

From the Puget Sound Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/stories/2002/09/16/focus11.html>

Fayyad hopes to spark a data revolution

Usama Fayyad, president and CEO, digiMine Inc.

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Some 70 pounds thinner after his first-ever diet, digiMine chief executive Usama Fayyad shrugs off his accomplishment. He's simply someone accustomed to achieving the goals he sets for himself.

A former NASA scientist who studied volcanoes on Venus, Fayyad served a stint as a senior researcher at **Microsoft Corp.** before leaving two years ago to form Bellevue-based digiMine Inc. with two colleagues. The startup uses the same sort of data-mining tools Fayyad once used to study planetary geology. Instead of starfields, digiMine culls through massive corporate databases looking for useful information. The company's analytical software helps clients drive more sales through their Web sites and personalize customer e-mail. Clients include The Wall Street Journal, CBS MarketWatch, Nordstrom Inc. and Barnes & Noble.

"I left a lot of stock options at Microsoft on the table, and I've never looked back," Fayyad said. "This was a chance to go out and make a difference, to risk it all on one bet, and out of that bet, if we succeed, there not only will be the money but I believe we ... can make a big difference a revolution in how people think about data and how data gets used."

Fayyad works hard to make digiMine a good place to work. His 120 employees can ask him anything and get a straight answer each Friday at the company's Beer and Stories meetings. Corporate bureaucracy is anathema to Fayyad.

"I saw a lot of inefficiency, a lot of politics. It makes work unpleasant and I've seen companies lose their star players people leave when their voices are not heard," the 39-year-old said. "The only way to fight that is an open system."

Despite his long hours, Fayyad still finds time to edit several scientific journals, mainly to keep himself abreast of advances in data-mining technology. Sometimes,

he feels the tug of that freedom that researchers have to work on problems unconstrained. But he's found he thrives on the risk and challenges inherent in being an entrepreneur.

His biggest regret: Time away from his family. Fayyad compensates by making sure he spends what time he has with them well.

"I have more quality time now," Fayyad said, "because I value the time more and I'm more careful about it."

Vital statistics

Married

Book on your nightstand: "Jack: Straight from the Gut" by Jack Welch and John Byrne

Favorite movie: "The Matrix"

Favorite musical artist: Pink Floyd

Favorite escape: Reading

Wheels: Toyota Land Cruiser

Personal hero: Mohandas Gandhi

Person you'd most like to meet: Rene Descartes

Quote/motto: "All models are wrong, but some are useful" Charles Box, on mathematical and statistical modeling ... I also often use the short poem "If" by Rudyard Kipling

My three passions: digiMine, data mining and my family

Jeanne Lang Jones

Staff Writer