

ISSUE TWO

# COHERENCE

threading a bond...

November 2018

Quarterly | Volume 1, Issue 2



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Cover Story:

## FROM A LOVING FRIENDSHIP TO A DYNAMIC BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

- *The Entrepreneurial Power Duo*  
- *Deepa Nainani & Neerja Sujanani*

**Dr. Ms. Sanjukta Ghosh**

Editor & Publisher of Coherence Magazine

- AWARENESS ON SEX TRAFFICKING
- HIDDEN TALENTS
- REAL PEOPLE REAL CLOTHES
- HEALTH - DIABETES
- FITNESS
- AUTHENTIC CUISINE
- INSPIRATIONAL ARTICLES
- SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & EDUCATION



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From a loving friendship  
to a dynamic business  
partnership - The  
Entrepreneurial Power Duo –  
Deepa Nainani & Neerja Sujani



**T**ogether, these multi-talented, power women Deepa Nainani and Neerja Sujanani co-own and run the award-winning Plus Group International Limited who have made their mark in Hong Kong as being a reputed advertising, media and marketing agency.

Deepa Nainani was born and brought up in Singapore and moved to Hong Kong 22 years ago. Having worked in a US stock listed semi-conductor chip company for 10 years, as Senior Planner, Deepa brings with her a wealth of experience in logistics, high level planning and management. Now a sought-after marketer for corporate, social and fashion events Deepa heads up Plus Group International Limited. Her key areas of expertise are offline and online marketing, designing, printing, logistics, operations, management as well as leads the creative direction for the

company. Deepa is married to Anoop and has two lovely children Vivek and Yash.

Neerja Sujanani

hails from Mumbai and moved to Hong Kong 21 years ago. Neerja has worked at The Economist Group Asia Pacific as Production & Distribution Director for all their publishing activities. Printing, production, distribution are key skills, as well as website development and programming, sales and digital marketing. Neerja's husband is Baiju and her two boys are Sohan and Tarun.

Together, these wonder women co-own and run Plus Group International Limited who have made their mark in Hong Kong as being a reputed advertising and media agency specialising in working with small and medium business as their one-stop-shop partner. Taking care of B-to-Bs as well as B-to-Cs, Plus Group focusses on designing, printing, websites, marketing, corporate and fashion events. In addition, they consult for several business in the fields of fast-moving consumer goods, events, the food and beverage industry as well as various other businesses. From supporting charities and NGOs to other businesses, friends, causes, community efforts, business, fashion, networking events and much more they are force to be reckoned with in Hong Kong. All roads lead to Deepa and Neerja at Plus Group!



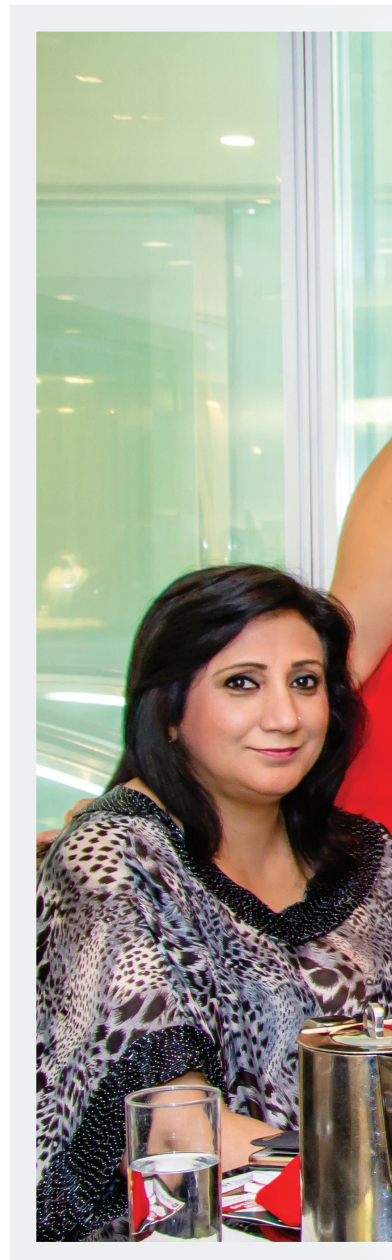
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When asked what the ‘Plus’ in their company name stood for, they both unequivocally quipped that with each transaction or interaction with our company we aim to promise yet ‘over deliver’, giving all our clients a ‘a little more’ having worked with us and used our services. Thus the ‘Plus’ factor.

