

THE MM PROFILE

Bhupinder Anand

Life is about picking up the pieces of your jigsaw puzzle and making the picture you want, says Anand Associates' managing director, who has a passion for public speaking and likes to be considered as being a financial architect. Interview by Julie-ann Sprague



For most people, standing up in front of a room filled with conference delegates and delivering a presentation is uncomfortable and not done for enjoyment. But for Anand Associates managing director Bhupinder Anand, public speaking is a thrill.

This year, the public speaking circuit has taken him to Warsaw, San Diego, Cairo, Palm Springs, Calgary and Toronto three times.

The 42-year old father of two juggles regular speeches with financial advising and says he has struck a good balance between work and pleasure, albeit with the support of "a very tolerant" wife. Anand prefers to be called a financial architect.

Originally, he qualified as an engineer but, without a clue about what he wanted to do, the university graduate took a job as a trainee branch manager with Leeds Permanent Building Society. Within three months, he was promoted to assistant branch manager.

"A year later they were going to give me my own branch and things were going well, except I hated it," says Anand.

It was in his next job as a broker consultant at Scottish Equitable that Anand got a taste

for sales and found his calling. He later switched sides from selling to IFAs to selling financial products to clients as an IFA.

Anand is passionate about financial services but gets frustrated with regulatory red tape and blames the FSA for forcing out IFAs out and creating a savings gap.

"They have destroyed this business. Why do we have a savings gap? The blame has to go to the regulator's door. Four or five years ago, there were 300,000 financial advisers. Today, it is probably less than 50,000 and that is because the FSA has made it too hard for people to do business.

"If you cut 75 per cent of firemen from the system you would have a fire problem. If you cut 75 per cent of nurses and doctors there would be a health gap, if you got rid of 75 per cent of policeman you get a crime gap. Get rid of 75 per cent of financial advisers, then, no doubt, there is a savings gap. In this business, people have to be sold to save."

Anand is also a staunch opponent of the FSA's introduction of multi-ties.

"The whole depolarisation change is a farce. It completely muddies the water. It has taken 17 years for the public just to understand the system so to introduce a third category of multi-tie only benefits the banks. In the interest of the public, not financial advisers, the system should be clear and simple. I cannot see how multi-ties will help."

Yet, Anand says that while others sit and complain and continue to complain he sets out to find the opportunities.

"Whenever there is a change that I think is a problem, I get angry and upset but then I immediately look for the opportunity."

Anand also likes to be different and cites moving to a fee-based structure 10 years ago as one of the changes he has made that has kept him ahead of the pack.

He has a hectic schedule but uses some of his overseas trips as a way to switch off and recharge. "If I travel for about three weeks, I do not switch my phone on, I do not phone the office and they do not phone me.

Born: Chandigarh, India
Lives: Buckinghamshire
Education: Engineering degree, Oxford Brookes, Diploma of the Personal Finance Society
Career: 1987-1988: Leeds Permanent Building Society, 1988-1993: Scottish Equitable, 1993-1995: De Havilland Financial Management; 1995-1997: Caroline Banks Associates, 1997 to date: Anand Associates
Likes: To be with family, to travel and make new friends all over the world, excellent food.
Dislikes: Energy vampires, people who lack integrity, moaners.
Favourite book: *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie.
Favourite film: *Once Upon a Time in America*. "It is an under-rated masterpiece. At nearly four hours long and having seen it at least seven times, I have spent a day of my life on this movie."
Favourite album: UB40's *Signing Off* and Stevie Wonder's *Hotter than July*
Best live concert: U2 in Toronto in 2005
Hero/heroine: General Colin Powell
Drives: BMW 750iL and Jeep Grand Cherokee
Life ambition: To exploit my energy, motivational skills and expertise to make a positive difference to all the people I meet, socially or professionally, and to have tremendous fun while doing so.
Career ambition: To continue to be globally recognised for excellence in the provision of creative and innovative financial planning solutions.
If not doing this job I would be: Probably retired. I love this business and the satisfaction and freedom it gives me and cannot think of anything better.

"In order to be successful in business, you have got to recharge. Business drains you and you need to be recharged. I do it often, at least every three months."

Anand also runs Advisor Master Class, a one-day training course that allows him to address an audience but at the same time attend a quarterly entrepreneurial training program in Canada, called Strategic Coach.

He says the programme has helped him capitalise on his "unique ability".

Anand explains: "Unique ability is something that you do extremely well and it is something that not many people can do like you do. It has to be something you enjoy doing and something that makes a difference for the people you do it for. And, it has to make money. All of those were working for me in terms of public speaking, except for that last point, so I set up the Advisor Master Class."

Anand lists addressing 7,500 people from over 60 countries at the main platform of the Million Dollar Round Table in 2004 as one of his biggest achievements. He was invited back to present for MDRT's Top of the Table meeting in 2005 and will present at MDRT again this year.

He recounts another great achievement – being the warm-up act for Tony Blair in 1998 for the launch of Britain's Richest Asian 200 magazine, which Anand sponsored.

Anand, whose parents came to the UK from India when he was 10 months old, is a very driven individual and he attributes some of his success to setting goals.

"Have you ever tried to put together a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle without the picture on the box? You would not know where to start would you? But how many of us live our lives and look back and look at the pictures we created. Wouldn't it be better to have the picture in front of us so that we only pick up the pieces that make up that picture and discard the ones that are not relevant? Life is about picking up the pieces of your jigsaw puzzle.

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