



A Step Above

ezekiel

Today's workers aren't asking for much. They want opportunities to develop, learn, be promoted and respected in a transparent environment. Multinationals are viewed as the best places for this to happen. Sure, they pay the best. But we visited some of the most sought-after places to work and found that the best things about work can be free.

by Jeson Ingraham • illustrations by Karim Ezz El-Din • photography by Khaled Habib

SLIDING INTO THE ELEVATOR AT THE ZEINY TOWER IN MAADI, SHEREEN ABDELSALAM had no reason to suspect she was a routine appointment away from a life-changing experience. She got off at the 15th floor and whisked past security onto the managers' floor at the regional headquarters of Schlumberger, one of the world's largest oilfield services companies.

As one of the company's IT workers, Abdelsalam was assigned to fix the personnel manager's computer in early November 2002 — she received about 10 calls like this one every day. Several hours passed in Graeme Cook's office and polite chatter gave way to inquiry. What prompted her to join the IT department two years before? How did it fit with her background in political science? What did she like to do in her free time? To the latter, Abdelsalam told Cook about her love for reading and writing. She would do such work for free.

As soon as she completed her work and left, Cook logged onto the company's online "Career Center" and found Abdelsalam's curriculum vitae from a global pool of Schlumberger employees. Beyond her previous work experience, Cook was also able to view Abdelsalam's top three choices for positions she would like to move into. Topping her list was internal communications, an area where Cook incidentally thought she would make a perfect fit.

He grabbed the phone to call Abdelsalam's boss — "tactfully, because I'm going to steal her," recalls Cook — and a few weeks later Abdelsalam was reporting to him as the company's internal communications manager.

"We only recruit at the bottom level. We don't bring in people from outside. Everyone starts out at the bottom, including me," says P&G's GM Shannan Stevenson. **"And that, over time, instills a climate of trust. Everyone has grown up together."**

"She came to fix my PC one day and then she's on the fast track," says Cook.

He only needed a few minutes to gauge Abdelsalam's potential. She had good communication skills and lots of energy. You can always judge energy level by how someone sits in a chair, he says, and Abdelsalam had the posture down pat. Imitating her, he straightened his back and convulsed in his seat as if he had a few too many shots of espresso.

While Abdelsalam looks back at the day as the "luckiest" in her life, she says her experience validates the tools and the culture in place at Schlumberger to help employees develop themselves — every manager has lost an employee to another department. She started with the company about a decade ago in the finance department, and her career path has taken her through the marketing, IT and internal communications departments before she recently landed another promotion as manager of the employee service center.

The winding path upwards has allowed her to pursue completely different careers without having to start over at a new company. While it's doubtful she would feel the same level of satisfaction if she was stuck in the IT department fixing computers, the

freedom of movement has instilled within her considerable loyalty for the company.

"If I am offered another job with a better pay, I would not go," she says.

Abdelsalam is the kind of person Confucius probably had in mind when he said, "Find a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life." Her experience typifies what most of today's workers value about the workplace, as reflected by a recent survey conducted on behalf of *Business Today Egypt* by the NFO WorldGroup, a leading market research agency.

Borrowing a Schlumberger line, workers are, above all, looking for "borderless careers." They want to be in a company where there are few constraints on their development or their ability to move up within the ranks. The best companies are perceived to have no borders and no ceilings, not for women, nationals, nor those who are not family members of family-owned companies. Only performance sets employees apart in the best work environments.

When 400 participants were asked on our survey what are the most important reasons for joining a company, "future

prospect/career path/promotion" came out as the top priority (See "Survey Says?" page 77). The survey also shows that most are looking for a career with a company that enjoys a good reputation, which scored the second highest for overall values. Salary came third.

Participants were also asked to put a face on their ideals by listing the best places to work in Egypt. Vodafone, Procter & Gamble, and Schlumberger headed the list. The Orascom Group, and its subsidiary Orascom Telecom (OT), was the only homegrown company on the selective list. OT did not respond to *bt's* request to highlight its efforts to keep employees happy, but many other companies on the list did open their doors, including Schlumberger, Procter & Gamble, Vodafone, Shell and Care Egypt, the only non-profit receiving numerous votes.

Within these organizations, employees and managers shared their thoughts about what sets them apart.

Employee navel gazing

HUMAN RESOURCE WORKERS LOVE BUZZWORDS. UNFAILINGLY, THE WORD "people" serves as the anchor of most companies' mission statements or lists of core values. Clichés are fine, as long as the com-



pany lives by the book, so to speak.

Procter & Gamble (P&G) is known worldwide for its consumer goods, from Pantene shampoo to Pampers diapers. In Egypt, the company employs 700 people and boasts of the Middle East's tallest "detergent tower," which means it has a greater capacity to produce powdered detergent than any other factory in the region, at its plant in Sixth of October City. However, General Manager Shannan Stevenson is quick to hand out a brochure that states "the men and women of Procter & Gamble will always be our most important asset."

A few weeks ago, P&G moved 150 of its administrative employ-

"We are virtually running in a flat organization. Everybody can talk to anyone. We don't believe in a hierarchical organization," says Vodafone's HR Manager Emad Tayeb.

ees from an office in the fading World Trade Center to the Nile City Building's north tower, a kilometer north on the Corniche. The office hosts several "break-out" areas where employees can lounge on colorful, cartoonishly shaped sofas and chairs and enjoy a hot beverage or a cool glass of water, or step outside to a veranda with a fourth floor Nile view. All desks are out in the open, including the general manager's, but there are carefully placed meeting rooms where employees can find privacy.