These two friends met in the gym of the Kowloon Cricket Club and played badminton together twelve years ago and hit it off immediately, not knowing it would culminate into a successful business venture together a few years on.

Having served at their corporate jobs for more than a decade each and with a passion and drive towards entrepreneurship, they decided to build a company together that would ethically and efficiently serve Hong Kong with the services they intended to provide. Thus, came the establishment of their boutique agency Plus Group International Limited (formerly known as *Print Plus*). This dynamic duo shares more than their Sindhi, Indian heritage: they live in the same building in Kowloon, have children of similar ages and both have a wealth of information and insights from their corporate eras.

Amongst other things, **Plus Group International Limited** is also renowned for their flagship lifestyle and shopping event **GlamFest** (formerly known as *Kowloon Bazaar*) which has had 12 successful years in Hong Kong drawing in thousands of shoppers each year. They also launched another annual shopping affair called **Summer Sparkles**. These events were started with the aspiration to put together a variety of vendors to market, showcase and sell a wide variety of products and services to a high-end demographic of shoppers throughout the day, each year. Their events grow many folds, growing bigger each year and innovating to keep their events number one in everyone’s calendars. With unique local and overseas vendors, the events offer a unique variety of literally hundreds of products to delight shoppers. Marketing is done not only by traditional media and branding but also by ever new and evolving media and networking





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to bring in a niche of vendors both local as well as internationally. What is most commendable is that part proceeds go to worthy charities each year such as the Rotary Club of Kowloon Golden Mile as well as the Chinmaya Seva Ashram.

Deepa and Neerja are also Publishers of repute in Hong Kong, having published the Hong Kong Resource Guide for 9 successful years. It is their endeavour to give more to the people of Hong Kong. Filled with insightful editorial, thought provoking articles and insider tips and tricks, it's a great platform to showcase the knowledge and talent of very many Hong Kong companies, consultants as well as providers of goods and services. Quality reading that reaches many apt readers with their hard copy as well as online editions, they publish a useful compendium of information for people from all walks of life.

As a publication house in Hong Kong, they work with budding writers, designers and illustrators to work hand in hand with any clients who would like to publish their work. From a consultative angle, each and every aspect is worked on together. They have a knack of shining light on the strengths of writers and are able to work on and deliver spectacular end products which are on budget and within tight timeframes. From international publishing licences to brand guidelines, making choices of paper and printing colours, finishing effects to use, they are a solid guide. Once in the hands of these competent ladies and their professional teams, their expert opinions and vision to have a spectacular end product take shape effortlessly and flawlessly. They have launched many brands in Hong Kong, consulting right from the logo to brand guidelines and then creating products, packaging, marketing material



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and even an online digital presence for their clients. Most clients turn into long term friendships and are life long connections to reach mutual goals.

Plus Group International also helps, assists and works with a variety of charities and for this they have been awarded the Caring Company Award by the Hong Kong SAR Government. They have awarded this honour for the past three years. They believe in supporting charities as well as non-

profit organisations with their services, expertise as well as special rates and services to further their respective causes. They also promote eco-friendly papers and products, printing with new age organic and soya inks and other endeavours with a view to being diligent global citizens and setting a good example for today's youth.

When asked what the 'Plus' in their company name stood for, they both unequivocally quipped that with each transaction or interaction with our company we aim to promise yet 'over deliver', giving all our clients a 'a little more' having worked with us and used our services. Thus the 'Plus' factor.

Both Deepa and Neerja have been featured in various magazines and publications in Hong Kong as well as internationally, featured on radio shows as well as even a podcast!

