

A Tigress in the Pacific Rim

Chanida Puranaputra: Understanding Other Culture

By Dr. Josephine Gross



Chanida Puranaputra is a network marketing leader from Thailand who has trained more home-business millionaires in Southeast Asia than anyone before her. For the past two decades, she has occupied top leadership positions in several U.S.-based companies as they opened for business in the Pacific Rim.

During that time, Chanida continually strengthened the professional image of network marketing as she expanded its presence in those regions. Her influence and expertise helped the business model flourish in countries such Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, Korea, Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and India.

Recognized as an international leader, Chanida has spoken in more than twenty-five countries and her training resources have been translated into more than ten languages. Together with her husband Nat, Chanida dedicates herself to empowering others to achieve financial freedom and time with family, two values she holds close to her heart.

Although the majority of Chanida's business is in Southeast Asia, she is also building in South America (Mexico and Colombia) and in Europe (Iceland and Romania). Her Asian humility combined with her international business savvy has enticed thousands around the world to dream again and take inspired action.

A New Business

Chanida moved from Thailand to Los Angeles in 1979 to get her MBA. While going to school, she also started working in the hotel business and worked her way up to reservations manager for a five-star Japanese hotel. She loved her job and became Employee of the Month, then Employee of the Year.

approached Chanida about life insurance. Since they now had three children, she and Nat decided to buy it. After they received the policy, the sales rep came back to tell them about a business opportunity.

“You no longer have to pay for this if you can introduce me to some people,” he explained. “Our company lets you build a part-time business.



Chanida, Nat, and their children with respective partners.

“I felt the hotel could not do without me,” she says. “When I got married and had children, I realized I could never increase my earnings there. To support our growing family, Nat and I decided to open a Thai restaurant, the only business we knew how to do. We invested all our savings, thinking that owning a business would give us more freedom. The opposite was true. I continued working at the hotel and we hired a manager to run the restaurant.”

During that time, in 1989, a gentleman

Come to our meeting and you will understand how you can earn sales commissions and overrides.”

Chanida felt it was worth checking out. She accompanied the gentleman to a meeting in a big hall. The backdrop read *Say Yes to Your Dreams*.

“Everyone was talking about the extra money they were making,” says Chanida. “I got excited and asked how I could get started. I was told that to sell insurance, I needed to get a license, so I filled out an application.”

When she came home, Nat, who worked at a

bank, told her to cancel it, but she didn't listen. Instead, she took the training and passed the test, but Nat ignored her success. When her upline came to visit, he was watching TV and turned up the sound just to annoy her.

"I was embarrassed, but now I think it was funny," says Chanida. "Having an unsupportive spouse was the first struggle I had to overcome."

Whenever she explained the business to Nat, he would say, "I don't care. Just show me the money." Once Chanida sold her first policy and earned a \$450 check, he no longer objected to her decision. He agreed to keep up the restaurant while she was building her new business.

This first sale brought Chanida good fortune, although she didn't think so at first. It so happened that a few days after she signed up her first client, he suddenly died. Chanida was shocked and worried about what would happen next. The company decided to pay out the insurance policy to the father of the deceased. When Chanida presented the \$150,000 check to the eighty-two-year-old man, he was in tears with gratitude. He had five other sons and he told her the funds she had delivered would allow him to send them all to school.

"At that moment, I felt my business was bigger than I thought," says Chanida. "For the first time I realized I could really be of service."

The good news spread quickly throughout the church of the deceased young man, who was Romanian. The church members decided they should all buy life insurance, and as a result, Chanida was promoted to national sales director within one year. She concluded that working with immigrants was the way to go and continued prospecting Filipinos, then Vietnamese, until she had a big team.

Opening Thailand

A few years later, in 1994, Chanida and her family moved back to Thailand to take care of Nat's mom,

who was sick. Unfortunately, she had to leave her business behind, but she figured she could teach others about sales and customer service and founded a training center called Communication Concepts Academy.

"Thailand has a lot of insurance companies," she says, "so we began training insurance reps on how to recruit and retain."

Chanida enjoyed training for other companies but often wished she could train her own team. When she heard a big U.S.-based network marketing company was coming to Thailand in 1996, she decided to visit its headquarters in Utah and meet the owners. The product was nutritionals and the opportunity looked promising, so she joined and started to do pre-marketing in Thailand.

"Because I'd been away in America for a long time, I didn't know anybody in Bangkok," she says. "I advertised in newspapers, looking for people who wanted a change. I created my own video about the product and the company, and sent out a thousand VHS tapes."

Using every skill and technique she had learned, when the company finally opened Chanida quickly became Thailand's first Blue Diamond. Her success story caused a paradigm shift in how network marketing was perceived in Thailand.

"Up until then it was considered as a side business for housewives with nothing else to do," she says. "The stereotype was the lady who knocked on doors and sold products at parties. It was seen as a business for which you don't need any education, and here I was with my MBA from America making a million dollars."

