

Revolutionizing immigration and visa services in Asia's 3rd largest economy since 1993: Prashant Ajmera & Associates

Pooja Kundoo • The CEO Magazine

A successful business is spawned when an entrepreneur stumbles upon a hurdle in his own life that needs to be solved. By addressing that pain point, he/she becomes deeply connected to his/her mission. The seed of Prashant Ajmera's entrepreneurial journey sprouted back in 1988 when he wished to tour Europe by train as a backpacker. Interaction with multiple travel agents in Ahmedabad and Mumbai to obtain travel visas went in vain with a single disappointing reply. They told him that he would never be granted a tourist visa since his case was not supported by any tax returns in his name, neither did he have a bank account, nor did he possess any property in his name. "This prompted me to study immigration law and I began to understand the process and principles behind visa issuance. On 29th March 1988, I stood in line for a UK visa (the first country I applied for a visitor visa) and was granted one for a period of 2 years. In those days there was no Schengen visa and one had to apply separately for each individual country. After my Europe tour, I decided to stay back in London and pursue further studies. I enrolled for a double degree in Company Secretary & Administration (ICSA) at the London School of Business. In September 1992, I met an immigration attorney from a prestigious law firm in Montreal, Canada, in London. This law firm specialized in Canadian immigration matters and was looking to expand their practice in India. I proposed to

him that we could work together and start immigration practice in India," Prashant recalls his journey of establishing the Law Firm of Prashant Ajmera & Associates.

Here are the edited excerpts of the recent chat held with Prashant focusing on the 25 – year long voyage of his venture.

Mr. Ajmera thanks for joining us. As a licensed lawyer, you have been a pioneer in this field in India. How did you nurture Prashant Ajmera & Associates as a trusted name in the industry?

We started our boutique law firm in India in 1993 with a primary focus in the area of immigration and visa services. Back then we were associated with a reputed law firm in Montreal, Canada, and our concentration was on skilled worker, entre-

preneur and investor visas of Canada. Presently the focal point of our practice is Residency & Citizenship by Investment programs for different countries around the world. Our client base has evolved from professionals and skilled workers to HNIs and top-notch business persons.

Till date, I don't know of any law firm in India whose primary practice is dedicated solely to Residency and Citizenship by Investment. We provide an honest and candid opinion in every case. We listen to our clients - understand their objectives, needs and circumstances and then suggest appropriate options. OUR JOB IS TO PROVIDE THE RIGHT LEGAL ADVICE AND NOT SELL ANY SPECIFIC IMMIGRATION AND OR VISA PROGRAMS. For us, it's always the client's welfare and satisfaction that matters.

Our forthrightness and sincerity



Prashant Ajmera
Founder, Prashant Ajmera & Associates

have paid off and we have been able to build our brand over the past 25 years. For us, quality of work is more important than quantity or volume and we have always strived to maintain this work integrity.

How did you make your mark in the industry and in the heart of the customers as well?

When we started out, there were already many travel agents and visa agents in India who worked for a very small fee. It was therefore difficult for people to believe initially that a lawyer could provide services related to visa and immigration matters. But slowly and surely we were able to gain the trust of our clients by providing the best professional services in the market.

Maintaining lifelong relationships with our clients is more important to us than making money from them. Successful business persons, professionals, leading real estate developers, bureaucrats, politicians, CEOs and CFOs of banks and multinational companies, deans and professors of universities, wealth advisors, chartered accountants, lawyers and many such outstanding people have come to us for advice and eventually become our clients.

What are the services offered under the gamut of Prashant Ajmera & Associates?

We started our practice by providing immigration and visa services for professionals and skilled workers. We successfully processed our first Residency and Citizenship case in 1997 for Canada for a leading industrialist family in Gujarat. Slowly we started diversifying and began providing these services to more business persons and entrepreneurs. Presently 90% of our practice is concentrated on providing Residency and Citizenship by Investment services to High Networth Individuals (HNIs) and business persons.

Our law firm has formed associ-

ations with various law firms and professionals in over 30 countries to provide optimum services to our HNI clients in India.

In this age of mistrust, are you seeing an evolution in how consumers trust brands, or are they still for the most part doubtful?

Yes, there is a fair amount of mistrust in our industry as such due to heavy competition and lack of proper regulation. In India, anyone can open shop as an immigration or visa consultant. But when clients see our profile and impressive track record, they are convinced about our authenticity. We are very upfront with our clients regarding their chances of obtaining immigration or any type of visa for that matter. If they do not qualify for whatever reason, we are very forthright in informing them that they do not meet the requirements. Most of our clients come through past references or by word of mouth. So basically our work speaks for us and our clients provide us with free publicity!

Throw some light over the expansion binge of Prashant Ajmera & Associates.

I have been invited to speak at two International Bar Association conferences, and at various prestigious business organizations. I have contributed articles related to immigration and visa matters to a number of magazines and newspapers over the years, including The Times of India (Mumbai edition) in 1996 and 1997. We were the first law firm to conduct a seminar for EB-5 Investor Visa Program in Mumbai in 1999. Recently the British legal magazine, 'Lawyer Monthly' has awarded us with the legal award titled, 'Immigration & Nationality Law Firm of the Year 2017-India'.

I will be also speaking at several upcoming conferences, in India and abroad.

Any new categories or changes this year...

Yes, we will be providing Residency and Citizenship by Investment services not only for USA and Canada but also 35+ other countries, including European and Caribbean countries. This month we have signed an agreement with a TOP immigration law firm of USA to cater to our US based clients or clients having problems with US immigration. Real Estate developers from all parts of the world are approaching us to sell their real estate projects to Indian HNIs. We are being approached by many law firms and related professionals from around the world to facilitate their entry into the Indian market.

How has been your journey as an entrepreneur?

It has been a very fulfilling journey. I have now reached a stage where work has become a hobby and I am enjoying that. It gives me great satisfaction when clients, who have already successfully immigrated, come to me and credit me for their success in a foreign country. That I have been able to make a difference in their lives is immensely rewarding. By giving them the right advice, I have, in a small way, helped them realize their lifelong dream.

What do you hope to accomplish within the next year from personal as well as professional point of view?

In next 12 months, we wish to travel all over the country and establish ourselves as the only law firm in India providing Residency and Citizenship by Investment services to HNIs.

A piece of advice for the young entrepreneurs...

Honesty is the best policy. There are no shortcuts in life and only hard work and perseverance can help you achieve your dreams and goals. Also, your reputation and integrity should come before everything else. If these are intact, success will not be far behind.