

Rocky Patel The Sultan of Cigars

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I attend a lot of events and tradeshows. We often do black tie dinners. At all of these venues, I am constantly meeting people, talking to them and I answer questions about the whole cigar smoking experience. They look upon us to educate and guide them. The personal touch I provide also goes a long way.

CM: Do you sell cigars through your website?

RP: Our website gets over a million hits. We do not sell cigars directly. We sell only through retailers and distributors.

CM: What sets you apart from your competition?

RP: What sets me apart is that I am a perfectionist. I am very dedicated and I work hard.

The cigar business has been dominated by the Cubans. It is a form of art and it is passed on through generations. When I got into this business I was told that I would never make it because I am not from a Cuban or a Hispanic family. Now, I look at myself in the mirror and see that I have achieved what I set out to and that's what helps me drive myself even harder.

CM: How does your wife deal with all the traveling?

RP: I am single, I haven't met the right person yet. It is hard to meet a woman in a male dominated business like mine. Besides that, I travel a lot too. I am home for just four days a month!

CM: Do you go to India at all?

RP: I try to go to India every year. And no, I do not go just to Bombay, I end up going all over India and not just to one place. I love going to India.

CM: How do your parents feel about your career choice?

RP: They are quite amazed and astonished by what I have achieved. It was just two years ago that my father went to a tradeshow for the first time and was amazed to see the popularity of my cigars.

CM: What is next on the agenda for you?

RP: We are expanding out with newer ideas. The latest endeavor is that I have recently decided to create a lifestyle catalog which will launch mid year. We are working on it and it will offer consumer and lifestyle products.

We were approached last summer by someone who is an avid cigar smoker to make a reality show based on our lives. They thought my lifestyle was cool and would make a good television reality show so they are shooting a pilot for "Cigar Czar," covering everything we do, from work to play to entertainment. It may air sometime this year if it is syndicated by a network.

CM: Owning a cigar company is probably not a very common dream. However, what would your suggestion be for someone who wants to get in this line of work?

RP: This is a very hard business to crack into. You have to have a talent and ability to pursue a dream. The best advice would be to work with the competition, get some experience, seek the best quality and work hard. You must have a vision, a dream, a cooler quality and a keen eye for new ideas. Don't let yourself stagnate and always be faster than your competition.

When you have these qualities you can do anything! For example, with my experience so far in all that I have done, I can confidently say that I can take on any product anywhere in the world and I can market it to turn it into the top brand based on creativity, competitive ideas, training, building reliability and making it a success.

