CASE STUDY

Ali AlEnezi

Senior Network/Security Infrastructure Supervisor at Kuwait Aviation Services

"WHEN YOU FACE HARD TIMES, DON'T GIVE UP, DREAM, BE READY FOR YOUR DREAM, BECAUSE ONE DAY IT WILL HAPPEN. NOW I'M WORKING AT THE TOP FOR VARIOUS COMPANIES AND ACHIEVING WHAT I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF."

WHEN ALI WAS TO BEGIN HIS STUDIES IN THE IT INDUSTRY, AN UPSETTING TURN OF EVENTS PUT THE BRAKES ON HIS EDUCATION.

Ali's father sadly passed away and so now, unable to pay for his studies, he felt he'd lost everything. After a difficult six months, Ali found the motivation to find an alternative way, working as a security guard in a shopping mall, amongst various barista jobs. He saved as much of his wages as he could, and in 2008 returned to his studies. His efforts were not unrewarded, as he was offered a scholarship at Gulf University for Science & Technology (GUST University).

From humble beginnings, Ali's dedication meant that he was able to aim high, and is now employed in the field of Aviation, working as the Senior Network/Security Infrastructure Supervisor for Kuwait Aviation Services, together with being a member of the board for multiple other businesses.

The SANS Effect
But he couldn't have done it without SANS training. Ali was headhunted for this position and told us about the interview process. "When my interviewer discovered that I had GIAC

Certifications, he offered me whatever salary I wanted, within whichever team or department. He simply wanted me onboard to help improve Kuwait Aviation Services' cyber security, and with SANS training, he knew I was the best person for the job".

Now saving 10% of his salary every month specifically for SANS training, Ali has completed five courses and sees SANS studies as an investment in yourself. With two certificates already obtained (GPEN and GWEB) and another three exams pending, Ali plans to have all five certifications by the end of 2020.

"I've learned the steps of attacking, terminology and how to build reports for penetration testing. SANS training and certification helped me to get a contract with NGOs in Kuwait, and to go through pen test reports. But I've also done courses to help entities in Kuwait with their incident handling". Since Ali's employment with Kuwait Aviation Services, the firm's attention toward cyber security has shifted dramatically. Now working hard towards offering the right training in every department, Kuwait Aviation Services are treating cyber security training as a life skill. They are starting to understand the value of the skills their staff achieve after studying

"THE WAY I SEE IT, SANS ISN'T TRAINING, IT'S AN INVESTMENT. IT'S INVESTING IN YOURSELF."

with SANS, and are moving towards implementing training with them, and giving promotions to those who do decide to work on their personal development.

What drives you in your daily security job?
"I'm geared by my passion to improve the company that took that leap of faith in me, and strive to be a good role model in what I do, leading the way so that those within the organisation, and outside of it, will feel encouraged to improve their skills and understanding in cyber security

"I FEEL SO SUPPORTED BY SANS, AND SUCH A SENSE OF LOYALTY; THIS I GUESS DRIVES ME TO DO WELL."

too". Ali sees a future where Kuwait are a key player in security and the IT field and hopes for a big shift in cyber security awareness.
The cyber security field is constantly shifting. Changing and keeping up with the evolving cyber threats drives Ali to perform well and to keep learning. "I try to stay ahead of the game by utilising all the resources on the SANS website, and within the SANS community. I'm continuously listening to podcasts, keeping an eye on RSS feeds, and staying in the loop on the SANS Twitter page. I also have a flash drive with a load of audio books on the industries' trending topics which is great for when I'm commuting."

Not just training

When asked how he feels about SANS now that he's taken training, Ali's enthusiasm was clear: "Whenever I post anything on social media, SANS always respond and make me feel valued. Without their constant mentoring, morale support, exceptional training, and the website resources of course, I wouldn't have found myself in a position where I'm being cherry picked by big business and able to name my own wage".

"SANS ARE NOT AN INSTITUTION TO ME, THEY'RE NOT A COMPANY; THEY'RE FAMILY."

As part of the SANS community, Ali has formed a group of friends from within the Alumni, the group are GCC cyber security community and are made up of various different professionals. "We all communicate on Slack and WhatsApp, sharing feedback, the knowledge we've learned in training, recommended courses, current issues in the field, and information on attacks. We help each other to improve and understand the real skills needed". Further to this, Ali has connected with instructors and fellow SANS alumni on his social media, with followers on Instagram and LinkedIn. "Whenever I take a SANS course, I feel relaxed while training, and if I post something on one of the SANS social media platforms, I feel supported and like I'm part of a family".

The future

We wanted to know where Ali saw himself in the future, and if he had further training aspirations. Ali had an immense excitement at the thought of one path in particular! "Reverse engineering! That's my next training target. I've loved reading through the code and found the free 60-minute demo for SANS reverse malware, FOR610 course fun and engaging".

SANS COURSES THAT ALI HAS TAKEN:

SEC504: Hacker Tools, Techniques, Exploits, and Incident Handling

SEC560: Network Penetration Testing and Ethical Hacking

SEC542: Web App Penetration Testing and Ethical Hacking

DEV522: Defending Web Applications Security Essentials

SEC566: Implementing and Auditing the Critical Security Controls - In-Depth

He has passed GPEN, GWEB and has registered for GCCC & planning to sit for GWAPT, GCIH.

ARE YOU LOOKING TO TAKE YOUR SKILLS TO THE NEXT LEVEL JUST LIKE ALI? VISIT SANS.ORG/LEVEL-UP TO DISCOVER HOW YOU CAN LEVEL UP YOUR CYBER SECURITY SKILLS!

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