

Interview Questions for Mona Adawy

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Mona Al Adawy, Founding Owner and Managing Director of GeoEnergy Petroleum Services Company; a well-established diversified services provider to the oil and gas industry in Middle East and Africa since 2009. Al Adawy's areas of expertise include business management, training, consulting as well as over 15 years of experience in Oil & Gas data management projects. She holds a BSc and a MSc in Geology from Cairo University and a Global Business Diploma from ESLSCA Business School. Moreover, she studied Women's Entrepreneurship at eCornell University and is a Certified Corporate Director from IFC. Currently, she's finishing up her MBA from South Wales University, UK in Strategic Management.

Al Adawy created GeoEnergy to better serve the oil and gas exploration industry. The company provides integrated Geosciences products, services and solutions that help to assess exploration and development opportunities and significantly reduces exploration risks, cost and cycle time. Since it was established, GeoEnergy has a proven track record with serving more than sixty Oil & Gas companies in Middle East and Africa.

WiB: You're not only working in a job that has been until recently dominated by men, but you're also one of the female pioneers in it. What motivated you to venture in this field, knowing ahead the challenges you will encounter?

MA: To be honest, I was not fully aware of the challenges of working in the oil industry. I thought it would be like any other business. It really helped that at the beginning I focused on providing a specific service; “Scientific Data Digitalization and Digital transformation”, and I was confident I would provide it to the clients with excellence. My driving force was my passion to help and support others in their work and specially when it is related to my personal passion “Digital transformation”.

WiB: Can you tell us about your professional career prior to starting GeoEnergy?

MA: After graduating from the Faculty of Science, and meanwhile looking for a job in the oil companies, I worked as a medical representative for a reputable pharmaceutical company. I learned how to market medical products and achieved a great success promoting the company’s products to some of the best medical doctors and professors in Egypt. Within six months after I started working, the company sales of medical products increased by 36%. That’s when I realized I have a talent to sell.

Then I worked as a geologist in a petroleum services company, make digital transformation for oil & gas companies technical data. Not before too long I got a promotion and my responsibilities grew. But eventually I took maternity to care for my child. It was then that I decided to start my business once my boy turned one.

WiB: What opportunities you saw and what attracted you to start a business in this field?

MA: I saw and still see the opportunity and the future in the digital transformation, and I believe we shall invest more in applying the technology in other sectors in the country. I believe technology makes our businesses smarter and easier in our very dynamic and challenging world.

WiB: What drives you to succeed?

MA: My love for my kids and husband pushes me to succeed, because I want to be the model for my kids. In addition, I believe the time, effort and hard work I invested to build

GeoEnergy will pay off at the end. My driving force is "To learn from my experiences and use my lessons learned to transform my future"

WiB: What's your vision for the future of the company and how do you work to achieve it?

MA: My vision for GeoEnergy is to become the global quality leader in providing professional and innovative integrated services to the oil and gas exploration industry, with an uncompromising ethical standard and in a cost-effective manner. To accomplish that, I am focusing currently on Africa and I am working on expanding our services in two more countries in Africa by end of 2022.

WiB: As CEO and Managing Director, what are the challenges you face?

MA: On the business level, the challenges we have in the industry now is the fluctuation in the oil prices. This fluctuation impacts the short-term business plans of the oil & gas companies', which in turn directly affects our forecasts and plans for the company growth.

WiB: Oil sector is a male dominated field. Is your company taking any steps to increase the number of female employees, especially in management positions? If yes, what are they?

MA: Although our sector is male dominated, (but) I believe in women when they have the will and the desire to achieve success. I hired a female HR & Admin Manager in Jan(uary) 2020, and I believe she is an added value to our company.

WiB: Egypt mandates women on boards of publicly traded companies, but without government regulations the road is still challenging for many.

a: How can we engage more men to support women's equal role in the work force?

