



Stephanie Secret | East Bay Business Times

Media Entrepreneur

Raj Raheja

Heartwood Studios

BY HEATHER BUCKLEY

EAST BAY BUSINESS TIMES

“Being an entrepreneur is like running in a race. You can come in first or last – either way is better than sitting at home,” said Raj Raheja, co-founder of Heartwood Studios, a 3-D animation and visual effects studio in San Ramon.

Raheja says his most significant entrepreneurial strength, as well as his weakness, is that he is a restless soul and believes it’s best to find a partner who complements what you do best to insure the company will be more balanced and successful.

“He is today, I am tomorrow,” Raheja said about his business partner, Neil Wadhawan.

Raheja tries to imagine himself out of a job every day. He says one of his biggest challenges is that there is not enough desperation in his life. Confident that success is not an issue, he wonders more about how extreme his success will be.

In his early 30s, Raheja has already filled three passports, drawing on his worldwide travels – including those as a child between Africa and India – for motivation and drive.

He became an entrepreneur at 18, while studying to be an architect at the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. He noticed architects who had been

Heartwood Studios

Business: 3-D design
Address: 2400 Camino Ramon, Suite 175, San Ramon 94583
Phone: 925-217-9657
Web: www.hwd3d.com

in business for 10 years were not moving beyond restoration work. His dream was much larger, so he started his first company, building exhibition booths.

Raheja designed trade-show booths that could be transported in suitcases and used computer-screen animation to sell the booths, using his earnings to put himself through college. He expanded his animation business to sell stages for high-society weddings with his aunt who ran a public relations firm.

After years of using animation to sell different services successfully, Raheja met Timo Wadhawan, who ran a construction business and partnered with him to develop Heartwood Studios. Soon after, Timo’s son, Neil Wadhawan, joined the company as CEO. The three have been developing the 3-D animation and visual effects studio since 2002.

“We started the company on blind faith,” said Raheja.

Heartwood Studios’ team of architects, designers, engineers and modelers provide real-time 3-D shopping solutions for the likes of the Dallas Cowboy’s 3-D Pro Shop and Kohler 3-D online design center and high-end animation and simulation for the defense industry. Current and previous clients include Whoopi Goldberg’s radio show, “Wake Up with Whoopi” and Scott Adams’ “Dilbert’s Ultimate Home.”

“We are changing the entire user experience,” said Raheja, “My biggest challenge is figuring out what not to do online.”