



Stephen Fernandes

After Hours

Arabian Computer News delves below the corporate strategy to understand what really makes the regions CIOs and IT bosses tick. This month, we speak to Stephen Fernandes, assistant vice president and country manager for the Middle East at Cognizant.

How did you end up where you are now?

Having worked with leading IT organisations and gained wide experience across industries, I was drawn by Cognizant's vision, leadership and brand equity, and the opportunity to leverage my experience in the Middle East to grow Cognizant in the region.

How many people do you manage and what is your management philosophy?

Presently, I manage a regional team spanning across functions such as sales, account management, program/project management, operations, HR, and administration.

I believe in enabling each member of my team to internalise the corporate vision and align their goals with the company's mission. I believe one size does not fit all and it is important to assess and understand what it takes to make each team member successful. I enjoy coaching and mentoring my team members to harness their most important assets—self-belief and self-confidence.

What was your first computer, and when did you first use it?

I used my first computer back in 1986 as a student of engineering. Those were the days of Character User Interface. My first computer was the first-generation IBM PC convertible with two floppy disks.

What's your greatest achievement?

I have yet to have my greatest achievement, but heading Cognizant's operations in the Middle East and helping customers derive optimal value from working with us is close.

And your biggest IT mistake?

It would have to be switching from one IT stream to another without considering past experience or knowledge.

What is your fondest memory?

My fondest memories are those of my first meetings with our legendary vice chairman, Lakshmi Narayanan, and our ever inspiring and iconic CEO, Mr. Francisco D'Souza, during my early days with Cognizant.

Which technology will have the biggest impact on the market in the next year?

The foundation for "a new normal" is built on three pillars: A new generation of highly distributed and virtualised business models; a new generation of cloud and mobile technologies; and a new generation of born-digital workers and consumers, the so-called Millennials. The next few years will be characterised by transitions in technology, industry structures, and business and technology architecture. In achieving higher thresholds of business performance, businesses will continue to look beyond cost optimisation and aim for incremental efficiencies from existing technology investments, and operational excellence.

What would you say is the best way to deal with stress?

I compartmentalise my mind. This has helped me with multitasking and dealing with challenges and situations independently. There are things that are in our control and things that are not. I stay focused on the former and look at problems as things that come with a solution. Breathing exercises and evening walks have helped too.

GETTING PERSONAL

Nationality: Indian

Number of years in the industry: 21

Favourite food: Mediterranean Food, especially kebabs with hummus

Favourite holiday destination: Mauritius

Favourite type of music: Soft Rock and Instrumental

Dream car: Ferrari

Dream gadget: iPad 5

Favourite movie: Braveheart

Would you like to take part in ACN's 'After Hours' section? If so, please contact: ben.furfie@itp.com