

Following the American Dream

This is the second in our series celebrating the 10th anniversary of [New Direction Partners](#). It's always heartwarming when we can help entrepreneurs follow their dreams. The story of Aditi Chavannavar's acquisition of Allied Bindery in Madison Heights MI is a special one that we are pleased to share. If you need bindery services, be sure to look her up. If you want to follow your dream, whether buying or selling a printing or packaging business, let us help.

From Ph.D. to Printing Professional

Aditi Chavannavar immigrated to the United States after she earned a Master's Degree in Chemistry in her home country of India. "I watched the Ph.D. students in my country, and they had a really hard time," she says. "They didn't have adequate resources or lab space and most end up sitting around for months trying to get access. I didn't want to get my Ph.D. that way so I chose to come to the United States."

Aditi finished her Ph.D., acquired a Green Card, met her husband and secured a great job at BASF as a chemist. Her husband is also a first-generation immigrant from India who came to the United States to get a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering, and works for GM. The couple has a two-year-old son.



"I love my job at BASF," Aditi says, "but we were interested in running our own company. We were looking for a business – not necessarily a printing business, but one that was run well, was profitable and had good principals in place and a good level of management. We searched for several years before

we came across an ad for Allied in an online business site. It looked interesting, so we contacted Jim Russell, who had listed the business, to learn more.”

“I had dinner with Aditi and her husband, both in their 30’s,” Jim said. “They had an entrepreneurial spirit, she wanted her own business, and he was intrigued by the engineering aspects of what goes into the book binding and gluing process. With their background, I wasn’t sure they would actually be interested in the industry, but the more they learned about Allied and got to know the seller (Ed Doyle), the more intrigued they became.”

Under Jim’s guidance, the couple applied for an SBA loan, and everything was looking great for a December 31st close. “That got derailed three days before closing by the government shutdown,” Jim explains. “The SBA lender said they needed to receive verification from Homeland Security to make sure their immigration status was in order, so that slowed things down. Nevertheless, we were finally able to close a couple weeks after the government reopened.”

Allied Bindery was owned by six partners, all but one of whom were looking for an exit as soon as possible. Minority owner Ed Doyle agreed to stay on for a year and help Aditi get grounded in the business and the industry. “I still have a few projects to finish up at BASF,” she says, “and then I am going to India to visit my family for a month. Ed is running the business, and when I get back, I’ll jump in with both feet and learn as much from him as I can.” Aditi has already met the employees, many of whom have been with the company for 20+ years, as well as some of the key customers.

“Jim was so helpful as we worked through this,” Aditi says. “I think that first dinner was two or three hours, and he patiently and clearly answered all of our many questions about the business and the industry. We had questions about how printing and binding work, how they work together, what it is like day-to-day running the business dealing with employees and customers, and how best to maintain a work/life balance. Not only does Jim know the industry well, but he ran a business himself.”

One question the couple had was whether there was a threat of printing companies bringing bindery in-house that could affect their business growth opportunity. “We spoke with a few Allied customers about that,” she said, “and they told us that having a simple bindery in-house, low-end binding, some saddle stitching, etc., was about as far as they wanted to go. If they need a large volume of adhesive bound or lay flat books, most customers want to outsource that rather than make the investments in equipment and staff to do it in-house. That’s where we see our niche and our future growth opportunities, binding with techniques that people don’t have the training, skills or equipment to do themselves or don’t want to make the investment.”

Aditi is also starting to work with the schools in the area to see about getting some vocational training introduced in the bindery field. “We are aware of the aging out problem,” she says, “and we are looking to see what we can do for long term growth, through courses, summer interns and more. But formal vocational training is really the key.”

Aditi is looking forward to being active in the business starting in June when she returns from India and is excited about the future opportunities. She and her husband are following the American Dream – great examples of the terrific opportunities that America offers that can be hard to come by in many other parts of the world.