Chanida believes she was instrumental in helping Thailand open its eyes about the potential of network marketing as a vehicle for change and a business that attracts educated professionals looking for financial and time freedom.



In front of her home in California.



In traditional Thai dress.



At home in Thailand.



At international convention in Utah with company owners and top leaders.

Chanida quickly duplicated her success by teaching others how to recruit. Don't go out to recruit, she would tell them, but recruit as you go about your day and develop a passion for how this can change people's lives.

She also created a system for what to do daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly. She opened an office and gave presentations every afternoon and evening, seven days a week. She held weekly meetings for her inner circle, her team members with the highest recruiting numbers.

Soon local leaders would bring the business to other cities and duplicate the process there. Chanida would visit and teach them how to present. The business spread from Thailand to the Philippines and Malaysia. In no time Asia became 80 percent of the company's global market.

Chanida stayed with this company for five years. At one point she had a conflict with the local management. Around that time, one of the company founders, Keith Halls, left the company to become a field distributor for another company, and she decided to help him open up Thailand.

When news of this company opening in Thailand got out, people flocked to Chanida, asking if they could be first to join her team. Keith interviewed her and the article was published in the newspaper. This time around Chanida did not need to run ads or say much to attract people. Her recruiting campaign used the slogan, *Thailand*

is the gateway into Indochina. By the time the company officially opened Thailand, 3,000 people signed up the first day.

Chanida went on to build another successful organization. In her fourth year, she brought in a big leader who had strong connections in Vietnam. The company promised it would open this new country for her, but somehow it didn't happen, and Chanida began looking elsewhere.

Doing It Again

In 2007 the owner of her company decided to sell it and start a new company. He approached Chanida about opening Thailand and Vietnam and this time they were able to work things out. From Vietnam, Chanida's business spread to the rest of Asia, and in 2010 she became the company's top earner. Her new campaign slogan became, *Thailand is the bridge to the world!*

"The first year I became Diamond, the second year Double Diamond," says Chanida. "Every year, at the company's annual convention, we publicly set our goal for the next year. From the stage, I told a cheering crowd that by the end of my third year I would be Triple Diamond. One year later I reached that goal."

When others express awe at her accomplishments, Chanida responds that network marketing is easy to do in Asia, if you are in the right company.

"When Asians recognize our opportunity,

they really put their minds to it and treat it as a business,” she says. “I believe network marketing attracts the smartest people. Those who are negative about our business are simply ignorant. They say no to something they don’t understand. They have no idea this business can give them everything they’ve always been looking for.

“Smart business people look for three things: low investment, high profit, and low or no risk. That’s it! Look at what happened to me, how many millions of dollars I made from just buying one package. Of course I invested my time and focus, but apart from that, I feel this is not difficult at all.

“Vietnam has 80 million people, 90 percent of whom are under forty—the older people died in the war. These young people are learning English and ready to work hard when the right opportunity comes along. That’s why we had such success there.”

From Vietnam, Chanida went to Malaysia, then to Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and finally Hong Kong, which she describes as a gateway to China. From Hong Kong, she continued on into Korea and Japan.

Chanida says she can name five U.S. companies who have their top income earners in Asia Pacific. She calls them *five tigers in one cage*.

But despite favorable conditions, such as the Asian work ethic and a strong networking culture, most new companies don’t make it, she says, because of poor management, insufficient funding, or because they fail to adapt to the local cultural imperatives.

“In order for companies to succeed, there has to be a convergence of factors: a unique product, a fair compensation plan, a management that’s flexible enough to adapt and change, and right timing. I believe the best time to join a company is when it is three years old. Experienced networkers such as myself can go in on day one because we can recognize potential dangers. Others should wait till the company has survived

the danger zone.

“Finally, before deciding to join a company, I need to be able to look the owner in the eyes and see his vision for how he will position his company for long-term success.”

Chanida stayed with this last company for another five years, at which point some things happened at the corporate level that she didn’t agree with.

“I always wish I could stay forever,” she says, “but when the company doesn’t do the right thing, I know it’s the end of my time there. As leaders, we must be able to act in integrity and in our team’s best interest. You can give me a lot of money, but if my heart says it’s not right, I just walk out.”

Success Secrets

Chanida considers Art Williams her first mentor. Not only did she study his books, *Pushing Up People* and *All You Can Do Is All You Can Do But All You Can Do Is Enough*, she also had a chance to work with him closely in her first company. Her team won several contests and Art honored her with his company’s Woman of the Year award in 1991. Chanida feels she learned everything from Art, especially how to motivate people through recognition.