### What motivated you to choose this career/ reason behind choosing this career?

**Neerja:** At the age of 17, I was at university and I became the editor of my university magazine, which we used to print 10,000 copies of. We were dealing with a printer that was not up to the mark – the magazine was always late, way over budget and terrible in quality. In the old days, we used to have to do type setting manually with metal blocks supported with some basic on-computer desktop publishing. We also didn't see the printer specialising both in typesetting as well as printing at the same

time – these were pain points to us. I was sub-editor for the previous year, I was on the committee even the previous year and now being at the prestigious position of Editor, I took the plunge and took on the job myself to get it done better, faster and with a better overall outcome.

This was my first experience and being successful - I was studying at the Government Law College from 6am to 10am and then went on to work for the rest of the day from 10am to 10pm taking designing and printing jobs. As a young adult, I took this on seriously and worked really hard and became successful with jobs coming in automatically on referrals from happy clients. We grew to a full time business with a team of five, we had a printing press in the busy, bustling Fort, Fountain commercial area in Bombay. From here, there was no looking back...It was designing, printing all the way. So then of course fast forward, I got married and moved to Hong Kong. This is where I worked with Economist Magazine Group for 10 years and at that point I decided that it was time to embark upon a business in Hong Kong.

Deepa felt the same way. Deepa was working with an international multinational company in the US called LSI - they are listed in the US as a Semi-Conductor Company. She played an important role there at the high position of Senior Planner having to sometimes travel overseas and take on various projects. Deepa and Neerja got together and wanted to experience the joys (and pains!) of entrepreneurship at this stage in their lives, as well as do something good for the community along the way. Thus they came together and launched their company...

**Deepa:** I started working at a very young age, having had a lot of different life experiences and having completed 10+ years at my corporate job, in addition to several other positions such as being a banker at DBS Bank in Singapore; I decided that this would be the right time to make a career switch into entrepreneurship. This would give me a





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valuable, new experience and a real chance to input my efforts to achieve gainful and commensurate output. Often at corporate companies and multinationals, we don't get a chance to shine and prove our real value to the company. Having and owning a company would give me more flexibility in terms of timings and a real chance at building and contributing to a successful business venture. Having been through the trials and tribulations of launching a business, operating as a start up, riding the growth curve, stabilizing the business to then making a name in the marketplace which we have built today was just a dream... we are happy to say we have achieved success today.

### Talk about your journey?

Thus we embarked upon this venture together – we put a business plan in place and setup our office in Wanchai as we had potential clients in this area. We started from literally a 400 sq foot office and worked hard with perseverance, gaining clients' trust and operated there for six years until we decided that we have come to a point in the business lifetime where we need to expand and get to the next stage. Also wanting to restore some work life balance, we opted to move closer to home and opened office in Hunghom. This has been a good move – sometimes we need to go to the kids' schools or work late at night or often go back to work after an early dinner at home. Time travel has become less and we get much more accomplished in the day.



With entrepreneurship there is a give and take and of course you have to be masters of your own time. You have to keep motivating yourself at any given point. So, for example if we have to leave early for an appointment and then there is a choice of whether to go back to the office or go home, one has to consistently keep making wise choices. If something is on deadline or something is due, then one must head back into the office - no matter how tired you are, or how late it is or how lazy one is feeling or how much rain there is... Keeping our word is golden – it keeps the clients' trust and it brings more clients!

There are also good days and bad days; one has to

bounce out of bed each morning to come back bigger, stronger and wiser. A lot of work goes into growing a business – many late and sleepless nights, a lot of preparation for project pitches, intense overseas trips, endless hours at gruelling printing plants, trips to the Mainland and to fairs and events – we have also participated in the world's largest printing fair in Frankfurt. One needs to try many different things, many sales and marketing strategies. One can't do the same thing and expect the same result. With that theory in my mind we keep motivating each other, inching towards our goals, making it real. We think having two people in a business or any venture is really awesome as one has a backup at all times and not only that, there are two points of view which can be pondered upon and discussed in order to chalk out an action plan.

### Describe the support you have received both socially and personally:

Firstly we both would like to thank our families because if we didn't have their support, then we wouldn't have the time and space to create what we dreamt of. Both our husbands are extremely happy to give us time and space to build and are actually really proud of how far we have come. This is extremely important – love and support not only on the home front but also in other ways – sharing responsibilities and duties is when it works well. Women in business or in corporate jobs have to wear so many hats both on the domestic as well as work front – if one has a life partner, then it becomes smoother and easier.