Though the building reflects the "forward looking" view of its employees, Stevenson says, it's still just a façade

"A nice looking office is no good at all if the right values and principles are not there." More important is the company's efforts to make employees feel like they are part of a successful company and winning their trust, he says.

"We only recruit at the bottom level. We don't bring in people from outside. Everyone starts out at the bottom, including me," says Stevenson, who started with the company's marketing depart-

ment 17 years ago in the United Kingdom. "And that, over time, instills a climate of trust. Everyone has grown up together."

Loyalty is groomed from day one at P&G. New employees are immediately given responsibility over a project with intensive coaching from a supervisor. "We don't send them off to a six-month technical training course. They come in and they start doing something real," says Stevenson. Even the bright college students who are recruited from Cairo's top universities for P&G's summer internship programs are likely to be working on marketing projects soon after final exams.

"You don't need to spend money to help people feel valued

about what they're doing," says Stevenson. "I think the most important thing is to focus on the individual and to ensure that there is a climate where people can work and feel valued ... and where they feel they can achieve, they can have a sense of ownership about what they're doing. And that's down to just good people management."

In addition to being judged for their efforts to expand the business, P&G's supervisors are also tested for their ability to groom future talent for the company. Ask any headhunter how this system has affected employees' feelings about the company and you will be told how difficult it is to snatch executives away from P&G.

Deconstructing the pyramid

AT VODAFONE EGYPT'S NEW HEADQUARTERS IN SIXTH OF OCTOBER City, the building's design is meant to represent the philosophy of the mobile giant. An open ceiling of the lobby that allows visitors to gaze up toward the top floors is the first hint at Vodafone's at-

On The Cheap

Improving your company's workplace doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg

If the Dummies' guide to human resources is not on your summer reading list, workplace experts have some cheap advice for employers trying to improve their office settings.

DON'T MANAGE IN THE DARK: Transparent working environments are easy to encourage if companies have nothing to hide. Sharing the draft of a new policy, for instance, is one way to ensure workers have the opportunity to provide feedback before becoming affected by a policy. At Care Egypt, the senior management distributes the minutes of their regularly scheduled meetings so everyone knows what's on

their mind. Procter & Gamble's General Manager Shannan Stevenson actually sits in a desk out in the open next to other company directors. "We try to move away from a departmental silo where you walk into the marketing department and close the door behind you," he says. He has no doors to hide behind.

MAKE A WISH: Celebrating an employee's birthday can go a long way in making him or her feel valued. If the company won't pay for a birthday cake, employees can pool their resources to buy refreshments or a gift, if they're feeling generous. In today's rapidly churning work environment, an em-

ployee's long-time service to a company should also be recognized. Employees with anniversaries at Care Egypt, a non-profit organization, are formally recognized with pins or other mementos. "Maybe because we always have to be conservative in our financial package we try to really emphasize the non-financial benefits of working with us and feeling really like part of the family," says Ann Lynam Goddard, Care's country director. Of course, employers who are not looking out for their workers' needs probably won't have too many senior employees around to worry about.

LET GO: Control freaks don't tend to be popular bosses. They make employees feel like cogs in a wheel. Increasing an employee's responsibilities provides a greater sense of ownership. "The most important thing to do is give employees a sense of belonging. I mean, there is a long list of ingredients of an environment, from where they sit, the facilities, salary - obviously, training, the

tempt at openness.

Some foreign observers have used the pyramids as a rather unflattering symbol of the typical workplace structure in Egypt, especially as it relates to the country's bureaucratic nature — a few elites at the top of the triangle make decisions as the masses encapsulated below remain idle. The best companies do their utmost to bring their managers closer to the ground level.

Vodafone's new building is full of perks (See "Vodafone's Perk Palace," page 72), but human resources manager Emad Tayeb says the building's design sets the tone.

"First of all, it's the openness. Not only the materialistic openness, but it's the openness in communication," says Tayeb. "We are virtually running in a flat organization.

Everybody can talk to anyone. We don't believe in a hierarchical organization.

"I think the problem in Egypt is that the main focus is on the business itself, not on the people that make the business happen," he adds. "Openness is something that we miss, something that we lack in most business environments in Egypt."

Flattening the organizational structure should also make it easier for employees to scale the company's career ladder — call it a stepladder. There are about 15-20 internal vacancies every month at Vodafone, so there is a constant churning of opportunities to step

whole set. But really what makes it or breaks it is if you have a sense of belonging," says Sherif Samy, chairman of Skill-Link.com, a recruitment firm. Giving employees a greater sense of belonging may also soothe the boss' nerves.

HONOR VACATION TIME: Nothing can be more frustrating than having an employer toss out your vacation plans at the last minute. However, this is probably an area where employees often share the blame by throwing their plans together. Tech titan LinkdotNet has practiced a system to help management determine who is expecting time off months ahead of time. This allows the company to plan accordingly so that workers can get the needed time away without leaving the company vulnerable. "As an employer I should encourage you to take a vacation because I do need you to detach, and let go and have a good time — and come back re-energized, rejuvenated and ready for challenges," says

up. This means Vodafone must constantly be providing the training required to help employees climb up from within.

Tayeb estimates that more than half of the employees working in his internal communications department started out with the company in the customer operations department. Personally, he believes the company has invested five or six times more in him than the previous companies listed on his resume, including other multinationals. A company like Vodafone should devote at least 1-1.5 percent of its budget to its workforce, he says, claiming the company devotes an even bigger chunk to about 2400 employees and contractors in Egypt. In return, the company has high expectations.

