

FAITH & FORTUNE

- **Event Title:** Faith & Fortune: Strategies for Success in Business, Government, and the Corporate World
- **Date:** December 7th, 2024, at 12:30 pm
- **Co-hosted by:** The Mainstay Foundation and UMMA
- **Duration:** 3 Hours
- **Location:** Idara-e-Jaferia, Burtonville, Maryland

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An Overview

The **Mainstay Foundation** and **UMMA** co-hosted this highly informative event, **Faith & Fortune: Strategies for Success in Business, Government, and the Corporate World**, as part of their Entrepreneurship Network initiative. The session was coordinated and facilitated by **Sayyid Abathar Tajaldeen**, a director of **The Mainstay Foundation** and **Dr. Azmat Hussain**, President of **UMMA**.

This insightful session brought together seasoned professionals and budding entrepreneurs from the community to discuss their journeys, challenges, and successes in fields ranging from technology and healthcare to venture capital and government contracting. Key themes included the importance of mentorship, leveraging community networks, and addressing barriers—particularly for women and underrepresented groups. Panelists shared valuable advice on transitioning from corporate roles to entrepreneurship, balancing professional and personal lives, and fostering inclusive environments for skill development. The event emphasized the significance of intentional effort, resilience, and community-driven support in achieving professional and personal success.

Speakers

- **Mr. Kumail Zaidi**

Mr. Kumail Zaidi has more than two decades of leadership experience with a focus on driving sales, enhancing development and streamlining operations through the use of data and technology. Prior to joining System Pavers, he was the CEO of Frontpoint Security, where he more than doubled the company's growth and profitability. Syed also founded and ran Doublepositive, a marketing company that was sold to a strategic partner after 10+ years of successful growth. He's an alum of University of Maryland, where he earned both a BS and an MBA.

- **Habib Nasibdar**

Mr. Habib Nasibdar is the founder and CEO of Mindcubed, a company dedicated to delivering innovative solutions by fostering curiosity, creativity, and inspiration. With a diverse professional background spanning software engineering, business development, and strategy, he has led transformative projects, including the post-9/11 implementation of the District of Columbia's JUSTIS program, integrating over 70 systems to enhance public safety. An advocate for technology and innovation, Mr. Nasibdar has served in leadership roles at ACT-IAC, driving cloud adoption in the federal government and earning the "Rookie of the Year" award in 2010. A frequent speaker and thought leader in cloud computing and information sharing, he holds a Master's degree from George Washington University and a Bachelor's in Computer Science from the University of Mumbai. Residing in Arlington, Virginia, he is also a dedicated family man and active contributor to nonprofit technology initiatives.

- **Mrs. Sarah Naqvi**

Mrs. Sarah Naqvi is a seasoned IT executive with over 30 years of experience, currently serving as the Chief Technology Officer at LivCor, a Blackstone Portfolio Company. Previously, she held the position of Executive Vice President and Chief Information Officer at HMSHost, where she led technology-driven business transformation across North America. Her extensive career includes leadership roles in application development and project management at HMSHost, Bell Atlantic, and GE Information Service. Mrs. Naqvi holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Communication, as well as dual Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees from the University of Maryland Global Campus, emphasizing her expertise in business and technology integration.

Session Highlights

Overview

The *Faith & Fortune* event brought together ambitious entrepreneurs, professionals, and community leaders to explore strategies for achieving success in business, government, and corporate sectors while maintaining strong values and principles. Through three focused sessions, attendees gained insights into creating scalable, institutionally funded businesses, navigating the complexities of government contracting, and climbing the corporate ladder with integrity. The event featured a panel of esteemed speakers—Kumail Zaidi, Sarah Naqvi, and Habib Nasibdar—who shared their experiences and expertise, offering actionable guidance and inspiration.

Creating Institutionally Funded Businesses

Panelists provided a comprehensive overview of strategies to attract institutional funding, emphasizing the importance of building scalable operations and preparing for competitive markets. Habib Nasibdar recounted his journey from immigrant to entrepreneur, highlighting the critical role of risk-taking, perseverance, and leveraging writing skills in the government contracting industry. His story exemplified the value of identifying unique strengths and aligning them with market opportunities.

Navigating Government Contracting

Government contracting was presented as a lucrative yet complex field requiring specific skills, such as proposal writing and regulatory compliance. Habib emphasized the cyclical nature of government contracts and the need for diversification and strategic relationships to mitigate risks. For aspiring contractors, he advised learning the trade under experienced mentors before venturing independently.

Climbing the Corporate Ladder with Integrity

Sarah Naqvi shared her inspiring journey of ascending to leadership roles in a male-dominated corporate environment while staying true to her identity as a Muslim woman. She emphasized the importance of executive presence, confidence, empathy, and building diverse teams. Sarah's experience at Blackstone underscored the value of taking risks, fostering relationships, and creating a support system to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

Building Community Through Networking

A recurring theme was the need for community engagement and intentional mentorship. Panelists highlighted the significance of supporting community members, especially women and underrepresented groups, by creating opportunities and investing in their professional development. Kumail Zaidi stressed the importance of fostering connections within the community to amplify collective success.

Overcoming Challenges as Women in Leadership

The challenges faced by women in leadership, particularly Muslim women, were a central discussion point. Sarah Naqvi reflected on her experiences in corporate America, where biases and limited representation often presented obstacles. She urged the community to address these challenges by nurturing talent, encouraging self-confidence, and advocating for inclusivity.

Audience Engagement

The event included robust audience participation, with attendees posing questions about transitioning from employment to entrepreneurship, finding balance in life, and navigating barriers for women and minorities in the workplace.

Notable insights included:

Entrepreneurship vs. Corporate Careers:

Panelists emphasized the lifestyle trade-offs between entrepreneurship and corporate careers, advising attendees to align their choices with personal goals and circumstances.

Mentorship and Talent Development:

Attendees called for greater efforts to mentor young professionals and provide them with hands-on experiences, particularly in technical fields like IT and cybersecurity.

Community Support

Panelists encouraged the audience to intentionally support community members, breaking down barriers to entry and fostering trust and collaboration.

Stories of Inspiration

The panelists shared deeply personal stories that resonated with the audience:

Habib Nasibdar's Journey

From arriving in the U.S. with \$500 to leading a multimillion-dollar contracting business, Habib's journey showcased resilience, adaptability, and faith in the face of adversity.

Sarah Naqvi's Leadership Path

Sarah's ascent in corporate America, while balancing family responsibilities and embracing her identity, demonstrated the power of persistence and self-belief.

Kumail Zaidi's Entrepreneurial Drive

Kumail's experiences of building and selling multiple businesses revealed the importance of timing, risk diversification, and leveraging unique skills.

Final Reflections

The event concluded with a call to action for attendees to embrace challenges, prioritize mentorship, and maintain their values in their professional pursuits. The *Faith & Fortune* event not only provided practical tools for navigating the business and corporate worlds but also fostered a sense of community and shared purpose.

Attendees left inspired and equipped to pursue success with integrity, embodying the spirit of faith-driven leadership and collaboration.

