



# Sayed Hashish

(Enterprise and Partner Group Director • Microsoft Egypt)

By Marwa Helal

Sayed Hashish, Group Director at Microsoft Egypt, spends almost three hours a day commuting between his home in Maadi and the hi-tech Smart Village located on the Cairo-Alexandria desert road.

Between meetings with current and potential customers and directing five managers and their respective teams, this is how he works. Edited excerpts:

I use the time commuting consolidating phone calls, checking and replying to emails using our Pocket PC.

The night before, I check my calendar and plan the day ahead. Since the commuting time is pretty lengthy, it takes discipline when organizing customer and partner meetings that are outside the office. I try to make the meetings either early in the morning or late in the afternoon to avoid double trips to the office. When I finally get to the office I check my email and reply to the ones that were too long to reply to on the Pocket PC.

Also, being responsible for sales makes me depend heavily on Excel to track my business, but before this turns into an advertisement for Microsoft however — it's true that technology makes me an efficient worker, what makes me most effective is the people.

I'm a big believer of diversity in the workplace — a diversity in work styles gives the team different perspectives that we can all benefit from. I spend 30% of my time on people. It would be relatively easy to leave the office an hour earlier every day if I didn't stop and talk to the people I work with, but talking to my colleagues is an investment and a learning experience. They are also the reason I am excited to come into work on Sunday.

The part of the day I enjoy most is when I'm meeting a customer or a partner — this is the most engaging time. I do not enjoy much back-office work. I regularly have such meetings to discuss future projects or follow-up on existing ones. The opportunity to get firsthand knowledge and feedback from our customers on the work we do with them and to see how we can positively impact their business is very gratifying. Of course when you talk about



partners, this is even more; I still recall some of our partners in Egypt that we started working with when they were only few people. Today, they've grown to a few hundred people. It is such impact that gets me going through tough times.

I am also a big believer in autonomy and empowerment — no micro-managing. You manage by helping people do their job — you don't do it for them. This way, I have time to rethink our strategy, long-term planning and structures that create a model that better serve our customers and partners. This time to rethink our future is what I call my "white space," it's a luxury that I have only because I have great people working for me, who are fully capable of doing an excellent job with their responsibilities.

When it comes to traveling for work, it isn't much fun because we travel at least once

a month. It's something that, combined with long work hours, disrupts my work-life balance. I remember I left to go the States on Wednesday and was back by Friday. We go to lovely places — South Africa, Greece, Turkey, Prague — but we spend it in a hotel room or in a conference. You don't get to see the place, so it's a pity because you go all the way there but you don't find time to see it — it might as well be a hotel in Cairo.

Now that my baby girl is a bit older, I try to take my family with me and then it's more fun.

When I return, I find it's easy to catch up, because with technology you're always connected. I think I work a bit too much, but in my industry it's a given that you will work too much. The key is to figure out how to balance work and make work fun: You have to be passionate about what you do, feel it's worthwhile and have fun at work — that's what gets you through. **bt**

