puzzled when they saw me smiling while the customer was clearly wrong. But when the customer finished explaining, I would calmly say, "You're right." This simple acknowledgment often had a profound effect. The customer felt heard and understood, and they became more receptive to my perspective. They no longer felt the need to argue because their point had been acknowledged.

Dealing with people is arguably the most intricate job in the world. Human attitudes are complex and crucial. In the business world, your team plays a pivotal role, from building products to providing services. Both the creators and the consumers of these products and services are

people. Therefore, it is vital to maintain a balanced relationship between them. Ensuring the satisfaction of your team while also meeting the needs of your customers is an absolute necessity for any successful business.

Imagine your business is thriving, and your product or service is in high demand, but your best employees decide to leave. For instance, if you have started a food delivery service or a restaurant and people love your food, losing your chef could be a significant setback. Any change in taste could alienate your customers. Hence, the challenge lies in keeping your employees content, possibly by increasing their salaries, offering extra time off, or improving their working conditions, all while maintaining your self-esteem and profitability. It is a bit like walking a tightrope.

On the other side of the equation, your customers are also individuals with their own psychology and needs. To cater to them effectively, you must conduct personal interviews, market research, and surveys. It is crucial to continuously compare your product with competing offerings in the market. Creating customer loyalty and attachment to your product or service is vital for business growth. This might require different marketing strategies and tactics depending on your business' scale.

Here is an example: In certain areas where Saraiki people lived, they did not consume Coca-Cola. The company was concerned and unsure how to capture their attention. It was discovered in a meeting that the Saraiki people were passionate about the songs of Attaullah Isa Khelvi. So, a brilliant idea emerged – they gave Attaullah Isa Khelvi a bottle of Coca-Cola to hold in advertisements in print media. People, seeing their beloved singer endorsing the product, started using it. This goes to show

that understanding the psychology of your customers is a pivotal component of running a successful business.

Some Personal Experiences and Observations

People tend to admire success. They love to be around successful individuals and bask in their achievements.

Let me share a little story with you: Once, I checked out of a hotel in Dubai and hailed a taxi to go somewhere. The taxi driver, however, advised me not to proceed. Another taxi pulled up behind, and I decided to hop in. To my surprise, the new driver recognized me as Salim Ghauri and expressed his admiration as a fan. I was curious about how he knew me, and he explained that he follows Pakistan and me on social media through his smartphone.

I have noticed that some people go through life merely existing, living for the perception of others, and constantly fearing judgment. It is crucial to remember that no matter what people may say, living life to the fullest requires living for yourself and your own happiness.

Now, let me tell you about an adventure with some old friends. We decided to take a trip to Thailand to escape our daily routines and experience a different way of life. None of us brought our families; this was a journey just for ourselves. The biggest debate revolved around our destination choice. We all shared responsibilities, with each of us taking charge of various aspects of the trip. Planning a trip for a group of six or seven people is not as straightforward as it sounds. During our visit, we deliberately steered clear of any official work. Traveling is a constant learning process; it exposes you to new experiences and broadens your horizons.

Speaking of experiences, let's talk about love. Love can be a complex and varied emotion for different people. For me, if I find myself constantly thinking about someone, it is a sign of love. In my view, the key to a successful marriage lies in love, whether it is a love marriage or an arranged one. What truly matters is your ability to tolerate, understand, and accept each other's strengths and weaknesses. I have seen love marriages falter after just a few years because the couples could not comprehend or endure each other's differences.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending the HEC (Higher Education Commission) Reforms Conference, at the invitation of the Prime Minister. I was heartened to see positive progress. The current government is making strides in acknowledging its shortcomings and strives to bridge the gap between itself and the people. They have plans to repurpose government buildings into universities and centers for public welfare. The conference also delved into improving Pakistan's education system and producing a more skilled workforce. I suggested a shift towards virtual education. Despite efforts to expand physical schools, many children still remain out of school. I proposed bringing education directly to the people, using devices, and reaching every household, street, and village in the country.

