

Can't find time for the people who matter most? There's an app for that

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Arsh Haque (JD 2021) had an idea with a partner to create an app that keep up with friends and family, for personal wellbeing. Credit: University of Southern California

It's hard to make time for the people who matter.

That was the starting point for Arsh Haque's latest startup venture, an app designed to manage friendship.

In late 2018, Haque, who is now a member of the USC Gould School of Law's JD Class of 2021, found himself in a tough spot. A startup that he and a partner had launched had, in his words, "just kicked the bucket" and they were both feeling pretty low.

"We were living in new cities with new time zones, and we were pulling lonely, 80-hour weeks," Haque explains. "Something had to change, but we didn't know what."

For the next six months, they tracked their habits and completed daily, subjective wellbeing assessments. Haque, who has a master's degree in public policy analysis from Sciences Po School of Public Affairs in Paris, analyzed the data and discovered something unexpected.

"More than nutrition, or occupation or exercise, one driver squarely sat above the rest: relationships," he concluded.

For Haque it was his relationship with his mother. He realized that their bi-weekly call would lift his spirits. "One call every two weeks to my mom could carry me as far as a whole week of workouts," he says. That discovery is what led to developing Wellsayer.

How It Works

Wellsayer works by helping users set goals with friends, such as, scheduling a weekly call; logging updates on how those calls went and receiving helpful reminders when it's time for the next one.

"It's hard to keep up with people. Sometimes you just forget. Sometimes it's hard to find the time. Or, a lot of the time, you don't want to bother them," says Haque. "We make it so you can skip those barriers and spend your energy on the part of relationships that matter."

Being a law student at Gould has benefited Haque during the process of building Wellsayer. "Startups are complex, legal creatures," he says. "Since day one, we have been knee-deep in bylaws, advisory agreements, convertible notes and corporate governance. USC Gould has prepared me to more deftly navigate those waters."

Haque chose USC Gould because of one element: happy alumni. "The alumni weren't just happy with where they were," he says. "They were happy with how they got there. So many of them cited law school as some of their happiest years. They were the only alumni where I never once heard, 'Law school is awful and being a lawyer is barely worth it.'"

Big Ideas Fueled by an 'Entrepreneurial Spirit'

David Kirschner, Gould's associate dean of admissions, recalls Haque's law school application. "Arsh's entrepreneurial spirit—he had founded three companies! – was apparent," he says. "It was clear that he displayed the tools to be successful in law school."

Once Haque was a student, he sought Kirschner's expertise. "I spoke to him about how to tap into the Trojan network, how to make connections at Gould and the USC community at large," Kirschner says.

Haque also sought out Saul Garlick when Garlick was the Social Entrepreneur in Residence at the Brittingham Social Enterprise Lab at the USC Marshall School of Business. Garlick, who is the founder and CEO of Unleesh, a social training app for frontline workers, offered his insights into strategy.

Garlick was impressed by Haque's entrepreneurial qualities. "While his structured approach gives away his legal studies, you can sense his passion for the work he is doing with the company," says Garlick, who sees enormous potential in the app.

"Today's loneliness crisis is getting worse not better, and the desire to solve it is growing fast," he says. "I think helping people pick up the phone and reconnect with your inner-circle of friends and family is critical in a noisy world."

Garlick served as a strategic sounding board for Haque. Garlick says: "I riffed with him on language and messaging, discussed process and other random things that came up."

Plus, Garlick encouraged Haque to join the USC Social Founder, an informal group that met on campus bi-weekly and continues to support each other on Slack now that Garlick's residency has ended. And, Garlick is now formally a member of Wellsayer's Advisory Board.

Networking seems to come naturally to Haque. As a stellar student, he is a member of the third cohort of Gold Honors Scholars, which was launched by USC Trustee Stanley Gold, JD 1967, and his wife, Ilene. Gold is the chairman of Shamrock Holdings.

At the Gold Honors reception, Kirschner noticed Haque in deep discussion with Gold. They were discussing the app.

Curious about Wellsayer? Learn more about the app for [iOS](#) or [Android](#).

Provided by University of Southern California

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