Surinder Sharma: A Gentleman and a ‘Power’ Player

By Rinky Thomas

Surinder Sharma belongs to that elite group treated around the world as the best and the brightest of India. A graduate of IIT Delhi in Electrical Engineering, Sharma was moved to USA for the sake of his children’s education. After a stint with James Energy as its General Manager in Dubai, he moved to Ontario in 1995 and who immediately absorbed into Ontario’s power sector.

In Ottawa, Sharma did very well until his wife and four children moved into the country in the following years. But Sharma has done well, blessed with one daughter (insurance professional), one son (engineer) and one son (doctor). Talk about a stereotypical Indian family!

Having realized that his children were well on their way to independence, Sharma looked around for things to do that fitted his temperament and ambition. In 2002, at the age of 53, he quit his job and started Power Saving Systems Inc, an energy conservation projects company. By becoming an affiliate of a US company by paying a hefty $30,000, he started an energy审计 business, of helping small companies under 50kw consumption with energy audits. This extra helps companies to conserve and save on energy costs.

For Sharma, there was much talk about conservation at the time, the business started to take shape in 2003. That year, things were so slow I thought I would go back to a regular job,” Sharma remembers. But he decided to push on, which, he says, was a turning point in his life.

In 2002, then prime minister, Jean Chretien, signed the Kyoto Protocol that committed Canada to energy conservation and alternate energy development. The Ministry of Natural Resources came out with funding programs for both Energy Audits and Retrofitting. Sharma was in business for a new. He put his focus to serve manufacturing, hospitality and warehouse sectors with a top to bottom sales strategy. Ottawa announced a 30% grant for any company going in for energy audits. “I jumped into my car, drove all the way to Ottawa to be in on it,” Sharma smiles. “I think my application was the third in the basket!”

Again, if one asked of provocation was not enough, the Dalton McGuinty liberals took power in Ontario in 2003 and suddenly, instead of producing more power, the focus turned to conservation and alternate energy. “The policy changes were a big help to my plans,” Sharma admits.

His big break came in 2008 when the Ontario Government launched a wide range of programs for Energy Conservation that gave Power Saving Systems Inc an opportunity to partner with Nacho to serve the vast market in the Small Business Lighting across the GTA.

“We were given a list of 30,000 small businesses to work with to help them reduce their energy consumption through audits and thus save on costs,” he explains.

It was really hard going, talking to each small player, getting them on board and close the deal. But Sharma and his very diverse team persisted, that led to some very impressive results. In the meanwhile, those players that didn’t have the heart in the game retired from the arena, leaving Sharma with a diverse force which include Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, Phillippinos, Nepalese, Nigerians and others. His advice to new immigrants: “Networking with the mainstream and connect with diverse communities.”

The story of Surinder Sharma is the story of the Ontario Board of Trade for the past four years. Among a host of his voluntary activities are the Walk for Values hosted by Safaiy International Organisation in Toronto around the world.

Now that he has his business running smoothly, this grandfather of four is a plane flying around the world, go deeper into spirituality and work for the planet’s environmental health. “God has been kind to me,” Sharma adds humbly.

“Oo, you I forget to tell you - he was a table tennis champion of Delhi state in his younger days. A power player, down to his fingertips!”