



I WANT MY
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TEXT / CHRIS HANRAHAN

Samer Kurdi

A noble calling

SAMER KURDI IS Global Chairman of the Entrepreneurs' Organization, a network of more than 8,500 business owners in 121 chapters and more than 40 countries. A Saudi Arabian, he visited Jakarta in February to meet and socialise with the members of the EO's Indonesia Chapter. It was the last leg of a two-week tour of Asia that began in Chennai, India and also included Hokkaido, Tokyo, Seoul and Bangkok. A member of EO for the last 10 years, Kurdi became Chairman of the organisation's Global Board of Directors in July last year. Also on the EO's Global Board are Chairman-Elect Rosemary Tan of EO Malaysia; Chairman-Elect-Elect Gus Valen of EO Cincinnati, who accompanied Kurdi on his Asian tour; Blair Assaly of EO Edmonton; and Jody Dharmawan of EO Indonesia. (Dharmawan is President Director of Lee Cooper Indonesia.) Kurdi is Group Deputy General Manager of Saudi-based Sunbulah Group, a company started by his father, Ibrahim Yousef Kurdi, which is a regional pioneer in food processing, manufacturing and distribution, and sells its products in more than 30 countries. Samer Kurdi has also founded a real-estate business in partnership with another EO member in Saudi Arabia. Kurdi and his wife, Dema, are the proud parents of two girls, Maria and Asiya.

Getting the work-life balance right is particularly difficult for entrepreneurs, Kurdi points out. Because they work for themselves, and have employees relying

on them, business owners are more likely to become workaholics, neglecting family and other social relations. The stresses and strains of the entrepreneurial lifestyle can have serious consequences over time, including depression, burnout and other health issues. Kurdi wants to make sure that his members avoid these pitfalls. "As business leaders, we're constantly using our knowledge and experience to make a difference in the lives of those we lead," he notes. "But where do we receive the support that we need to achieve success and significance? Who do we turn to when we face personal or professional issues unique to entrepreneurs? Entrepreneurship can be lonely - but it doesn't have to be."

One of his priorities during his tour was to explain "EO360", the organisation's latest fiscal-year theme. "This year, we're supporting the complete entrepreneur by going 360 degrees," says Kurdi. "In alignment with our strategic imperatives, we are focusing our efforts on supporting the totality of the entrepreneur. Committed to supporting all elements of the entrepreneur's journey, we will help every member achieve excellence in the following areas: 'My Business, My Family, My Community and Myself'. Using these four personas as guides, we will offer enhanced support and next-level resources so that all members can excel as well-rounded leaders. This is a top priority for EO, because the stronger we become as entrepreneurs, the bigger impact we'll have in this organisation, each others'

lives and the world."

"There is no clear definition of what makes a successful entrepreneur," says Kurdi, who admires the style and achievements of Sir Richard Branson of Virgin Group fame. "But, in general, entrepreneurs are more creative than others. They take more risks and they adopt new technologies faster. Their businesses become their livelihood, so they have a very strong connection with them. They are more committed. They don't quit when times are tough, because their families depend on the businesses they run. I was inspired by my father to become an entrepreneur, and I believe that it's a noble calling. Entrepreneurs work very, very hard - they have to. But it's not good for their health to focus entirely on business. One EO member I know was contemplating suicide at one point because of the stress he was under.

"This is why I came up with the concept of 'EO360' as our organisation's theme during my term as Global Chairman. I want my members to have a more balanced life so that they do not get burned out. If they have a family, they need to raise their children well. They need to do things for their community. We entrepreneurs often do not take good care of ourselves. We don't work out or spend time with friends, or play golf. It's good to be selfless, but if you don't take care of yourself you can't take care of others. When I hear of an EO member who took time out to watch his child take her first baby steps, that's when I know we are doing something right." ■