



OPEN's Ten Years of Connecting People with Ideas

Entrepreneurs are rare in any community, but an entrepreneur of Pakistani affiliation on the global scene is the rarest of them all. The OPEN's Tenth Anniversary Event was held on October 18th, 2008 at the Boston University's School of Management. Over 200 attendees came to where OPEN started from all over the United States and Pakistan.

The Origins of OPEN

It is not a coincidence that OPEN's birth place, Boston Massachusetts, happens to be the center of learning in the United States with over two hundred and fifty colleges and universities located within a small radius. OPEN was formed in the exuberant days of the Internet bubble when technology could do no wrong. On the first Sunday of every month, a small group of us started to meet to discuss how to grow our companies; more importantly, we brainstormed on how we could assist and advise other budding entrepreneurs based on our experiences. These informal get-togethers lasted for two years before OPEN was formally registered in Massachusetts in 1998.

In 2000, Malik Khan (Sitara Networks) inspired us to have the audacity to take on the ambitious project of holding a North America wide business plan competition. There were over forty entries from the United States and Canada. Eight finalists came to present their plans at the [First Annual Business Plan](#) competition held at World Trade Center, Boston. The \$50,000 First Place prize went to Toronto-based Octanewave Technologies, Inc., a Mobile-Wireless Enterprise software vendor. Second Place went to Patheo of Westminster, CA. Two companies tied for Third Place: XYZ Technologies of Boston, MA and Nuonics of Orlando, FL. The other finalists were Earthmatix of San Mateo, CA, Eureka of Oakland, CA, Media Talash of Chicago, IL, and MyOwn.MD of San Diego, CA.



The OPEN Chapters

Not satisfied with just starting companies, raising young families and adjusting to our new surroundings, we decided to create a completely decentralized model of franchising OPEN chapters. Each chapter would leverage its talent pool and draw from the strengths of its eco-system.

[OPEN New England](#) has its strength in biotechnology, communications, software and education. It has fifteen charter members, six executive committee members and over 200+ members who participate in the quarterly events that are focused on different markets and entrepreneurial challenges. It has also held events that celebrate achievements, like [Pakistani Women in Leadership](#): Profiles in Professional Success in 2003. The keynote speaker was Ms. Shahla Aly, Microsoft's General Manager of World Wide Services, Strategy and Planning. Many smaller events are held in cooperation with MIT and Harvard Universities. Some of its earlier charter members moved to other cities and helped in the creation of OPEN Chapters there.



[OPEN Silicon Valley](#) was formed in late 2000 and has since grown into a thriving ecosystem of about 4000 members, volunteers and attendees, including over forty charter members and over 300 paying general members. OPEN SV launched [OPEN FORUM](#) in 2004 and the highly successful annual conference now has attendance of 500+ from all over the world and a strong cast of repeat sponsors. Keynote speakers at the Forum have included Imran Khan, Hatim Tyabji of Verifone, and Mike Moritz of Sequoia. OPEN SV has about 12 networking events each year including quarterly panel events, workshops, and social mixers. It also has monthly mentorship events as well as social events for its charter members and volunteers. In 2008 OPEN SV moved into a dedicated office space that is available to its officers and members for use. Its most stellar feature is its volunteer corp. which at 50+ strong is the functional backbone of OPEN SV.

[OPEN NY](#), formed in 2001, serves one of the most diverse and vibrant communities of Pakistani-Americans. The New York area, in addition to being the center of Finance, has emerged as the hub of the "Converging" Media, Telecommunications and Technology Industries. The OPEN NY Board and Membership is as diverse as the community, representing several industries such as Finance (Banking, Private Equity, VC and Hedge Funds), Consumer Products, Life Sciences, Health-care, Media, Telecoms and Technology.. Keynote speakers at OPEN NY events have included: Faran Tahir (leading Hollywood Actor), Prakash Melwani (one of the top Private Equity professionals), Raj Rajaratnam (one of the top Hedge Fund managers), the late Ismail Merchant (luminary Filmmaker), Mark Coblitz (Head of Strategy for Comcast), among other successful entrepreneurs and professionals. In 2008, OPEN NY organized an event show-casing [Pakistani-American Film-makers](#) to the community and executives from the media industry and film-festival circuits -- Two of the film-makers from the event were selected by the South Asian International Film Festival. Other 2008 events featured Pakistani Artists and Social Entrepreneurs from the



Food industry. It has thirteen charter members and 100-150 members/participants.

