

BEYOND CODE

My Journey Towards Entrepreneurship

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Introduction

Every journey begins with a question — sometimes spoken, sometimes silent. For me, it was never “*What will I do?*” but rather “*How can things be done better?*” That question has followed me since childhood, echoing through every challenge, every reinvention, and every dream that pushed me beyond what was known.

I was born and raised in Alexandria, a city that lives between the sea and the sky — a place where civilizations met, traded, and sustained for millennia. There’s something in that horizon, where waves meet the Corniche, that teaches you to look far beyond what’s in front of you.



My childhood there was simple yet filled with meaning — computers that spoke a strange new language, people who shaped my values, and experiences that built resilience before I even knew the word for it.

Entrepreneurship, for me, didn’t start with a business plan. It began with *curiosity*. With a blinking cursor on a black screen. With trial and error, long before I understood that both are essential ingredients in building something new. I learned early that innovation isn’t only about technology — it’s about perspective. It’s about finding connections where others see separation, seeing opportunities in problems, and believing that creation begins the moment we dare to imagine differently.

The path that led me to digital transformation wasn’t linear — it was made of turns, pauses, and moments of uncertainty. I’ve faced loss, failure, and the kind of silence that tests your faith. But each time, something inside pushed me a step forward. That lesson became the foundation of how I lead, create, and live: uncertainty is not an obstacle, it’s an invitation to trust your purpose.

In my professional life, I have built, transformed, and advised organizations to embrace technology not as a threat, but as a bridge — a bridge between what they are and what they could become. My mission through *Beyond Code* is not to glorify success but to decode the journey — to share how entrepreneurship and digital transformation intertwine in the real world, shaped by human emotion, ethics, and vision.

This book is not a manual. It’s a mirror. A mirror reflecting the trials, triumphs, and transformations that shape a modern entrepreneur’s spirit. It’s for those who dare to build something from nothing, who are willing to unlearn old systems and imagine a better, more connected future.

Each chapter you'll read is a fragment of my life — from family roots and childhood fascinations to professional milestones and reinventions. Together, they form a story not about technology alone, but about how people, purpose, and progress can coexist in harmony.

In the end, going “beyond code” means seeing the human side of innovation. It's realizing that every algorithm, every startup, every transformation — begins and ends with a person's belief that things can be better.

And that belief, I've learned, is the true code of entrepreneurship.

— *Amir R. Negm*

Chapter 1: Between Heritage and Horizons—Roots, Memories, and Digital Dreams

My journey into entrepreneurship did not begin with business plans, investors, or technology. It began with stories—stories carried across centuries, whispered through generations, and told to me by my father, Ahmed Rushdy, Jr.

I come from the Negm family, descending from the Sawarka tribe, whose lineage traces back to Saad ibn Okasha, the noble Companion of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Sawarka were and are still a well-known Arab Bedouin clan, deeply rooted in the history of northern Arabia and the Sinai Peninsula. They were known for their courage, adherence to Islamic principles, and strong tribal governance. When Amr ibn al-As led the Islamic conquest of Egypt in 640 CE, the Sawarka stood among the early supporters of the Rashidun Caliphate.



For centuries, the Sawarka lived by the rhythm of the desert, where survival required resilience, unity, and trust. They were merchants and warriors, protectors of caravans, and custodians of honor. In those sands, the values that would one day guide me in boardrooms and digital ventures were born: perseverance, adaptability, and responsibility.

As empires rose and fell—the Rashidun, Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman—my ancestors adapted. They migrated, negotiated, and reinvented themselves. By the 1700s, four Negm brothers left the desert to settle in Egypt's Nile Delta, establishing communities in Al-Abbasa, Kafr Negm, and other towns. They became landowners, leaders, and mediators—bridges between tradition and a changing world.

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, the Negm family rose as prominent village sheikhs and rural administrators. In a time when the Ottoman Empire relied heavily on local notables for governance, the Negms were entrusted with roles that blended spiritual, judicial, and political authority. They mediated land and tribal disputes, managed waqf endowments, supervised religious education in local mosques and Quranic schools, and coordinated village taxes and agricultural output.

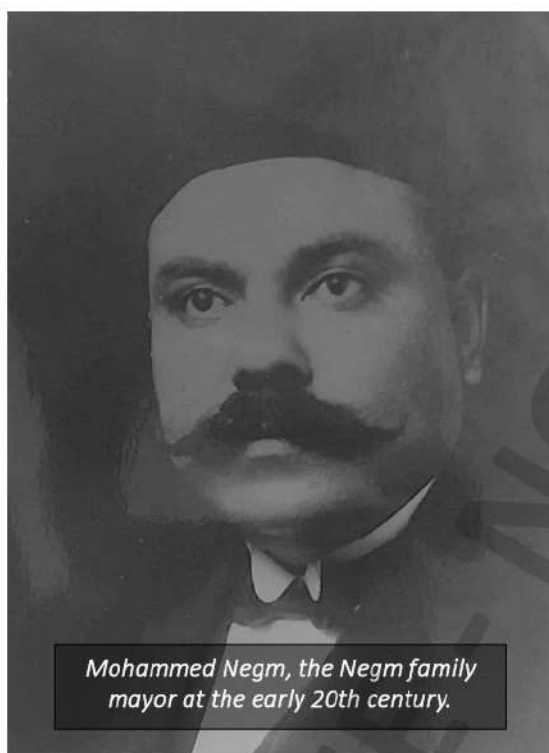
With the rise of Muhammad Ali Pasha, the family embraced new responsibilities under Egypt's evolving state structure. As land titles were formalized and new irrigation projects expanded agricultural output, the Negm family became landholders and estate managers, further securing their regional influence.

The Negm family's martial legacy was enshrined during Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt. As French forces advanced on Sharqia and Salhiyya, the Negm family mobilized regional tribes and peasants in resistance. Their defense of their homeland led to royal recognition. In

reward, the Ottoman-aligned wali of Egypt granted them 10,000 feddans of agricultural land in Al-Husseiniya and Fakous. Part of it became known as Kharayeb Abu Negm— “the ruins of Abu Negm”—a symbolic nod to lands destroyed and reclaimed.

