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After 10 years, Iyka just getting started

By **Katie Morell**
Contributing Writer

Iyka Enterprises Inc., an award-winning company that is thriving despite the current economic conditions, is now in its 10th year of providing business process application tools to companies around the globe.

Located near the intersection of Route 64 and Smith Road in St. Charles, Iyka has 42 contract-based and full-time employees at its offices, which includes its global center in India. It provides software services for corporations of all sizes and helps to streamline database design, data warehousing and data reporting.

In addition, Iyka runs a network operations center, helping its clients maintain internal networks and identify possible errors.

Since its inception in 2000, the company has been so successful that the US Pan Asian Chamber of Commerce named it as part of the top 10 fastest growing Asian businesses.

Sitting at the company's helm is Poonam Gupta, a woman originally from India who came to the States 20 years ago to find a better life.

Gupta grew up in Northern India, in the small village of Kanpur. As a child, it was unheard of for a woman in her village to venture abroad for college, but Gupta was bound to change that.

In 1990, she boarded a plane for the U.S. with plans to attend Illinois State University (ISU). When she touched down, she had \$11.35 in her pocket.

"I came to town knowing nothing and no one," she said. "I came three days before school was scheduled to start. I thought I knew English, but it was British-style English. When the college opened, I didn't realize that the first week was orientation and there was no food."

With help from ISU's International House, Gupta was given a place to stay, but still had nothing to eat.

"I was 100 percent vegetarian and just didn't eat," she says. "I drank water and on the second and third day, I had dry bread and survived."

The following week when school officially opened, Gupta settled into a routine, complete with three meals a day, and four years later graduated with a degree in chemistry.

Soon after school ended, Gupta earned her masters degree and went to work as a chemist for Cabot and then INX International. In June 2000, she resigned to pursue her dream of starting her own business, and founded Iyka Enterprises five months later.

Starting a technology-related company in the middle of the dot-com boom wasn't all that uncommon, but keeping it going through 9/11 and the current recession is downright rare.

"Even in this economy, there is always a need," Gupta said. "We changed our focus from new installation to services. Any big business has lots of data and someone has to maintain it. There are networks in the company and someone needs to monitor them and take care of them. We take the whole network and deliver results."

Iyka operates on the motto of "being innovative and creating sustainable results," said Gupta, adding that through economic ups and downs, the company has not only diversified its services, but also its client base.

"We are very non-traditional in our approach," she said. "We go where the need is. We have clients not only in North America, but also in Europe, Asia, the Pacific Rim and Canada. It is important to focus on whom you are selling to. We go wherever the need is and will not hesitate to board a plane to England and show a company how we can help."

Looking ahead, Gupta forecasts a bright future for Iyka Enterprises.



Poonam Gupta-Krishnan, president and CEO of St. Charles-based Iyka Enterprises, Inc., a 10-year-old provider of managed services and software solutions, has experienced most of her company's growth the past two years and plans on adding 30 more employees this year. (Photo by Dietrich Wolfram)

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were achieved in the last two-and-a-half years.

"We have new contracts that are 90 percent confirmed and will bring more than 30 employees into the Chicago this year. We will have very aggressive growth in the coming years."

Iyka Enterprises Inc.

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Small business tips

Iyka Enterprises President and CEO Poonam Gupta gives a few tips for small business owners:

Go for it

"If you have a vision, dare to make your dreams come true. Have the guts and do it."

Keep pushing

"Small business owners often complain about things that might go wrong. Life is not fair. Accept it and move on. Just keep going with what you are doing."

Never stop learning

"I was never fearful to learn new things. Take courses, go the extra mile to accomplish what you want."

Don't give up

"A lot of people might have a business that does well during the first year or two and then things don't work out so they give up. Keep encouraging yourself."

Reach out

"When you are struggling, know that you will struggle anyway if you don't do anything. Reach out and get the help you need. A lot of times small business owners do not do that. Don't be afraid to ask for help."

Women, go easy on yourselves

"For female small business owners, give yourself permission to make mistakes and take time – you will be all right. Raising a family is physically, emotionally and financially draining. Many times, women tend to beat themselves up thinking they have to do everything. Pause and give yourself time. Then get back into it."

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