Having collaboration and understanding are other support factors to mention – our children, our families, our helpers are all super supportive. One lives by example – the kids see their mummies and daddies work hard, work ethically and that not only leads by example, but also creates motivation and respect.

**Neerja:** In addition, we have a lot of clients and supporters for example - even you, yourself Sanjukta, your magazine and your events. There are a lot of people who support; a lot of people nurture the fact that we can all grow together, collaboratively. We wish many more people were less exclusive and more inclusive. There are some who are more than happy to connect and collaborate and even refer and then there are others who are afraid to include. I think the largess in life comes from including, not excluding. You and I get along very well because we share these similar views and values.



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**Deepa:** Sponsors come forward to support our endeavours, even social groups collaborate and various marketing alliances bring forth growth. Working hand-in-hand brings love and growth. If the marketplace can see we are good honest suppliers, there will always be takers for our services and products.

We must commend our office team of staff who work with us day in and day out, working towards making the vision and mission of our company a reality. As entrepreneurs and business owners, we train and nurture our staff to work independently and efficiently bringing out in them traits such as reliability, initiative and dependability. We are happy to say that we work as a team, sharing problems which we solve together as well as the various successes we achieve.

## Once you started your journey how were things?

A few years ago, we were honoured to be called upon by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong to lead the designing, branding and printing projects for their 60th Anniversary celebrations, which was to culminate in a grand ball.



This was really prestigious and we felt a lot of pressure to produce work that was upto an international level. Stress in this case can be good or bad stress. Good stress pushes and motivates us to do better work and we used it to positively to push us to really showcase our talent. Our branding would go all over the world and even to other Chambers of Commerce in Hong Kong, Consulates, Government Ministries and more. The most interesting part of this project was a Hong Kong Government commemorative stamp and Postal First Day Cover which we were to design and would then be printed in France. It was a fantastic challenge and it was a pleasure working with the Committee. We were able to showcase the gallant story of India in Hong Kong and got approvals and blessings from all concerned. It's a thrilling feeling to know that there are stamps and first day covers out there that we designed and conceptualised!

A young writer and her family wanted to publish a book to raise funds for the international organisation the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) – this teenager who had such lofty goals immediately impressed us. With a view to encouraging her in this noble endeavour, we enthusiastically embarked upon the designing and layout, illustrations and their planning, ISBN international publishing numbers, conceptualisation and the many processes that take it right to printing – we produced a lovely hard cover book which was also given a rave review in the SCMP (South China Morning Post newspaper, our national English daily). What is amazing is that this family donated 100% of the proceeds to the WWF Charitable Fund, and paid for the production costs themselves – a rare and honourable gesture indeed.



Most recently we worked with our dear friend Ritu Hemnani who has conceptualised and self published a beautiful and heart-warming book: Gope and Meera – A Migration Story which is a tale about a cherished homeland reluctantly left behind and why the Hindu Sindhi community is scattered across the world today. It is a well written, captivating tale of tragic loss, determined hope, preserved culture and spirited victory that will captivate readers of all ages. Our children of today never had an opportunity to read about this event in history and experience the story first hand – Ritu has been able to depict the tale



in such an appropriate manner appealing to young readers. We collaborated fantastically in the production and printing processes and we are delighted to report that Ritu has had grand successful launches in

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Hong Kong, Singapore as well as Manila. She has become a popular speaker at schools and even been invited overseas on speaking occasions. We wish for her to go from strength to strength.

### Share your experience as a women entrepreneur...

Having run a company now for more than a decade, we find that we are able to see the whole picture now. Any business is a challenge and a struggle – not withstanding which gender the entrepreneur running it is. One needs to always keep an eye on the ball, not just one ball, often, in fact almost always, there are many balls in the air at the same time. One needs to focus on all aspects at all times, keep motivated and hold the vision true and forthright, despite days on which one lacks motivation. A passionate fire coupled with hard work are the formula – with these, the whole universe works with you to actually bring you to your goal.

