




 five minutes with  
**Vida Rizq**

Interviewed by Heba Hashem

A veteran communications professional and the principal founder of Aflannah, Vida Rizq is widely credited with bringing crowdfunding to the Middle East, helping independent filmmakers, artists, scientists, students, and innovators across the Arab world realise their wildest entrepreneurial dreams.

**What was the inspiration behind Aflannah?** The inspiration came from knowing how many ideas there are out there that just cannot happen, not because they are not great ideas, but because they just cannot find the funding, and by the desire to encourage creative thinking, particularly in and for the Arab world.

**In what way has Aflannah changed the Arabic filmmaking scene?** It is true we have a major strength in film, but we are not just about films. The narrow definition of Aflannah in Arabic is 'our movies', but we want Aflannah to mean 'a collection of stories'. Filmmakers have been introduced to crowdfunding and it [not only] gives them an alternative avenue to funding but also an opportunity to gain valuable feedback in the filmmaking process and build an audience who will see their film and invite others to do the same.

**It's been several years since your launch. What keeps you going every day?** We have just celebrated our third anniversary. Figuring out how to make [crowdfunding] successful and mainstream in the region is what keeps me awake at night and what keeps me going every day. We also meet so many different people from all walks of life, nationalities, experiences; and with each project and team there's always something new to look forward to.

**What do you believe makes a film commercially successful?** Three things: story, story, and story.

**How do you like to spend your time on a flight?** I am guessing you may want me to say watching movies! That is, in fact, exactly what I do on a flight.

**Who do you enjoy travelling with the most?** I quite enjoy travelling alone, especially when overloaded with work. It gives me the opportunity to get some quality me time. If I am travelling to a new destination then I normally share the experience with my family – it gives us stories to share and talk about forever. ☺