

# A new dawn

Bringing high-quality drugs to the people and places they're needed was a key priority of Dr. Nik Kotecha OBE, founder of Morningside Pharmaceuticals and the 2019 National Business Awards Entrepreneur of the Year, sponsored by Inflexion.

Armed with a doctorate in drug discovery and working for SmithKline Beecham, Dr. Nik was acutely aware of the need for high quality pharmaceuticals in developing countries

He and his wife set out to export high-quality UK drugs to areas accustomed to sub-standard pharmaceuticals.

In true start-up form, they turned their garage into an office. But it was 1991, so unlike fledgling companies that would set out at the end of that decade, they had no internet to facilitate research and communications, and so had to rely on the telephone, fax and travel. They began by ringing up British embassies in developing countries and asking: "Are there companies in your country that import medicines?". They'd then take the lists provided by the embassies and build relationships with these companies.

"There was already a demand for high-quality medicines, so we were getting orders and sourcing products from our partner pharmacies and wholesalers, which packed the drugs and sent them via a freight agent to that country," explained Dr. Nik. Unusually for a new business, this led to Morningside beginning as a 100% export-led company, with UK medicines reaching many countries across the world.

Over the next five years Dr. Nik would continue to cultivate relationships, which saw orders and the business grow. The company's big break took place in 1995 during a UK government agency trade mission to New York, where Dr. Nik approached a global United Nations Aid agency. It was here that Morningside really took off, as the company's business model of exporting to the developing world fulfilled a unique gap in the market for the international aid sector.

This is where personal passion breeds success, as Dr. Nik's own journey had inspired a life-long interest in International aid. Dr. Nik said:

**“UN organisations and large NGO's wanted to procure high quality medicines to supply to developing countries. It was a real opportunity for our business, and this is where our mission of 'making quality healthcare an affordable and accessible reality throughout the world', was born. ”**

Fast forward to today and Morningside is one of the UK's largest suppliers of a wide range of quality medicines to aid organisations including the WHO, UNICEF, Red Cross and MSF. "We send products from our Loughborough Distribution Centre to these organisations all over the world, particularly to disaster and war zone regions where a wide range of medicines are needed urgently," Dr. Nik explains, his pride palpable.



Dr. Nik Kotecha OBE, founder of Morningside Pharmaceuticals collected his 2019 Entrepreneur of the Year Award from Andrew Priest, Partner at Inflexion.

## Stumbling blocks

Setting up any business requires a careful mixture of resilience and perseverance, but establishing one which is entirely export-driven has a unique set of challenges. "Communications were particularly tricky," recalls Dr. Nik. "Back then there was no internet, so communicating and even due diligence required lots of travel. Between 1995 and 2010 I travelled extensively to meet all the people necessary to build the business in a stable and scalable way."

Over its 28-year history, Morningside has exported to over 100 countries globally, but now focuses on a smaller number of core markets in the private sector, whilst also exporting through large UN and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The last fifteen years has seen its focus shift to growing its UK business, which is now its largest market.

This posed a new challenge for the business, as they moved the Morningside companies away

from pure distribution to include product development and manufacturing as well. "The first 12 years of Morningside's life we were a trading company, procuring high-quality medicines from others. However, we were keen to develop our own R&D and licensed prescription generic medicines for the UK and developed markets. Our approach was to grasp the opportunity for cost effective generics that arises once a product comes off patent: formulate that drug, do the clinical work and testing, create the IP, and then submit it to the regulatory body to secure a Marketing Authorisation in the UK and other developed markets," explained Dr. Nik.

The Morningside companies have since invested prolifically in R&D and today they have over 240 licensed medicines in the UK and EU. "Our pharmaceutical products are distributed twice daily nationwide to pharmacies and hospitals in the UK, so they are available when our customers and their patients need them," added Dr. Nik.

Morningside is stronger too, through it's required perseverance:

**“Throughout our history, we've been hiring, investing and innovating; it's what businesses and entrepreneurs should always be doing.”**

advises Dr. Nik, continuing: "We have embarked on a strategy focussed on continuous improvement, as well as innovating and investing heavily in R&D, which can take many years to pay off!"

Dr. Nik's advice to budding entrepreneurs is clear: "Find your passion, and from there you will find your purpose. Once you have found your purpose, then you can begin, develop and grow your business."

*Dr. Nik Kotecha OBE also undertakes a number of Board and Advisory positions, regionally and nationally, including as a Department for International Trade (DIT) Export Champion, CBI Regional Councillor and Board Member for the Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP).*

### Reflecting on success

**“I am truly honoured and humbled to receive the Entrepreneur of the Year Award, which I would like to dedicate to the hard work and commitment of our employees. I hope this national award helps shine a light on how successful businesses can take a socially responsible approach and make a real difference to the communities they operate in.”**



**Dr. Nik Kotecha OBE, founder of Morningside Pharmaceuticals**

### Recognising visionary leaders

Inflexion has sponsored the National Business Awards 'Entrepreneur of the Year' Award since 2016. Focusing on the contribution of a dynamic, creative and visionary leader, the Award recognises an enterprising individual who has achieved sustained levels of growth and strong financial performance through a culture of innovation, resilience and an ethos of inspiring others through their leadership style.

If you would like to nominate or learn more about the Entrepreneur of the Year category at the National Business Awards or the European Business Awards, please email us at [andrew.priest@inflexion.com](mailto:andrew.priest@inflexion.com)

### Randal Charitable Foundation

As well as building a successful pharmaceuticals business, Dr. Nik Kotecha OBE, has also founded his own charitable foundation.

The Randal Charitable Foundation has a clear, unwavering vision that is to save lives, help the socially disadvantaged and improve the quality of life for those in need in the UK and around the world.

Its focus is to support issues connected to health, disability, addiction, mental health, poverty, education and social disadvantage.