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MAGAZINE

Revealed:
**The New Psychology
of Wealth**

**UK Millionaires
On The Move**

**Kumar
Muthalagappan**
Exclusive Interview

ServiceNow
Ferrari Partnership

Executive
**Monaco
Yacht Show
2025**
Guide

Fine Dining
In Mallorca

Thailand
Boardroom to Beachfront

Motoring
**LAMBORGHINI
ASTON MARTIN
ROLLS-ROYCE**

Watches
**BIANCHET
AP HOUSE MCR
JACOB & CO.**

Special Edition

The Business of Finance

+ **Emma Robertson**
Exclusive Interview

+ **TU Dortmund University**
Complex Language For Funding Success

+ **Raising Capital With Content**
A Founder's Guide

+ **Stefan Surina**
Beating The Odds

+ **Chris Spratling**
Attracting The Right Acquirer

+ **Ed Ferris**
The Investor Dating Process

+ **David Moss**
Exclusive Interview



Exclusive Interview

Kumar Muthalagappan

Entrepreneur & Philanthropist

In an exclusive interview with The Executive Magazine, entrepreneur and philanthropist Kumar Muthalagappan OBE discusses his transition from leading successful ventures across finance, property, and clinical research to establishing the KM Foundation, a strategic approach to philanthropy that applies business principles to create lasting community impact

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Kumar Muthalagappan OBE represents a new generation of business leaders who understand that true success extends beyond profit margins and market dominance. Having built and led successful enterprises across finance, property, hospitality, clinical research, and private equity, this entrepreneur has now channelled his considerable expertise into philanthropy through the KM

Foundation. His approach is distinctly strategic, applying the same rigorous financial principles and operational discipline that drove his business success to create meaningful change in healthcare, education, and community development. The Foundation's ambitious partnership with Orbis UK alone aims to screen 100,000 people over three years, demonstrating the scale of impact that results when business acumen meets philanthropic vision.

What sets Muthalagappan apart is his understanding that sustainable philanthropy requires the same strategic thinking as successful business ventures. His tenure as Chairman of MeDiNova and later Oncacare provided crucial insights into healthcare accessibility challenges, while his governance roles with prestigious organisations including the Olympic Games Delivery Authority and Visit Britain honed his ability to unite diverse stakeholders around common goals.

In this exclusive interview with The Executive Magazine, he reveals how his financial background informs resource allocation in the charitable sector, discusses the Foundation's impressive operational efficiency, with 70% of funds reaching frontline initiatives and explains his multigenerational vision for creating

lasting community impact alongside his children as co-trustees. **Your career trajectory spans finance, property, hospitality, clinical research, and private equity. How did this diverse portfolio of business interests shape your understanding of what communities truly need, and what prompted you to establish the KM Foundation at this particular juncture?**

"Through my career across multiple sectors, I had the privilege of working with people from all walks of life—patients, investors, entrepreneurs, and frontline workers. What became increasingly clear was that the foundational pillars to uplift any community are access to education, quality healthcare, and a strong sense of community. Education opens doors, healthcare provides longevity and dignity, and a vibrant community nurtures social cohesion and resilience.

"Establishing the KM Foundation was something I'd long envisioned, but it required the right timing and resources. Only after selling several businesses and releasing significant equity was I in a position to give back in a meaningful, structured way. So, in 2019/2020 we launched the KM Foundation to create lasting impact in the areas that truly matter."

During your tenure as Chairman of MeDiNova, you championed accessible clinical trials. How did this experience inform your philanthropic approach, particularly in healthcare equity?

"My time at MeDiNova, and later with Oncacare, gave me a deep appreciation for how far we still have to go in global healthcare access. Even where treatments exist, vast populations remain excluded due to geography, cost, or lack of awareness. That insight was a turning point for me.. We don't necessarily need more innovation, we need better distribution of what we already have.

"This philosophy now underpins the KM Foundation's healthcare



initiatives. We aim to bridge that gap, supporting programmes that not only improve access to care but do so efficiently, inclusively, and sustainably.”