Open's [DC Chapter](#) was formed in the summer of 2004 and has a growing network of over 1500 members, volunteers and attendees; including 22 charter members and 75 general dues paying members. Over the last four years, OPEN-DC has held a number of quality events that have brought the diversified community of entrepreneurs, service and other industry professionals, World Bank and IFC employees, Federal and State Government elected officials as well as students in the Washington DC metro area together. Key topic areas for entrepreneurship discussion have included venture capital, outsourcing, government contracting, politics, cricket, airlines, telecommunications and private equity. OPEN-DC has also placed special emphasis on interest group round-table sessions and professional development seminars where speakers and attendees focus on a common topic area. Such events have included: "[Government Contracting: Surviving and Thriving after Graduating from 8 \(a\) Program](#)" and "Women in Entrepreneurship". Among other activities this year, the DC Chapter has also started a quarterly newsletter and an annual picnic program to further communicate within and expand its network.

The most recent Open Chapter, [OPEN Houston](#), was formed in November of 2005 and currently has a network of over 200 members and attendees. The organizational structure consists of twelve board members, a seven member executive committee and an operating committee; representing key industry sectors from Texas. In addition the chapter enjoys permanent support from five corporate sponsors. Since its inception the focus of this chapter has been to develop membership among entrepreneurs, corporate executives, professionals, and investment bankers and to create linkages between Texas and Pakistan in the area of Energy, Education, Healthcare, and Technology. The chapter has hosted a number of networking events and symposiums covering such topics as: "The Borderless View of Entrepreneurship", "Global Trends in Emerging Technologies", "Trends and Opportunities for Minority Professionals and Business in Corporate America", and "Global Trends and Opportunities in Carbon Mitigation and Finance".

[OPEN Global](#) consists of representatives from all the chapters. Its charter is to protect and enhance the OPEN brand and oversee global projects and initiatives that span multiple chapters or are chapter-independent. It manages a rigorous process of whetting potential candidate Chapters. Its second responsibility is oversight and assistance of existing chapters. While each chapter runs as an independent franchise, OPEN Global is there to assist in case of problems. It is important to note that OPEN Global's goal in this oversight is not to micromanage each chapter. The charter for oversight is to provide guidance and solutions to a chapter by leveraging the expertise and experience of OPEN Global leaders and OPEN's local chapter leaders. It is responsible for enforcing a basic level of activity and value deliverance by each chapter within its community. Lastly it manages all external communications about OPEN as an organization (*non chapter specific*) so that there is one consistent and unified message to the outside world.

The Tenth Anniversary Event

On October 18th, OPEN held its highly successful Tenth Anniversary Event. This was the second event organized by OPEN Global. The previous one was in response to the earthquake in Pakistan and was held in Washington DC.

The morning began with a panel addressing the Global Healthcare challenges facing us. Imran Nasrullah, Chief Business Officer at [Massachusetts Biotechnology Council](#), moderated the panel which included Una Ryan, a Research Professor at Boston University and Ex-CEO of [Avant Immunotherapeutics](#); Jeff Elton, the COO of [Novartis](#); and Naseem Amin, Senior Vice President at [Biogen](#). The panelists provided their respective corporate perspectives- and personal observations- regarding the role of technology and innovation in answering the developing world's needs. A major factor determining the feasibility and success of innovative technologies for developing world application included how the cost of goods around producing innovative technology solutions must be lowered so that end-user pricing is affordable in the developing world.

The panelists noted that the role of the entrepreneur is to look for inefficiencies in the health care system (from innovation to delivery) and provide solutions to improve such inefficiencies. On the topic of the role of IP in fostering innovation, there was a split in the panel. Dr. Una Ryan opined that IP was absolutely essential for raising capital and to fund the cost of development, while Jeff Elton felt there was a role for collaborative structures between the innovator and the commercializer, and IP protection was not always necessary. Jeff Elton commented that an entrepreneurial area of opportunity included software solutions that aggregate, interpret, and generate metadata pertaining to biological data correlated to biopharmaceutical opportunities. Naseem Amin observed the future challenges pertaining to global outsourcing of the pharmaceutical supply-chain included building measures to assure confidence in quality control, e.g. tainted heparin. Examining the role of FDA in interfering with the innovation process, the panelists concurred that the role of the FDA should be to assure safety and efficacy and not an assessor of market risk, i.e. if the FDA focused on patient safety and efficacy it would propel new, safe and effective drugs into the market.