This era elevated the family as defenders of Egypt’s sovereignty, a title interwoven with their aristocratic identity. Their influence continued into the Khedival period of the late 19th century. In 1893, when Khedive Abbas Helmy II’s royal yacht malfunctioned on the Ismailia Canal, the Negm family hosted him at their estate. His generous treatment earned Al-Shoudafi Beik Negm the prestigious Nishan Medal, along with the title of Beik, cementing the family among Egyptian elite.

Under Al-Shoudafi and later Mohammed Negm, the family held mayoral and judicial roles, overseeing cotton estates, managing royal properties, and deepening their integration with Egypt’s aristocracy. Ahmed Rushdy Sr., son of Mohammed Negm, carried this tradition further, liaising with the royal court and contributing to policy dialogues in Zagazig and Cairo.



From the early 20th century through the British Occupation, the Negm family—while still landowners and noble administrators—quietly joined Egypt’s rising nationalist current. During the 1919 Revolution, family members supported Wafd-led resistance, providing safe houses, horses, and communication channels between Sharqia, Cairo, and the Canal Zone. In the 1940s, Kafr Negm became a logistical base for student and labor movements opposing British bases at Tel El Kebir. The family hosted resistance meetings in secrecy, supplied food, medicine, and transport, and refused cooperation with British-appointed local councils.

These were not just historical facts to me; they were the foundation of my childhood identity. My father often reminded me: “We are not only living for ourselves. We carry the responsibility of those who came before us.”

Growing up, I did not live in palaces or among vast estates—those belonged to earlier generations. I grew up in a world reshaped by the 1952 Revolution, where aristocratic titles had faded and the grandeur of landownership was redistributed. Yet what remained strong was the weight of history, the sense of duty, and the drive to reinvent ourselves in every era.

From a young age, I noticed how my father navigated life with quiet dignity. He was not a man obsessed with wealth or recognition; he was a man of principles. His lessons were not delivered in classrooms or long speeches, but in the small rhythms of daily life—at the dining table, in the way he negotiated with others, in the way he insisted on fairness even when it cost him.

One of my earliest memories was walking with him through the streets, watching how people greeted him—not out of fear or obligation, but out of genuine respect. That respect, I came to understand, was not inherited. It was earned, slowly, through consistency, honesty, and service to others.

As a child, I was restless and curious. I devoured books, fascinated by stories of explorers, scientists, and leaders. My father encouraged this. He would often say: “Knowledge is a legacy too. Protect it as you would protect your family name.”

In our home, tradition and modernity coexisted. My family carried stories from centuries past, yet I was growing up in a world where computers, satellites, and digital networks were beginning to shape the future. That duality—being rooted in ancient lineage while reaching for modern innovation—became the essence of who I am. And then came the moment that lit the spark.

We were among the very first households in our community to own a computer. It was a bulky, humming machine, with stunning IBM logo—no local storage, relying on fragile 5.25-inch floppy disks, running MS DOS 6.22 and programs coded in BASIC. But it was, that time, a piece of the art.



I remember sliding in a floppy, hearing the mechanical click, and then watching green letters flicker onto the black screen. To many, it was a confusing contraption. To me, it was a portal to another world.

That machine taught me patience, precision, and imagination. A misplaced character in code could crash everything. But a carefully typed command could create something new from nothing. It was trial, error, and discovery—an early form of entrepreneurship.

Yet my curiosity about this new digital world did not stop there. Every Thursday night, I would visit my uncle’s house just to use his computer — a newer, faster model that felt like stepping into the future. His machine ran Microsoft Windows 3.11, with its colored icons and graphical interface, a world away from the black screen and blinking cursor I knew at home.

I remember the excitement of moving a digital cursor with a mouse for the first time, opening windows, dragging files — it felt almost magical.

Those evenings became a weekly ritual. While others looked forward to weekends of rest, I looked forward to Thursday nights — to explore, to learn, and to push buttons until something new appeared on the screen. That was when I began to understand that technology was not just about tools; it was about possibilities. Each system upgrade, each new discovery, was a door opening toward a future that seemed to whisper my name.

A crucial influence at that time was my childhood English teacher, Walid Al Garwani. Beyond grammar and vocabulary, he saw my curiosity for technology and encouraged me to attend

computer classes—an incredibly rare opportunity for a child then. Sitting in those rooms filled with the hum of machines, I felt as if I had stepped into the future.

These experiences—family heritage, my father’s principles, and the blinking cursor of that early computer—shaped the blueprint of my entrepreneurial spirit. I began to see that technology was not just about machines. It was about transformation. Just as my ancestors adapted to new empires and economies, I learned to adapt to digital frontiers, Something which is known today as Agility.

Looking back, I realize that my first entrepreneurial lessons came not from textbooks, but from my father’s example, my family’s history, and the spark of technology in my childhood home. When I later stepped into the world of startups and digital transformation, I carried these lessons like unseen armor.

The world may change its tools—from camels and caravans to servers and data centers—but the principles and values remain the same.

In many ways, my father gave me the blueprint for entrepreneurship before I ever knew the word. He showed me that a true leader is one who honors the past while shaping the future. And perhaps without realizing it, he set me on a path where the legacy of the Sawarka and the vision of the Negm family would merge with the boundless possibilities of the digital age.

Chapter 2: A Small Family, a Wide World—Growing Up with Legacy in Mind

I was born in 1984, in Alexandria, Egypt—a city where the Mediterranean whispers history into the air and where every corner seems to carry a story of culture, trade, and resilience. My childhood was framed by the warmth of a small family: my father, my mother, myself, and my younger brother. We were not a large household, but we were tightly knit, bound together by values that would later shape the way I approached both life and business.

We lived in Kafr Abdou, one of Alexandria's most refined neighborhoods. It was a place of elegance, quiet streets, and a sense of community that reflected both privilege and responsibility. Growing up there, I learned the importance of environment—how the spaces around us influence ambition.



