

Business Monday

Saving and shopping in the South Bay

Consumers:

New iMac with Intel
is on the right path./D3

A 'PASSION FOR QUALITY'

When it comes
to customer
focus, an RPV
man helped
write the book

By Muhammed El-Hasan

DAILY BREEZE

Sitting in the living room of his Rancho Palos Verdes home with a view of the Pacific Ocean over his left shoulder, Subir Chowdhury speaks rapidly, as if there is no time to lose.

Indeed, Chowdhury seems to have wasted little time, writing 12 books, starting two magazines and founding his own company.

And he's only 38.

Chowdhury has focused on helping companies and individuals improve the quality of their work and wring efficiencies from their operations.

"It's all about passion," Chowdhury said of the commitment to quality. "But you can't fake it. You really have to have that passion."

Some of his clients have included Fortune 1000 companies such as General Motors Corp., Caterpillar Inc. and TRW Inc. — now part of Northrop Grumman Corp.

In 2003, Chowdhury founded ASI Consulting Group, where he serves as chairman and CEO. The company is based in Livonia, Mich., with offices in 10 countries.

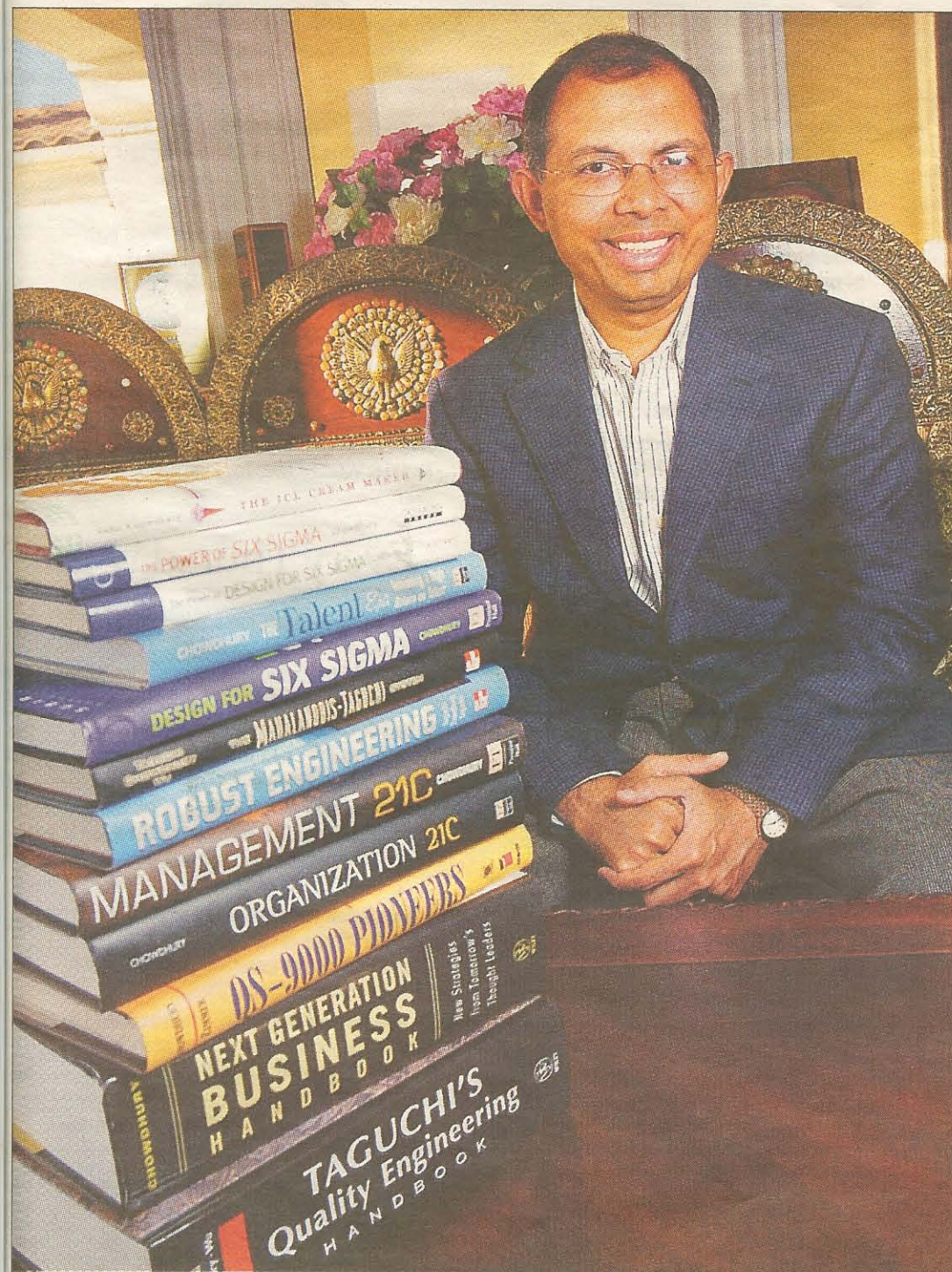
Last year, Chowdhury moved to the South Bay with his wife and daughter, and plans to open a West Coast office in Torrance.

