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## The Son Also Rises

Kids can have the darndest ideas.

BY R.J. KING



Tel Ganesan (right) says his son Ash has the makings of a business consultant, but his heart is in film.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL HITZ

Tel K. Ganesan, who traded in his engineering job at Chrysler to start a software, electronics, and IT staffing firm, came home one day and complained to anyone who would listen — in this case, his 5-year-old son, Ash — about building maintenance issues at the office.

Without missing a beat, Ash turned to his father and said, matter-of-factly: “Dad, why don’t you just buy the building; then you won’t have any problems,” recalls Ganesan, president and CEO of Kyyba Inc. in Farmington Hills. “I don’t know where Ash picked up his understanding of real estate, but I followed his advice and it worked out.”

In 2009, Ash struck again. At the time, Kyyba operated three companies under different names, which confused clients. Ganesan decided it would be prudent to unite the businesses under one brand. A search produced some 2,300 suggested names.

“I asked Ash about it, and he said I should name the company ‘Kiba,’ which is the main character in a popular trading card game in Japan,” Ganesan says. “At first, I didn’t know what to make of it — but I had to admit the name was catchy. Ash didn’t want me to pay any royalties to the game company, so we changed the spelling to Kyyba.”

Ganesan, a native of India who earned a graduate degree in mechanical engineering from Wayne State University in 1991, says he had hit the glass ceiling in his corporate career, which motivated him to take the “entrepreneurial plunge.” While he put together a board

of advisers early on, he never thought to include his son.

The company, which also has operations in New Jersey and India, is projected to post \$28 million in revenue this year — up from \$500,000 in 2005 — and is on course to record \$100 million in revenue in 2016, Ganesan says. The growth will come from new

accounts in automotive, food services, energy, and retail, as well as acquisitions.

“It was hard to walk away from a position at Chrysler, where you get a free car, vacation, a pension, health care, and all of the other offerings,” Ganesan says. “But I wanted to strike out on my own when I had the chance. I didn’t want to look back and regret that I never made the move.”

Ganesan attributes his company’s growth to its internal culture. “When you’re acquiring and integrating businesses, the most important thing is to make sure your culture is right,” he says. “If you make that happen, the profits will come.”

It also helps to solicit business ideas.

“I think my dad should sell products to consumers, and not just big businesses,” says Ash, now 15 and a high school sophomore. “I think Kyba has the opportunity to produce educational software for businesspeople and entrepreneurs. And I think my dad should focus more on the United States, and let his people in India run that office.”

Ganesan says he will again consider his son’s advice. But he isn’t counting on his son to join him at the office one day. “I want to get a dual major in film and zoology, and follow in Steven Spielberg’s footsteps,” Ash says. “My dad says that’s a great goal.” db

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