**Career Advice #37 | Arun Iyer (UAE)**

**Initial exchange on LinkedIn | 13 February 2019**

**Update via email & Facebook Post | 21 September 2019**

Career Advice #37. This career advice was provided to **Arun Iyer on 13 February 2019** after he reached out to me to connect on LinkedIn. Unfortunately, I had not taken the time to provide a detailed response relevant to his experience and education so our exchange was limited to a couple of direct messages on LinkedIn.

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ARUN IYER | Initial query on 13 February 2019

I have been job hunting for the past couple of months and was wondering if you could have a look at my CV and give me some feedback on avenues I could pursue, if its not a hassle

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MY INITIAL RESPONSE on the same day:

Arun,

Where do I start? You are in Sales. You are in Dubai. Golden Opportunity to learn the key messages that Gary Vaynerchuk insists will help people succeed in this internet and social media infested world. But I have been following him for over a year and have been looking at emerging technologies for nearly 2 years. I suggest that you start with these two articles on job search I published last summer on Medium. This should help to trigger some ideas.

Job Search 2022

https://bit.ly/2MW4bK9

Retro Recruiting Rebuked (posted 10 July 2018)

Medium link ==> https://bit.ly/2L21kii

If you are willing to spend time and hustle learning something new, I am ready to listen and give you feedback. What do you like? What type of companies do you want to work for? Have a think and revert back.

Cheers, Allen

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**KEY TAKEAWAYS AND ANALYSIS**

What can I say? I passed on learning about Arun’s experience and background (beyond him having worked at DAMAC, a well known real estate development firm in Dubai) and did not seek to provide him with any relevant and targeted guidance on what he could do to re-tool his skills to make him more marketable in Dubai, in the wider Middle East or back in his home country of India.

To be clear, in February last year I was focused on trying to pivot from our Blockchain projects being suspended (Solarnity and Pitchdeck), the lack of alternate employment opportunities in Qatar (since my contract with Qatar Solar ended on 31 October 2018) and a lack of traction on funding with the two Blockchain startups I had been working with since November 2018: UnCloak and Digipharm.

Overall, I made no effort to understand the background of Arun nor did I take time to “personalize” or “tailor” my template response to fit his experience. For example, my reference to Gary Vaynerchuk did not include a link to any of his podcasts – which I have repeatedly made reference to over the past few months. Further, I provided Arun with a link to my job search articles but did not seek to relate them to his specific situation in Dubai.

Ironically, from March 2019 to early September 2019, I provided guidance to 20+ job seekers based in Dubai and 40+ job seekers in which their profiles contained similar “Sales”, “Sales & Marketing”, “Digital Marketing” and “Marketing” experience.

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A Chance to “Do-Over”

Since I cannot turn back the clock, I will use this opportunity to “re-do” and amend the advice to Arun by seeking to “personalize” and “tailor” a more complete and relevant response based upon his 17+ years of work experience since he graduated from the University of Huddersfield in 2002.

In addition to his Sales Director role at DAMAC Properties, Arun also worked in business development and sales roles with Aster DM Healthcare, Vasco (Travel) and several smaller companies over a period of 11+ years.

Thus, it is my view that the following key areas could help in his future job search:

* Innovation in the UAE and Middle East
* Middle East Venture Capital
* Angel List
* SaaS (software-as-a-service) examples applicable to digital marketing would be beneficial to Arun
* Gary Vaynerchuk

The following detailed response was emailed to Arun earlier today:

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**AMENDED CAREER ADVICE | 21 September 2019**

Good day Arun,

This message comes after I re-evaluated the advice I provided to you back in February this year. At that time, my focus was on what I was doing to pivot and retool myself and I failed to properly focus on your experience as a sales and marketing specialist in Dubai having worked 17+ years in various roles since you graduated from the University of Huddersfield.

By the way, I see congratulations are in order for your new Sales and Business Development role with Miral in Dubai!

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My suggestions and recommendations below are meant to benefit you over the long term and may or may not transfer into your current role.

Based upon your LinkedIn profile, I have a few ideas that could potential help in any future job search:

* Tech innovation in the UAE and Middle East
* Middle East Venture Capital
* Angel List
* SaaS (software-as-a-service) examples applicable to digital marketing
* Gary Vaynerchuk

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UAE/Middle East Innovation

Uber buying Careem and tech-focused startups like Yallacompare, Lunch:On, Bloovo & Property Finder all rely upon tech innovation for their success.

