

## MANJIT MINHAS: From Brewery Owner to Dragon to Podcast Host- The Canadian Business Mogul you Need to Know

by Tiffany Curry

Manjit Minhas is a Canadian entrepreneur, born and raised in Calgary, Alberta. She co-owns Minhas Breweries with her brother, Ravinder Minhas. Their products are sold in five Canadian provinces, 47 states in the US, and 16 other countries. During the pandemic, their company adjusted to add hand sanitizer to their production.

In early 2015, Minhas was asked to be on the hit show Dragons' Den. Being on Dragons' Den allowed her to share her knowledge, experience, and expertise about being an entrepreneur. Minhas also co-owns Spotlight TV and Film Production which writes, directs, and produces numerous documentaries, feature films, lifestyle programs, tv, digital commercials, and corporate videos based in Calgary, Vancouver, Los Angeles.



## Feature

During the pandemic, Minhas started the Manjit Minhas Podcast where she sits down with various business professionals for conversations about life and business.

**Tiffany:** What do you think is the most important key to success with working with family, especially a sibling?

**Manjit:** I think that it's important that you not only have respect for each other, but you are great communicators. You understand that you have a process when tough decisions need to be made, and you can't agree to disagree and/or can't convince each other. You have to plan for when things don't go right and separate the personal from the business and it's essential that you understand that it is not the boardroom table at the dinner table amongst family.

We have different talents and skills. It was important to make sure that we were both responsible for different parts of the business and that we weren't stepping on each other's toes but still always consulting each other and moving forward for big things together.

It has been a fabulous experience, and I would wish it upon anybody and everybody to have a partner as I've had. We've been there for each other during the tough times and celebrated many successes and milestones together.

**Tiffany:** I read that your brewery switched your production and started making hand sanitizers to help when the pandemic first hit; what kind of challenges did you face with that?

**Manjit:** It was a big business decision, but not a hard one, to pause our distillery operations and start making hand sanitizers to help the community. I work a lot, but never as much as I did the first two months of the pandemic because we were trying to figure it out. We had one ingredient, the alcohol, but we needed two more ingredients. We needed a recipe, government approval, new bottles, new labels (in French and English). We needed a new supply chain, trucking, and airline partners to take it to far North indigenous communities, and the list went on and on. We had to hire about 200 new staff members to produce the product around the clock. It was a unique challenge that I'm happy we were able to rise to.

**Tiffany:** What interested you most in Dragons' Den that pushed you to take the offer to join the cast?

**Manjit:** I was never the face of the company. I was covered in the media and newspapers normally. This was going to be something completely different for me. At first, my reaction was thank you, but no thank you. But my brother said to me, you gotta go for the screen test because whether they pick you or not is not the point. You gotta go and be you because your daughters have nobody that looks like them on TV as someone they could aspire to be. Initially, I did not think they would pick me. I am glad they did because I was allowed to be me, which attracted me to it. I didn't have to change my name or any of the other things that minorities are traditionally asked to do when they are in mainstream media. It has been an amazing ride.

**Tiffany:** Has there ever been a deal that you let pass you by that later you thought to yourself, I wish I could have invested in that company?

**Manjit:** Of course, you know, we don't have a crystal ball; we go by our gut. We don't know anything about these companies or the individuals before they walk into the Den. It is all first impressions. We cannot call a friend or get any assistance; we get an hour with them. Definitely, after the fact, many times we kick ourselves and have remorse that we didn't jump in, and occasionally we have buyer's remorse afterward, too.

**Tiffany:** So, with everything you have going on from Dragons' Den, the brewery, and your production company, what made you decide to start a podcast?

**Manjit:** Once the pandemic hit, I was not traveling anymore. For the last 20 years, I traveled about three days a week on average, so I discovered I had more time in my week now. A podcast had been something I was thinking about for a while, so I called a bunch of my friends and told them my idea. I am a true believer in getting uncomfortable, trying new things all the time, and continuously learning. Every day, I try to get 1% smarter before going to bed by talking to new people, reading, and watching new things. I sit on a fair number of boards, public and private, and charitable companies. The podcast is all about giving my knowledge but also learning from my guests. I want the audience, the listener, to feel like they are sitting at the kitchen table with us while we are having a conversation.

**Tiffany:** They say that highly successful people have some sort of routine that they follow, like getting up early in the morning, meditating, journaling, etc. Is there something you do that you attribute to help your day run smoother?

**Manjit:** Yes, I am an early riser. I don't use an alarm clock, so I wake up when I wake up. I always have my eight hours of sleep. Pre-pandemic, I would leave a party, no matter how great, at 10:00 pm. Sleep has always been one of those crucial things to me. Before I go to bed, I always write down two things that I want to accomplish the next day. I truly believe in having it kind of ruminate and resonate with you while you are sleeping. When I wake up in the morning for the first half-hour, I do not talk to anybody. I do a lot of mental exercises and read two newspapers. Everybody has to find out what works for them, but I was never a believer in not getting my sleep and running on fumes. It's nice to see, though, that now people are taking their rest as seriously as their hustle.