*Allembay Garden – Central Park in Kafr Abdou,
one of Alexandria's most refined neighborhoods*

Seeing well-maintained gardens, orderly streets, and neighbors who valued quality inspired in me an early sense of standards. Later in business, I carried this lesson with me: the surroundings you create—whether for clients, employees, or partners—set the tone for performance and trust.

One of my fondest memories was walking along Alexandria's Corniche, that long stretch where sea and city embrace each other. The waves against the rocks taught me a lesson about persistence: no matter how many times the sea withdraws, it always returns, stronger and more relentless.

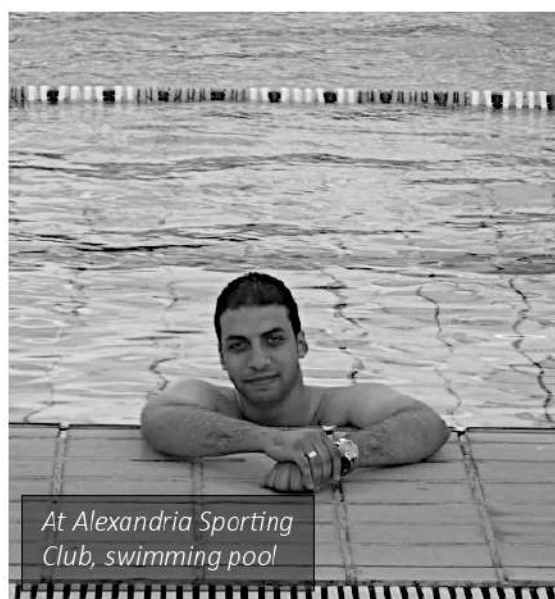
Standing by the Corniche, gazing at the horizon, I learned to think in terms of vastness, of futures yet unseen. It was my first unconscious exercise in vision—the very skill every entrepreneur needs to look beyond immediate struggles toward long-term horizons.



*Corniche Road, Alexandria—
A story seen, walking along*

My younger brother and I shared more than just a home—we shared paths. We attended the same school, went to classes together, and even joined the same activities. We are members of the Alexandria Sporting Club, where afternoons often meant swimming side by side in the pool. Those hours instilled in me a natural sense of teamwork, of competing but also supporting, of pushing each other forward. Entrepreneurship, I would discover years later, is rarely a solo swim—it is about surrounding yourself with people who can dive in with you, share the waters, and sometimes help keep you afloat.

Our summers were spent in Agamy, at Bianky Beach, where our family had a cozy house. It was more than a retreat—it was a gathering place. I still recall the warm sand, the laughter, the friendships built with other children who happened to belong to public figures, influencers, and celebrities of that time. For me, it was an early introduction to networks, to the subtle ways relationships form when people share moments of leisure and trust. I may not have understood it then, but building genuine connections is one of the most powerful foundations of business. The beach was where I learned that friendships, like partnerships, often grow strongest not in formal meetings, but in moments of shared joy.



*At Alexandria Sporting
Club, swimming pool*

Another defining element of my childhood was curiosity. I was one of the children in my circle who was always fascinated by technology, and I remember my first interactions with computers vividly. Long before I realized the power of digital tools, I was experimenting, clicking, trying, and failing. Those small experiments taught me a critical entrepreneurial trait: the courage to explore uncharted territory without fear of mistakes. Technology later became one of my cornerstones in business, but its roots lay in that early curiosity.



Looking back, Alexandria itself was my first mentor. Its mix of elegance and grit, tradition and modernity, taught me how to balance vision with realism. From Kafr Abdou's classy community, I learned about standards. From the Corniche's horizon, I learned about vision.

From my brother and our adventures, I learned teamwork. From Bianky summers, I learned networking. From our first computer, I learned curiosity and innovation. All of these pieces shaped the entrepreneurial mindset that would later drive me: that opportunities often grow from environments, that persistence matters as much as vision, and that relationships and curiosity are the twin engines of growth.

Chapter 3: The Making of Discipline—Lessons Beyond the Saddle

As childhood gave way to adolescence, I began to understand the balance between freedom and responsibility. The same city that shaped my early sense of wonder—Alexandria—now became the backdrop for ambition. My secondary school and university years were filled with questions about purpose, identity, and direction. It was during this stage that my fascination with horses evolved into something far greater: a lifelong relationship that would mirror my journey as an entrepreneur.

I had been riding horses since childhood, but during my teenage years, I found a deeper connection. Riding was no longer just a pastime—it became a pursuit of harmony, focus, and self-mastery. My real turning point came when I was introduced to the game of polo.



It was Emtan Ali, Egypt's distinguished polo player and international representative, who opened that door for me. Through him, I entered a community of passion and excellence—another vibrant space where seniors like Mohammed El Shamy, Abdelfattah Ragab, Hossam Sadek, and others dominated the Egyptian polo scene. Each of them had a unique approach, and from each I learned something that transcended the game itself.

From Mohammed El Shamy, I learned discipline, composure, and strategy—how to lead through example and quiet strength and to think not only about the next move, but the next five.

I learned team spirit, the ability to move as one unit toward a goal. I learned resilience, how to keep playing even when the odds seemed impossible. And finally, I learned grace under pressure, how to lose without bitterness and win without arrogance.

Those were lessons far beyond sport; they were early lessons in leadership.

But among all teachers, none was more consistent or sincere than the polo pony itself. The equine that does not speak, yet it communicates perfectly. It reflects your emotions, your focus, your confidence. A distracted rider produces a hesitant horse; a calm rider inspires trust.

In many ways, horses trained me to be the leader I would one day become. They taught me that control is not domination—it's partnership. In polo, you cannot succeed by force; success comes from cooperation, from reading subtle signals and responding with respect. The horse is not your servant, it's your teammate. Together, you pursue a shared purpose.

This understanding became one of my deepest business lessons: leadership is a partnership of trust. You cannot drive people forward unless you move in rhythm with them.

The polo field became a reflection of the business world I would later enter. Both require vision, timing, coordination, and adaptability. The game moves fast—just like markets and

opportunities. You must make decisions at full speed, often with incomplete information. You must know when to charge forward and when to hold back.

The adrenaline of polo mirrors the pressure of entrepreneurship—the balance of aggression and patience, courage and caution. Every chukker (polo round) taught me that success is not about avoiding mistakes, but about recovering fast and keeping your focus intact.

