

## TWENTY-FOUR HOURS WITH

### Rami Makhzoumi



As one of the region's young, driven and up-and-coming business leaders, Rami Makhzoumi combines heritage with verve. Rana Ballout takes a closer look at what drives the ceo of Future Pipe Industries.

Even at the age of 30, Rami Makhzoumi is exceptionally eloquent. The momentum of his speech is evenly paced. His words carefully chosen. Always using positive active verbs in a deep clear and engaging voice. He takes a break to listen to questions and intermittently smoke his Cohiba Sublime cigar, finding it endearing that it can only be found at Beirut International Airport. Born of Lebanese parents in Saudi Arabia, Makhzoumi moved to London at the age of three, residing there well into his university years at the University of Buckingham and then London Business School. "I consider myself to have been fortunate in a very unfortunate situation," he says, depicting the Middle East of the 1970s as tumultuous. "I was blessed to have people around me that came from

very similar backgrounds. That, even though I went to very British schools, I never lost touch with my Arab roots."


As ceo and president of Future Pipe Industries (a multimillion dollar company his father, Fouad Makhzoumi built from the ground up), he shoulders a lot of responsibility. A fact that has propelled him into, possibly, taking a more philosophical approach to business and life. You would have to if over 1,000 employees in Dubai alone (Future Pipes has 17 factories worldwide) depended on your leadership and business acumen for their livelihoods. "It's a burden and an honour all at once," he admits. "But as a family and as a company, we go by the true meaning of future which is that we want to build a legacy. We always aim to build for tomorrow as >

opposed to trying to create immediate success." Significantly, the word "build" is oft part of his parlance.

It's not so much that Makhzoumi sees the world through rose-tinted glasses, as much as he has the will to do good. A vision of life based on his father's teachings and his own innate spirituality. "I would have loved to be part of the entourage of the prophets," he muses when asked with whom he would swap his life. "I think that we have lost the understanding of the meaning of life... To have been around the prophets that delivered the message in its purest form and not generations later must have been a tremendous blessing," he explains mellifluously.

He also has a passion for family (he married at 23 and has three young daughters) and currently airs. At the age of 21, he wanted to become a diplomat, to change the world through powerful institutions like the United Nations. "I was young and foolish," he reveals nonchalantly. Once his father decided to enter the political fray as head of Lebanon's Hizb Al

Hiwar Al Wataneh, the younger Makhzoumi needed to pick up the mantle, so he ditched ambitions of attending Tufts's Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy and a diplomatic career for the family business. A decision he still views as fool-proof. "As a company, we provide products that are the arteries of any nation," he says. "And I realised that, as an industrialist, you are contributing to nation building because of the sheer number of people under your aegis, as well as contributing to the social good of the countries you are involved with. So that, in one way or another, I am playing a political role but from a business, social and corporate angle." His favourite book of all-time is George Orwell's dark political thriller 1984.

Do you think that you'll ever want to follow in your father's political footsteps? There is a pause. He draws on his cigar and blows out the smoke. "For what may happen in the future. I am no fortune teller," he finally says, as the long distance line between Beirut and Dubai crackles slightly. 

Otherwise he will feel too lethargic to continue with the day's work. When very hungry, he heads down to the restaurant-certified canteen and mingles with the staff. "The executive room is for business lunches. I prefer to eat with my greatest assets, so to speak." His favourite dish is, by far, his mother-in-laws' Molokhia. After lunch, some inter-company meetings or ones associated with the exclusive Young Arab Leaders club.

### 8pm-2am: Evening Splendour

Evenings are for relationship-building meetings with friends, family and business partners. "It's good to talk in a relaxed atmosphere over maybe a cup of coffee, a nice dinner or an after-dinner cigar." Even though the different aspects of his work are never fully over, he does his best to spend as much time as possible with the family. The weekends are solely for them.



## FROM DAWN UNTIL DAWN

### 7am to 12noon - Electronic Communication

Sat at his desk at about 10am, Makhzoumi sips on his second cup of tea (black with two sugars). He checks emails that have come in from the US division or anywhere else in the world. Promptly answering them. He then turns to the Internet, browsing a series of alternative news sites he has etched into his favourites, like www.clearinghouse.com or www.whatreallyhappened.com. "I like to have alternative news. It's really where journalists can freely express

themselves. Since we primarily work according to government policy, we need to be in the know at all times." News alerts will also intermittently buzz their arrival on his mobile phone. Meetings with government officials ensue.

### 12.30pm-7pm: Meetings of Compatriots

Ideally, Makhzoumi has a plate of fruit for lunch.

## MAKHZOUMI'S TWO CENTS ON...



**Energy** "The precision in the clogs that makes the world go round."



**Friendship** "I am lucky to have a big acquaintance base. But my friends are few and very close."



**Hobbies** "I love clay pigeon-shooting and football. I am a Liverpool fan."



**Collections** "I am a collector of cigars which my wife hates, as well as ties and cufflinks. I have a custom-made silver pair by Mouawad with my name in Arabic on them. I prize them."



**Biggest challenge** "Accepting limitations. At some point you have to pass it on to the next generation."



**Next ten years** "Hopefully having a good set of revelations under my belt."