

Shah Canada's strong foundation of family business success



The Shah Canada Group of Companies creates success by embracing the future while honouring the past.

The family's entrepreneurial roots trace back to Kenya, where the family ran clothing and textile companies in East Africa. With the intention to start a textile business in Canada, they soon realized that there was a far greater opportunity to supply ethnic foods to the growing immigrant population. Hence, in 1974, Shashi Shah started Shah Trading Co. Ltd. and along with his brothers, built it into one of Canada's most successful importing and distribution businesses.

In 2006, backed by their father Shashi, brothers Sujay and Ajay Shah launched their own entrepreneurial initiative: The Shah Canada Group of Companies.

"Growing up in the family business, my brothers and I

Left to right:
Rajay Shah,
vice-president,
Sujay Kumar Shah,
president and chief
executive officer, and
the late Ajay Shah.

inherited this amazing knowledge of importing and trading and we capitalized on it by incorporating food science and technology to create value-added and manufacturing focused organizations. One of these was Kii Naturals, a manufacturer of artisan crackers. In just seven years, we built it to 120 employees, shipping product to over 25 countries and in 2017, sold the business to a U.S. private equity firm," says Sujay Kumar Shah, president and chief executive officer of Shah Canada, who runs the group along with his brother Rajay Shah, vice-president.

Today, Shah Canada's portfolio of companies – which includes Shashi Foods and Smile Natural Foods – employ a complex trading strategy that sources raw materials from more than 40 countries around the world.

Shashi Foods is North America's leading manufacturer for globally procured and locally curated spices, herbs, and seasonings. Shashi's exciting portfolio of products are used by some of the most recognizable brands in retail, packaged food, and food service industries in North America and beyond.

Smile Natural Foods is a private-label producer of organic and gluten-free muesli, granola and nutrient-dense breakfast cereals for major supermarket chains across Canada and the U.S.

The Shah Canada portfolio also includes Clarius, which invests in privately held companies in and beyond the food industry, and Jay Capital, a real estate portfolio company with industrial and commercial holdings.

"We run multiple businesses," Sujay says. "To grow and manage them successfully over the last couple of years, we have had to continuously adapt to a rapidly changing environment. By utilizing a strong foundation and applying ingenuity, know-how and entrepreneurial spirit, the company has maintained its status as a Platinum Club winner of Canada's Best Managed Companies over the last decade."

Over the last two years, Shah Canada has injected more automation and software integration into its business, allowing it to stay competitive in the face of rising costs and increased competition. The company also took the opportunity to groom a group of senior directors, managers and officers who will help apply the family's business acumen and generational knowledge to increasingly complex and ever-changing global markets.

"Using modern food science and technology to develop innovation and generate growth throughout global markets, is one of this generation's contributions to the ongoing legacy of the family business," Sujay says.

"The purpose of Shah Canada is to take everything we've learned from our past generations, combined with the knowledge we've created, and pass all of that on to the next generation to continue our legacy."

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