As my university life continued, I carried the discipline of polo into everything I did. I approached studies with the same rhythm I had learned on horseback: preparation, precision, perseverance, and innovation in results.

The friendships built around the sport also shaped my understanding of networking with purpose—a skill that would later help me build teams and partnerships in the business world.

The game also cultivated a sense of elegance and humility. In polo, no matter how good you are, you depend on others—teammates, grooms, trainers, and of course, the horses themselves. That humility kept me grounded. It reminded me that in both sport and business, success is a collective effort.



When I look back now, I realize that my adulthood didn't start when I went to university—it started the day I truly understood what it meant to ride. To be one with a horse, to move with purpose, and to lead through understanding rather than control.

The field of polo was my first boardroom. The horse was my first partner. And every match was a rehearsal for the challenges and triumphs of the entrepreneurial path ahead.

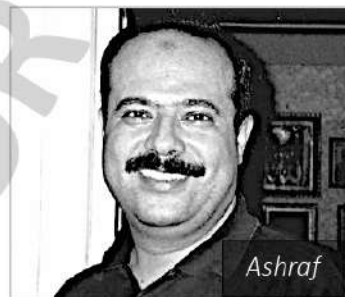
Chapter 4: When the Sky Fell Silent—Lessons Etched in Loss

Life rarely announces when it's about to change forever. Sometimes, it just stops — quietly, without warning — and everything you thought you understood about purpose, strength, and time suddenly loses meaning.

For me, that moment came in my third year of university.

Until then, my days were full — classes, polo, friends, and family. But most importantly, there were two people who shaped much of my youth outside my parents: my aunt Wafaa Negm and her husband, Ashraf. They were not just relatives; they were companions, mentors, and friends. Weekends often meant being with them — going to the club, watching films at the cinema, or planning a spontaneous trip. I never saw them as the adults of the family; they were *my people*, the ones who understood my humor, my curiosity, and my constant need to explore.

Then, one ordinary day, came a piece of news that shattered the calm rhythm of everything. Ashraf was diagnosed with lung cancer. He was the strongest person I knew — full of energy, laughter, and plans. The man who never missed a joke suddenly became the man fighting for breath. I remember the sterile smell of hospital corridors, the quiet fear in the family's eyes, and the mechanical beeping of machines that made me realize how fragile life could be.



My world narrowed down to his bedside. I stopped attending classes. Polo suddenly felt meaningless. My grades fell, but I didn't care. I barely went home, spending most of my time with him, my aunt, and my cousins — talking, sitting in silence, pretending things would somehow return to normal.

But September 2003 came, and Ashraf was gone. That was the first time I truly fell. It wasn't just grief — it was disorientation. The kind that makes you lose your sense of direction.

In that single season, I lost more than a person. I lost my rhythm. I lost my studies. I lost my place in the polo team. The world that once felt full of opportunity now looked colorless and still. Everyone else seemed to move on, because for them, death was something that happened — for me, it was something that stayed.

There's a peculiar silence that follows great loss — a kind of quiet where even time seems to hesitate. That silence became my classroom. I learned, painfully, that grief has its own curriculum — one that no university could ever teach.

I began to understand that success isn't measured by how fast you rise, but by how deeply you can fall and still find the strength to rise again. The world around me hadn't changed; what changed was the way I saw it.

Ashraf's illness and passing taught me about impermanence, empathy, and resilience — lessons that later defined how I lead people and businesses. It taught me to value presence over progress, purpose over performance.

When I eventually returned to life — to studies, to polo, to society — I was not the same person. The drive I had before was replaced by clarity. The distractions that once seemed important no longer held value. I understood that no matter how successful you are, life will test you in ways that strip away everything superficial, leaving only your core.

That experience became a quiet force behind my entrepreneurial journey. It gave me emotional intelligence before I even knew the term. It made me patient when projects failed, compassionate when people struggled, and grateful when opportunities came.

In business, as in life, you cannot avoid falling. But if you learn to rise each time stronger, wiser, and more grounded — you discover the real definition of success.

Ashraf's death was my first fall. But it was also the foundation upon which I built my resilience. And sometimes, it's only after losing something irreplaceable that we learn how to truly build.

Chapter 5: The Return—Rebuilding from the Ashes

There are moments in life when time seems to stop—when loss, grief, and exhaustion collapse into silence. After Ashraf’s passing, my world felt like that. I was physically there but emotionally absent—adrift, unanchored, unable to move forward. My studies stalled, polo was forgotten, and the joy that once colored my days turned to shades of grey.

It was my mother who broke that silence. One evening, as we sat in the quiet of our home, she spoke to me—not in the tone of sympathy, but in faith. She reminded me of the story of Prophet Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. “When Moses reached the edge of the Red Sea,” she said, “he saw no way forward. Behind him, Pharaoh’s army was approaching, and before him, the sea stretched endlessly. The sea would part, but Moses didn’t know that yet. His greatness was not in foreseeing the miracle—it was in taking the first step into the unknown, trusting that God who called him would not forsake him.”

That conversation stayed with me. It was the spark that reignited something inside—a quiet belief that the only way forward was through faith and action. Sometimes, the sea only parts when you decide to move. And so, I did.

I began by reaching out to one of the toughest professors in our faculty, Prof. Magdy El Rayes, an industrial engineering lecturer known for his strictness and discipline. Students were used to warning each other about approaching him. But something inside me said I should try.

He was busy that day. He barely had time to look up from his desk when I introduced myself and told him I needed guidance. To my surprise, he took my phone number, though I didn’t believe he would ever call. But he did.



When we met again, I told him my story—about losing people, about the year I had wasted, about the weight I carried. He listened quietly, then said just a few words that would stay with me for life: “Look forward. Life will go on. People may stand by you, but you must be the first to stand for yourself.”

That was it. No long speech, no comforting tone—just truth. A simple, firm truth that shifted my perspective completely. It wasn’t about waiting for life to heal me; it was about standing up for myself and walking again.