Let me share an inspiring example from my time in Australia in 1980. Although it is a vast country with a relatively small population, they managed to implement a wireless education system. Each morning at 9 a.m., a single teacher would instruct students in hundreds of households simultaneously through wireless broadcasts. Even in areas without traditional schools, they succeeded. If Australia could do it, why cannot we create a similar system for ourselves? We can provide one test device to a designated person in each village, who can then gather local children

for daily lessons. With 80% of Pakistan now having 4G service, it is time to embrace technology in education and make necessary changes to our system.

Medical science has made tremendous advancements, and people now live well into their 80s, a significant increase from the past. Diseases, although more prevalent, have seen corresponding improvements in treatment. This is a remarkable achievement in the field of medical science. We must continue to enhance our medical system to meet the evolving needs of the times. In the past, people often passed away without a clear understanding of their illnesses, such as diabetes or cancer. Today, we benefit from the medical revolution, and the average lifespan has significantly increased.

Population Growth: A Ticking Time Bomb

The growing population in Pakistan is a pressing concern that demands our attention. If we do not implement effective birth control measures, we could face a crisis in the next fifteen to twenty years, with a population nearing 300 million. This would overwhelm our resources and potentially lead to internal strife and civil unrest.

Our society has become increasingly complex, making it challenging to understand people's perspectives and behaviours. To address these issues, we need a comprehensive campaign, particularly targeting the younger generation. Education is the key. We should incorporate discussions about the importance of smaller families into school curriculum, instilling the idea that planning for smaller families can help prevent future crises. Education is the only path forward.

Be Supportive

I have had the privilege of working with many talented individuals who have later received better job offers or started their own businesses. I have always supported their decisions to move on and encouraged their growth. I never stand in the way of anyone's success. It reminds me of a story: When Steve Jobs was nearing the end of his life, he expressed regret that he had not seen more of the world or fully enjoyed life. Despite building a multi-billion-dollar company, he found that material success could not replace the experiences he missed.

Life is a gift from Allah, and it should be cherished. We must not simply go through the motions. People often fail to fully live life, appreciate relationships, or take time for themselves. Life passes by even as they struggle to enjoy their hard-earned achievements. Challenges and problems are an inevitable part of life, but everyone should find joy in them. This is the art of living.

Success Is a Gratifying Feeling

Recently, I received an award from the Pakistan Software Export Board, recognizing my company NETSOL as Pakistan's top IT exporter. Every award is special, and this one was particularly meaningful for Pakistan. NETSOL has held the title of High East IT Exporter in Pakistan for the past 12 years. Such recognition serves as a reminder that our achievements are valued and have a positive impact.

Leave Workplace Issues at the Office

Work is a means to earn a living, but it comes with its share of challenges. Every day presents new issues that we must tackle independently. However, when we return home, we should leave work problems

behind. Home and family have their own concerns, and bringing work problems into the home can disrupt domestic peace. It is vital to maintain a clear boundary between work and personal life.

Find Peace in Simplicity

Life is often a rush from one task to another. We hurry when going somewhere, eating, or even driving. Slowing down and eliminating haste can bring a sense of peace. When we cultivate calmness in our lives, everything else tends to fall into place.

Find Peace Within Yourself

In recent years, I have made significant changes in my life, which have greatly improved my health and overall well-being. I have learned to live in the present moment and have found peace within myself. It is essential to recognize that we are powerless before nature. Embracing this understanding can bring tranquillity to our lives. We should learn to savour each moment.

Control Your Desires

We must understand that we have no control over fate or the future. While we should continue to work hard and strive for our goals, we should also be content with what we have achieved. Many individuals accumulate wealth but remain unsatisfied, always wanting more. It is important to find a balance between ambition and contentment.

“Success is not a destination, but a continuous journey, shaped by a blend of factors like effort, attitude, and wise choices. In the realms of business and life, it is essential to navigate the complexities with simplicity, embrace change, and focus on the things that truly matter.”
– **Salim Ghauri**

Chapter 23

Social Life of Entrepreneurs

Looking back, I cannot point to a single event that made me successful. Success, I have found, is a result of continuous effort and a blend of factors like luck, intent, and hard work. It is about navigating challenges with simplicity rather than overcomplicating things. Overcoming the fear of failure and avoiding excessive planning are also keys to success. Too much planning can be a waste of time and resources.

