



JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY



NAME*: Sherif

LASTNAME*: KESSEBA

CLASS OF*: 1991

MAJOR*: BA in Business Administration

NOW I AM*: Managing Director of Nile Valley Group
Cairo, Egypt

What was your career path after graduating from JCU?

I went to live in Egypt, working for a government agency that promoted Egyptian export industries, and then moved on to work at the United Nations for 2 years. I later spent 5 years in South Africa, working with one of the largest Arab conglomerates and managing their African operations. In 2002, I returned to Egypt and started up Nile Valley Group (NVG), a shareholding company that produces and exports high-value horticultural crops. Coming back to my country and meeting all of the demands of setting up a business was a new challenge that I tackled on a day-by-day basis. I knew that being “cocciuto” would help one day!

Tell us a little about your current position.

My current position is really about two things: On a macro level, my job is to think strategy and lay a path forward for Board approval. On a micro level, my job is about preventing and solving problems. What I enjoy best is the fact that our industry – Export Agriculture – is truly globalized. What happens at the other end of the world affects us directly: Does Chile have a strong crop? Did it rain in Australia? How much do we estimate the UK recession will affect demand on food items? The world is one small village!



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Have you received any honors or served in any professional organizations?

I was the youngest staff member ever to reach a “Director” position within an organization of 27,000 employees, and I was nominated by “Business Today” magazine as a Top 10 Young Businessman under 40, out of a nationwide pool of candidates. I’m also a member of the British Egyptian Business Association, American Chamber of Commerce, Agricultural Commodity Council, and Horticultural Export Improvement Association.

What was JCU like when you attended?

It was a lot smaller than it is today! We had only six classrooms. The largest could accommodate 30 or so students. There were 120 degree-seeking students, and the roof terrace was the only place where we could all “hang.” We had a great time – I really miss those years.

Was there anyone during your time at JCU who acted as a mentor for you?

Susan Fuller! She managed to pass on her enthusiasm and passion about business studies to her class. I remember thinking “Why are we doing this, pretending to be some blue chip CEO? Why all these case studies? Why are my classmates evaluating me?” These “why’s” were soon answered in real life. Professor Fuller gave me the knowledge I needed to start off my professional life, but on top of that, she gave us an edge by providing an insight to the real world.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would that be and why?

Rome! It is the most beautiful city in the world... I still think fondly about meeting up with friends at 11pm in Piazza Euclide and just chilling there for hours while arguing about where to go.

What advice would you give to students attending JCU today?

Enjoy it while it lasts.