

Mohsen Moazami

Vice President, Emerging Markets and Globalization Centre

Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group



Mohsen Moazami's work as head of Emerging Markets and the Globalization Centre for the Cisco® Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG) has been lauded by organizations such as the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, the governments of Turkey, Mexico, Brazil, and many more. In addition to serving as a member of the management board of the Cisco Globalization Centre and the Senior Leadership Team for Emerging Markets, Moazami serves as a member of the Strategy Council of the Global Alliance for ICT and the Development of the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA-GAID). He was termed "one of the most successful and influential Iranian Americans" in a report published by the U.S. State Department, and he sits on the Investment Advisory Board of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan—and this only begins to describe his accomplishments.

Though born in Tehran, Iran, Moazami's story is essentially an American one. Born into a well-to-do family, he lost his father at the age of eight, and so learned to be self-reliant at an early age. He went to Stanford University to complete his graduate studies, following the family's expectation that he would take over his father's business interests when he graduated. But as a college sophomore, this predetermined and well planned life scenario was overturned and changed forever by the Iranian Revolution. Moazami's father had been a minister of communications under the Shah's regime, so Moazami quickly realized that a return to the home country would not be possible. The United States—once a place to visit and study—became his only home.

Moazami finished his undergraduate work in engineering science and economics at University of California and went on to earn a Masters degree in Mechanical Engineering at Stanford. Having finished school, he inventoried his assets: a 600-square-foot



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apartment for which he owed rent, a Honda Prelude (also requiring a monthly payment), \$37 in cash, and a MasterCard. With these meager assets and no idea how he would meet his financial obligations, Moazami struck out for the American Dream and started an ICT consulting and systems integration company, Stanford Business Systems. By dint of hard work and a seriously ballooned credit card, he grew the firm to a multimillion-dollar enterprise.

How did he do it? Moazami credits two things in particular: the unlimited opportunities offered by his adopted country, and the mindset of the immigrant. “These two things are connected,” he says. “The immigrant mindset is: ‘Failure is not an option.’ So you do whatever you have to do to make things work. The immigrant mindset has always helped to make America great. America is a true meritocracy; an immigrant like me can come here, work hard, and build a serious company on nothing more than a good education, willpower, and a credit card.”

After several years of successful growth, Moazami sold Stanford Business Systems to Kurt Salmon Associates, a large management consulting firm with a global footprint. He stayed on for a few years to facilitate the transition, but his new financial independence gave him many choices. After a lengthy courtship, he decided to join Cisco IBSG as a senior director, leading the Retail Practice, and later as a vice president for Emerging Markets and the Globalization Centre.

“A key pillar of Cisco in Emerging Markets is Country Transformation, where we partner with heads of state and governments to help develop a blueprint for socioeconomic development using ICT,” he notes. “We help the leaders of developing countries to better understand that broadband is a basic and necessary utility, like water, electricity, and roads. And we work with them on ways to fund and deploy a broadband infrastructure across their countries with a particular focus on return on investment from a multi-industries point of view— leading to prosperity and competitiveness for those countries.”

Moazami derives keen satisfaction from his emerging countries work. He points out that when consulting with an enterprise in the developed world, the work can result only in incremental improvements. “But in Emerging Markets, we have the potential to drive true transformation. For example, an outcome of our work in Brazil, broadband deregulation and availability, has led to a sophisticated banking system potentially more advanced than banking in the United States or United Kingdom. And it couldn’t have happened without broadband access.”

Moazami, now a United States citizen, resides in London with his wife and three children. The family loves London, and Moazami is a follower of football (soccer) teams Chelsea and Manchester United. He is especially pleased that his children have the opportunity to see other parts of the world, meet a huge variety of people, eat different foods, and be exposed to a wealth of cultures. And his plans for the future?

“Apart from my personal plans, I’m going to continue to have fun with my work, and try to make a difference in the world,” says the man who built a new life with \$37 and an overworked MasterCard.