**Donna** [00:00:22] Welcome, everyone. I'm Donna Hopkins, head of customer care at the Differentia Consulting. And today I'll be talking with Mohammed Al Radi Alfana about their journey to digital transformation. Mohamed, thanks so much for joining us today. Why don't we get started with a little bit about Alfanar ?

**Mohammed** [00:00:40] Hi, Donna. It's great to be speaking with you today. Alfanar is the first venture philanthropy organisation to operate in the Arab world. We provide management support, tailored funding and technical assistance to help social enterprises that support the most vulnerable communities in the region, access quality education and employment opportunities. We have operated since 2004 and today have supported thirty five social enterprises in three countries, impacting the lives of over one hundred thousand individuals for the better.

**Donna** [00:01:19] It must be so rewarding to work for such a worthwhile cause with so many interesting people does not have an overarching mission.

**Mohammed** [00:01:29] Alfanar is trying to empower social enterprises to affect social change. We see social enterprises as a vehicle to development in the Arab region.

**Donna** [00:01:42] You're helping to drive so much change. But it hasn't always been like this, has it? Tell us a bit about your time before Qlik

**Mohammed** [00:01:51] Alfanar's Qlik journey, or should I say Journey to Qlik began with word documents. We would receive word documents with lists of indicators such as number of children and school number of women employed. And that would be the reporting that we receive. The problem with this style of reporting is that the data in it cannot be validated and it's impossible to disaggregate an example being if I saw a report and wanted to enquire about what percentage of those employed women live in a specific community or fall within a specific age range, if those points are outside of the template, I would have to call the social enterprise and request that data. It was very slow and it was clear that this reporting system didn't read, was not really conducive to analysis.

**Donna** [00:02:56] What did you do to overcome those challenges? And did you move straight from from word to Qlik ? Was it an interim solution?

**Mohammed** [00:03:04] Following the the problem with word documents, we shifted to databases specifically on Excel. Now, this gave us the ability to disaggregated that we had more data than we've ever been used to. The problem then became time. The not for profit sector suffers from a scarcity of resources that's both capital and human resources. We're all juggling a million things, and no one has the time to deep dive into expensive datasets. Perhaps a company working in the private sector could have a team of analysts that dig into data, churn out reports for management. Unfortunately for Alfanar and our social enterprise partners, this just was not possible. And this unfortunate reality adversely affected our ability to make informed decisions. So we were very lucky to find Qlik. Qlik is an amazing tool that revolutionised the way we conduct monitoring and evaluation and helped us overcome the scarcity of resources which would have otherwise made the shift to a data driven culture impossible.

**Donna** [00:04:25] It's really fascinating to have this first hand insight into the sector and what you're doing with data is really pioneering. Can you share with us how long this journey has taken?

**Mohammed** [00:04:35] So it's been three years and it was slow at start. But with your support and the Qlik community, we've been able to create tailored apps for all seventeen social enterprises that we currently support.

**Donna** [00:04:54] When you talk about apps, what does that mean for these social enterprises? Do the enterprises like them and how do you measure in their success?

**Mohammed** [00:05:03] For me, the biggest success indicator of rolling out Qlik has been the adoption of the data driven culture. I mean, as we discussed before, our old reporting system was not mutually beneficial. We couldn't get much out of it and. Either too little or too cumbersome now with Qlik, this has been the first time in the history of Alfanar that our social enterprise partners are voluntarily reporting more frequently and asking to integrate more data. I mean, for me, this has been the real game changer.

**Donna** [00:05:42] Changing cultures and behaviours is an amazing accomplishment, especially from a distance. What does that mean in practise for the businesses you support?

**Mohammed** [00:05:51] Yeah, so for the Future Eid Foundation, this project started with two hundred widows and three villages in Upper Egypt. When you're dealing with small numbers, it's easier to manage data and make informed decisions. But fast forward eight years later. We are now in over 60 villages in three governorates in Egypt, impacting over forty thousand widows. When you get to that number, the ability to interact with a dashboard that shows you what training is working and what village, what are the income increases according to the training a widow has received or her attributes, living conditions, etc.. This is where Qlik becomes an extremely powerful tool. And when we're making a business plan to expand the future foundation and scale it for the coming years, we can look at that data and say that, you know what? This training doesn't seem to work with this category, but it does work with this category. So if we're working within a limited amount of resources, we can apply it in the best way possible to help as many people as possible.

**Donna** [00:07:09] So in this sense, you're using Qlik to help social enterprises spend their money more intelligently. How would this have been possible otherwise?

[00:07:19] Without Qlik they wouldn't they wouldn't have the time to kind of look at all the data to see that, well, 20 percent of our funding should be allocated to this and 20 percent should be allocated to this. And this is how best to scale our enterprises. And this is what's selling and this is what's not selling.

**Donna** [00:07:39] That's fantastic. So it seems that Qlik is having quite a significant social impact in that region. Well, at the other types of businesses that benefit from this

**Mohammed** [00:07:49] We're working with another organisation called Perpetua in Lebanon. Now, this organisation provides online learning modules to students throughout the Arab world. As you can imagine, since the outbreak of covid, the demand for their services has risen exponentially. And for many children, they're the only form of education they receive. So they become an extremely important service. And there, I believe at the end of twenty nineteen, they only had less than a thousand users and now they have thirty thousand plus and it's growing exponentially.

**Donna** [00:08:32] What's the link between data and this frankly phenomenal growth in student numbers? How are they able to grow so quickly.

**Mohammed** [00:08:40] With Qlik they can look at all their modules and see the engagement rate per student per month per geography, and they can better adjust their modules and teaching style and curriculum to meet the requirements of students that would otherwise just be at home and not have much to do.

