**Career Advice #85**

**Ramez Mahmoud | IT specialist**

**Link to Eslam Soliman (KPMG Egypt) | 9 April 2019**

Career Advice #85 originated out of Cairo, Egypt when I came across a job search post made by Ramez Mahmoud, an IT specialist, on 9 April 2019. Ramez and I shared a common contact: Eslam Soliman. Razmez had posted the following message to his network:

“Dears, after 6 years i left my job and i am seeking for a vacancy in a reputable company as I am interested to work whether in IT ,help-desk ,C.S. department or any other department which is fitting my qualifications. I have 12 years experience in customer service and ADSL tech field (6 years as a leader ) but i don't prefer to work in a call center.”

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On the same day, I submitted the following reply within the comments section of the post made by Ramez:

Hi Ramez,

To be clear, I am based in Doha, Qatar and cannot directly provide you with leads. What I can do is provide you with ideas that may help.

These ideas may require you to spend time to understand where practical application can fit to circumstances and companies in Egypt. You worked for some blue chip names (Vodafone & Noor Data), so it is likely they already have state of the art ERP systems. Sometimes a simple & affordable “Bolt-on” or “add-on” application can make a huge difference.

Quid, helps companies analyze large volumes of text from news, social media | <https://quid.com/>

Segment, helps companies manage growing streams of data they collect about their customers | <https://segment.com>

Virtru | Focus on data protection with encryption for Gmail, MS Email and Apps | [www.virtru.com](http://www.virtru.com)

**Talentsoft** | HR tech company for talent management & learning; cloud-based in 27 languages | www.talentsoft.com

**Ease** | HR and benefits software for small businesses, insurance brokers, & insurance carriers | www.ease.com

**Skedulo**, mobile workforce management software company |[www.skedulo.com](http://www.skedulo.com)

**ShipMonk:** providing back office support to entreprenuers / small businesses for order fulfillment and shipping | www.shipmonk.com

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Ramez and I had no further correspondence or exchange after that date. However, as I have done on many subsequent occasions (and even outlined in Career Development Kits, or CDK’s #1 to #8), it is my view that I could easily expand upon the suggestions provided to Ramez back in April 2019. Although Ramez’s LinkedIn profile indicates he secured a new role in August 2019, my expanded suggestions are meant to benefit job seekers over the long term – hence the description “Career Development Kit”.

Earlier today I reached out to connect with Ramez on LinkedIn and as soon as he accepts my connection request, I will send the following detailed message:

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Good day Ramez (and Eid Mubarek if you recognize Ramadan),

I trust you are keeping well during the Covid-19 pandemic. This period of drastically reduced business activities and social distancing provides a unique opportunity to revisit the career advice submissions I attempted in 2019. You may or may not recall the suggestions I had made in April of last year in connection with your job ending comments included within a post that I saw because of our mutual connection, Eslam Soliman.

To be fair, my submission was brief since I was worried about remaining within the 1250-character limit set by LinkedIn for any single post. In summary, I drew attention to your 12+ years of experience with blue chip names (Vodafone & Noor Data) and that you likely worked with state-of-the-art ERP systems. With rapidly changing technology, including SaaS verticals available in virtually all job functions (or software-as-a-service) sometimes a simple & affordable “Bolt-on” or “add-on” applications to existing ERP systems can make a huge difference. I had outlined several SaaS examples that I thought may be worth your exploring for potential adoption or practical application by Egyptian companies including: Quid | <https://quid.com/>; Segment | <https://segment.com>; Virtru | [www.virtru.com](http://www.virtru.com); **Talentsoft**| [www.talentsoft.com](http://www.talentsoft.com); **Ease** | [www.ease.com](http://www.ease.com); **Skedulo** |[www.skedulo.com](http://www.skedulo.com); **ShipMonk** | [www.shipmonk.com](http://www.shipmonk.com).

**Research for the long term**

As you are likely aware, businesses across the globe have drastically reduced their activities including significant layoffs of staff for deemed non-essential businesses. Thus, the following overview is meant to provide you with ideas that can be researched during the pandemic and possibly benefit you (and/or your network of contacts with similar skills) over the long term.

Please keep in mind that many of the references and examples included in my message are based upon the state of affairs in the “pre-pandemic” period. Conditions may or may not prevail for the companies that are highlighted and/or their related technology. I draw your attention to the following overview:

* CDK #3 “Middle East IT Expert”
* Gary Vaynerchuk
* Egypt & Middle East innovation
* Angel List in the Middle East
* Small Business innovation
* Social Media

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**CDK #3 “Middle East IT Expert”**

On 14 December 2019, I posted this article on LinkedIn (<https://bit.ly/2RRPu0n>) and on 8 January 2020, on Medium ([https://bit.ly/3023XsC](%22)). You may want to consider reading the article to get an understanding of the depth and breadth of the suggestions I had made. In my view, a significant amount of the content is relevant to your educational background and work experience in Egypt and your proximity to many of the Middle East references included therein. To the extent possible, I will try to avoid duplication in the commentary that follows and seek to provide material that relates to the period from early January 2020 and later.