We didn’t speak again until a year later. When I graduated with excellence, I called him to thank him, and to let him know that his words had been the seed that grew into my second beginning.

In that period of rebuilding, my closest friend, Ehab El Tabbakh, or *Bibo*, was my constant. We had shared countless adventures, secrets, and dreams. During the time I disappeared into Ashraf’s illness, he had watched me from a distance—disappointed, perhaps, that I had lost myself in grief, but patient enough to wait for my return.

When I finally began to stand again, he was there. Alongside our friends Rafik Ibrahim and Salma El Banna, and the rest of the group, they formed a circle of trust and encouragement that carried me through. They didn't let me sink again.



Their support came not through words but through presence—shared laughter, study sessions, late-night talks, and the simple reminder that life was still full of color if I chose to see it.

It taught me something that would echo throughout my entrepreneurial journey: success isn't a solo act. Behind every comeback is a circle—friends, mentors, family—who hold the light when you can't see your way forward.

My graduation project became the test that defined this new chapter. Though I was a mechanical engineering student, my heart was always drawn to technology. So, I chose a project that blended disciplines—mechanical engineering, electronics, and computer science.

The idea was to build an application that is capable of receiving readings from an internal combustion engine and analyzing its performance in real time. It was an ambitious fusion—too technical for the mechanical side, too mechanical for the computing side. But I believed in it.

The university appointed Prof. Mohsen Ossman to supervise the project. He was looking ahead, insightful, and believed in innovation. But midway through, an unexpected obstacle appeared: Prof. Ossman was selected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to join the Egyptian diplomatic mission in Africa. His departure meant our project would be cancelled, new project selected, and a new professor appointed.

At that moment, the old shadows of despair tried to return. But I refused. I went, with my chosen colleagues, to visit Prof. Ossman in his office. I told him that I didn't want to abandon the project—that I was ready to find a way.



I still remember the look on his face, half surprise, half admiration. We talked for a long time, and in the end, he made a bold decision: he would continue supervising remotely and seek exceptional approval from the university dean.

It was an unorthodox arrangement—rare, almost unheard of at that time. But we made it work. The project was completed successfully, evaluated in full, and ultimately earned an Excellence grade.

That moment wasn't just an academic achievement—it was proof of what belief, persistence, and initiative could achieve. I learned that bureaucracy, circumstance, or misfortune could all be overcome with clarity of purpose and courage to act.

When I look back now, that period stands as one of the most formative of my life. It taught me that faith without action is hope without direction. That resilience isn't about ignoring pain, but moving through it. That leadership begins with taking responsibility for your own recovery before leading others.

Years later, when I would face the unpredictable tides of entrepreneurship—markets collapsing, projects failing, partnerships tested—I would return to those days. The lessons were the same. The stage was different, but the script was familiar: have faith, take the step, look forward. Because sometimes, the sea only parts when you decide to move.

That chapter of my life was more than a comeback — it was a rebirth. I learned that resilience is not about never falling; it's about refusing to stay down. Faith gave me direction, mentors gave me clarity, and friends gave me strength.

Later in business, when setbacks came — failed pitches, delayed payments, difficult partnerships — I would recall that period. I would remember that the sea only parts after the first step, that leadership sometimes means standing tall when no one else can see the horizon yet.

Chapter 6: The Impact of Others—People Who Shaped My Compass

Every person who enters our life leaves a trace — some leave marks that fade with time, others leave impressions so deep they become part of who we are. When I look back, I realize that the foundations of my character and my entrepreneurial outlook weren't only built through books, education, or experiences, but through people — individuals whose words, actions, and presence quietly shaped my compass.

On my mother's side, my grandfather, Mohammed Hamdy Hamza, was a retired Air Force Major General — a man of discipline, precision, and quiet authority. One summer, when I was about six years old, I travelled with him and my grandmother to Port Said. He was then a partner in a furniture factory in Damietta with relatives-in-law.

Every morning, we would leave Port Said together, crossing through Port Fouad, boarding the sea ferry, and continuing the long drive to Damietta. I remember sitting beside him in the car, the sound of the waves mixing with the hum of the engine, watching him move through his day with a sense of order that was almost rhythmic.

He was more than a man of command; he was a man of structure and foresight. His military background showed in everything — how he organized his schedule, how he gave instructions, how he inspected the factory floor, and even how he addressed the workers with respect and authority at once.

As a child, I didn't yet understand what "operations management" meant, but I was witnessing it first-hand. I saw how leadership was not only about giving orders but about *being present*, making decisions based on facts, and caring about the details without losing sight of the bigger picture.

Those summer days were my first silent lessons in discipline, planning, and the art of command — traits that would later define how I lead teams and manage businesses. Looking back now, I realize that my approach to structure, organization, and crisis management often mirrors his — calm on the surface, strategic underneath.

On my father's side, my grandfather, Mostafa Kamal Negm, represented something different but equally profound. He had a countryside house in King Marriott, a district on the outskirts of Alexandria surrounded by green fields and quiet roads. That house was a world of connection and belonging.

Every gathering there felt like a festival — relatives, in-laws, and friends filling the rooms and the garden with laughter, music, and conversation. I remember the smell of food being cooked, the sounds of children running between the trees, and the sense of unity that only large families can create.

What I learned there wasn't about business or discipline — it was about community. It was about the strength that comes from relationships, from maintaining ties across generations, and from creating spaces where everyone feels they belong.

Those family gatherings in King Marriott taught me that leadership isn't only about results; it's also about connection and empathy. In business, as in life, people follow trust before they follow vision. And that trust is built through respect, inclusion, and shared experiences — just like the ones that house gave us.

Across the road from our home stood a small mosque. Behind it was a modest room where the imam, Sheikh Abdelfattah Elsayed, lived and taught. I used to visit him regularly as a child, sitting cross-legged on the floor beside other kids, reading the Quran, and listening to his lessons.

He was a man of serenity — his tone never rose, yet his words carried weight. He taught me more than verses; he taught me that ethics and economy are intertwined. Islam, as he explained, defines fairness in trade, clarity in contracts, honesty in dealings, and mercy in transactions. "Business," he once told me, "is not only what you earn — it's how you earn it, and who benefits from it."