**Donna** [00:09:05] And does that level of data insight give them the degree of agility that they maybe never had before.

**Mohammed** [00:09:11] Well, Qlik allows organisations to respond at a time efficient manner to changing circumstances. They can look at how interventions, the outcomes of interventions immediately and change their curriculum, change their methods accordingly to maximise social impact.

**Donna** [00:09:34] What does that mean now in terms of the way people now think and and the habits they've developed because of the capability that Qlik is giving them?

**Mohammed** [00:09:43] When a social enterprise comes and voluntarily has to integrate more data, that shows that they they really do see data as as a as a valuable asset to their organisation. Another thing that I've noticed that really highlights the shift to a data driven culture is that decisions are no longer and data are no longer being retrieved by, how should I say, people and data silos. Historically, each organisation would have one person that deals with data and occasionally that person. She would provide the data to management nowadays, I see everyone from the data teams, upper management, middle management, everyone and the social enterprises interact with Qlik on their own, generate insights on their own. So in short, there has been this sort of democratisation of data within the social enterprises, and people are no longer hesitating to refer to their respective apps to generate insights and to see what's going on, what's changing. How can we respond more efficiently, efficiently, efficiently this month, this week, the step?

**Donna** [00:11:04] Oh, that's a huge change. And I can imagine organisations like Tabshura adapting really quickly because they they already have a digital nature. But how are you supporting other organisations who have maybe more traditional operating offline model?

**Mohammed** [00:11:21] There's one organisation in Lebanon we support called Fabrique and they collect second hand clothing, process it, repackage it and sell it in vulnerable communities for very modest prices. They're operating large distribution and logistics network and they have to supply shops constantly. Everyone on the team uses clay, and when they see that a shop is close to running out of clothes, they can respond immediately and they use Qlik for that.

**Donna** [00:11:55] It's really fascinating to hear how all of these social enterprises are using Qlik and the benefits that they're seeing from it. But if we bring the story back to you, tell us a little bit about your experiences as a Qlik user.

[00:12:09] As a user, what I like about Qlik is that it's extremely intuitive. I don't have an I.T. or software engineering programme and I was able to learn how to use Qlik because it's intuitive and also because it has an amazing support community. I use community on a daily basis. I think that's the most important thing to me. And it's also something that's been repeated by our social enterprise partners. So they were shocked to see that they could link to their data from Facebook to Dropbox to Google Drive to loan Excel sheets into a single. I mean, for us, this is this is like magic.

**Donna** [00:12:54] It's wonderful to hear you talking about Qlik technology as being magic. How important is the partner relationship in a journey like this?

**Mohammed** [00:13:04] So Differentia Consulting has been there for Alfanar every step of the way. You gave us our initial training and you were there for every technical query I had. I believe I must have contacted you a million times over these last three years and every session was extremely helpful. But even past the technical queries that your team was able to help us with, you've introduced us to the community, including like minded, not for profits that are also embarking on their own journeys. And also we've also talked and brainstormed about how clip can be be used more effectively to improve the performance of our social enterprises.

**Donna** [00:13:59] Yes, Qlik really does have a thriving Qlik community and we're so glad that you're part of it. How do you find the dedicated training materials on this site? Have you used those too?

**Mohammed** [00:14:10] I find it extremely helpful. So Alfanar has been lucky enough to have two great sources of knowledge. We've had differential consulting to help us every step of the way. And we've also had this incredibly active and supportive community. I've posted countless requests on the site and when I first started using it, I didn't really expect people to answer. But people respond within hours. It's amazing. Not to mention the Qlik continuous classroom has been a great help to me as well.

**Donna** [00:14:48] And we know that Qlik users are very passionate and very generous when it comes to sharing their their knowledge. So I'm really glad to hear that you've experienced that.

**Donna** [00:14:59] So tell me, Mohammed, what's next for Alfanar?

**Mohammed** [00:15:03] The first thing that we hope to do is to continue to maintain and improve the apps of our existing social enterprises and, of course, create new apps for new social enterprises that we support past that we've already started to integrate it into. Our H.R. and operations, and we want to integrate it everywhere else. We want every facet of our organisation from accounting to fundraising and the same thing for our partners to be integrated into play so that Alfanar and the social enterprises we support can operate more efficiently and put more of our time to the things that matter, which is helping people on the ground achieve more prosperity and a better life.

**Donna** [00:15:54] While you've certainly got an exciting roadmap ahead of you, if we were to look back for a moment, what would you say with some of your your highlights of the journey so far?

**Mohammed** [00:16:05] I think for me, the most memorable moments have been when I would deliver a complete up to a social enterprise that I have never seen something like quick before. Just seeing that that spark everything changes. Our social enterprises have changed the lives of over one hundred thousand people. The number of women employed has increased from one thousand seven hundred and eighty one to four thousand four hundred and sixty six. The number of children with access to quality education has increased from two thousand four hundred and seventeen to twenty eight thousand one hundred and twenty two. And on average, social enterprises and Outliners portfolio grow their impact by thirty nine percent a year and their non donation revenue by thirty seven percent a year. The bottom line is with Qlik social enterprises can change the lives of more people.

**Donna** [00:17:06] Those highlights are incredible and the change the Alfanar has been able to drive has helped so many people. How does that make you feel?

**Mohammed** [00:17:16] I feel like the luckiest man in the world. I love my job. I love working with Qlik. I love using data to support social enterprises that are working and very difficult in a very difficult environment.

**Donna** [00:17:31] Thank you so much, Mohammed, for sharing your journey with us. The team a different you're really proud to have you on board and to continue supporting you and supporting the social enterprises in everything that you do. And I'm sure that our viewers will join us in wishing Alfanar the very best for the future.

**Mohammed** [00:17:48] Thank you. Thank you very much.