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**Gary Vaynerchuk**

In my article (CDK #3), I make reference to Gary Vaynerchuk’s keynote speech in Dubai in late 2018 (at the Sharjah Entrepreneur Festival) and his late 2019 visits to Dubai with interviews on the Kris Fade Show (Dubai 103.8FM) and Dubai92. There are links included in my article.

In my view, adopting one or more of his ideas in a manner that is relevant and contextual to your personal circumstances could make a significant difference in your life over the long term. Why do I think that? I lived in Doha, Qatar for 3 years and in my last 18 months or so in Qatar, I consumed many hours of his content in which he consistently (and repeatedly) speaks about branding and awareness, social media, entrepreneurship, hustle, patience, persistence and a whole host of advice during his key-note presentations, podcasts and Inside 4D’s workshops with startups and other founders.

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**Tea with Gary Vee**

You may have seen or heard of Gary’s recent live Facebook feeds called “Tea with GaryVee”. This is a 2-hour live session whereby Gary manages a series of Q&A from various individuals. This is the link to Episode #8 “13 Reasons we’ll get through this” published on 3 April 2020:

YouTube: https://bit.ly/2JF76XZ

Podcast: **https://apple.co/2wgq0kR**

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**Gary Vee and Social Media Content**

Gary repeatedly focuses on providing feedback to individuals (and/or the companies they represent) to create and post content on various social media platforms that relates to both their personal brand and/or that for their respective businesses. This may be more relevant during the crisis since many “sales” posts will likely have little or no impact. In 2019, Gary posted his “How to make 64 pieces of content in a day” on 14 November 2019 and he posted his “86-page content model” earlier in 2019. These are the links to both:

How to make 64 pieces of content: https://bit.ly/37sr9mf

86-page content model: http://bit.ly/2H0Jviz

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**Innovation in Egypt and the Middle East**

As outlined in my article CDK #3, since early 2018 I have been following funding announcements in venture capital and tech newsletters I subscribe to, namely Techcrunch, Crunchbase News, Venture Beat, #StrictlyVC Newsletter and FINSMEs.

In addition to the examples highlighted in CDK #3, the following relates to samples of recent Middle East funding announcements over the period from early January to April 2020. This is not meant to be a complete list. Google or related search could reveal additional companies on the market.

**Vezeeta**, an Egypt-based healthcare services booking platform in the Middle East and Africa, raised $40m in Series D funding | FinSME article: https://bit.ly/2VYAvC3 | [https://www.vezeeta.com/](%22) | 13 February 2020

**Kitopi**, a two-year-old, Dubai- and New York-based cloud kitchen platform company that provides kitchen space and delivery services to restaurants, just raised $60 million in Series B funding led by **Lumia Capital**. The company says it already operates 30 satellite kitchens across the U.S., UAE, UK, and Kuwait, and that it plans to open another 100 globally by year end. | Fox Business article: [https://fxn.ws/3aw47w0](%22) | 5 February 2020

**Aanaab**, a four-year-old, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia-based online teacher training platform, has raised $1.5 million in seed funding led by **Wamda Capital** and **Nour Nouf Knowledge Company**, along with a group of angel investors in the education sector | The National article: https://bit.ly/2S6FP5s | 4 March 2020

**FlexxPay**, a Europe and GCC fintech company focusing on employee benefit solutions, raised a pre-series A funding round of undisclosed amount | FinSMEs article: [https://bit.ly/2S3AkEo](%22) | [https://www.flexxpay.com/](%22) | 11 March 2020

**Zon**, a new, Dubai-based decentralized mobile e-commerce platform that plans to launch in the second quarter and to provide consumers access to a large network of retailers across UAE, has raised $8 million in seed funding led by **ASA Ventures**. The company's founder and CEO, **Arif Saiyad**, is also the CEO of 16-year-old ASA Ventures. | reported in StrictlyVC newsletter | [https://asa.ventures/](%22) |31 March 2020

**Pure Harvest Smart Farms**, a four-year-old, Abu Dhabi-based startup focused on the production of greenhouse fruits and vegetables in the Arab Gulf region, has secured equity of up to $100 million from Kuwaiti investment firm **Wafra**. TechCrunch article: https://tcrn.ch/2VVmlBP | 7 April 2020

**360VUZ**, a Dubai, UAE-based immersive video app, raised $5.8M in Series A funding | FinSME article: | [https://bit.ly/2VxSsZo](%22) | [https://360vuz.com/](%22) | 21 April 2020

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**Angel List in Egypt and Middle East**

<https://angel.co>

As outlined in my article CDK #3, Angel List is typically used by tech startups to list tech and non-tech roles. I had outlined the open roles listed on Angel List for each of the main countries in the Middle East. What I had not done was provide any specific examples of Egypt-based entities.