Those sessions shaped my understanding of business ethics long before I knew the term. They formed my lifelong belief that integrity isn't a business value — it's a human one. His lessons still echo in the way I approach decisions, negotiations, and partnerships.

Then came Mohammed Abdelrehim, my Arabic teacher during secondary school — a man whose classes felt more like a dialogue than a lesson. He was one of those rare teachers who didn't just teach language, but used it as a bridge to understand life.

He saw something in me — perhaps curiosity, perhaps restlessness — and he engaged it instead of suppressing it. We would often talk beyond the textbook: about literature, society, and even personal matters. He gave me space to express ideas freely, to question, and to think critically.

From him, I learned that communication is power — that words can build or destroy, inspire or mislead, connect or isolate. He nurtured my ability to express complex ideas simply, a skill that became essential later when leading diverse teams or communicating vision to investors and clients.

He reminded me that language is not just a tool; it's a form of leadership.

Each of these figures entered my life at a different time, yet together they formed the pillars of my worldview. From one, I learned order; from another, connection; from a third, ethics; and from the fourth, expression.

They were not famous entrepreneurs or business mentors — they were simply people who lived their values fully. But their lessons stayed with me, quietly guiding how I build companies, lead people, and make decisions.

Because at the end of the day, success in business — like success in life — isn't about algorithms or markets. It's about people. The ones who shape you, the ones you work with, and the ones you serve.

And these four men — my two grandfathers, Sheikh Abdelfattah, and Mr. Abdelrehim — will always be the unseen mentors behind everything I've built since.

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Chapter 7: The Blueprint Years — Building Foundations in Concrete

When I first stepped into the world of construction, I thought I was simply beginning a career. In truth, I was laying the foundation for a mindset — one that would later redefine how I viewed business, systems, and transformation.

In 2007, I joined a construction services provider in Dubai as a Site Engineer, a young professional filled with technical curiosity and ambition. It was the golden age of Dubai's growth — cranes marked the skyline, and the rhythm of progress pulsed through every street. Projects rose from the desert with astonishing speed. It was a time when the impossible seemed routine.



My early days were consumed with drawings, schedules, and site coordination. I learned the discipline of execution — the ability to translate vision into concrete form. But even as I navigated the world of rebar, formwork, and project deadlines, my curiosity stretched far beyond the site boundaries.

I was fascinated not only by *how* buildings were constructed but by *how* businesses were built around them.

While many focused solely on technical milestones, I found myself asking different questions, how project finances really work, what makes a project profitable beyond the engineering precision, how the company sustains cash flow between milestones and payments, what

defines client satisfaction — technical excellence or relationship building — these questions became my second education.

I would spend evenings reviewing project cost sheets, tracing the patterns between expenses, billing cycles, and cash flow projections. I wasn't in the finance department — but I was learning its language.

Between 2007 and 2014, I rose from Site Engineer to Project Manager, but my real growth was lateral, not vertical. I began building bridges between departments — engineering, procurement, finance, business development, and HR.

I made it a point to sit with colleagues from different departments, ask questions, and understand their pain points. The procurement officer's delays, the finance manager's constraints, the planner's pressures — I wanted to see how every cog in the wheel turned. That curiosity was not just technical; it was human. I learned that most operational inefficiencies were not due to lack of tools but lack of connection — people working in silos, unaware of how their decisions affected others.

In hindsight, that period was where my digital transformation vision was seeded.

By 2011, I had grown confident enough to take a bold step. I requested a meeting with the company's Managing Director — a move many considered too daring for someone of my position. But I believed I had something valuable to say.

I presented a complete proposal — an ecosystem that connected everything to everything within the company. The vision was to digitize and automate workflows across departments: project tracking, procurement, billing, HR, document control, client communication — all integrated in one platform.

It wasn't about replacing people; it was about empowering them. I explained how automation could save time, reduce errors, and give management real-time insights into every project.

But the idea, at the time, was far ahead of its context. The proposal was not taken seriously. It was filed away, politely dismissed as "too ambitious."

A year later, the company invested over 25 times the cost I had estimated, hiring one of the biggest international vendors to implement the same vision — piece by piece. I remember the mixed feeling that moment brought: a sense of validation, but also frustration.

That experience gave me one of my most valuable lessons: innovation has timing — and courage doesn't always get rewarded immediately.

Yet, I didn't see it as failure. I saw it as a preview of my future — the first glimpse of the digital transformation leader I was becoming.

While the professional world taught me structure and systems, I also discovered the power of giving. In 2013, the company partnered in a graduation program for distinguished fresh graduates from a couple of American universities and I was nominated to be the lecturer.



It began as a single lecture — but it became a tradition that lasted four consecutive seasons. Standing before young minds reminded me why I had always been curious: knowledge is meant to be shared.

Teaching refined my understanding of leadership. I learned that real influence comes not from authority, but from *empowerment*. Seeing those graduates ask questions, challenge ideas, and think differently made me realize that every generation deserves a chance to build something better than the one before it.



By 2014, I had reached the position of deputy Projects Manager. I was managing a governmental multimillion-dirham development, leading diverse teams, and coordinating across consultant, client, and subcontractors. But behind the blueprints and deadlines, a deeper evolution was unfolding. The construction field taught me precision and discipline — but my side pursuits taught me *systems thinking, strategic curiosity, and the courage to propose change*.

When I eventually resigned in 2017, it wasn't out of frustration but transformation. I had realized that I was no longer only interested in building structures. I wanted to build systems, organizations, and ecosystems — to create new architectures not of concrete, but of intelligence and innovation. And in that realization, the engineer became the entrepreneur.

Chapter 8: The Leap of Faith — A Side Business Born from Curiosity

In 2015, while still working in my corporate role, I began to feel an inner pull — a quiet voice telling me that my story wasn't meant to stay confined within the rigid structures of employment. I had learned the systems, mastered the processes, and led projects that shaped skylines. But something inside me wanted to create something of my own — something more personal, more agile, and more meaningful.

That year, I started a boutique design and build studio — a side business born from curiosity, ambition, and a love for creativity. I envisioned a company that combined engineering precision with aesthetic innovation — spaces that told stories rather than simply served functions.