Ken Morse, Managing Director of [MIT's Entrepreneurship Center](#) entertained the crowd with his dry humor in his keynote address. He spoke at length of OPEN's collaboration with his center to accelerate the growth of Pakistani businesses through the [Business Acceleration Plan](#) competition and workshops. He also challenged the audience to engage more with Pakistan by using RFK's remark "If not now, when? If not us, who?" He concluded by noting on how the use of media has been an underestimated and underutilized tool for showcasing OPEN events.

Lunch was followed by Entrepreneurial Idol. Umair Khan, founder of [Folio3](#) and [SecretBuilders](#) moderated the event



with five participants vying to be crowned idol. Sajid Sohail, CEO of [Jadoo](#) , presented its product that makes watching internet based multimedia content on TV seamless to the viewer. Yuri Ostrovsky , President of [ClickDiagnostics](#) , pitched its services that bring quality healthcare to the masses with a click of a cell phone button. Quinton Zondervan , CEO of [Excelimmune](#) described how his biotech startup would help solve incurable diseases using human generated polyclonal antibodies. Jim Daniell , CEO of [Ednets](#), spoke about Ednets providing a fundraising platform for schools utilizing the local community's patronage of retailers. Salahuddin Khan, CEO of [Salagar](#) unveiled high end speakers that boast incomparable style. The judging panel consisted of Ken Morse of MIT Sloan, Yusuf Zia, EVP of Global Ecosystem and Partner Group at SAP, and Bilal Zuberi of General Catalyst Partners. With the audience weighing in heavily with their questions, comments and their applause, and the judges with their critiques and viewpoints, Ednets was judged the eventual winner and received one hour pitch time with four investors.



Dr. Mehmood Khan, Chief Scientific Officer of PepsiCo, was the second keynote speaker. His speech focused on the importance of providing adequate nutrition to the young and their mothers. His most profound statement was that it takes four generations to turn off the genes that have been turned on if there is inadequate nutrition at early stages. He disclosed the finding of latest research that the children of immigrants are taller in US because their genes are being fully expressed. He spoke of the power of supply channels of companies like PepsiCo in delivering products to distant and remote areas.



The impressive panel on social entrepreneurship was moderated by Prof. Adil Najam, Director of [Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future](#) at Boston University, and the panelists were Syed Babar Ali, founder of the Lahore University of Management Sciences ([LUMS](#)) and of the [School of Science and Engineering at LUMS](#); Sarah Bird, CEO of [SaafWater](#); and Seema Aziz founder and Chairperson of [CARE](#) Foundation. Babar Ali talked about the efforts to bringing a world class engineering university within the reach of all Pakistanis with merit, irrespective of their ability to pay. He spoke about the large number of applicants who applied for the freshman class this year, some of whom decided to come to this institution over their acceptance at MIT. Sarah spoke about SaafWater's success in bringing clean water to the low income people of Karachi and eventually to over 3 billion people living in urban areas of the developing world. Seema spoke about the challenges of rehabilitating the crumbled public school system in even Lahore, which she believed was the cultural center of Pakistan. She narrated her personal stories of experiencing the thirst for good education amongst the poor. Her stories



touched the hearts of the audience. CARE Foundation is now managing over 182 schools with over 117,000 enrolled students. All panelists highlighted the importance of personal commitment and passion. They all suggested –social entrepreneurs bring a motivation and passion for social change. They are driven primarily by these passions, just as other entrepreneurs might be driven primarily by the profit motive.

