


Scholar



Shukoor Ahmed
(BSCS '93)
CEO, V-Empower Inc.

Infinite Bandwidth

Providing Technology
Solutions Worldwide

**General Dynamics Information
Technology Offers Educational Pathways
Commencement Season Kicks Off**

contents

Scholar

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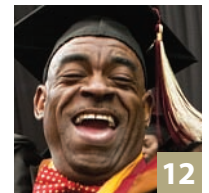


FEATURES | 2 Working in the Clouds. A new trend offers technology on demand. **4 In Orbit.** An alumnus tracks the Earth from above. **9 Field Study.** Four alumni discuss their technology careers. **10 Educational Pathways.** General Dynamics Information Technology develops its work force.



ON THE COVER | Shukoor Ahmed (BSCS '93) has always been a problem solver. With a diverse background in math, customer service, computer science and public policy, it seems Ahmed has an answer for everything. Today, he is the CEO of technology solutions provider V-Empower Inc., is running for public office and volunteers at three nonprofit organizations.

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UNIVERSITY NEWS

- 12** Commencement Season Kicks Off
- 14** Online Courses for the 'Next Generation'
- 15** Strayer by the Numbers

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INFINITE BANDWIDTH

Finding Solutions Worldwide

By Courtney MacGregor Coder, Senior Editor

Shukoor Ahmed (BSCS '93) has always been a problem solver. With a diverse background in math, customer service, computer science and public policy, it seems Ahmed has an answer for everything. Today, he is the CEO of technology solutions provider V-Empower Inc., is running for public office and volunteers at three nonprofit organizations.

As a consulting and information technology solutions company, V-Empower develops client solutions in information security, software and Web development, and project management. But when Ahmed started the business in 2001, the company's mission wasn't so clearly defined.

For two years his team worked on a trial-and-error basis, correcting software kinks and handling the unforeseen problems that arise when you start your own business. "We made mistakes—expanded into China, developed new technologies that we were not able to sell—but there is uncertainty in business," says Ahmed. "Sometimes you fail as you try to figure it out."

"In the early years of the company, we weren't cutting ourselves a paycheck. I took out loans on my home and my assets were stretched as much as possible," he

recalls. "But we were all working toward the same goal of getting V-Empower off the ground." By 2004 the team had leveraged their knowledge, honed their business model and began attracting clients. They saw solid profits from 2005 to 2007.

Growing Pains

As was the case for many companies, 2008 was a difficult year. Just as V-Empower had landed on profitable ground, it was hit by a worldwide recession. But Ahmed was prepared with hard-working and inspired employees. "I encourage every one of my employees to work as if they are an entrepreneur," says the chief executive officer. "It's not enough to just come to work every day. You have to bring value to the company, be a part of its process and be invested in its future."

That mentality carried the organization through the economic downturn and, today, Ahmed is rewarding his dedicated employees. He is in the process of dissecting what is currently known as V-Empower into three smaller companies, and will name three long-time employees as majority stakeholders and CEOs of the new ventures.



“My company matured in different directions, and the best solution was to break it apart so each line of business could realize its full potential,” says Ahmed.

This process is bittersweet, as Ahmed lets go of a company that he grew from three employees to more than 110 across four continents and seven countries at its peak. Yet, the process allows him to nurture the business and his employees at the same time. Ahmed will become a partner and mentor for the new companies.

Leading the Vote

Just as he relinquishes one project, another is already capturing his attention. Later this year, Ahmed will indulge a lifelong interest in politics by running for the Maryland House of Delegates for the second time. In 1998, shortly after earning a master’s degree in public policy from American University, he ran for the same position but did not win.

Despite the loss 12 years ago, the experience inspired Ahmed to develop technology solutions for voters. “I wanted to build a Web-based platform that made absentee voting easy,” says the resident of Bowie, Md. So, in 2004, his team at V-Empower produced a Web application that enables voters to register for an absentee ballot in any state.

The voter services that Ahmed is most proud of are new iPhone, Droid and Facebook applications. “I have a student in Baltimore and one in Russia working together to build a site that lets voters find their polling station and sample ballots by entering their street address on their phone,” says Ahmed. “It’s really important to me that voting is made easier and that voters can access all

the information they need to make an informed decision.”

Regardless of how the election this fall turns out, it will no doubt test Ahmed’s skills in public policy, business, public relations and leadership. “As you go through life and collect knowledge and experience, it may not serve you right away, but you will draw from it down the road,” says Ahmed, who emigrated from Hyderabad, India, in 1988. “This is an opportunity for me to put all of my experience to work.”

Healthy Results

Volunteerism is another way in which Ahmed applies his experience. Each week, he donates time to the Bowie Business Innovation Center, Humanity First and the Padder Foundation’s free health clinic in Prince George’s County, Md.

The health clinic was founded by Dr. Feroz Padder, a cardiologist and longtime friend of Ahmed, who lost his wife and two children in a car accident in 2006. When he decided to start a foundation in their name, he turned to his friend for help. “I filed for 501(c)3 status and worked with the county to get approvals for the clinics,” says Ahmed. “I am proud to be a part of the work they are doing.” He is currently working with county officials to expand the clinic’s operations to two days a week.

Despite his hectic schedule, Ahmed always finds time for his wife and two teenagers, and relishes the life and work he has created for himself. “I keep in mind the words of Confucius: ‘Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life,’” he says, noting: “I have that job.” ◦