Warren Buffett, a legendary investor, shares six invaluable principles for achieving financial success and a contented life:

- 1. Diversify Your Income:** Relying on one income source can lead to financial stress. Having multiple streams of income is a wise choice, as jobs and businesses can be unpredictable.
- 2. Manage Your Expenses:** Spend money only on what you truly need. Avoid unnecessary expenses that may force you to sell important assets later.
- 3. Prioritize Savings:** Save a portion of your income before spending. This ensures financial stability and encourages responsible spending.
- 4. Diversify Your Investments:** Do not put all your savings into one sector. Spread your investments across various sectors to minimize risk.

5. Mitigate Risk: Learn from the mistakes of others and conduct thorough research before taking risks. Always be prepared with a well-thought-out plan.
6. Set Realistic Expectations: Be cautious about trusting others blindly. Making informed decisions can protect you from unnecessary deceit.

The simple philosophy of life is that work is essential for sustenance. We encounter different challenges every day and must find solutions ourselves. However, it is crucial to leave work problems at office and focus on family and home when you return. Rushing through life can lead to stress, so taking a step back and enjoying the present moment can bring peace.

I have made significant changes in my life over the last three years, leading to better health and a more positive outlook. We must acknowledge our powerlessness in the face of nature and destiny, but continuous effort and hard work are essential. While success is essential, we should also strive for contentment and happiness, avoiding the trap of constantly wanting more.

Wise Use of Money

Be happy and savour every moment you have. I had a driver who often faced troubles in his daily life. When he passed away, his family found 65 thousand rupees among his belongings. This humble man had saved by not spending that money on himself, even when his bicycle was broken. It was painful to witness. Maybe he saved that money for tough times, but he never used it for personal enjoyment. Sadly, many people today follow the same path, which is unwise. Everyone's mind is filled with fear of an uncertain future, but no one truly knows what lies ahead. In my

prime, I have seen things deteriorate, like businessmen's warehouses burning down, and then seeing them rise again in prosperity. They could not enjoy life; they were constantly preoccupied with safeguarding their future, but nature had its own plans. We never know what tomorrow holds.

Steve Jobs, a wealthy man, succumbed to cancer. He wrote before his passing that money could not buy him health or happiness. His wealth could not save him. This demonstrates that money can only bring happiness when used wisely. I find contentment in helping others during the day, which helps me sleep better at night.

Family Matters

The divorce rate in Pakistan has reached around forty percent, mainly due to a lack of mental alignment. I believe it is unwise to force two people together. Every boy and girl have the right to lead their own lives. However, both should make an effort to adapt to each other, for marriage is a significant responsibility. It is not a small matter. Joining two individuals with separate minds is a challenging endeavour. I would like to emphasize that parents should step back and consider their children's wishes and desires. Parents should express their wishes but avoid imposing them.

One tragic aspect of our society is that we often see a daughter's suffering but overlook the daughter-in-law's plight. When a girl marries and comes into her new home, she eventually demands to share the kitchen, and that is her right. However, she might only demand it because she is either separated against her will or oppressed to a point where separation is her only choice. Mothers-in-law should also learn to seek happiness. The less they interfere, the happier they will be. Socialize

with friends of your age and change your priorities to enjoy life. Each person should decide their path in life. I believe the current generation can become better parents-in-law because they are more sensible and knowledgeable.

Avoid Negative Thoughts

Negative thinking is rampant in our society. Jealousy and anger are like poison, corroding us from within, leaving us in constant restlessness. They steal our happiness and damage our dignity. To lead a happy life, focus on your own path, express gratitude, and steer clear of negative emotions like anger and jealousy. If you see someone successful and think, "How did they succeed? They were worthless," remember that we do not know the full picture. Allah knows why someone holds a certain position. Jealousy will only disrupt your own life, as their life is not connected to yours. Only your own life is truly yours.

I make an effort to stay close to my wife and children, spending quality time with them and expressing my love. It is these little things that keep us close to our loved ones and bring happiness to our lives.

Have Faith in God

I believe that there is no greater power than nature. Nature has its limits, and we should acknowledge that. It is essential to keep striving and working hard for success, so you never regret not trying.

