

A Few Good Men (& Women)

The (Net IP) San Francisco Bay Area Chapter

The Network of Indian Professionals is a non-profit that connects individuals of South Asian decent, organizing events in 23 chapters across the country. The largest chapter today is in the San Francisco Bay Area with close to 500 members, all the more remarkable when you consider that the SFBA chapter started 2005 with only 15 members. What happened over the course of twelve months that enabled this group to emerge as one of the most prominent in the community?

“We wanted to build a community that everyone could connect to and be proud of,” recalls Milan Mantri, the 2005 co chair. Born and raised in London, Milan qualified as a Chartered Accountant in the UK before moving to New York and now San Francisco.

In 2005 Net IP arranged close to 50 events in the Bay Area involving authors, artists, filmmakers and business leaders. The quality of events quickly attracted new members and caught the eye of corporate’s that sponsored events. Google, the Mountain View based search engine, sponsored one such event, a “wine and cheese” at an art gallery. Over 100 persons turned up one evening for an advanced screening of Gurindar Chadha’s “Bride and Prejudice”.

“Our aim was to highlight Indian culture as well as connect individuals professionally”, explained Milan. *“This entailed arranging events to showcase literature, art and film as well as organizing dinners with CEOs and entrepreneurs”.*

On August 15th Net IP and the World Affairs Council commemorated Indian Independence Day together inviting a multi-cultural crowd numbering close to 200 persons. On another note, the chapter arranged a conference in the fall, on career planning & realizing lifelong dreams entitled “Follow Your Passion”. Speakers & panelists comprised of dancers, journalists, business and social entrepreneurs each with inspirational stories to influence the audience to fulfill their ambitions.

Millennium Goals and Vision for India

Following the success of the local SFBA conference and the strong track record of helping charities, Net IP in general and the Bay Area chapter in particular seem well placed to partner with other non-profits. One such partnership is with AIF (America India Foundation) who recently organized a conference surrounding the UN millennium goals.

Milan firmly believes that changes in technology have enabled innovative individuals to initiate positive social impact given limited resources.

“We have established a talented and entrepreneurial network that is eager to contribute to the community locally and abroad. Many of our members are forming non-profits as well as

businesses. Advances in communication technology have enabled individuals to start ventures with a view to better society. Through email, websites, and blogs, small groups have the ability to reach potentially anyone that has access to the internet & beyond. Huge audiences, globally dispersed, are now reachable with limited resources”.

This means, that together with the emergence of social entrepreneurs in recent years, it is possible for one individual working from home to effectively raise the visibility of projects and causes that they feel passionate about as never before. What then is the future for young Indians around the globe?

“India has made remarkable progress in a short number of years and increasingly Indians abroad are re-connecting with their land of origin to create further opportunities. While young professionals will continue to enjoy success in business and sciences, and make important breakthroughs in relatively new fields such as art and entertainment, a growing number of individuals, non profits and corporate’s will be inspired to tackle global causes; combating hunger, poverty, disease and supporting environmental issues.

“I am very optimistic and excited by what our generation and community can accomplish in India and elsewhere in the years ahead” concludes Milan. Judging by the talented individuals connecting on the west coast there is plenty of reason for optimism.