"It's not only an employee that comes in the morning and counts hours and he goes home," says Tayeb, explaining what he looks for in an employee. "No, we're trying to convince the people that this is your second home. You have to be loyal to what you're doing here. And now, over time, they became part of the business."

It certainly feels like a second home to Amr Fathy, Vodafone's senior systems analyst.

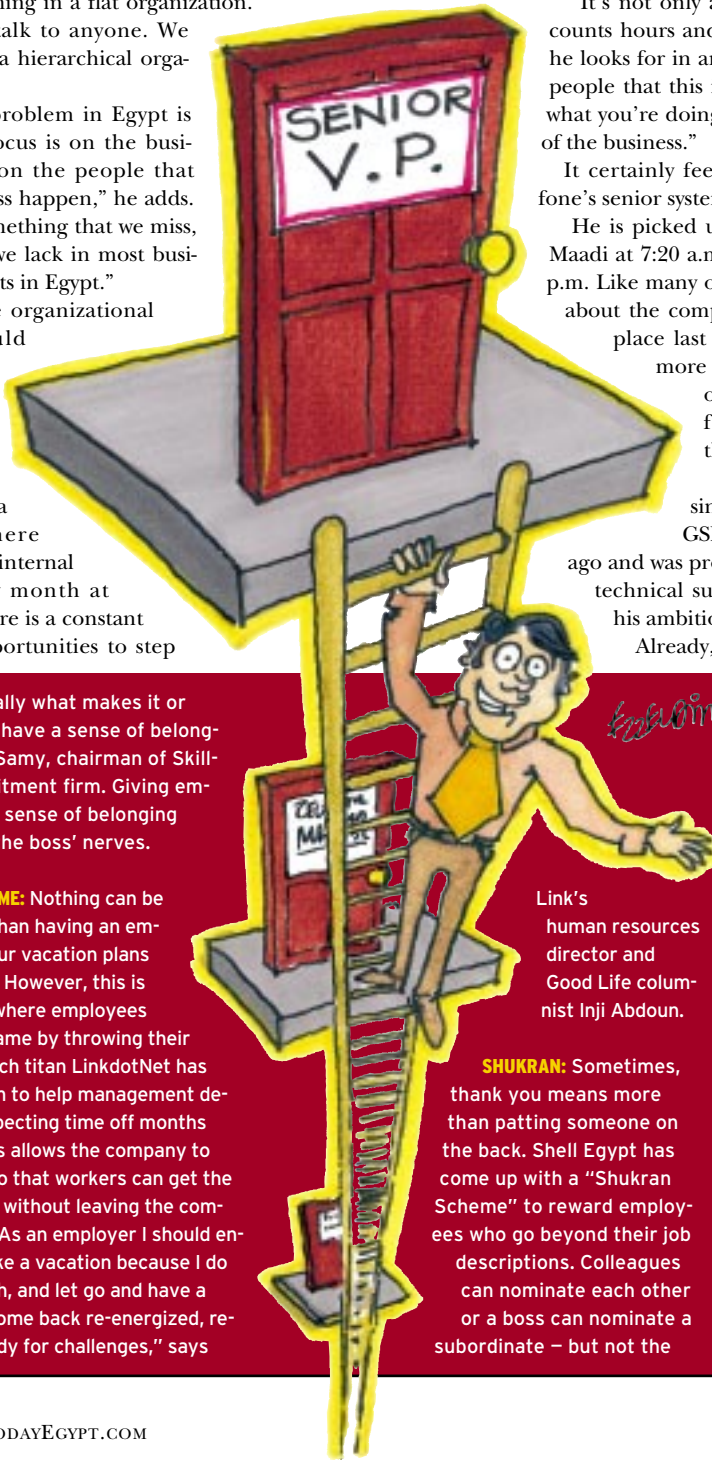
He is picked up by a company bus from near his home in Maadi at 7:20 a.m. On an early night, he returns home at 6:30 p.m. Like many of his colleagues, Fathy was initially concerned about the company's move to Sixth of October, which took place last December. But he has forced himself to be more efficient at work so he can enjoy the pleasures of a book or movie on the bus ride to and from work. An hour away from the office, there are also fewer distractions at home.

Fathy saw Vodafone as an ideal place to work since the company entered the market as Click GSM in 1998. He joined the company three years ago and was promoted after a year. Currently, he is providing technical support for the production billing system, but his ambitions will probably not keep him there for long.

Already, he has received several raises, received "too

other way around. Winners can get a monetary bonus, free hotel rooms, or a dinner for two. "Everybody is treated very decently, very humanely, and this is an environment where everybody feels valued," says Alaa El-Dabaa, Shell's media and communications adviser, who especially likes the scheme's monetary rewards.

PROMOTE FROM WITHIN: Seeing outsiders fill highly sought-after positions can be disheartening. Such practices place a drag on morale and remove incentives for employees to work hard. "Believe it or not there are plenty of companies that do not have a clear incentive policy. ... people think it's very subjective, or there is cronyism or favoritism, or whatever. And this turns people off," says Samy. Many of the best companies only hire at the entry level, encouraging promotions to spring up from within. At P&G, supervisors are judged on both how they are growing the business and grooming the talent beneath them.



Link's human resources director and Good Life columnist Inji Abdoun.