MA: Gender Diversity concept is still an arguable topic that has a potential to develop globally. Regionally, specifically in the Middle East and Africa, more efforts are needed

to empower women. Egypt is one of the countries in the Arab region that has a potential to embrace gender diversity. In my opinion, the effective way to engage more men to support gender diversity is to show by evidence and statistics how positively the financial and business performance of organizations are affected by the presence of women and especially Women on Boardrooms. Telling success stories from leading companies and countries that support gender equality also helps.

b. How can women grasp this opportunity to advance from there?

MA: In fact, it is a great opportunity for women to have fair chances to show their managerial and professional capabilities. Women who have the opportunity to be represented on a company board, must be equipped with the required qualifications and skills to provide added value with their contributions in the boardrooms. They must be well prepared for the position and to be ready to deal professionally with the unconscious bias.

WiB: Egypt has several appointed female ministers. What impact, if any, do you think this will have on the issue of women on boards?

MA: In my opinion, and due to the political will and support from the president and the government to promote women on board, it will be received well from organizations to have women representations in their boardrooms. And this could be translated as a positive impact, but its effectiveness should be evaluated first.

WiB: Should the government institute policies that ensure more women given the opportunity to be senior managers and board members of companies? What could be in your opinion a useful measure? (legal quota or recommendations, data base, more data transparency, etc. Why?

MA: I think by developing a database for professional women, companies will be able to select the most qualified female board member for their industry who become an added value for their business. The legal quota could be useful to achieve long-term positive effect, but as I mentioned before the effectiveness of women role in the boardroom is more important.

WiB: How can we prepare women in general for a board position? What are useful measures or networks?

MA: One of the most useful courses that prepared me and increased my confidence to serve in boardrooms is the Certified Corporate Directors Program offered by the International Finance Corporation, in collaboration with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the American University in Cairo (AUC).

WiB: Why do you think it is important to have women on boards? How could you as a board member help other women in business?

MA: Studies show great impact on companies' performance from applying the gender diversity indicated by the key performance indicators such as profitability, high rate of employee's retention and a more rigid organizational structure.

Women in companies invest more to develop the human capital. You find women on boards supporting the educational activities and opportunities for the employees. Additionally, women by nature take care of the details such as the individuals' requirements and expectations that positively reflected on the company work environment, as women always have the lead to provide more flexible and comfortable work environment. In my opinion, coaching and mentoring other women in business is the first step to empower tomorrow's female managers and leaders.

WiB: What are in your opinion the strengths of female leadership and the possible impact of this leadership? Can you please give us examples?

MA: The main strength of female leadership is when they achieve a new milestone; then no one else can say it is impossible to do it.

From my experience, this impacts the work environment positively. The example here is me. I lead by example in my company. So, when I respect meeting on time with a client or take care of one of my employee's problems or issues, I lead in creating the company's culture that others shall follow.

WiB: Many highly educated, intelligent and motivated women are pushed aside in managerial positions. How can we put women on the radar of companies and people

with power to become noticeable for these positions? Who are important players to involve, from the public and private sector, to help accomplish that?

MA: I think networking events, forums and conferences support that goal through inviting women who are willing to contribute to other companies' boards to attend these events. Also, roundtables to discuss specific topics or challenges in specific industry with inviting both the corporate directors and the recommended women for the post. The recommendations from board members and top management from both public and private sectors should be taken into consideration in judging the proposed woman to boardrooms.

WiB: Women represent more than 40% of the global labor force, yet they don't have proper representation in business decision making. How can women step up to overcome the stereotype that only a certain gender and profession can get on boards?

MA: By continuous learning, updating their knowledge, upgrading their skills, working smarter on their technical and managerial gaps and develop their emotional intelligence.

WiB: What do you advise young women who want to become entrepreneurs and reach their potential?

MA: My main advice is to "FOCUS" and know that success is not easy; and there is no easy money in this world; prioritize their goals in life goals and what they really want to achieve and why. I learned in this life that we don't make sacrifices, but we make choices.

WiB: From the professional qualifications, what are the important qualities and/or skills for success in management positions? What are useful measures or networks?

MA: Presentation skills, communication skills, emotional intelligence, time management skills and negotiation skills are very important qualifications required.