There was a tragic terrorist attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi, resulting in the deaths of four people, including two fathers and a son who had come to apply for visas. They arrived at the exact time of the attack, and sadly, they lost their lives. I wish their flight had been delayed or they had been stuck in traffic, so they could have survived. But life is

unpredictable, and fate plays its part. The key is to find some solace in the face of adversity. Every moment in the world can be a source of happiness if we embrace it and strive to make it so. Respect your desires and keep working towards them, regardless of what others may say.

"Life is a journey filled with continuous learning, both personally and professionally. Every moment in this world offers an opportunity for growth and exploration. From the inception of NETSOL to my global travels, every step holds lessons that have shaped my understanding of the world and the path to success." - Salim Ghauri

Chapter 24

The World Ahead of Me

Embarking on the NETSOL Journey

NETSOL stands as Pakistan's largest IT powerhouse, with 1,500 employees from Lahore and an additional 200 from around the globe, generating an impressive \$80 million in revenue. Yet, how did this institution come to be? It is a blend of luck, intention, and unyielding hard work.

Once, someone inquired if my goods had yet to arrive. Since, I had not released my product to the market, I advised them that instead of waiting, it is often better to take matters into your own hands. In that moment, I realized that this had been my approach from the very beginning. When I initiated NETSOL, I would venture wherever there was a glimmer of opportunity.

One of my potential clients resided in Singapore, and I held high hopes of securing business from them. There was a Thai Airways flight departing from Lahore at noon, reaching Bangkok just after 6:00 AM. From there, an 8:00 AM flight to Singapore would land at noon. Every two weeks, I took these exact flights to visit my Singaporean client, who kindly invited me for lunch. After lunch, I would promptly return to Lahore because I could not afford to stay in a hotel. I persisted in this

manner for months, hopeful that my efforts would lead to a contract. Thus, NETSOL is the fruit of unwavering determination and persistent hard work.

I possessed a unique gift – the ability to make decisions without worrying about the consequences. Life, in many ways, hinges on our choices. Thoughts constantly flood our minds, but we often fail to act upon them, lost in contemplation. Overthinking gives rise to numerous questions that consume our precious time.

Consider an airport, and you will notice two distinct types of passengers: those departing from home and those returning to it. You can discern the difference by simply observing the people there.

Becoming wise is not solely a product of reading books. I firmly believe that every moment in life offers an opportunity to learn. To me, understanding people is a form of astute reading. If you can decipher what the person next to you wants, you are on the path to success.

The Transforming Power of America

In the past fifty years, the United States of America has emerged as a global powerhouse, reshaping the world. Whether we personally like these changes or not, they are significant. Technology has been a driving force, revolutionizing the way we live and work, yet it has also led to increased unemployment as machines replace human jobs. Our world today heavily relies on technology.

When I entered the field of IT three decades ago, technology was present, but I could not foresee its profound impact on our lives. Europe used to lead in modern manufacturing, but in the last half-century,

America has taken the forefront, both benefiting some and causing mass unemployment.

New York City, a bustling metropolis, often symbolizes the pursuit of wealth and materialism. In 1997, we established NETSOL's office in the U.S., believing it would be our biggest market. By 1998, NETSOL became the first Pakistani company to be listed on the American stock exchange. My view of America is mixed due to the complexities I have encountered.

The Charm of the United Kingdom

Britain, with its rich culture and history, stands in stark contrast to America. British people have a strong attachment to their culture, and I have found that Pakistani culture has also found a place within it. When I am in the UK, it feels like a piece of Pakistan abroad.

In 2005, we expanded our business in the UK, a decision that has proven successful. Currently, we have two thriving offices in different locations. Personally, I prefer Britain to America because of its deep historical roots and cultural preservation.

Enchanting Italy

Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting Italy with my family. Italy's breathtaking scenery and rich historical heritage left a lasting impression. When planning your travels, consider including Italy on your list; it is often more budget-friendly compared to other destinations.

Rejuvenating Nature of Africa

I have been fortunate to spend time in Kenya, immersing myself in its natural beauty. Wandering through its forests and observing animals has been a profound experience. Animals teach us valuable lessons; they

hunt solely for sustenance, not for pleasure, unlike humans who are often trapped in a cycle of accumulation.

