

# Shabnam Rezaei

Managing director, **Big Bad Boo Studios Inc.**

Age: 36



**S**habnam Rezaei has travelled all over the world, and exposure to different ways of life has given her a passion for multiculturalism.

Rezaei was born in Iran and lived there until her and her family left during the Iran-Iraq war, and that's where her travels began.

"I lived through the revolution there, and then went

to Vienna, where I went to an international school, and all my friends were from different parts of the world," explained Rezaei.

In Vienna, Rezaei learned how to speak English, German, French and bits of Croatian in addition to her native Farsi.

"It was really eye-opening to see what one language can do in terms of endearing you to someone who doesn't speak any other languages," she said. "It opens up a whole other world."

After Vienna, Rezaei pursued more academic interests.

In 1995, she graduated from the **University of Pennsylvania** in Philadelphia with two degrees – a B.Sc. in computer science and a BA in German language and literature.

Then she earned an MBA at **New York University** while working for **Exis Consulting**, a financial-services consultant, where she eventually became a global sales manager.

She's also worked for **Deloitte & Touche LLP** and **MISYS Banking**

*Birthplace:* **Tehran, Iran**

*Where do you live now:* **Vancouver and New York**

*Highest level of education:* **An MBA from NYU**

*Car or chosen mode of transport:* **My feet**

*Currently reading:* **A History of Iran, Empire of the Mind by Michael Axworthy and Lost Symbol by Dan Brown**

*Last CD bought or music downloaded:* **Viva La Vida by Coldplay**

*Favourite movie:* **It's a Wonderful Life**

*Favourite local restaurant:* **Vij's and Rangoli**

*Person you would most like to meet (living or deceased):*

**Steve Jobs and J.J. Abrams**

*Profession you would most like to try:* **Astronaut**

*Mentor:* **My dad**

*Most memorable career milestone or event:* **Realizing the impact of our work when one mom told me her four-year-old finally called her "Maman" (Mom in Persian) after watching our cartoon**

*Toughest business or professional decision:* **Anything with people involved; you are affecting their livelihood and future and often have to rely on your gut**

*What's left to do:* **This is just the dress rehearsal**

**Systems**, a financial-software service provider.

But it was a lifelong passion for different cultures that led Rezaei to Vancouver in 2005 with husband **Aly Jetha** (see p. 21) to found **Big Bad Boo Studios Inc.** The production company develops cartoons for children

that educate viewers about multiculturalism.

In her travels, Rezaei learned an important lesson about the world that she wanted to teach to children, and she said that's what Big Bad Boo allowed her to do.

"Really, in the end, you come to the conclusion that people are the same wherever you go." ■

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# Aly Jetha

President, **Oznoz Entertainment Ltd.** and **Big Bad Boo Studios Inc.**

Age: 39

It's safe to say **Aly Jetha** has a knack for business.

**Oznoz Entertainment**, a multicultural cartoon developer, and its partner animation studio **Big Bad Boo Studios Inc.**, are Jetha's third and fourth businesses.

He said he knew he wanted to be a businessman at a young age, but pursued a law degree to ensure he had a well-rounded education.

"I had two passions really, political science . . . and business, and a law degree was the only thing that qualified me for both," said Jetha, who earned his law degree from **University of California, Berkeley**.

After he finished his studies at Berkeley, Jetha joined San Francisco-based **Bain & Company**, an executive consulting firm, as a management consultant.

Jetha said it was at Bain that he learned the ins and outs of business and got the entrepreneurial bug.



"It was in the middle of the Silicon Valley gold rush, and I kind of jumped ship and said, 'You know what? I need to start my own company.'"

In 1998, Jetha moved to Seattle to found **Intra Technologies**, which developed and sold semi-conductors for the trucking industry.

In five years, the company earned \$8 million

in annual revenue and employed 50 people worldwide – and then he sold it.

In 2003, he joined the founding team of **Via One Technologies Inc.** in New York, and helped grow that business from a startup to an enterprise worth \$350 million.

But it was Jetha's experiences growing up in an immigrant family and travelling abroad that

*Birthplace:* **Nodola, Zambia**

*Where do you live now:* **Vancouver and New York**

*Highest level of education:* **Juris doctor from the University of California, Berkeley**

*Car or chosen mode of transport:* **BMW**

*Currently reading:* **Shantaram by Gregory David Roberts**

*Last CD bought or music downloaded:* **No Line on the Horizon by U2**

*Favourite movie:* **Citizen Kane, Love Actually and, when business is bad, Rocky II**

*Favourite local restaurant:* **Vij's or George**

*Person you would most like to meet (living or deceased):*

**Pierre Trudeau and Steve Jobs**

*Profession you would most like to try: I'd love to be a chef*

*Mentor:* **My mom**

*Most memorable career milestone or event:* **Deciding to be an entrepreneur and not practise law**

*Toughest business or professional decision:* **I don't do it often, but I hate letting people go**

*What's left to do:* **So much. I feel like we're just getting started**

caused him and wife **Shabnam Rezaei** (see p. 12) to co-found Oznoz in 2005.

"We really felt strongly about multiculturalism . . . and really teaching kids about different cultures," he said.

Oznoz and Big Bad Boo now employ more than 70 people, and although he's handled businesses all over the world, Jetha said he's here to stay. ■

**"I kind of jumped ship and said, 'You know what? I need to start my own company'"**

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