

Gujarat, India: A family affair

I am Arjav Shah, and I run one of the many diamond factories on the edge of Surat, a city of about 4 million people in northwest India.

I grew up seeing diamonds right from birth, and my father always said that one day I would take over the family business. Even at school, I had to learn about what makes a good diamond as well as do my homework.



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Today, I employ nearly 500 people that cut and polish diamonds. My staff are really good at getting the most out of small stones that other traders might dismiss. I pay them about 40 cents for every finished gem - you might think this isn't much but the wages are pretty good compared to other jobs here, and it means we can process diamonds at a fraction of the cost of doing it in Europe.

I buy rough diamonds through the De Beers Diamond Trading Company or traders in Antwerp, Belgium and Tel Aviv, Israel. I've got relatives in both cities that help me find the right deal - there's nothing like family. When I was younger, I did work experience for my uncle in Antwerp to learn the tricks of the trade.

India's history of diamonds runs long, far and deep - they were first discovered here nearly 3,000 years ago. Thanks to our hard work the diamond industry is coming home! Indian factories employ about a million people, and cut and polish 90% of the world's gem diamonds.

When I got married last year the wedding was spread over five days and thousands of guests attended. I made sure that I invited business contacts from mining companies, De Beers, and international banks, as well as my customers from Australia, Japan, North and South America. Yet most of the time I keep my head down, work hard and use the family network to stay ahead of the game.