The Changing Face of China

In the year 2000, we ventured into China, and by 2004, NETSOL secured its first Chinese customer. Today, China stands as our largest market, undergoing remarkable transformation in the past 18 years. China boasts a rich history and is the world's fastest-growing country.

During my initial visit to China, communication was challenging due to language barriers. However, China recognized the importance of the English language and sent thousands of young people abroad to learn it. The country has made astounding progress over the past two decades. English is not just a language; it is a tool for global communication, something we should all strive to master.

The Promise of Pakistan

I believe Pakistan is on the cusp of significant change in the next decade. The country is heading in the right direction, with a burgeoning young generation. Every person's life journey is unique, and we should not blindly emulate others.

Always ask yourself if you are happy. Pursue what brings you joy and disregard the opinions of others. When facing obstacles, keep striving for your goals. My experience in China taught me that success is a product of unwavering determination and consistent hard work, not shortcuts, and is built on a solid foundation of effort and perseverance.

Unlocking the Lessons of Travel

When you have a task at hand, you tackle it head-on. There is no room for excuses like a lack of resources or personal challenges. The world

does not scrutinize why you did not do something; it simply sees that you did not do it.

In my global travels, I have developed a habit of looking past modernity and focusing on people. I explore the essence of their ancient culture. For instance, if you are in Lahore, you can find the real soul of the city beyond the Danfoss-like contemporary facets. To truly understand Lahore, you must visit its historic gates, where you will encounter its authentic history and culture.

This practice extends to London, a city steeped in history. When I am there, I strive to immerse myself in the genuine, age-old culture of the place, as it offers valuable insights.

Learning from Nature and Culture

Roaming a city and gazing at its buildings alone will not teach you much. The real teachers are the people and their culture. Every culture holds wisdom, and every person has something to offer.

Consider animals in the wild; they hunt only when hungry. Unlike us, they do not hoard more than they need. They understand that excessive hunting would waste their resources and leave them hungry in the future. Nature's design includes a balanced system, where each creature has its role; some animals graze on vegetation, while others feed on meat.

Equal Respect for All Cultures

As we explore new cultures, we must resist the urge to perceive them as inferior or superior to our own. Whether in a culture we perceive as superior or one where we feel oppressed, we should not belittle others.

Instead, we should approach every culture with respect, engage with people, ask about their lives, and share our own experiences.

Respecting other religions and visiting places of worship can be enlightening. Personally, I have benefited from such experiences in my journey.

Learning from Mistakes and Taking Initiative

In life, some decisions will be right, and others, wrong. However, rather than labelling mistakes as failures, I see them as invaluable learning experiences. Mistakes are not shameful; the real shame lies in not trying at all. Mistakes can diminish our fear and lead to personal growth.

Travels in Thailand and Observations on Culture

Thailand offers a lesson in humility. Contrary to misconceptions, the Thai people are kind-hearted and peaceful. Over my two-decade tenure visiting Bangkok, I have rarely witnessed conflicts or loud altercations. Their civility aligns with their religious teachings.

Adapting Education to a Changing World

Our world is evolving rapidly, demanding a corresponding shift in our education system. If we fail to adapt, unemployment will rise, leaving people unprepared for the demands of the modern workforce. Our universities must urgently incorporate skill development into their programs. This necessitates a change in approach by the Higher Education Commission (HEC).

In the era of machines, traditional degrees may become obsolete. We must transition to virtual education, equipping students with practical

skills, not just degrees. In today's world, literacy extends beyond reading and writing; it includes the ability to communicate effectively using digital tools.

Overcoming Pride for Personal Growth

Pride can be a stumbling block. To achieve our goals, we must shed our pride and be willing to give before receiving. This selflessness is a key ingredient in our path to success. By acknowledging our weaknesses and working to overcome them, we strengthen ourselves.

Exploring London and Venice

London, with its rich culture and respectful populace, stands as a testament to the acceptance of diverse cultures. Venice, Italy, offers a unique experience with its stunning water-based architecture and transportation system.

Unlocking Pakistan's Potential in Tourism

Pakistan is blessed with abundant natural beauty and historical treasures. Yet, we have overlooked the potential of promoting tourism in our country. By investing in travel infrastructure, we can boost tourism revenue significantly.

