**Kishan Palija**

*A peek into the brains behind the Geekay Group business empire*

From dreaming of becoming an astronaut as a child to building one of the biggest gaming and technology businesses in the Middle East, Kishan Palija has come a long way. Over the past 16 years a lot has changed for him. Kishan Palija shares with us how from being a complete novice at 18 yr old with zero understanding of business, he slowly picked up business acumen and led the company to financial success. Today the Geekay Group is a major business conglomerate in the Video Games, Toys, Lifestyle Merchandise and Technology space. The enthusiasm to see his company grow and conquer more milestones is proof that this is just the beginning. There is much to look forward to from him and his company in the future.

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Kishan Palija is living proof of the fact that anyone who truly perseveres can overcome the struggles of initial setback and achieve phenomenal career growth and success. He has been the driving force behind taking Geekay Group- a retail chain for comics and game lovers, to global recognition. Today it is a popular brand amongst young pop-culture fans and gaming geeks in the Middle East region.

Kishan Palija’s story is nothing short of inspirational. At the young age of 18 years, when most teenagers struggle with heartbreak and exam stress, Kishan Palija was handed the reigns of the family business. He had to step up and take charge even though he had no business knowledge or experience. His father’s sudden and unexpected demise meant that he was now the new business leader. Even though he was abruptly placed in the centre of the storm, with important business decisions, operational dilemmas and financial burdens looming over him, he never faced self-doubt. He had to take the responsibility of growing the business that his father had built over the last few decades.

**THE HARDEST DAYS OF SURVIVAL**

The toughest challenge that Kishan Palija faced was that he had no knowledge of the business, no work experience and hence no respect from any of the existing employees and partners. As a newbie in the business world, he had to put in extra efforts to learn everything from scratch. He knew that success was the only choice as he was solely responsible for the well-being of his family- his mother and 4 siblings, the business employees, the brand reputation and carrying forward his father’s legacy.

Kishan Palija learnt everything about the business on-the-job by working along-side the warehouse employees, sales employees; so as to get a first-hand understanding of ground level problems. He earned the respect of his employees by listening to them, finding solutions to their problems and then providing strong leadership. Although he entered the business at a very young age, he was able to tackle these challenges head on. One of his biggest learnings during his initial days of struggle was the importance of team work. Kishan Palija believes that a team is like the 5 fingers of your hands, you can’t pick up a bottle without all 5 fingers. He says “I believe as an individual you can do things, but if you take the right advice and suggestions from people around you, you achieve much more. Team work is what drives us”.

Kishan’s main source of strength is his family. They’re a big, close-knit group of 4 siblings and he’s the eldest of them. Being the eldest, he takes on the role of a father figure, guiding his sisters and brothers whenever required. Kishan’s mother is the strong pillar that holds the family together through tough times. During the traumatic days of his father’s loss, she was the guiding force that showed him the way to take over the business with confidence and ease. Kishan’s other support system is his wife of 9 years. She was his school crush and they’ve been married for 9 years and have 3 children.

**A HAPPY CHILDHOOD**

Kishan Palija has been fortunate to have a happy childhood. Born and brought up in Bur Dubai, the family lived in one of the poshest regions of Dubai in those times. He completed his schooling at the Indian High School which was best school in Dubai. He believes that it is the lessons and guidance he received at this school that came in handy later while struggling to understand business functions. It was during his college days that he felt the first pinch of being different from the rest. While his friends went off to the best international schools, he attended a regular evening school to get his degree, while managing the business during the day.

**DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM HIS FATHER**

Kishan’s father Deepak Maganlal Palija has been the main source of inspiration to achieve the success that the business is witnessing today. Deepak Palija migrated to Dubai after the India-Pakistan partition in search of a good living for his family. He was a true visionary, who was able to build the video game business in Dubai at a time when this concept was alien to a majority of the people. Although he didn’t have the best education, Deepak Palija was able to start his career very young and learn on his own. He will always remain the biggest mentor and guide to Kishan.

**THERE’S A LOT TO LOOK FORWARD TO**

Today, Geekay Group is a renowned Gaming and Entertainment Company with 22+ retail outlets, a chain of comic stores and also distribution partnerships with the best gaming software accessory brands. The group primarily operates in the GCC (Gulf Corporation Council) with its head office in the UAE and warehousing and operations units in Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, India, Africa among others. Geekay group is expected to enter Kuwait with 3 company-owned stores shortly. With these stores the brand will be able to provide the whole product range and service standards to the people of Kuwait as well.

Kishan Palija plans to take the brand to the global platform in the next 3- 5 years. His ambition is to get recognition from industry leaders around the world for the achievements of Geekay Group. The group has already received multiple awards from big names in the industry including Sony Playstation and Microsoft X Box. They’ve also recently been awarded the Most Consumer Centric Retailer and The Best Retailer of the last year.

His advice to new entrepreneurs is “Try, try till you succeed. Never have ego; ego kills people. You can never put anyone down. The smallest person in your organization can be the biggest contributor. Respect everyone and learn from people. Take inspiration from people and use that to improve yourself”.

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