



When Priya Oberoi was told she had perianal cancer, everything changed. Swiftly reassessing what was important to her, she quit her high-flying City law firm job to set up her own business, which began from her hospital bed.

Recently, the entrepreneur and founder of Oberoi Capital Partners was nominated for an Asian Women of Achievement Award 2015, and Oberoi couldn't be happier.

"It was very sweet of them to nominate me and lovely to receive recognition for all the hard work you put in," she says. "It was great to meet other Indian girls and see what they're doing, and it's impressive in the context of such a big, wide world. Making your mark is never easy."

University of Oxford graduate, Oberoi, is set on being remembered; her conglomerate, set up in 2009, is an independent, FCA registered, private placement and consultancy boutique, which sources investment opportunities in natural resources (mainly oil, gas and power), and raises money for private equity/venture capital investments and co-investments.

DEAL BREAKER

A life-changing diagnosis was the impetus Priya Oberoi needed to kick-start her investment business, and she's now gaining the recognition she deserves, writes Sophia Charalambous



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Oberoi speaks multiple languages, helping her to act as a cultural go-between

Oberoi’s ability to speak multiple languages including Russian, Hindi, Arabic and Farsi, has put her in good stead for negotiating business with the Middle East, and she’s so thankful to have taken the leap.

“I was working 90 hours a week in a big firm as head of Islamic finance and looking around thinking, ‘Do I want to be like the rest of the people here?’ And when I realised that ‘no’ was the answer, I handed in my resignation. While I was in hospital, I had the idea to be a boutique placement agent – taking money from the Middle East to put into projects in places like America. Currently there’s no one in the middle who can bridge that cultural gap. It’s very much about understanding what people want, which makes us quite unique. We spend a lot of time sitting around drinking chai and listening to people. I think that’s something women can do really well.”

The company is now a team of five with six consultants working abroad, which is how Oberoi ensures she’ll get ahead in a highly competitive market.

“London attracts the biggest and the brightest,” she says. “When I look around Mayfair, there are some brilliant people here, and you have to be better than them. To do this you need energy as you’ll be working mornings, afternoons, in the night and at weekends. I haven’t had a proper holiday for five years. But more

than that; you have to be the kind of person people like because you have to make people attracted to you.”

Aside from running a conglomerate and attending the award ceremony at The Hilton, Oberoi has just got married to her Italian fiancé, in the back garden of their home in South Kensington.

And her mother, who has been helping with the wedding, has been a source of encouragement to Oberoi from day one.

“My mum is part Indian, part English and my dad is Indian,” she explains. “I grew up in a really normal middle-class home but I had parents who really believed in me and pushed me. After my illness, there were a lot of people who thought quitting my job was a reaction to the cancer. But it wasn’t – I always wanted to do this, I just didn’t have the courage before. My mum was brilliant and told me to just try because otherwise you won’t know. And it’s better for my health. We have this old saying in Hindi: ‘Health is wealth’, and if you don’t have that you don’t have anything really. I remember people would tell me that all the time growing up, and I never understood it until something like that happens.”