SHUKRAN: Sometimes, thank you means more than patting someone on the back. Shell Egypt has come up with a "Shukran Scheme" to reward employees who go beyond their job descriptions. Colleagues can nominate each other or a boss can nominate a subordinate — but not the



“You want to be smart in your choices. **You don’t want to make the wrong move and have a bad name on your resume** or be in a working environment that is not very conducive to self development,” says the IFC’s Ghada Teima.

many” company bonuses and has taken advantage of the company’s share options. Most of all, however, Fathy values the education he is getting both from his supervisor and training courses, which are ultimately preparing him for the next job. Soon, he will be sitting down with his boss to determine what technical and business skills he wants to sharpen over the next year.

“The most important thing for me was to learn,” says Fathy, explaining why he wanted a job at Vodafone. “So, here in Vodafone I am learning every day.”

What’s in a name?

IT WAS A CRUSHING MOMENT. GHADA TEIMA HAD MOVED TO THE United States to pursue a job at a large investment bank. But a few months after the terror events of September 11, 2001, the economy was languishing and workers from the Middle East were in low demand among employers.

After leaving FinRate Consulting, where she had been the vice president and board member, Teima had been relegated to a me-

Perk Palace

By providing transportation, food and other treats, Vodafone workers don’t mind trekking to new headquarters

With all the side benefits of working at Vodafone Egypt’s “Sixth Horizon,” it’s a wonder how the company can claim productivity has increased roughly 20 to 30 percent since the building opened last December in Sixth of October City.

Architecturally, the building, which cost well above LE 100 million, incorporates the traits of an ancient Egyptian temple with all the amenities of a modern workplace. It further boosts Vodafone’s reputation as one of the best places to work in Egypt, if not the best, as indicated by **bt**’s workplace survey.

“I would challenge that you would not find such a facility within Egypt and maybe within the Middle East area,” says Vodafone’s human resources manager Emad Tayeb.

Excluding the Gulf, Tayeb’s statement does not ring of exaggeration.

To start with, Sixth Horizon is wireless. Mobile phones serve as everyone’s extension – a helpful feature unless you would rather not be caught away from your desk. Employees use the phone free of charge until 8 p.m., at which point they get 300 free minutes a month. Computers with wireless internet connection serve as nice getaway spots to check the latest football scores or news.

Work areas are wide open with private meeting rooms never too far away. Anyone needing an afternoon pick-me-up is usually only a short walk away from drink areas, where they can grab a soda from the fountain machine or a hot beverage or water free of charge. Catering provided by Bon appétit is subsidized for employees, who have plenty of places to sit at an indoor/outdoor café overlooking the budding cityscape.

There is a Gold’s Gym fitness room, health clinic, bank and other retail shops on-site, so the building’s 800 workers can avoid running errands after a long day at work.

Business centers scattered throughout the building provide every imaginable office need, including photocopiers, printers, shredders and heavy-duty staplers. Ensuring privacy, workers can send a document to a common printer and complete the job only after swiping their Vodafone badge over the printer – even after a document has spent several days in the queue.

Random facts about the building, called “Wows,” are painted on

nial job in the finance department at a retail company in Manhattan. She worked just to pay the bills, and was unable to get a foot in the door at Goldman Sachs or Merrill Lynch.

Less than a year into her stay in the United States, Teima heard from a friend in Egypt about a position opening at the International Finance Corp., the private-sector arm of the World Bank Group, in Cairo. Teima quickly decided to brush up her resume and apply. A year and a half ago she returned to Cairo as the IFC's business development officer for the North Africa Enterprise Development.

What does she enjoy the most about her job at the IFC?

"The name," says Teima.

Reputation is taking on a growing importance among today's employees, according to workplace experts. It ranks second on the *bt* survey for what employees want from a job. Employees who want to get ahead feel the need to work in a place where a company's reputation helps advance their career, even if they only use the firm's name to sell themselves to another employer.

"You want to be smart in your choices. You don't want to make the wrong move and have a bad [company] name on your resume or be working in an environment that is not very conducive to self development," says Teima.

But even companies with a good reputation can take some getting used to, depending on a person's outlook.

Alaa El-Dabaa never pictured himself working for an oil company. As a writer for the *Egyptian Gazette*, the only English-language daily newspaper in Cairo, he described himself as a union activist. Corporations were monsters.

