

Sherif Iskander

(Regional Manager • Google Middle East and North Africa)

By Marwa Helal

6 KHIL , VNDQGHU UH IRQDO P DQDI HU RI Google in the Middle East and North Africa, is responsible for the daunting task of improving the quality and quantity of Web use in the region. He took time from his busy schedule to sit down with Business Today Egypt to tell us how he manages it all. Edited excerpts:

I like to make use of Sunday, as it's the workday that does not overlap with Europe. I'll use it to conduct lots of meetings in Cairo because there are no meetings from outside of Egypt. However, Friday is a day where Europe and the US are still operational, so I have to be available in case of any last-minute changes or meetings. That leaves the other four days in the middle of the week in which I do my best to strike a balance.

I can't begin my day without coffee. I'm pretty particular about it: My first cup is usually fresh-ground Colombian coffee brewed at home. I try to minimize driving as much as I can by trying to schedule appointments closer to where I live in the early morning or later in the evening. My assistant, Lamya, has a tough job scheduling all my appointments to make sure I'm not going back and forth across town in the middle of Cairo's unpredictable traffic. If I manage to make an eight-hour day boil down to six-and-a-half hours of work and one and half of driving, I consider that a success. But if I need to do four hours of driving, that means I've just wasted half a day. That's one of the toughest things to do.

I try to get to my meetings on time and I am pretty well connected. If I have some buffer time, I try to use it to respond to emails, phone calls and requests that are coming in. I am very picky about a lot of things, my car included. So when I go to a meeting, I usually park in a very good spot, then I walk to the meeting. This is a great way to recharge my physical and mental energy.

At night, at around 1–2am, I set aside an hour to respond to emails so that they don't pile up. If I need to, I spend another hour early in the morning catching up.

Because I work in a very fast-paced industry, another important aspect of the work I do is setting aside some time to keep up with what's going on in my field. I can't just be focused on what I'm doing; I need

to know the trends, what people are talking about and doing, as well as be aware of any controversial issues that may be arising. I read blogs, websites with technology news on the weekend or for an hour each day. I use email notifications, which help a lot. Keeping up with the news and being well informed is crucial because it's what gives you an edge, extra depth and perception.

I know I need to do more when I think faster than my actions. I keep track of these ideas by recording them into my phone or scratching them down on a piece of paper. If I'm spending two hours a day driving, one of those hours is spent on the phone and the other is spent on inspiration.

The best way to manage people is to be very religious about it, so you set objectives and you have to be in agreement with the person you are dealing with. Once you

all of your objectives.

Managing someone who is far away is not much different than managing someone who is close by. I don't know why there is always an assumption that because you see that person face-to-face that you're better off. Consider a salesperson who is usually out of the office — whether he is out in Cairo or Saudi Arabia doesn't make a difference to me, because in either case I don't get to see him except once a week.

The 'Iskander System' is chaotic but it usually means that priority takes precedence. It's a mix of paper and electronic lists, sometimes I leave home with several scraps of papers in my pocket or I will set reminders and notifications or I will email myself a list of things to do.

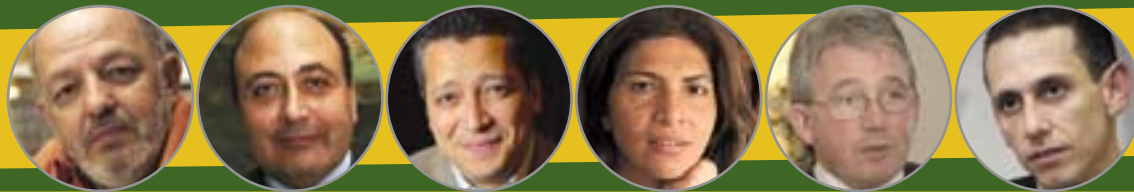
Whatever has a higher priority gets done. The trick is to reach a compromise where



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get that agreement and commitment from them, then you know you have a workable set of objectives. You set the time aside to help and monitor that person and you talk to them weekly to make sure you've tackled

you can do as much as you can without leaving too much out. This is what takes thought everyday. The essence is looking at the full picture and understanding the implications of each of your actions. **bt**



Tahany El-Gebaly

(Vice President • Supreme Constitutional Court of the Arab Republic of Egypt)

By Yasmeen El Mallah

I WZDV DQ KRQRU WR EH DSSRIQWIG DV Egypt's first female judge — and an even bigger one to start that judicial career at the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), the most respected court in the land. Nearly four years since her then-controversial appointment, Tahany El-Gebaly is still the only woman on the SCC's bench. In her eyes, however, she's just another judge among her 17 male colleagues, though she got company in the judiciary a little over a month ago when President Hosni Mubarak ordered that women be allowed to join the third branch of government through the same channel as men. Thirty-one have already done so.

A day in the life of an SCC judge depends on the outcome of a monthly meeting at which each member of the court is assigned cases. A select panel then hears each case, with one member of the bench assigned as what is known as the ruling judge, responsible for writing the final decision after a vote of all judges sitting on the panel.

"Every case requires extensive preparation, reading up on the issue and researching the relevant case law," El-Gebaly says. Cases that reach the Supreme Constitutional Court, she notes, are generally far more complicated in law and in impact than those that reach other courts. The complexity of the cases makes her role as ruling judge one of the biggest challenges of her job.

She declined to discuss specific cases, though, citing confidentiality issues.

When El-Gebaly arrives at the courthouse, she prepares for her scheduled hearings. While she does have support staff, the judge is old school in her work, preferring to do her own research in her home and office libraries, writing up her rulings in longhand and giving them to her assistant to type. Her courthouse office doesn't even have a computer.

The judge rarely keeps fixed hours: El-Gebaly says that once she is given a responsibility, she stays until it is completed, no matter how late this may keep her. Then there are also days when she can work at home, studying case history and law for upcoming hearings and writing up her rulings. She also works to keep abreast of new developments in interna-



Khaled Tabbib

tional law and in other nations' constitutional development and researches the feasibility of applying these in the Egyptian system.

Perhaps most remarkable about El-Gebaly, who has risen to the rank of vice president of the SCC since her appointment, is her quiet modesty about her job and life. She downplays her role as ordinary, but her 2003 appointment was extraordinary at the time. She admits that unlike most women, who have to apply for a judgeship, she was approached by the Supreme Constitutional Court after being a lawyer for 30 years.

"I had to resign from 39 groups and organizations just so that I could focus on being a judge," El-Gebaly says.

Then there was the attention: "After I was appointed, I was closely watched by everyone," she recalls. One mistake, she knew, could harm not just her own career and public image, but every other female lawyer's chances of ever being appointed to the bench.

Still, she says, "it only took one week for people to accept me as the only woman [on the court.]"

The hardest part of joining the SCC was not changing preconceived notions among her male colleagues, it was changing her

own legal perspective, she says. After three decades as a lawyer advocating one side of a legal issue, she had to look at a case objectively, taking all sides into account before issuing the ruling.

Balancing work and home life is a challenge for everyone, but working women in essence have two jobs, she says. "I wake up at 6am every morning to do household chores for two hours before I have to leave to come to the office."

Her life doesn't just revolve around the courthouse. Friday is dedicated to home and hearth, whether it's doing chores or spending time with the family.

"When I became a judge, I had to learn how to balance between my family, the house and work. I cook and I clean my own house and don't allow anybody else to help out," El-Gabaly says. "My mother used to work, and she had a much harder life without all of the technology that we have today. If she was able to work and do everything around the house in those harsher conditions, then there shouldn't be any reason why I can't do it on my own as well.

"My day, really, is like any other Egyptian woman's." **bt**