The following articles are a good indication that MENA tech startups and venture capital firms will increase in the coming years:

Entrepreneur ME: http://bit.ly/2HAYujT

Wamda: http://bit.ly/2HHdf5O

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Middle East venture capital (VC)

Most VC’s list portfolio companies on their websites. Such companies will range from startups to full commercial entities. In my view, there are a couple of potential opportunities hidden within the VC network for sales and marketing roles:

* Strategic advisor to the VC partners and investment associates on sales and marketing initiatives for their portfolio companies
* Guidance to the VC partners and CEO’s of portfolio investments on implementing SaaS (software-as-a-service) products that fit their business needs
* Strategic sales and business development advisor to one or more of the individual companies within the VC portfolio

The following is a selection of VC’s in the Middle East:

Dtec Ventures | https://dtec.ae/ventures/

Gulf Capital | https://www.gulfcapital.com/en-US/1/1/Home

Gulf International Bank |Bahrain | https://www.gib.com/

Iliad Ptrs | https://www.iliad-partners.com

Jadwa Investments (KSA) | http://www.jadwa.com/en

Kaaf Investments | http://www.kaafinvestments.com

Kuwait Investment Authority | http://www.kia.gov.kw/en/Pages/default.aspx

Manafa Capital (KSA) | https://www.manafa.co/

Middle East Venture Partners | https://www.mevp.com

Naseba | https://www.naseba.com

NCB Capital (KSA) | https://www.alahlicapital.com/Pages/Home.aspx

NOOR Capital | https://noorcapital.ae/

Ominvest | https://ominvest.net/

Omnia Ventures | http://www.omniaventures.com/

Privity LLC | http://www.privitylle.com

Raed Ventures (KSA) | http://raed.vc/

Riyad Capital | http://www.riyadcapital.com/en/

Saudi Technology Ventures | https://stv.vc/

Shorooq Investments | http://shorooq.ae/

Sokotra Capital | https://www.sokotracapital.com

STC Ventures | https://stcventures.com

Swicorp | http://www.swicorp.com/

Upside Digital | http://www.upsidigital.com/

Waha Capital | https://www.wahacapital.ae

Wamda Capital | http://wamdacapital.com/

Women's Angel Investment Network | http://bit.ly/2Jiafi7

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Angel List |https://angel.co

Startups list tech & non-tech roles here. Quick search revealed:

27,732 startups globally

8,596 in India

1,413 in Mumbai

1,209 in Delhi

142 in UAE

108 in Dubai

When I typed in “Business Development” in the “Keywords” filter for Dubai, the amended results revealed a total of 21 startups, a sample of which included:

Vairt | real estate investing | <https://www.vairt.com/>

SafarPass | business travel and expense automation | <https://safarpass.com/>

Vaasara | digital platform for service providers | <https://www.vaasara.com/>

You may need to setup your profile on the site in order to access all of the key search features and to get familiar with all of the relevant startups listed thereon.

The low numbers of startups in the UAE and Dubai is an indication of the tremendous upside for innovation and growth in the region. Why Angel List? Startups may not always use traditional recruiting sites. When such startups scale, they will need people.

One key consideration for you will be to gain familiarity with SaaS (software-as-a-service) applicable to sales and marketing, even if the Dubai companies are slow to adopt such innovation.

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Investments in technology

I follow technology investments announced in various tech news feeds: StrictlyVC newsletter, Crunchbase News, Techcrunch, VentureBeat and FinSME’s Inc. A large focus of venture capital and private equity investments has been on SaaS verticals (software-as-a-service), artificial intelligence, machine learning, augmented reality, and robotic process automation to name a few.

Such venture capital investments tend to be in virtually all disciplines:

HR, accounting, logistics & supply chain, digital marketing, cybersecurity & data management…

…and in virtually all sectors:

Real estate, retail, hospitality, healthcare, construction, oil & gas, fintech, insurance, education, farming, manufacturing, robotics, ridesharing, food delivery, autonomous vehicles.

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Digital Marketing SaaS

The following is a selection of digital marketing SaaS that have received venture capital funding over the past year. These can be classified into three groups: Outreach, Support & Specialty. These are arbitrary groupings. You may have a different view.

