



Alumnus Subject Graduated Place of Work Position
Tej Dhillon
BSc, Geology
1987
Dhillon Group
Owner/Chairman

dhillon
group

Tej is one of the UK's most successful hoteliers. He is Chairman of the Dhillon group, which has been rated by *The Times* as being worth around £78 million. The Dhillon Group has a collection of unique properties dating back to the 11th century.

Tej set up his first 12 bed hotel with his sister at the age of 27. After he sold his first hotel, he went into joint ventures with larger organisations. From there, Tej learnt how to run a business on a different scale.

Why did you choose to study at Royal Holloway?

I wanted to study at a London University. I began my studies at Bedford College, so in my first year I was in central London. I was there at the time of the Bedford and Royal Holloway merger.

Royal Holloway was a really good university with fantastic facilities and buildings. I loved being in London when I was at Bedford but Royal Holloway isn't far, so I still used to go into London regularly. There was a good social life at Royal Holloway plus I had the advantage of having all my Bedford friends. I made many more friends when we merged with Royal Holloway; I met some great people.

How did you find your studies?

I suffer from dyslexia, so it was sometimes difficult to absorb all of the information. I saw my studies as a stepping stone. I was always driven by opportunities in business and looking at how I could make some money. I even tried to set up a security business while I was at Royal Holloway.

What support did Royal Holloway provide in terms of your career and business?

The careers service organised 'milkrounds'. This is where I found my first job, with an accountancy firm, after graduation. Take advantage of the careers service. Nowadays competition is very stiff in the job market, so you need all the support you can get.

My experience at Royal Holloway certainly helped me develop as a person. You meet so many people from all walks of life, with different backgrounds, and from different countries. This has really helped me in my business, because I have to work and deal with so many different types of people and businesses.

What advice would you give someone wanting to set up their own business?

You need to be able to make decisions, especially when those decisions are with your own money. If you make a big mistake, it can change your life. You learn how to take calculated risks. When you first set up a business, you have to deal with

everything – I used to serve in the properties, run reception – I did everything! You need to bring yourself back up again when things don't always go to plan – don't be despondent because of rejection. You need to have persistence as well good people around you. If you believe in yourself, you will be surprised at what happens. Also, money shouldn't be what drives you – it should be achievement in other areas such as good PR.

How are you approaching green issues in the Dhillon Group?

We are very involved in green issues. When dealing with large organisations, they want to ensure they are doing business with an ethical hotel. As a business, it is important to be ethically wise. I have a small child and so I want this world to be a better place for the future.

We are always looking for ways to improve our buildings, which range from the 11th to 17th century. We work with local suppliers to help reduce our carbon footprint – this also helps the local community.

Great minds go on to great places



Royal Holloway
University of London

people *with* passion

“My experience at Royal Holloway certainly helped me develop as a person.”



What do you do on a typical working day?

There is no typical set day for me – it's quite diverse. I visit the hotels and am always making notes to pass on to the appropriate managers. I spend time on revenue figures and on the phone to managers, bankers, accountants and lawyers.

What exciting projects are you working on?

I'm re-creating a brand in the market-place by re-inventing the Modern Day Coaching Inn and the Modern Day Country House. Branding is an important element for any business. You have to think about brand values and what will differentiate your business from the others. Whatever we do, we do it outside the box so that the whole philosophy is differentiated from the competition. We're getting a lot of positive press, so we must be doing something right!



What are the benefits of working for yourself?

It's the best thing in the world! You are your own boss, controlling your own destiny and you get fantastic satisfaction. Even the challenges give you an adrenalin buzz. Every day there is something new because it's a live business. I rely on my team around me to bring everything together. If you get it right, the rewards are great.

Have you re-visited Royal Holloway since graduating?

I recently came back to Royal Holloway to present to students and young alumni. It brought Royal Holloway back on my radar.

There were some really good questions from the students – some were a bit more candid than others but then you need to have front – if you don't ask, you don't get. I enjoyed coming back to Royal Holloway and am more than happy to re-visit and help students by sharing my experience.

Visit the Dhillon group at dhillongroup.co.uk

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