The Foundation’s partnership with Orbis UK aims to screen 100,000 people over three years, with 34,500 expected to require surgery. What strategies have you developed to scale such ambitious eye care initiatives, and how do you build sustainable impact beyond the initial intervention?

“In fact, our goal is screen 100,000 out of which 34,500 are expected to undergo surgery. This isn’t just an initial intervention, it’s a full-circle programme from outreach to recovery.

“Sustainability, in our view, means scaling the model to reach more people, not simply revisiting the same recipients. We’ve partnered with Orbis for their ground infrastructure and operational expertise, and work closely with local hospitals and ophthalmologists. Our role is to act as a unifying force, bringing together the right people, resources, and systems to make this happen. If the model proves successful, we fully intend to replicate it in other regions.”

You’ve held significant positions with organisations including the Olympic Games Delivery Authority, Visit Britain, and the University of Warwick. How have these experiences informed your strategic approach to charitable work and measuring long-term impact?

“Those roles taught me the mechanics of getting big projects off the ground – how to unite diverse stakeholders, align around a goal, and deliver tangible outcomes. More importantly, they showed me the value of efficiency and execution.

“At the KM Foundation, we aim for a high proportion of funds, around 70%, to reach the front lines. That’s significantly above average, and it’s intentional. I’ve seen too many well-intentioned initiatives falter due to bloated administration. My governance experience helps us remain lean, outcome-driven, and collaborative. These are the hallmarks of any lasting community impact.”

Your background in finance and private equity provides deep insight into capital allocation and risk. How do you apply those principles to philanthropy and ensure optimal resource deployment?

“We look for projects that are highly scalable, strongly beneficial, and resonate with others who may wish to join us. The Foundation itself is modest compared to larger institutions, so our leverage comes from creating impactful models that others can replicate.

“We aim to demonstrate measurable success, end-to-end, and use that as a catalyst to attract partners and expand. Our financial lens ensures we ask the right questions about impact, cost-efficiency, and future growth at every step.”

The Foundation operates with strategic leaders in each focus area and works with partner organisations. What attracts you to specific partnerships, and how do you foster collaborative relationships while respecting local autonomy?

“We gravitate toward like minded partners, those who are action-oriented, results-driven, and operate with minimal overhead.

Often, organisations are rich in purpose but need a kick-start in resources or strategy. That’s where we come in.

“But our approach is always collaborative. We don’t impose, we support. We help organisations evolve and scale, but the long-term responsibility remains with them. That balance is key to sustainable impact and community ownership.”

You understand the importance of succession and continuity. How are you involving your children in the Foundation to ensure its long-term success?

“My three children – Seetha, Deva, and Dharma – are all trustees of the KM Foundation. They bring their own professional expertise, particularly in healthcare and education, and each oversees a specific pillar of our work.

“Together, we’re building a governance structure that ensures continuity, with an executive team to support operational delivery. While I’m actively involved now, this is ultimately a multigenerational mission. I’m confident that they, and future teams, will take the Foundation forward with integrity and vision.”

You support underprivileged communities in both the UK and abroad. How do you decide how to allocate resources, and how do you ensure cultural sensitivity across diverse environments?

“We don’t start with geography, we start with impact. While our initial focus is on the UK and India due to our personal ties, we assess projects based on their merit and scalability, not location.

“Cultural sensitivity is crucial. We always work with local stakeholders such as community leaders, medical professionals, and authorities, to ensure our efforts align with local customs, values, and realities. It’s the only way to build trust and deliver meaningful change.”

You’ve spoken about recipients giving back to their own communities. What outcomes have you seen in creating this multiplier effect, and how do you define success beyond service delivery?

“We’re still early in that journey, but the vision is clear: we’re not simply funding services, we’re building movements. We want recipients to feel empowered to give back, whether financially, through their time, or by championing others in need.

“Success for us isn’t just about how many people we’ve helped, but how many go on to help others. That’s when a programme becomes exponential. Whether it’s restored eyesight, educational access, or community development, we want each success story to spark another, and another after that.”