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Pair Leverages Common Interests to Create Brand

Fast Cars, Swank Nightlife Product of Hearty Ambition
DEIRDRE NEWMAN

Monday, February 13, 2017

Entrepreneurs, if nothing else, must be resourceful.

Exhibit A: Sammy Lakhany and Ali Hojat. Both men have a passion for driving exotic cars and figured a lot of others who live in Orange County do, too. So they started borrowing spiffy specimens from friends, rented them out here and there, and split profits with the owners.

The duo now has a fleet of about 20 luxury models at a Costa Mesa showroom called EnVus Motorsports, or “envy us.”

Their latest entrepreneurial effort stems from another love: nightlife. The business partners opened EnVy Lounge last spring in the former Ten Nightclub space in Newport Beach.

They declined to disclose revenue—both companies are privately held—but they’re bold in their intent that EnVus be acquired.

“The goal is to sell the company in five years for \$20 million,” Lakhany said.

The men say their business mix and approach boils down to a combination of persistence and personal interest in the lifestyle experiences they offer.

Seed of Ventures

Hojat was working at a Wells Fargo branch in Tustin and holding down a job on the side as VIP manager at Ten Nightclub when he met Lakhany, who was a mortgage broker.

Lakhany wanted to open an exotic car rental business. As he planted seeds of the venture, he enlisted Hojat, who at the time was running a vape store, to be his partner.

They started EnVus with cars Lakhany bought. The first, in 2015, was a 35th birthday present to himself: a T-Rex with a price tag of \$60,000. The two-seat, three-wheeled vehicle—half car, half motorcycle—was created by Canada-based Campagna Corp.

The duo opened the 2,000-square-foot EnVus in April. They’ve expanded to serve Los Angeles and San Diego, but without physical spaces. No additional expansions are planned.

Meanwhile, the former owner of Ten Nightclub, Vinnie Cappizi, who also owns the next-door Ten Asian Bistro, was looking to lease out the nightclub as Lakhany and Hojat were opening EnVus. Hojat arranged a meeting between Lakhany and Cappizi, and they sealed the deal last February. They invested \$650,000 from friends, family and a business loan to renovate the space, opening it a few months later in May as EnVy.

Lakhany had tried to open a combination bar and lounge in Santa Ana in 2012 but said he was derailed by red tape after investing \$250,000 from friends and family. He wrote off the loss as part of being an entrepreneur and looked ahead to the next business opportunity.

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