The Vast World of Business Opportunities

Opportunities for business are omnipresent across the globe. Regardless of your location, your skills and abilities can open doors to entrepreneurship and career success. The world is brimming with opportunities; it is up to you to harness them.

The world is vast and beautiful, and my desire to explore it persists. While my travel bucket list is long, I am particularly drawn to places with awe-inspiring natural landscapes, as they resonate with me more than modern cities.

“Success is not just about wealth: it is measured in the richness of relationships and the contentment of the heart and mind.” – Salim Ghauri

Chapter 25

Money or Reputation: What Will Be Your Inheritance?

Success is a journey that many of us embark upon with determination. We toil relentlessly, striving for that moment when our hard work bears fruit. However, it is important to recognize that true success is not merely the achievement of goals, but the test of our character that comes afterward.

When I envisioned NETSOL, my motivation transcended mere financial gain. It was never about acquiring fancy cars, grand homes, or lavish offices. My vision was to empower Pakistanis to contribute their talents in Australia instead of Indians. My purpose was clear: I wanted to make a positive impact on my country. Along this journey, Allah blessed me with financial success, but my original goal remains unwavering even today. As I pen this book, my mission remains unchanged: to share the wisdom and experiences I have gathered so that future generations can learn from them.

NETSOL has operated on the same principles. We do not just focus on the financial bottom line; we are committed to the betterment of humanity. We have supported the education of our employees' children and extended personal assistance during their challenging times.

Serving Humanity: The True Essence

A noble dream is one that aspires to better society, one that seeks to serve humanity. This altruistic spirit is the essence of true humanity. It is

individuals with expansive minds who can ascend to the heights achieved by people like Bill Gates and Elon Musk.

Bill Gates, through his foundation, tirelessly serves countless individuals across the globe, transcending barriers of race, caste, country, and religion. Elon Musk envisions a modernized world and is prepared to invest his entire wealth in making it a reality. Accumulated wealth finds its true value when it is dedicated to the welfare of others.

The Birth of SpaceX and Serving Mankind

Consider SpaceX, initiated when Elon Musk grew frustrated with the state of America's space program. Initially, his goal was to escape Earth, but he soon realized the staggering cost of space technology. Thus began the world's most cost-effective rocket-launching venture. SpaceX was not driven by profit; it aimed to safely land humans on Mars.

Embrace Life with Positivity

Living a life marked by positivity means you do not succumb to panic. Instead of saying, "I will do it," say, "I want and intend to do this work." Personal publicity contradicts the goals of welfare projects. In Pakistan, successful businessmen are often seen publicizing minor donations, like a bar of soap or two kilos of sugar, with photographs.

NETSOL, however, does not engage in such practices. We mention accomplished children, but we respect their self-esteem by refraining from publicizing fee payments.

Success Defined: Beyond Wealth and Status

Success is not synonymous with accumulating vast wealth, acquiring properties, or achieving high status. Success is not solely about material possessions; it is about realizing your potential.

Wealth, on its own, is not inherently good or bad. While some criticize the wealthy, others strive to attain wealth themselves. It is a complex interplay. However, we must not forget that money is not the root of all evil; the misuse of money is the issue. True success encompasses health, family, and genuine relationships.

The Power of Contentment

Money cannot buy health, meaningful relationships, or genuine friendships. It cannot purchase the priceless. Wealth may make life more comfortable, but it does not necessarily bring fulfilment. Achieving prosperity should not come at the expense of relationships and values.

I have never neglected my friends or simple pleasures, and my business activities have never taken precedence over family. This is because I have always known my true purpose. Earning money is important, but not at the cost of cherished relationships.

Seeking Fulfilment through Humanity

Success is not defined by wealth or status. Rather, it is rooted in the contentment of the heart and mind. The true wealth at the end of life is found in the quality of our relationships and connections.

As Hazrat Ali once said, a person who lacks friends is truly impoverished. Our greatest wealth is not in our material possessions but in our emotional richness, our thoughts, and our attitudes. Success, measured in relationships, is the most profound form of prosperity.

May you prosper, and may you remember that prosperity is not meant for hoarding, but for sharing. Take a moment to extend your hand to those who are still on their journey. Life is not about taking; it is about giving.