The final panel, called "The Path Less Traveled" was moderated by Shahid Khan, Senior Partner at IBB Consulting, and featured Hollywood actor [Faran Tahir](#), artist and film-maker [Mumtaz Hussain](#),

professional race car driver [Nur Ali](#), and designer/artist [Samina Quraeshi](#). This panel was included to showcase how

entrepreneurs can be found in unlikely places. Samina Quraeshi spoke about her upcoming book *Sacred Spaces*, a journey with the Sufis of the Indus exploring the mystical traditions of Islam as manifested through the artistic and devotional practices of South Asia. Her four other books are, *Legacy of the Indus*, *Lahore: The City Within*, *Reimagining West Coconut Grove*, and *Legends of the Indus*. Mumtaz Hussain spoke passionately about the opportunities out there in movies and digital media. His humble origins from Jhang did not deter him from aiming high in the highly competitive movie industry in the United States. Faran Tahir, a budding Hollywood actor whose blockbuster film, *Ironman*, is breaking all prior box office records in the United States, addressed how the challenges of being a pioneer in his field are no different than those faced by OPEN founders in business arena. He will appropriately be playing the role of a Federation Captain in the upcoming *StarTrek* movie, directed by J. J. Abrams. Nur Ali spoke about the difficulty of convincing his parents about his passion for driving cars since his childhood. He implored parents of Pakistani origin to let their kids follow their dreams, once they complete their education. Additionally he talked about his early difficulties of finding sponsors and hiring pit crew, and about being the only non-white in the NASCAR racing circuit -- sponsors are now attracted to his uniqueness in the circuit.



The day concluded with participants enjoying the sights of Boston from the vantage of a harbor cruise listening to the band led by OPEN's legal counsel, Arthur Anderson

OPEN Today & Tomorrow

Today, OPEN has one hundred and two Charter Members and over six thousand participants in its five chapters. Dilawer Syed, President of OPEN Silicon Valley disclosed that in their last event there were more participants of non-Pakistani origin than those of Pakistani origin. They came because they listen to, what Ken Morse describes as, "WIIFM (Whats In It For Me) radio". It is not surprising that Americans of all hyphenations are finding it worth their while to participate in OPEN events. Pakistanis

come from the gene pool that ruled one of the two largest non-expansionist empires in the history of mankind consisting of people of a large variety of ethnicities and religions for hundreds of years.

An entrepreneur is described as someone who attempts to organize resources in new and more valuable ways, accepting full responsibility for the outcome. Seema Aziz could not stand by when she saw kids following her as she visited the flood affected areas around Lahore. She strategized that the most efficient way to bring about sustained change was to provide education to the kids by rehabilitating the failed public school system. She believes that quality education is the right of each Pakistani no matter how poor he/she might be. Babar Ali understood that the only way Pakistani businesses will be globally competitive was by providing quality higher education to any Pakistani. Businessmen of Sialkot did not wait for the government to provide them an airport for transporting their sports and surgical goods to the world; they pooled their resources and built themselves an [international airport](#). Sarah Bird found it unacceptable that people are dying of diarrhea when technology exists to make water drinkable at low cost. She is conducting her pioneering work in the slums of Karachi that will one day benefit all developing urban areas. Challenges faced by the founders of Pakistan were in many ways similar to that of a start up. Allama Iqbal was the visionary that set the tone similar to what a Chief Technology Officer does. Quaid Jinnah was the Chief Executive Officer that took the start up country through its early years. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was the educationist whose efforts of establishing MAO resulted in a cadre of people that were able to lead Pakistan through its birth pangs. Seema, Sarah and Baber are the modern day role models for Pakistanis.

The next ten years will see OPEN start to make an impact across a much broader scale. OPEN's unique decentralized top driven model of entrepreneur value creation in an increasingly knowledge driven world will make it attractive to people of all colors, castes and creeds. The globally dispersed Pakistani Diaspora of four million strong will provide the lubricant for this transition into a globally integrated world. OPEN's leadership and participants will transition to an increasingly younger generation that moves seamlessly in the US and other societies. Internet centric tools will provide the real time interactions to support their activities. Geo agnostic domain-specific entrepreneurial communities will mushroom. This is our vision as we get ready to retool for OPEN 2.0.

Why not Us? .. Why not Now?

.. *Imran Khan*

with contributions from

Umair Khan, Shahid Khan, Adil Najam, Mubashar Hameed

Imran Nasrullah, Imran Sayeed, Syed Qamar

Panel designed by

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