Outreach

Jivox | provides a digital marketing platform that connects brands with their audiences using big data, AI/machine learning | https://www.jivox.com/

Ogury | platform for marketing companies | https://www.ogury.com

SalesWhale | uses AI to help marketers and salespeople generate leads | www.saleswhale.com

OutboundEngine, Inc. | all-in-one marketing software platform; relevant content created and sent automatically across email & social media; hands-free social advertising on Facebook & Instagram | www.outboundengine.com

Upfluence | influencer marketing platform | https://upfluence.com/

Support

Bellwethr | ML-powered customer conversion & retention platform | www.bellwethr.com

Boomtown | startup focused on reducing the complexity of selling, activating and supporting business technology products | https://boomtownroi.com/

Branch | helps brands create links between websites & mobile apps | https://branch.io/

Cogito | AI software that helps companies assess customer satisfaction | www.cogitotech.com/

Demand Jump | platform for marketers to make decisions | https://www.demandjump.com/

Finch | digital media automation platform for marketing professionals | http://www.finch.com/

Near | AI-enabled data-driven marketing SaaS products | https://near.co

People.ai | AI platform for enterprise sales, marketing & customer success | https://people.ai

Tiled | Microapps perform like native apps/websites: sales pitches, training | https://tiled.co/

Digital Marketing SaaS | Specialty

Attentive | "augmented sales assistant" integrates with Slack; helps teams keep up with sales pipeline | https://attentive.us/

CrowdRiff | AI-powered visual content marketing platform for travel and tourism brands | http://crowdriff.com/

Native Data | on-demand marketplace of local data -- it helps local brands assign locals to collect data they need on the ground, from pricing to store checks | https://www.native.io/

Phrasee | AI specializes in language generation for email marketing, push & Facebook copy | https://phrasee.co/

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SaaS relevancy

Technology will soon catch up to many of the back office & support functions that are currently manually prepared or linked to legacy ERP systems. This is particularly prevalent in the Middle East whereby significant investments were made in IT systems during the high growth years between 2005 to 2014.

SaaS resistance

There will be resistance to introducing new SaaS -- which I initially faced while in Qatar -- but I recently found when I returned to Canada such as:

• Too expensive

• Not safe and secure to protect our confidential records

• Not compatible with existing system

• Current system works just fine

These resistance (or rejection factors) may or may not be justifiable reasons for rejecting SaaS and the people you speak with in Dubai may have contrary opinions as to how such SaaS will be of benefit.

However, ignoring SaaS innovation just because your current employer (and others) choose not to implement them will only reduce your ability to identify affordable and effective technology solutions over the next 18 months, 3 years or 10 years.

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Learning SaaS

As you are probably aware, SaaS products have moved from the “IT Department” to the “Operations” teams tasked with managing the business. Non-tech personnel DO NOT NEED to attend classes or need to be an IT expert. SaaS today are affordable & bolt-on to existing ERP systems.

In fact, one SaaS example outlined in a recent StrictlyVC newsletter, MindTickle, claims to work with any platform, including calendars, customer relationship management (CRM) or special protocols (think Slack, Excel, SalesForce, DropBox, Google or YouTube). They even claim to be able to manage connecting their SaaS with proprietary software systems by offering an API (or application program interface) to ensure connectivity with systems. Believe me, I am not a tech geek. This just makes sense from a practical business point of view. This is the link to the MindTickle article: http://bit.ly/31lIyKD

Most SaaS can be readily learned: download free demo; subscribe to newsletter; follow company on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook & Instagram

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Relevancy of Gary Vaynerchuk

Why do I think listening to Gary Vee is relevant to you being based in Dubai? I lived in Doha, Qatar for 3 years and it was virtually impossible to discuss emerging technologies with my past employer or any potential employers. Many of the companies in the Middle East are grounded with legacy ERP systems and are very resistant to change and certainly do not see the benefits of social media for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their business. Listening to Gary Vaynerchuk opened my eyes to the benefits of using the various platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to create awareness of my personal brand (reputation).

This is the link to Gary’s key-note speech in Dubai in November 2018:

Link to podcast: <https://apple.co/2setheN>

Link to YouTube broadcast: http://bit.ly/2UPc7Af

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Have fun researching!

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