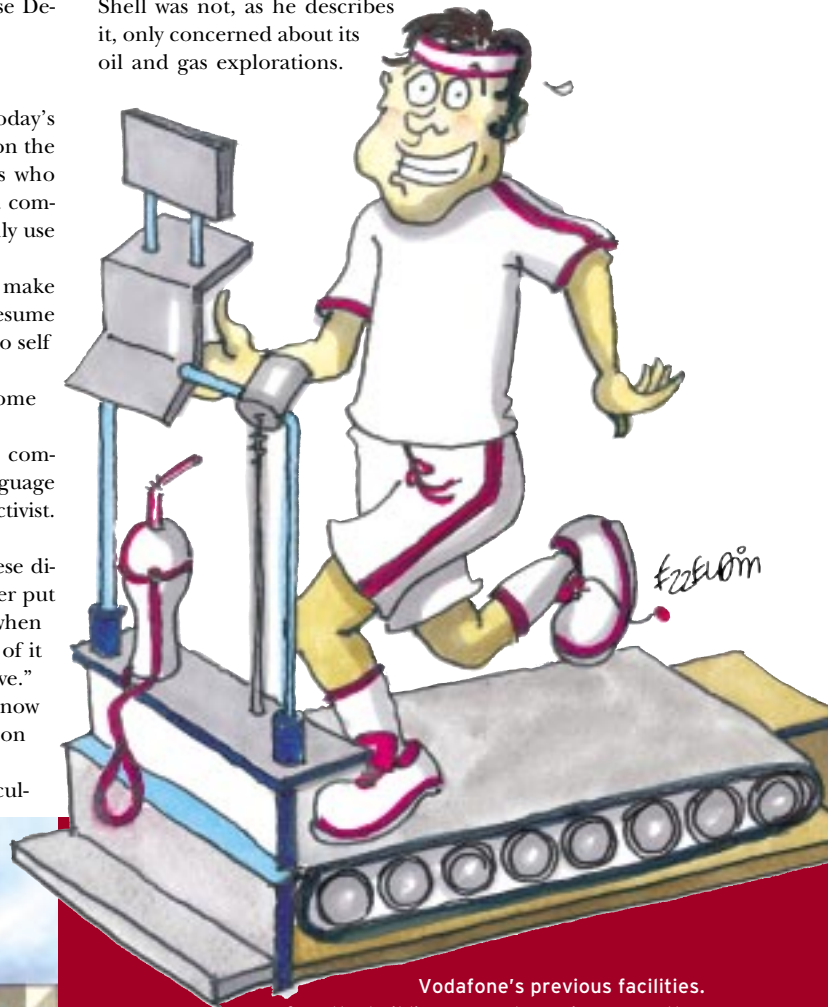
"We all have this image of multinational companies as these dinosaurs out there to devour us," says El-Dabaa, who had never put a lot of trust in corporate publications. "And it is very easy when you read things like [corporate publications] that you think of it as propaganda, part of the public relations puff that we all love."

His statement comes with remarkable ease for a man who now handles the public image of Shell Egypt. The transformation didn't take place overnight though.

In 1996, he left his job at the *Gazette* to study media and cul-

ture in the United Kingdom. He came back to Egypt two years later and found that the job market had only worsened. He returned to his position at the *Gazette* until a job opened up as a press officer at the Delegation of the European Commission to Egypt about two years ago. Feeling as if he wasn't growing enough in the position, El-Dabaa learned about an opportunity at Shell a year ago.

Researching the company on the internet, he found out that Shell was not, as he describes it, only concerned about its oil and gas explorations.



the walls. Almost 550 tons of steel were used in construction, which began when Vodafone was still known as Click GSM in February 2000. The total area of the glass used in construction covers about 2200 square meters, and all the marble tiles would span one kilometer if lined up from end to end.

Employees call Sixth Horizon a tremendous improvement over

Vodafone's previous facilities. Before the building's grand opening, more than 2000 employees were scattered over 16 locations in Cairo. Still, more than half of its employees are in flux, waiting for another corporate office to open up in the Smart Village on the Cairo-Alexandria Desert Road.

Whereas previous office buildings lacked adequate parking, most employees at Sixth Horizon now ride to work in company-provided buses, which play music and movies. The buses arrive and depart at scheduled times, forcing employees to maintain a tight working schedule.

Not long ago, Vodafone employees were complaining about broken-down elevators. At Sixth Horizon, the elevators signal an alarm and remain motionless when too many people have hopped on. Inevitably, someone running late for a meeting will be tempted to complain about the new feature, but it also will serve as a reminder of how far the company's work environment has come along.



It was also promoting sustainable development. So, he decided to apply.

While it took him a little time to ease his apprehensions about moving into the oil industry, El-Dabaa accepted the job a year ago and has found himself more valued as an employee than ever before — union card or not.

“You start at one point, but you know that you have a future there. You know that you are going to get through the progression, you know that you are going to be promoted,” says El-Dabaa. “And you know at the same time that you can enter the company as one person and with the passage of time you’ll be a completely different person skill-wise.”

To begin with, he needed to learn more about the industry itself, so he didn’t feel like a salesman unfamiliar with the product he was selling. He took a four-day intensive training program on oil and gas. Additionally, his position as media and communications adviser will allow him to make occasional trips to London to meet with his global counterparts.

Training has its own privileges. If you can see the world at the same time, chances are you’re feeling pretty good about your job.

Pay matters, but how much?

ONE OF THE UNLIKELY AREAS WHERE THE PUBLIC SECTOR IS TRYING TO mimic multinationals is among public-sector banks. As part of an effort to “privatize” public banking management, banking executives from the private sector have been recruited to enhance services at the four big public banks.

Assem Ragab was recruited away from his private investment firm by none other than Farouk El-Okda, who was then the chairman of the National Bank of Egypt before being tapped for governor of the Central Bank of Egypt earlier this year, to serve as El-Okda’s adviser at Egypt’s largest bank.

Ragab won’t divulge his pay, but he assures that the price was

Judging from his experience in the private sector, he has a few theories about why this may be the case.

“It’s in the air. You go into an NGO (non-governmental organization) and you find people happy, cheerful. Relaxed on one side, but very productive from another,” says Riad, who needed more than a year to adjust to life at a non-profit after leaving a private consultancy job in 1997.

More plausible than the air they breathe is the clients they serve. The purpose of Care is to purge poverty in Egypt, which helps employees put their own working conditions in context. Regardless, Care Egypt was the only non-profit company to make it onto *bt*’s list of best places to work. The achievement lends credence to the fact that it takes more than money to make employees happy — in fact, money ranks behind opportunities for promotion and reputation on *bt*’s survey.

Anne Lynam Goddard, Care’s country director, says people feel good about working at Care because of the non-profit’s mission.

“They feel like they are making a contribution that’s beyond just getting their salary,” says Goddard. “And that gives people a lot of personal satisfaction and happiness in some ways. They feel like their time is not wasted. It’s not just about getting a salary at the end of the day.”