NOTE: When I typed in “Egypt” as the location, selected “No-Remote”, the search revealed a total of 14 roles. Some examples of which included:

AdMazad | https://admazad.com/

Find Me Football | http://findmefootball.com/

Rabbit | electric scooter sharing platform | http://rabbit-app.com/

NOTE 2: As I recommended in CDK #3, I recommend that you consider spending time on the site to get familiar with some of the up and coming startups in Egypt (and across the Middle East that may need experienced IT staff as they grow and scale their business.

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**Small Business Innovation**

The SaaS examples outlined in CDK #3 are linked to Construction and Supply Chain, two key sectors in the Middle East. These may or may not be relevant to your experience and/or area of interest. Some additional SaaS examples are noted below for you to consider. Imagine if you are able to combine your 12+ years of experience with NOOR Data and Vodafone to recommend one or two “bolt-on” or “add-on” SaaS products relevant to your current employer or other small businesses in Cairo?

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***Sales and marketing***

**Influence.co** | developer of an online platform for influencers, brands, marketers, talent managers | https://influence.co/

**Partnerize** | company that provides automation tools for marketing partnership management | https://partnerize.com/

**FastForward.ai** | social media SaaS platform for digital marketing, commerce and payments | https://fastforward.ai/

**Chattermill** | that uses machine learning to gain insights into customer feedback (then deliver feedback to its customers) | https://chattermill.com/

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***Human Resources***

**EmployStream** | makes onboard automation software for the staffing industry | https://www.employstream.com/

Trainual | maker of a training and process management tool | https://trainual.com/.

Koan | performance management platform that's looking to help teams achieve their objectives and stay engaged | https://www.koan.co/

**Unmind** | London-based workplace mental health platform | http://unmind.com/

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***Data driven tech***

**Snowflake** | maker of a cloud-based database that compiles information from various sources so it can be analyzed | <https://www.snowflake.com/>

**Concentric** | enterprise data management platform that aims to secure unstructured (yet critical) data | <https://www.concentric.ai/>

**Trilliant Health** | analytics and data science company that empowers intelligent patient acquisition | https://www.trillianthealth.com/

**Celonis** | company does big data process mining on behalf of its enterprise customers | https://www.celonis.com/

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**Learning and applying new SaaS**

The examples outlined above and in CDK #3 are not meant to overwhelm you. As you are likely aware, most new SaaS (often referred to as Software-as-a-service) can be learned WITHOUT attending classes. WITHOUT getting an IT degree. SaaS have moved from the “IT Department” to “Operations” teams running the business. Most SaaS companies have free demos to download and “freemium” versions to allow small business to test and apply them to their business activities. This is increasingly more common during the Covid-19 crisis as most businesses have limited cash flows.

At minimum, I recommend that you to choose the SaaS that interests you and are applicable to your work environment in Egypt. Consider subscribing to the company newsletter or other news releases. They can also follow the companies on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram

***SaaS Applicability***

You may think: “How can these new SaaS help get me find a role?” In the short term, no SaaS will help. In the long term, the more an individual can learn about new SaaS that is applicable to their functional area, the more readily they will be able to identify potential gaps and can suggest affordable and effective solutions to companies that they are working at or seeking to work with; solutions that did not exist 10 years ago.

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**Social Media**

As an extension to the Gary Vaynerchuk introduction above, some ideas to consider for your own personal Social Media strategy:

Customer Service Calls

What if you created a series of articles to post on LinkedIn or Medium to outline stories of customers you helped over your 6 years at NOOR Data? Perhaps split the articles between staff of NOOR Data and small business customers of NOOR Data. What if you shared your feelings (and those of your customers) in dealing with technology and their business?

Imagine if your articles became the future training materials for customer service representatives at NOOR data?

Top 10 List

What if you considered a similar series of articles from your 6+ years at Vodafone? Creating a Top 10 List and include some of the old tech (like Blackberry or Nokia). Compare and contrast to the introduction of IPhone when it was first introduced in 2007.

Podcast | “Ramez Reviews”

What if you approached the same individuals noted in the customer service calls to invite them to join you on a podcast? The Anchor app is simple to use and allows for remote connections. Why do I think this is possible? In September 2019, I started the Calgary Business Podcast and have recorded a total of 134 episodes to 23 April 2020. Before Covid-19, I recorded 101 episodes in the offices of my guests. From 1 April 2020, I have recorded 33 episodes remotely using the Anchor app on my mobile device. I use Apple but it works equally well on an Android device.

What if you called the podcast “Ramez Reviews” and start to contact your former customers from NOOR and Vodafone to invite them to join you on the podcast? You could consider asking three questions: (1) What network are you currently using? (2) What network did you use prior to this current one, if different? (3) What are the key differences between the two networks? Or What changes would you like to see in your current network? At minimum, you will get people to chat and at the same time, allow you to share your expertise in this space.

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Good luck. Stay safe. Feel free to message me if you have any questions.

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