### What have you achieved and what are you looking forward to achieve in future?

As a company, we have been sponsoring the esteemed Hong Kong Youth Writers Awards for many years – Plus Group believes in supporting young students to achieve their dreams and give them the confidence



at a young age to nurture their talents. Some truly amazing entries are received for the various categories of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and cover art. Organised by

Playtimes, one of Asia's leading parenting and lifestyle magazines and supported by the infamous writer Nury Vittachi himself, the competition's main aim is to foster excellence in creativity by providing students with the opportunity to develop their expressive talents and expand their horizons. The awards encourage and recognise excellence in English writing and artwork among students, aged from 6-18, of various age groups, diverse backgrounds and different learning abilities. Since its inception in 2010, the competition has been a resounding success, with over 1,000 entries coming in from approximately 200

participating schools across Hong Kong, Macau and China in 2018. Each year we enjoy working with and supporting their team managed and led by our dear friends Jo Allum and Anise Naseer.

We also support several non-profit organisations in Hong Kong as well as in the region. One such notable recollection is the support we lent as a company to the Kannada Sangha Hong Kong who put on a charity show in Hong Kong with the famous Indian stand-up comedian Amit Tandon. We gave them our full-hearted support and put in our strategic marketing and promotional efforts to make the event a *sold out* one! With rave reviews and the monies raised going towards education of children in India, this makes us proud and happy to have been able to make a difference, in our small way and contribute with our expertise.

We are honoured to have worked with the India By The Bay 2017/18 team which comprises of a trio of amazing Hong Kong Indian women – Lakshmi Laroia, Sonali Laul and Paru Vora, representing the TeamWork Arts team.



This is a seven-day festival of India in Hong Kong that is organised in alliance with the Consul General of India and Asia Society of Hong Kong. Now in its fifth successful year, we look forward to working with them in the marketing space to promote the 2019 artistic calendar lineup of classical and contemporary music, theatre, dance, food, wellness, film, and literature.

We are happy to serve big brands and reputable names who in turn trust us for their designing, printing, websites and marketing requirements – just to name a few, we have on board as clients ICICI Bank and other international banks and investment firms, Penhaligons – The UK Brand who are Perfumers to the Queen, Louis Vuitton, Economist Group Asia Pacific, several theatre production companies, restaurants and many more. We specialise in printing to international standards and are in demand to print art magazines, delicate publications, coffee table books and many more in this delicate field. We do a lot of production, design and printing for events and



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event companies which require attention to detail and efficient, timely deliverables.

We are at an interesting stage in our business where we are well established and now have plans to scale in various strategic ways. We are honoured that satisfied clients refer other clients – we do not do any paid advertising and all our clients come by word of mouth referrals which is the truest testament to our work. This spurs us to do better and keep bettering our services along the way. We want to continue serving small and medium businesses where we are their brand purveyors and one stop shop when it comes to all media requirements such as designing, printing, marketing, online and offline publishing - all under one roof. Business owners gain time and efficiency by having our services provided back to back – we plug in and plug out of any stage in their scope of work. A lot of clients need such services – lets say if someone wants only designing or only printing / marketing etc we are happy to do so, but end to end solutions is where the true win for a client is – he saves time and effort thereby being able to focus on important tasks they have on hand. We help establish and grow brands and take businesses from concept to creation in their relevant fields. This is where we specialise and will focus on growth in these spheres.

Deepa and Neerja have ably and notably served the community in various ways. Deepa has been President of prestigious The Indian Businessman's Association in 2017 and Board Member from 2016 till date. She has also served on the organising committees of several worthy charities such as United Hands and others as well as well as on the advisory boards and marketing teams of various events which raise funds for charity and other worthy causes.

Neerja is currently the President of the Entrepreneurs Club of Hong Kong and has also been chosen to be on Hong Kong's Diversity List 2017. The Diversity list is put together by Shalini Gidumal and The Zubin Foundation which is a leading social policy think tank and charity in Hong Kong – the aim of the list is to nominate and enlist ethnic minorities from Hong Kong who have the skills and experience necessary to serve on the city's government advisory board. She has been President of the Rotary Club of Kowloon

Golden Mile in 2010-11 and President of The India Club of Hong Kong 2009. Her other appointments include serving on the board of India Association.