The local office will seek clients in the aerospace industry and government. But Chowdhury says he also wants to tackle Hollywood.

"What I applied to the manufacturing industry, I want to apply to (the entertainment industry)," he said. "I think Hollywood, as an industry, has 30 to 50 percent waste. ... If a movie is a flop, why is that? Did they listen to the customer? They didn't listen to the customer."

Chowdhury is "very intense," said James David Power III, founder of J.D. Power and Associates, a global marketing information firm

PASSION/D7



ROBERT CASILLAS/DAILY BREEZE

"First you take care of your internal customers, then you can deliver better service to your external customers," advises Subir Chowdhury, who is chairman and CEO of ASI Consulting Group.

PASSION: RPV man had winding path

FROM PAGE D1

based in Westlake Village.

The company hired Chowdhury several times to help develop standards for measuring quality.

Power keeps on his desk a copy of Chowdhury's 2004 book, *Next Generation Business Handbook: New Strategies from Tomorrow's Thought Leaders*.

"He's very prolific," Power said. "And when he sets out to do something, he gets it done. He has passion for quality. ... I don't know many people who have that drive."

Chowdhury has come a long way from where he started. He was born and raised in the Bangladeshi port city of Chittagong.

Obedient to his father's wishes, Chowdhury enrolled in a medical school in Chittagong. He dropped out six months later, leaving his parents disappointed.

"I wanted to be an engineer," Chowdhury explained.

Chowdhury then enrolled as an engineering major at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology near Calcutta, India.

At IIT, Chowdhury started a literary magazine in English and Bengali.

"A lot of my classmates when I was a freshman were so technical, so solid. But not so in literature," Chowdhury said. "So I started the university's first literary magazine. Life is not just about your technical abilities. Life is what is surrounding you."

He added: "I think I learned much more from those kinds of stuff than just going to school."

Chowdhury graduated with a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering. Instead of moving immediately to the United States, like most of his graduating class, Chowdhury returned to Bangladesh to work for Apple Computer, Inc.

The computer revolution was finally sweeping into Bangladesh. So Chowdhury started a computer magazine called *Silicon*.

During his two years at Apple, Chowdhury became friends with many Americans, who encouraged him to try his hand in the U.S.

He took their advice and enrolled at Central Michigan University to study industrial management. At the same time, he worked as a research assistant for Dow Chemical Co., which paid his tuition.

After graduating with a master's degree in 1993, he took a job at General Motors as an internal consultant for quality.

Two years later, Chowdhury wrote his first book, *QS-9000 Pioneers: Registered Companies Share Their Strategies for Success*, which focused on automotive standards.

"I became a big brand name in automotive quality as soon as my book came out," he said.

Chowdhury left General Motors in 1996 to join American Supplier Institute as vice president. The nonprofit group conducted research on management issues.

In 2003, he founded ASI Consulting Group, a for-profit firm. He said the company's headquarters will remain in Michigan although he has moved his home to Rancho Palos Verdes.

Chowdhury continues to write books. Last year, his 12th book was published, *The Ice Cream Maker: An Inspiring Tale About Making Quality the Key Ingredient in Everything You Do*.

The book has received praise from book

Business Watch

■ **Name:** Subir Chowdhury

■ **Position:** Chairman and CEO of ASI Consulting Group

■ **Age:** 38

■ **City of residence:** Rancho Palos Verdes

■ **Education:** Honorary doctorate in engineering from Michigan Technological University; master's degree in industrial management from Central Michigan University; bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology

■ **Hobbies:** Writing, reading fiction and nonfiction, and photography

■ **Family:** wife, Malini; daughter, Anandi, 4

reviewers at newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and from executives including Steve Walukas, vice president of corporate quality at DaimlerChrysler Corp.

In the book, Chowdhury uses a fictional account of an ice cream company plant manager to explain his philosophy on quality.

Chowdhury calls his philosophy LEO, which stands for listen, enrichment, optimize. He said people must listen to customers — both internal including colleagues and even family, and external such as those who buy one's goods and services.

"We, as human beings, have a tendency to do what we believe rather than listen to (our) customer," Chowdhury said. "First you take care of your internal customers, then you can deliver better service to your external customers."

Quality also requires a desire to enrich other people's lives and your own, he said. That's one reason he cites Mother Teresa as one of his heroes.

"Once you have that inside you, every time someone approaches you, you want to embrace him and help him," Chowdhury said.

One can bring about strong performance by anticipating challenges and potential setbacks, he said, citing last year's overwhelmed New Orleans levees as an example of what can happen when someone doesn't "optimize."

In 2004, Chowdhury traveled to China to discuss the concept of quality with government officials there.

"If China can produce the Japanese quality with Chinese price, they can wipe out the world," he said, swiping his hand in front of him.

Despite the United States' global advantage in innovation, other countries will continue to steal market share in industries unless Americans more fervently embrace quality, he said.

Later this month, Chowdhury's company will host a reception at the Library of Congress, sponsored by Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, R-Mich. Chowdhury will discuss his latest book and philosophy of quality.

"How many of us every single day wake up and go in front of the mirror? How many of us pause in front of the mirror and say, 'Whatever I did yesterday, I want to do better today?'" Chowdhury said. "That is very hard to do."