At first, the momentum was incredible. The projects grew in size and reputation, clients came through referrals, and the studio's name began to carry weight in the market. I was still managing my corporate responsibilities by day and running the studio by night, driven by adrenaline and belief. It was exhausting — but deeply fulfilling.

By late 2016, the curve was rising sharply. The business seemed unstoppable. I began considering leaving my corporate role entirely to dedicate myself fully to entrepreneurship. But success, when not grounded in systems and foresight, can sometimes move faster than stability allows.

In 2019, everything turned. A combination of financial missteps, market shifts, and overextension — followed soon after by the COVID-19 pandemic — led to a sudden and devastating collapse. What had once been a dream turned into a heavy reality — a massive loss and significant debt. It was one of the hardest moments of my life — watching something I had built with passion crumble under its own weight.

Yet, in that darkness, I found something invaluable. The failure stripped away illusions and taught me lessons that no success ever could. I learned that leadership is not about being in control — it's about staying composed when everything is out of control. I learned that vision without structure is fragile, and that growth without discipline can destroy even the most promising ideas.

As I reflected on that journey, I realized the real challenges that face new entrepreneurs — not just financial or operational, but systemic. The market was difficult to penetrate, the learning curve was steep, and the awareness of laws, business structure, and compliance was limited.

Many entrepreneurs, myself included, started with skill, passion, and talent — but those alone could not sustain a business. I understood then that while expertise may form the core, it cannot be the only pillar upon which a business stands.

I was operating my business from a serviced office. Every day, I observed how the business center and serviced office model worked — its flows, clients, challenges, and its potential. And as a lifelong technology enthusiast, I couldn't help but ask myself: *what would the digital version of this industry look like?*

At that time, terms like digital transformation, digitalization, and agility were still new — almost mysterious to most people. Remote employment, work-from-home, and hybrid work were concepts barely imagined before the COVID era. But for me, they represented a set of approaches that marked the next frontier of entrepreneurship. That curiosity, born in a small serviced office in Dubai, was the first spark that would later ignite the creation of Jirle — a platform designed to connect, transform, and empower businesses through digital intelligence.

When my design and build business began to collapse, I didn't just mourn its loss. I studied it. I dissected its journey to understand why it failed. And as I looked at big businessmen with diversified empires, I said to myself, *"When one business falls, another should rise."*

That mindset — resilience, reinvention, and relentless curiosity — became my compass. I was still solving the problems of a sinking company, yet my mind was already exploring the next horizon. I refused to let time pass unproductively. Instead, I redirected my energy toward technology and innovation.

That was the true beginning of my entrepreneurial transformation — the moment I stopped seeing failure as an end, and started treating it as raw material for reinvention. From that point onward, my journey in technology entrepreneurship began — the same journey that would lead to the birth of Neu Ocean Technologies, and to redefining how businesses could evolve, connect, and grow in the digital age.

Chapter 9: A Step Forward — Before The Wave

Every rebirth begins in silence — in the moments when no one is watching, when the applause has faded, and you are left alone with your thoughts and your faith.

For me, that silence came after loss — the kind of loss that shakes your confidence, questions your choices, and leaves you standing in the ruins of what once felt certain.

When my business collapsed, I thought; the years of effort, sleepless nights, and hope had dissolved into numbers on paper — debt, setbacks, and unfinished dreams. I was exhausted. But what hurt most wasn't the loss itself — it was the realization that I had to start again, from zero, when the world outside was closing in under the weight of a pandemic.

While many called it the end of normal life, for me, it was a chance to redefine everything. The lockdowns gave me time — painful, heavy time. And in that time, I sat with my failures and began to untangle them. I asked myself hard questions: *Why did it fall apart? What did I miss? What would I do differently if I had the chance?*

Slowly, I began to see patterns. The problem wasn't the dream — it was the structure. I realized how many entrepreneurs walk into the storm with nothing but passion, unaware of the forces waiting to test them — market gaps, legal obstacles, financial blind spots, and the isolation of trying to do everything alone.

That realization became my first spark of recovery.

Between 2019 and 2021, I wasn't building a company — I was building understanding. The world was moving online, forced to embrace concepts that had once been distant fantasies. Remote work, hybrid offices, remote employment, virtual collaboration — ideas that once drew skeptical smiles were suddenly the only way to survive. But I had seen it coming.

At that time, words like digital transformation, agility, and digitalization were still new, almost mysterious. Remote employment was barely discussed, hybrid work wasn't even a term. But to me, these weren't buzzwords — they were *signals*. Signals of a world shifting toward something I could almost see but couldn't fully touch yet.

That curiosity became my quiet obsession. I started sketching ideas late at night — frameworks, system maps, equations of connection. I didn't want another app. I wanted to build a living system — something that could adapt, scale, and think. A framework that could unite technology, people, and business into one intelligent language.

That's how the idea of Jirli was born. Not from ambition, but from necessity. Not as a business, but as a lifeline — a purpose that gave meaning to the failure I had endured.

I began to imagine businesses not as isolated entities, but as digital organisms — connected, learning, and evolving. I wanted to give companies the tools I once needed: automation without rigidity, intelligence without complexity, collaboration without barriers.

But the road to creation is rarely smooth.

During this period, I met the CEO of an Indian technology company. We spoke for hours — two entrepreneurs, two visions, both believing we were meant to build something great together. For a brief moment, I thought this partnership could be the bridge I needed to bring Jirle to life. But it didn't take long for our differences to surface. He was focused on short-term profit; I was thinking of long-term impact. His approach was transactional; mine was transformational.

The more we talked, the clearer it became — our philosophies would never align. When the meeting ended, he told me politely, *"I don't think we can work together."*

I stood up, looked him in the eye, and said quietly but firmly, *"We will find out when, one day, you will come to me to acquire your company. I may take it — and I may not."*

I wasn't trying to sound bold. It wasn't pride. It was conviction — the kind that rises only after you've been burned and rebuilt by failure. I walked out of that meeting not with disappointment, but with a strange sense of peace. The vision didn't need validation anymore. It needed protection.