**Please talk about the awards you have received...**

Of the many accolades and honours received, the

most notable are for Deepa the Award for Excellence in 2007 from LSI for handling customer's requests with complete enthusiasm and conducting a presentation to the Customer Service Group on the functionalities of Supply Chain Planning. Neerja received the Award for Presidency of Rotary Club of Kowloon Golden Mile 2010-11 in various categories including club leadership.



**Any suggestions for women entrepreneurs?**

- Our advice is to start with a passion, 'if you do what you love then you'll have never felt you worked a day in your life!' – this adage holds true now more so than ever before. If you don't absolutely love what you do, there will be no motivation to keep you going. Make every effort to keep this passion alive and enrich and grow it with every opportunity that presents itself.
- Have a plan – this culminates into focus in everything you do. These days, it so easy to get side tracked



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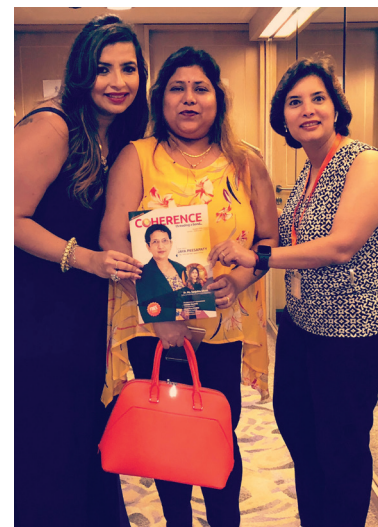
and get way laid – if you go in to post something on social media, its human nature to get carried away and spend time browsing instead of getting in, getting your work done and getting out. Spending time on social media is not a bad thing but too much of a bad thing isn't too good either. This is why some apps have been even been created to help you count the amount of time spent on social media

- Planning gives you a goal and having a goal gives you a desire to achieve.
- Learn the basics and learn your way up – learn everything right from the basics – how taxation works, government paperwork, accounting and other such processes. We're not saying you need to go deep into each of the processes but know enough of the basics so you can manage the processes well when staff or consultants or outside contractors are doing things like accounting for you, be comfortable to do so.
- Collaborate – Collaboration is key, whether it is for your business, with your family, when it comes to networking, business alliances, relationships with staff, suppliers and clients alike – all communications become clear and open when done in a collaborative manner.
- Taking collaboration to the home front is a super idea which works well, especially for women entrepreneurs.
- Find role models and mentors - women entrepreneurs would scale greater heights if they had success stories to imbibe knowledge and learning from; and if they have motivated, successful women encouraging them along the way - find such women entrepreneurs and work with them if possible.

- Trust your intuition and go the distance...
- Test your business then launch fearlessly. Know your finances, grow, scale and think outside the box.

## What message do you want to convey through COHERENCE?

Firstly, we would like to thank Coherence Magazine for this opportunity and hope you all enjoy the read. We are always here for the community and are honoured to support many deserving causes. We wish for your readers to be inspired in some small way and feel empowered and encouraged by reading our story.



We also wish that Coherence grows from a printed publication to much more... a movement of sorts, encouraging and bonding the community coherently to spread knowledge, joy, peace, prosperity and much more. We envision that Coherence will have a vibrant life of its own, lighting the way for many women that are just embarking upon their life journeys!

## Your comments/ feedback about COHERENCE...

We are delighted to have worked with Coherence Magazine and are proud and happy that Dr Sanjukta Ghosh has this vision of 'bonding' people together via various 'threads' being her variety of subjects that the magazine covers. Sanjukta is truly a representation of being able to live her dreams and being able to achieve anything that she puts her mind to. She has so many friends and supporters as she herself is so endearing to be with and spend time with. We wish Dr Sanjukta and Coherence Magazine all the very best in building the community, showcasing various causes and furthering the ideals of the reason the magazine was setup for.

