

# ‘Work, no words’ leads to success

Members value trust and honesty, says Kabir Laiwalla.

September 25, 2020

[Darla Dernovsek](#)

[3 Comments](#)



Kabir Laiwalla relies on the principle he was brought up with as his motto for professional success.

Laiwalla is CEO of [Platinum Federal Credit Union](#), Duluth, Ga., which was founded in 2000 to serve the Ismaili sect of Shia Muslims nationwide.

He was hired as office manager and sole employee in 2001, shortly after he came to the U.S. from Bombay, India.

His combined strengths in information technology (IT) and accounting helped the credit union grow from less than \$1 million in assets and 600 members in 2001 to more than \$150 million in assets and more than 10,000 members in 33 states in 2020. His biggest challenge throughout the years has been managing growth.

“We outgrow our capacity and then we have to catch up,” Laiwalla says.

New products targeted to the Ismaili community fuel that growth. Examples include business checking accounts with a flat monthly fee of \$59, commercial real estate loans, and unsecured business loans for working capital.

Building trust with honest advice has been crucial for this small community credit union.



“I always tell my staff, don’t tell members to get anything from us if it’s not beneficial for them,” Laiwalla says. “Educate them about the products and services we offer, but if it’s not worth it for them, tell them not to get it here. Or if you know something better than what we offer, tell them to go there. Members will value your honesty and always come back.”

When the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic hit, Laiwalla and other staff worked overtime to process Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan applications. They overcame SBA system slowdowns by timing loan submissions—and work hours—to the late evening or early morning, and processed more than 500 applications totaling \$13 million.

Members could also seek pandemic relief by participating in loan skip-a-pay programs or applying for \$5,000 emergency loans at 2.99%, car title loans at 1.99%, and business lines of credit for up to \$25,000 at 3.99%.

Vacation has little appeal for Laiwalla, but he saves time for his wife and two sons, golf, and the elementary school’s parent-teacher organization. “Hiking the hill” in Washington, D.C., or speaking at a community event is more fun than time off.

“Whoever is willing to listen, I am there to give it all out,” Laiwalla says. “That’s what recharges me.”

[https://news.cuna.org/articles/118481-work-no-words-leads-to-success?fbclid=IwAR3TscL6d6kOZ65c7wRRS\\_YrWb3uGJqNj7ewsgelJ3c0eycWtTTaL6tkBR8c](https://news.cuna.org/articles/118481-work-no-words-leads-to-success?fbclid=IwAR3TscL6d6kOZ65c7wRRS_YrWb3uGJqNj7ewsgelJ3c0eycWtTTaL6tkBR8c)