As an international agency, Care operates in more than 60 countries and is celebrating 50 years of existence in Egypt this year, including the years it was asked to leave the country from 1967 to 1974 due to regional instability. There are 200 employees spread across the country in places like Beni Suf and Fayoum. Projects in-

Caring Is Their Business

The rewards of working at Care Egypt are measured in more than money

Field workers at Care Egypt could easily be forgiven for a gripe here and there. Summers go by without air conditioning and winters without heating. Traveling on rugged roads to remote villages, it can take hours to arrive at a project site. The workday can last until as late as 10 or 11 at night.

Even administrative employees have made a habit of working long hours at headquarters in Maadi. Enough people were coming in to work on the weekends that they became known as the “Saturday Club.”

Despite the challenges, Samir Riad, Care’s human resources director, says it’s rare to hear a negative peep from employees. “You do not hear people complaining about their work conditions. You hear them asking for benefits, you hear them asking about salaries, you hear them arguing about the policy here or the policy there, but not about their work conditions.”

right to make the transition into the public sphere; no need to give up chic business suits, shiny cufflinks, or initial-bearing dress shirts.

But not all incentives come in stacks of 100s.

For Ragab, the challenge of the job is more than enough to keep him motivated. The National Bank of Egypt manages 25 percent of the nation's GDP, he says. So, if he can help improve the bank's services by 1 percent, he figures he is having a significant impact on the nation's economy.

"If I am not challenged, the work will be boring," he says. "I like a lot of variables. I hate monotones. I hate systematic, very bureaucratic work."

Salaries are something of a paradox. Employees who thrive on challenges need more than a big salary to stimulate them. But they are also the kind of workers who fetch a high value on the job market. Everyone has to pay up for competent employees and constantly be adapting to changes in the labor market to retain them.

As an international non-profit agency, Care Egypt does not have the luxury to lavish its employees with some of the same benefits as its counterparts in the corporate world. The agency's mission is to alleviate poverty in Egypt, so all the money coming in from donors must be used accordingly. This poses a unique challenge

for the agency, which senior managers say can be met by focusing on their mission (See "Caring Is Their Business," on page 74).

Care's administrative office is located in an unassuming building near the Hadayek El-Maadi Metro station. While perks at a non-profit have to be limited, Care does survey the marketplace once a year to make sure it is paying competitively. Internationally, Care strives to pay its employees 75 percent of the going rate. Here, the figure is closer to 100 percent, according to Anne Lynam Goddard, Care's country director, partly because it is comparing itself against many local NGOs that pay well below market wages.

"If we pay competitively and keep really good people, that will keep our quality of our projects high, which makes it easier to sell our project and get funding for it. To me, that's the cycle that I want to keep going," says Goddard.

Anyone looking for a job at Care, however, because of its pay scale ought to reconsider. Employees in the field face abnormal working conditions. And even those with office jobs in Cairo are in the habit of working long hours and sometimes six-day workweeks to support its humanitarian functions, primarily in Upper Egypt.

Care's employees need more than a monetary sense of rewards to handle the workload, says Care's human resources director, Samir Riad.

"You can double the salaries of people. You can give them all the benefits in the world. It would keep people happy for one month or a few months. But still, it will not resolve that kind of issue you are talking about, people becoming unhappy. People become happy or unhappy because of the way they are treated, the way that work is structured, the way that they can achieve their ambitions through their employer and finally the level of satisfaction from what they do."

For financially limited companies, workplace experts and man-

clude providing villagers with access to clean water, building schools and helping farmers find export markets for cantaloupes, beans and other goods.

Seeking an end to poverty is not a 9-5 job, says Goddard.

"There's always that saying that no one ever dies and says they wished they spent more time at the office. Well, it's harder to say that at a non-profit."

One drawback of working in the field for Care is that a project can dry up without a new one arriving to replace it. Additionally, Care does not have the resources to pay "completion bonuses" to ensure that an employee sticks with a project that is winding down, despite looming job uncertainty.

"The only way we can counterbalance it is to give enough information out about all the new projects in the pipeline," says Goddard.

Care has also worked to cut down on the number of foreigners filling project manager positions in a bid to provide more opportunities to local staff members who have been with the organization for several years. In the last six of seven years, the agency has gone from filling all of its project management positions with foreign workers to only two out of six today – the reason the ratio hasn't shrunk even further has as much to do with donors' requirements than anything else, Goddard says.

The agency seeks to develop its employees at all levels. If a driver or anyone else wants to go back to school, Care will help cover some of the fees. Finding time to study is another matter.

"At the end of the day, I'm going out there and I'm telling people to go home," says Goddard.



Care's Goddard says it's harder to regret working long hours at a non-profit.

agers say there are plenty of ways to make employees feel better about work without busting the budget (See “On The Cheap,” page 70). Recognizing birthdays or employees who have exceeded their job responsibilities are a couple of simple ways to increase job satisfaction.

Working without one expat too many

ONE AREA WHERE COMPANIES CAN PROBABLY SAVE MONEY AND BOOST morale at the same time is through their hiring practices in regards to expatriates. Hiring foreign workers in senior positions can engender a sense of inferiority among nationals and can cause resentment among employees who don't believe they are getting a fair shake at opportunities.

Many observers say the Egyptian workplace is overly dependent on workers from abroad, and these workers are usually not worth the salary companies pay to keep them. While expats are usually hired to train nationals in an area where there is a shortage of experience, many become comfortable in their new positions. Rather than move on after a year or two, these workers tend to be better at convincing managers of their necessity despite the presence of qualified nationals.