“From the beginning, I have given monthly recognition,” she says. “We have quarterly functions where different leaders take turns giving awards to their teams, and we hold yearly celebrations with Thai dinners where we hand out trophies. We also hold two-day leadership retreats where people can get to know each other. In the beginning I invested a lot in creating this culture. Now, my leaders know how to do things by themselves and I just show up at big events. I continue to meet regularly with my core leaders.”

The second major influence on her career was Keith Halls, a CPA and company founder turned field leader who at one point became her upline.

“Despite his huge accomplishments, Keith is

extremely humble,” she says. “Keith and I have totally opposite styles. I’m like a man at work, just like Art Williams. Keith is soft and never pushes people; he just brings out the best in them with his kindness.”

Chanida has never let her gender limit or dictate what she could or couldn’t do.

“I outwork a lot of men, so they see me as a top performer rather than a woman,” she says. “I enjoy what I do and always believe something good will come, even if I don’t know how. Once I set my mind on something, I never lose sight.

“I don’t understand *no*. If I want people to do something and they say no, I just keep going. I keep talking, and in the end, I get everyone to do it. I don’t know why. Maybe it’s because of my belief.”

One victory-over-no story Chanida likes to tell is how for the longest time Nat refused to join her in the business. He was an executive for a life insurance company making a huge salary with benefits and a company car. He came home every day, sat in front of the TV, had dinner, and didn’t want to talk to anyone. Chanida told him he didn’t look happy and was not going to have a long life

As she began expanding her business in other countries, she grew tired of traveling alone and asked him, “Why don’t you come out and help me?”

He replied, “What? You want me to come and help you?”

She said, “Yes, quit your job and help me so we can do this business together.”

He said, “Never. We are putting three kids through college. We need money.”

Chanida said, “How can I get you to join me?”

He said, “If you can make my money.”

She said, “Okay, I will replace your income. Once I do that, will you come out and help me?”

Nat agreed. Seven months later, Chanida reached a monthly income of \$23,000 and Nat quit

his job. His friends told him he was crazy. Today Nat has become Chanida’s greatest supporter and they build the business together

“Now his friends see we are making millions of dollars,” says Chanida. “Since he quit, Nat is a very happy man.”



Being welcomed as a keynote speakers at international convention.

Dreams Come True

When thinking about money, Chanida says her sole desire is always to have enough to be able to take care of her family’s needs and support the causes she is passionate about. One such cause is called So The World May Hear, founded by Dr. Bill and Tani Austin.

“Dr. Bill’s mission is to bring hearing to the world. He is unbelievable. He provides hearing aids to the whole developing world. Even Mother Teresa got hearing aids from him. I love to support him with my team.”

Chanida also wants to fund orphanages. Her daughter is already financing an orphanage in Zimbabwe.

“I raised my children on the success principles of the business,” she says. “My daughter majored in business and graduated with honors, my oldest son has a political science degree from UCLA, and my youngest son is a USC graduate. Thanks to the business, all of them learned about leadership, freedom, and not stopping at no.

“Right now I have everything I need, everything I ever wanted. This is my time to contribute, and my children feel the same way. My oldest son left his home for a month and went to Calcutta with his wife to be of service. My youngest son goes to Kazakhstan to volunteer. I want to be able to support their initiatives, and fortunately I’m in the right business to do so.”

Chanida’s vision for network marketing professionals is to continue raising the bar and to overcome any remaining stigma attached to the business.

As an international business builder working within many different cultures, Chanida says one area where networkers can improve is in becoming more sensitive to cultural differences

Chanida’s Top-Three Success Thoughts:

- People don’t care how much you know, but they *always* know how much you care.
- I believe in partner power—husband and wife working together as a team.
- My “trademark” word is *unbelievable!*

when penetrating new markets.

“In Asia, for example, people treat network marketing as a real job,” she says. “As soon as they can make \$500 a month, they can come in full time, because they can live off that. In America, even \$1,000 a month is just part-time income, but in Asia, when one spouse makes even \$500, the other spouse can quit working and join them in the business. From there, other family members will sign up, as it is a closed culture.

“Because of this, many professionals in Asia are interested in our business—but you have to treat these people in a civilized way. If you want to open a new region, you have to think like the locals. The Chinese eat noodles; Thai people eat rice; Americans eat bread. Don’t ever think you can do things the same way here.

“In Thailand, if you use your feet to point or to move something, it’s considered extremely rude; in America, it’s acceptable. In Thailand, touching someone’s hair or passing things over someone’s head is very disrespectful. Calling people a dog is a serious insult, but calling someone a pig, on the other hand, is funny, because in Thailand, pigs are considered cute.

“Often Asian people don’t say what they feel because they want to be polite. Not knowing this can lead to endless misunderstandings. In Vietnam if you ask someone, ‘Can you do this?’ the person will say yes because it’s impolite to say no. That’s why you need to learn a little bit about the culture. Learn even a little bit, and anyone can succeed.” ■



With Thai Diamonds.