From that day, I stopped looking for someone to believe in my idea. I realized that true entrepreneurs build first, and believers follow later.

By 2021, Jirle had grown beyond concept and code. It had become a philosophy — a new way of thinking about business, connection, and innovation. I no longer wanted to create tools. I wanted to build an ecosystem — one that would help others avoid the same pitfalls I once fell into.

That was the moment the idea for Neu Ocean Technologies was born. "Neu," because an advanced technology deserves to be born. "Ocean," because innovation, like the sea, is vast, deep, and endless.

Before the first official day, I already knew what Neu Ocean would stand for: Innovation as a culture, not a department. Technology as a language, not a product. Humanity at the heart of every transformation. And so, from the quiet aftermath of loss, a new wave began to rise — strong, calm, and unstoppable.

Neu Ocean wasn't built to chase trends. It was built to redefine the future — to prove that from the deepest falls can emerge the most powerful tides.

There's a moment in every entrepreneur's life when you stop running from the storm and begin learning to sail it. That was my moment. Standing between what was lost and what was yet to come, I understood that resilience isn't about surviving — it's about transforming pain into purpose. When I looked at the horizon then, I didn't just see another business. I saw an ocean waiting to be crossed, and I was ready to begin the voyage.

Chapter 10: Foundation — The Birth of Neu Ocean

The day I decided to officially register Neu Ocean Technologies, the world around me was still uncertain. The echoes of the pandemic lingered, economies were fragile, and so were people's hopes. But inside me, there was clarity — a quiet certainty that something new had to begin.

For months, I had been working in silence. Early mornings blurred into late nights, filled with notes, sketches, and prototypes. I had no grand office, no team, no investor backing. What I had was conviction — the kind that grows only after you've watched everything else fall apart.

Neu Ocean wasn't born out of opportunity; it was born out of purpose. It wasn't a restart — it was a renaissance.

The lessons I had learned — from my family's legacy of resilience, my father's integrity, my mentors' wisdom, and my failures in business — all converged into this single moment. It felt as if every chapter of my life had quietly prepared me for this one.

I still remember the first time I saw the name "Neu Ocean" written on paper. It wasn't just a brand — it felt alive. "Neu" stood for the new chapter of innovation after chapters of failure, a declaration that nothing is truly over unless you stop trying. "Ocean" reflected the infinite depth of innovation, where every wave carries both risk and opportunity. Together, they symbolized motion — endless, transformative motion.

The early days were not glamorous. I worked alone at first, surrounded by sketches, whiteboards, and a computer that carried more dreams than files. I drafted Neu Ocean's first framework on sleepless nights, building system architectures and product concepts line by line, idea by idea. Every morning, I woke up with new questions — how to make it simpler, smarter, and more human.

Entrepreneurship is often romanticized as freedom, but the truth is, it's discipline in its purest form. The first few years were a test of willpower. Some days brought progress; others brought doubt. But I kept reminding myself of a lesson that had followed me from childhood — the one I learned from horses: to move forward, you must trust the rhythm even when you can't see the finish line.

I reached out to people who shared the same belief in purpose-driven innovation. Conversations began to form connections, and connections began to form a team. There were no titles at first — only a shared belief that we were building something meaningful. Slowly, Neu Ocean started to take shape — not as a company, but as a movement.

Our first product was Jirlie — the very idea born in the ashes of my first failure. Now, it was finally becoming real. Jirlie wasn't meant to compete with existing software; it was meant to redefine what technology could be — not a tool to manage work, but an ecosystem that connects people, automates processes, and empowers organizations to evolve intelligently.

In the early stages, I did everything myself — drafting strategies, designing workflows, writing documentation, testing code, meeting partners, pitching, and managing every detail. It wasn't easy, but it was pure. Every step felt like carving meaning into reality.

In the years that followed, Neu Ocean Technologies began to attract attention. Stakeholders started noticing the boldness of the vision — to make digital transformation accessible, ethical, and human. Soon, alliances formed. Partnerships signed, clients across the globe — all became part of a story that began on a single desk with nothing but belief.

I knew we were building more than a company. We were building trust in transformation — a new way for businesses to thrive in a rapidly changing world.



Looking back, I realize that the first year of Neu Ocean wasn't about scaling or profit. It was about identity. About proving that innovation born from struggle carries a different kind of strength. It's quieter, humbler, but infinitely more resilient.

Every logo printed, every prototype tested, every meeting held — all carried echoes of where it began: a man who once failed, refused to quit, and decided to build the wave instead of waiting for it.

Today, Neu Ocean stands not as proof that I succeeded, but as evidence that faith and perseverance can rewrite destiny.

Because entrepreneurship, at its deepest, is not about creating companies. It's about creating possibilities. And Neu Ocean became truth.

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Closure

This book is not about perfection — it's about perseverance.

Every story you've read here was written through trial, doubt, and faith. *Beyond Code* is not a tale of instant success, but of the constant rebirth that defines every true entrepreneur's path.

I've learned that technology can transform systems, but only belief can transform people. The greatest innovations are not built in code, but in conviction — in the quiet decision to rise again after everything seems lost.

If these pages reach even one person standing at that same crossroad, unsure whether to continue, my story has served its purpose. Because in the end, what defines us is not how high we climb, but how deeply we believe when everything else fades.

To everyone who ever believed, challenged, or doubted me — You all became part of the story that made this journey real.

To every dreamer standing at the edge of uncertainty — May you find the courage to step forward, even when the sea has not yet parted.

And finally, to those who bet on my loss — It has always been a matter of time.

Thank you for sharing this journey with me — through roots, memories, failures, and rebirths — until the moment Neu Ocean was born.

The story continues, not in these words, but in every step forward.



Notes

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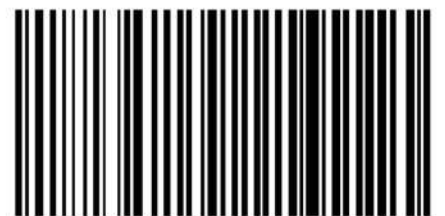
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My Journey Towards Entrepreneurship

06/10/2025



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