It's hard to blame them, says Dahlia Zayed, a marketing man-

“You can double the salaries of people. You can give them all the benefits in the world. It would keep people happy for one month or a few months. But still, it will not resolve that kind of issue you are talking about, people becoming unhappy,” says Care’s HR Director Samir Riad. “People become happy or unhappy because of the way they are treated.”

ager and *bt*'s “Tools” columnist, who designed the workplace survey for *bt*.

“It's very profitable for them,” she says. “And at the same time, I think they enjoy living in Egypt. It's a fun country for any foreigner to live in.”

Some feel treated like kings. They have never had their own drivers, housecleaners, or cooks before. They live in upscale apartments and have plenty of posh parties to choose from on the weekends.

“So, they try to sell themselves to top management as being indispensable to the business. And let me tell you something, across the board no one is indispensable,” says Zayed.

For many multinationals, relying on workers from abroad is unavoidable. Globally, more than two-thirds of Schlumberger's mobile employees are operating in a foreign country. In Egypt, Schlumberger is using modern technology and practices to further exploit brown fields, oil fields that have passed peaked production, mainly in the Gulf of Suez. The technology being used often requires bringing in workers from abroad, says Cook, who says he is nonetheless committed to increasing Egypt's “home country content.”

Expatriates may be working on a different pay scale at Schlumberger, but Cook says that doesn't mean the working environment needs to feel segregated. Indeed, when he took over as Schlumberger's personnel manager two years ago, he says there was more of a distinction between how the needs of national employees and

expatriates were met. He has tried to erase that distinction by merging the company's two branches of the employee services center, which looks after about 1000 permanent workers.

A ticket overseas

OF COURSE, WORKING IN AN OFFICE WITH FOREIGNERS IS A REFLECTION of the inbound and outbound nature of the global work environment. With branches all across the world, multinationals are often seen as a ticket abroad.

Schlumberger has about 150 foreign employees in Egypt. But the company employs at least 400 Egyptians in other countries, where they are making the same “fool's” salary as the expatriates working here. Cook likes to point out that three of the company's 10 presidents are Egyptians. Also, his counterpart at Schlumberger in his hometown of Aberdeen, Scotland, is from Egypt.

“I think one of the big attractions in Egypt is that we're probably one of the main tickets in which if you're good enough to perform you're going to get an international career,” says Cook.

As much as they are trying to develop local talent, multinationals are also usually trying to foster a corporate culture that is not confined along national lines.

“The values that we abide by are also universal,” says P&G's

Stevenson. “We are able to move our people around the world. And despite the fact that culturally our markets are very different — and the consumer stages of development might be different — the values that we operate in as a company are the same.”

P&G has seven foreigners working here, but employs 19 Egyptians in offices in the Far East, Latin America, North America and the Middle East.

At Vodafone, Fathy is not quiet about his aspirations to work in a place like Vodafone Spain or Vodafone Italy. He has friends in the company who are now on four- or five-month assignments in places like Vodafone Sweden. The company is also planning to launch a global intranet “vista,” which will allow all Vodafone companies around the world to share one pool for vacancy announcements and open up more opportunities abroad for local employees.

Shell's El-Dabaa says the potential to travel and work abroad is one of the things he appreciates the most about his job. Even if he doesn't end up in the Royal Dutch/Shell Group's media relations' office in London, he still feels he is getting international exposure by reporting to work in Heliopolis.

“You don't have to travel abroad to get this environment because it's here in Shell Egypt,” he says.

Building a company from the employee up

IT'S INCOMPLETE TO CONSIDER WHAT WORKERS LOOK FOR IN THEIR search for the right working environment without turning a mirror on them.

Survey Says?

In a nutshell, promotion is key, reputation matters, and salary helps

Work is a subjective experience. *Business Today Egypt's* first-ever workplace survey doesn't claim to represent all of Egypt's 20-odd million workers, its shoe shiners, peddlers of trinkets, cab drivers, or throng of government employees.

Rather, participants had to log onto our website in March and April to complete the survey, designed by Dahlia Zayed, regional marketing manager of the NFO WorldGroup, a leading market research agency, and *bt's* "Tools" columnist.

The results must be read through the lens of *bt* readers and subscribers, who were specifically targeted to share their views. They belong to Egypt's so-called "globalized 500,000," who could just as easily be working in London, Paris or New York if given the opportunity. For now, they are still in Egypt and have high aspirations.

More than nine in 10 of our survey's participants were under 40, and the number one thing they look for in a job is the opportunity for promotions. The reputation of the company they work for comes in second with salary rounding off the top three. Workers between 30 and 40 suffer from the greatest degree of dissatisfaction. The older they get, the more important job security becomes.

Respondents are two-thirds male and one-third female, yet they view the workplace with surprising uniformity. They represent all sectors, though they are weighted significantly toward services, IT, marketing and advertising, and consumer goods.

The majority seem to get along better with their colleagues than their boss. They seem fairly content with the flexibility of their working hours and their salary, but there is some frustration about their companies' bonus schemes, or lack of them – a fifth say they are totally unsatisfied.

The physical workplace environment also gets low marks. Only greenery level comes close to reaching the ranking of "fair," while air conditioning, photocopiers and water coolers hover slightly above the rank of "poor." Only about 40 percent have a cafeteria in their workplace. Overall, the workplace ranked 2.2 on a scale of 5, the lowest level detected from all the categories.

