

## Omar Sharif Amanat Official Biography

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By age 29 Omar S. Amanat had already experienced a heady amount of worldly success as well as despairing failure. He is a co-founding investor and partner in more than 37 different media, finance and technology companies, but, it is his one failure and his close brush with disaster on September 11th — that he remembers most. — both caustic reminders of his fallibility and vulnerability that keeps him grounded to reality. As Omar says, “It reminds me not to be too proud . I celebrate the importance of failing — it can temper your character and pave the way for great achievement.”

He has been named one of Wall Street’s “Top Ten Most Influential Technologists” as a result of his important contributions to the world of electronic trading. He began his entrepreneurial career in 1995 at a startup, the pioneering online brokerage firm Datek Online, which was sold to TD Ameritrade for \$1.3 billion after spinning off the innovative Island ECN. With this experience seared into him, he then co-founded Cyberblock, and co-designed the CyberTrader trading platform, which was acquired by Charles Schwab in 2000 for \$488 million. He then became the founder, CEO and majority shareholder of Tradescape Corporation, which was named one of the “Top 50 Private Companies in the United States” by Red Herring Magazine with revenues of \$250 million per annum and 30 branch offices throughout the world. Its trading technology processed over 10% of NASDAQ’s daily trading volume and it was the 5<sup>th</sup> largest U.S. electronic brokerage firm and the largest day-trading firm in 2002 when he sold it to E\*Trade for \$280 million, becoming one of E\*Trade’s largest shareholders\*.

He went on to become a co-founding investor and partner in several dozen different companies in media, finance and technology including [Skybridge Capital](#), a \$7.4 Billion Hedge Fund and asset management platform, [Raine Partners](#), a media entertainment and sports private equity fund launched with key backing from William Morris Endeavor and [Groundswell Productions](#) a \$205 million production company. He became a co-founding board member of Twilight Studio [Summit Entertainment’s](#) largest shareholder, Peak Group Holdings when he provided and/or otherwise raised 50% of the capital for Peak during Summit’s \$1 Billion financing and creation as a new studio in 2007 and served on the boards of both Summit and Peak.

His one close experience with failure and disaster changed everything. Omar was scheduled to have given a speech at the Windows on the World restaurant atop the World Trade Center the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, but narrowly escaped becoming a victim of the terrorist attack because he was running late. His largest branch office on the 83<sup>rd</sup> floor had 60 of his employees and was destroyed in the attacks. Thankfully his employees survived but the experience changed his life forever. As Omar says “I stopped asking myself questions like what the value of my stock was, and started asking more fundamental questions of life and death.” Omar’s new mission became focused on philanthropy and fighting the real “war on terrorism” by tackling

extremism head on and strengthening moderate hands in the Muslim World. His focus became on using innovative uses of mass media to promote inter-cultural understanding. Towards that end he co-founded with among others, Jordan's Queen Noor, the U.N.-affiliated Alliance of Civilizations Media Fund, in a partnership with Participant Productions, ICM and Summit Entertainment. He became the Executive Producer of several films including the [“The Visitor,”](#) which earned Richard Jenkins an Academy Award® nomination for Best Actor, [“Darfur Now”](#) winner of the NAACP Image Award for Best Documentary, and the Sundance Film Festival entries [“Smart People”](#) and [“The Mysteries of Pittsburgh.”](#)

His mission to examine the “power of films to change the world” led him to personally commission Harvard Medical School to perform neuroscience experiments into the power of media images to heal or inflame ethnic and religious violence. The research was continued by the AoC Media Fund and resulted in [a paper published by UNESCO](#) and distributed to all UN Member states.

In 2009, Omar established [Reel Knights Productions](#) which has since acquired 8 feature length scripts focusing on subjects matters rooted in ancient eastern mysticism. The company is also developing a cross platform interactive video game having completed 3D character modelling, animation and plot line for a cross platform interactive video game chronicling the epic Persian legend “Shahnama” also known as [“The Book of King's.”](#) in partnership with Middle Eastern 3D animation studio [Aria](#). The company has also completed pre-production on a feature length narrative biopic on the whirling dervish, ancient sage and beloved poet, [Rumi](#).

Omar attended the University of Pennsylvania and the [Wharton School of Business](#) where he is currently an Entrepreneur-in-Residence. He was the recipient of the Albert P. Einstein Technology award for outstanding corporate citizenship and sits on the boards of [Human Rights Watch](#), the Harlem Youth Development Foundation and is a co-founding board member of the [Rubin Museum of Art](#), the premier museum of Buddhist and Himalayan art in the western hemisphere. He is also a term member of the [Council on Foreign Relations](#), and served as the Vice Chairman of the [Acumen Fund](#), which was voted by Barron's as one of the “5 Charities changing the face of Philanthropy.”

He is a board member of [Malaria No More](#) alongside co-founders Ray Chambers and fmr News Corp President Peter Chernin in their fight to end Malaria deaths in Africa by 2015. He was named one of the [“Top 500 Most Influential Muslims in the World”](#) by Georgetown University and served as a trustee of the Democratic National Committee and Co-Chaired its South Asian Leadership Council.

He has been featured and mentioned in numerous media including the [New York Times](#), the [Wall Street Journal](#), [Fortune Magazine](#) and [Oprah.com](#)

\*In the ensuing month after Omar's E\*Trade sale in April 2002– just 7 months after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks- it was revealed that E\*Trade' CEO at the time, Christos Cotsakos, committed a Dennis Kozlowski/Tyco-style compensation scandal causing Omar's stock to drop in value from \$280 million to as low as \$28 million and then when the CEO was ousted in a shareholder revolt led by Omar and a subsequent rebound in the company's fortunes ensued, he

saw it skyrocket in value to more than \$1 billion. [When E\\*Trade refused to honor certain terms of the sale \(a \\$180 million stock based earnout that had gone up 4x in value\), Omar sued E\\*Trade for federal securities fraud and the \\$1 billion that was then due.](#) E\*Trade **responded** by having three of Omar's former employees, claiming payouts as part of the sale agreement but working for E\*Trade at the time, file to attempt to put Omar into an involuntary Chapter 11. It also **counter-sued** him for \$30 million. After initially fighting the petition, Omar's attorneys later advised him to convert the involuntary Chapter 11 petition into a voluntary action as a litigation tactic to speed up the E\*Trade trial. It was revealed in court filings that Omar's family trusts (which remained apart from his personal estate due to careful estate planning 6 years prior to the litigation, had substantial value from his prior ventures and Tradescape, the 5<sup>th</sup> largest US online brokerage firm which had \$250 million per annum in revenues during its 5 years prior to the E\*Trade sale). The legal tactic was successful. However, before the trial E\*Trade became a victim of the mortgage crisis debacle of 2008, when it revealed it owned \$48 Billion worth of toxic mortgages and its value once again plummeted 90% and it threatened bankruptcy and was sold for pennies on the dollar, causing Omar \$1 billion to evaporate in 2008. Instead Omar's company received \$70 million on top of his initial stock payment and E\*Trade got nothing and Omar's chapter 11 restructuring was successful.