Apart from the "yes / no" questions, workers measured their values on a scale of 1 (not satisfied at all) to 5 (extremely satisfied). Workplace facilities, in contrast, were ranked on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). The averages and percentages are taken from a sample of 400 people.

As for the rest of the results, we'll let the numbers tell the story:

In general, how important are the following factors when deciding on a new job?

Future prospect/career path/promotion	4.59
Company reputation as an employer	4.41
Financial compensation	4.31
Personality of your direct manager	4.16
Social/people/office environment	4.14
Market sector/type of business	4.01
Status/title	3.93
Company size	3.65
Journey time to office	3.30
Location of office/district	3.21
Number of staff to manage	3.11

How do you feel about your current job?

Can't wait to go in the office	18%
Fairly alright	66%
Misery Incarnated	17%

Thinking of your current job, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with the following?

Business climate	
Communication with colleagues .	3.80
Performance of my team	3.48
Communication with boss	3.45
Job security	3.37
Level of empowerment	3.24
Workload	3.21

Benefits

Flexible working hours	3.33
Competitive salary	3.01
Training and development	2.87
Medical insurance coverage	2.87
Life insurance	2.66
Annual bonus	2.66
Pension	2.64
Share option scheme	2.54
Company car/allowance	2.42

Workplace facilities

Greenery level	2.91
Cafeteria	2.69
Personal storage space	2.61
Quality of rest rooms	2.49
Decor/Furniture quality	2.39
IT support	2.30
Tea/coffee making facilities	2.23
Overall workplace facilities	2.20
Water cooler	2.20
Printer/copier	2.13
Air conditioning	2.04

Do you trust your company's leadership?

Yes	56%
No	29%
Do not know	15%

Do you agree with your company's strategy in conducting business?

Yes	50%
No	27%
Do not know	8%
What strategy ?	15%

What company do you currently believe – to the best of your knowledge – can be named the best employer to work for in Egypt?

(alphabetical order of companies receiving numerous votes)	
British Petroleum, Care Egypt, Exxon Mobil, IBM, Masterfoods (Mars), Microsoft, Mobinil, Orascom Group, Procter & Gamble, The Ritz Carlton (Sharm El-Sheikh), Schlumberger, Shell, Vodafone	

Who took the survey?

Gender	
Male	67%
Female	33%

Age	
Less than 25	21%
25-30	43%
30-39	29%
40-45	4%
More than 45	3%

Sector	
Services	21%
IT	16%
Marketing and advertising	10%
Consumer goods	8%
Telecom	7%
Banking/finance/insurance	7%
Travel/hotel	6%
Oil & gas	4%
Food & beverages	3%
Construction	3%
Pharma/health care	2%
Others	13%

Those applying to top companies must often go through rigorous hiring procedures, which involve several interviews, technical tests in a relevant field, and possibly IQ or behavioral exams. The process ensures the company finds the right employee, but has also revealed significant weaknesses in the labor market.

Inji Abdoun, who writes *bt*'s "Climbing The Ladder" column, receives a least one e-mail a day from a job seeker who is eager to get ahead but feels adrift. Abdoun, who also serves as the human resources director for the internet giant LinkdotNet in Dokki, says job seekers are not exposed to proper career counseling. The American University in Cairo's career advancement placement office, where she had her first job, is one of a kind in Egypt. In contrast, no one can visit a college in the United

States, from the Ivy Leagues down to community colleges, without finding a career center, she says.

People rarely know how to market themselves and no one has ever told them they have to, says Abdoun. At Link, Abdoun sees a lot of applicants who may be qualified to do a job on paper but do not demonstrate the "soft skills or aura" needed to fit in a fast-paced working environment.

"That's not stuff you're going to learn in school," she says. "You need to go out there and make something out of yourself."

The social structure may be the greatest barrier to upward mobility, she says, starting with the public school system. "You're from the masses, so you need to do a hell of a lot more work to stand out than someone from a private university needs to. They don't need to do anything, they just stand out."

With rampant unemployment, it's not a shortage of candidates that plagues the job market, says Sherif Samy, the chairman of Skill-Link.com, an online job search site that started four years ago and has about 60,000 visitors a month.

"Plenty of companies in Egypt find difficulty in recruitment. Why, it's not a shortage of numbers.

It's a shortage of skills and character," says Samy.

"It's easy to be professional and reliable. I mean we're not asking for rocket scientists. First, [we look for] people who can present themselves well, are smart, read, research — go on the net not to go on porn or sports sites but to read an article on the *New York Times*, it's free of charge. There are plenty of resources on the net for free, but people don't bother researching. You know, they think that we finish school, university, that's the last time we'll read a book. It's not true."

Indeed, Samy says he had no experience more valuable than an opportunity earlier in his career at a multinational consulting firm, Arthur Anderson, which has since evolved into Accenture. "I credit it for what I am today much more than any study I've done since kindergarten," he says.

While job seekers do not have to be victims of fate when it comes to their careers, the picture gets bleaker as you move away from the individual.

Samy calls the coming demand for jobs a "time bomb." Already, there is a shortage of about 2 million jobs and that number is projected to grow by as many as 800,000 jobs a year due to new entrants to the job market, he says.

There will never be enough jobs to end unemployment. "But what I tell people is it's very easy to distinguish yourself because of the lack of professionalism," he says.

"The lucky few who know their own self can prepare themselves to get jobs. They solve their problems on the micro-level. On the macro-level, we have a very serious problem."

Compared to the perception that there are no limits within Egypt's best companies, the prospects outside look much less inviting. That may be the greatest reason these companies are, if not loved, desired. **bt**

