

# CEO

MIDDLE EAST

THE GUIDE TO GOOD BUSINESS AND BETTER LIVING

DECEMBER 2019

#155

**A SECOND CHANCE**  
Paul Evans, CEO of Solutions Leisure Group, reveals the moments that redefined his life

**POWERFUL PLANS**  
How solar tech leader SirajPower is changing the way the region is powered

**TAP, REPEAT, RELOAD**  
Embed's Mobile Wallet helps businesses transform the way they deal with customers



## RIYAD BANK'S

### RENAISSANCE MAN

**TARIQ AL-SADHAN** IS TAKING THE COMPANY INTO A **DIGITAL FUTURE** AHEAD OF VISION 2030



PLUS:

**FLYING INTO THE FUTURE**  
AIRBUS CEO GUILLAME FAURY ON THE FUTURE OF AVIATION



**RAHM'S RACE**  
JON RAHM ON VICTORY, COMPETITION AND BECOMING A TRUE CHAMPION



**DEEP AND MEANINGFUL**  
THE UNIVERSE OF PANERAI



**ROLLS-ROYCE**  
BLACK BADGE CULLINAN ON THE ROAD

# CHALLENGERS

# DESERVE CHOICE

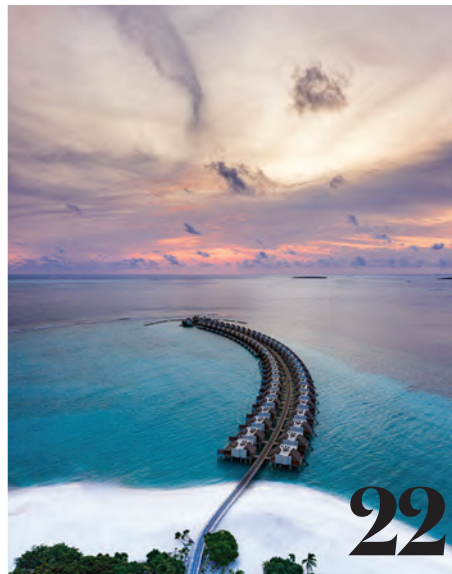
It's your software. Your business.  
You know what your business needs  
to achieve. So why let software vendors  
impose limits on what you can do?  
You don't have to tolerate it any longer.  
Choose the software that adapts and  
scales to fit the way you work.

#forthechallengers | [ifs.com](https://ifs.com)

**IFS**



# CEO MIDDLE EAST December 2019 contents



## Business

### 14 NEWS ROUND-UP

News and highlights from the region

### 18 THE ART OF FULFILLMENT

IQ Fulfillment gives an insight into staying ahead of the digital curve

### 20 STIRLING HOSPITALITY

Donald Bremner offers insight into the business of hospitality

### 22 AI AND THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Ciarán Kelly of FCM Travel Solutions, explains the implications of AI

### 24 DIGITAL JOURNEY

Digital transformation is a journey, writes Geng Lin, Chief Technology Officer, F5 Networks

### 25 FIVE STEPS FOR A COMPANY CFO

CFOs can take action for growth, says Infor's general manager

### 26 SUNRISE FOR SOLAR

SirajPower CEO Laurent Longuet explains how they are helping change the way the region is powered



# CEO MIDDLE EAST December 2019 contents

## Leadership

### 30 EMBEDDING A NEW IDEA

Embed is the worldwide leader of cashless business management solutions, writes Megha Merani

### 32 ZAETO'S WAY

This start-up is offering a cost-effective way to reduce the impact of environmentally damaging materials

### 34 HIGH FLIER

Guillaume Faury of Airbus is not afraid of big issues

### 38 A SECOND CHANCE

Paul Evans, CEO of Solutions Leisure Group, introduces his book, *When I Woke Up*

### 40 GROCERY GURU

Inside Kibsons, the region's disruptive online grocery platform

### 42 COVER STORY: BANKING ON IT

An insight into the leadership vision for Riyadh Bank

### 46 FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR WORKFORCE

Is your talent fit for the future? Jonathan Rook, Director of Sova Middle East has the answer





SORBONNE  
UNIVERSITY  
ABU DHABI

CONTINUING &  
EXECUTIVE EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT

# EXECUTIVE EDUCATION AT SORBONNE ABU DHABI

**Innovative programmes for modern professionals and leaders**

Actuarial Specialist in Data Science (taught in English)  
Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence (taught in English)  
Gulf and Media Arabic Intensive Training Session (taught in Arabic)  
Archives and Records Management (taught in Arabic)

For more information:  
T +971 (0) 2 656 9330/9542  
[ceed@sorbonne.ae](mailto:ceed@sorbonne.ae)

[sorbonne.ae](http://sorbonne.ae)

# CEO MIDDLE EAST December 2019 contents

## Pleasure

### 50 THE BEAUTY OF BOATS

Yacht ownership demystified, by experts DGMarine

### 52 GOLF AND GLORY

Jon Rahm tells Neil Halligan about the sweet taste of victory

### 54 BADGE OF HONOUR

Even heritage brand Rolls-Royce is evolving, writes Alp Sarper

### 56 PANERAI'S PANACHE

CEO Jean-Marc Pontroué talks about diving into the culture of the Italian watchmaker

### 58 WATCHBOX OPENS

Ahmed Seddiqi & Sons joins hands with the world's leading online pre-loved watch retailer, and it's a game-changer

### 60 WOMEN'S STYLE

Fashion statements for the successful woman

### 62 SEASONAL SPARKLE

High jewellery and sparkling watches for the festive season

### 64 FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Two new top tables to try out

### 65 BRUNCH, BULGARI STYLE

Connoisseurs of the finer things in life will appreciate the care and craft of this sophisticated brunch

### 66 TECH, OR TEAM?

Do your staff trust robots more than you? A study reveals that they might....



# Future Sustainability Summit

14-15 January 2020 | ADNEC, Abu Dhabi

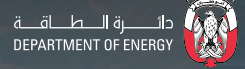
Part of



Hosted by



ADSW Principal Partner



Sustainable Finance Partner



## Exploring today's challenges and translating opportunity into action.

Join business and innovation leaders facing challenges today to create a more sustainable tomorrow. A unique opportunity for the United Arab Emirates to forge new partnerships and be part of a sustainable future.

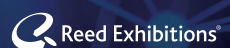
**REGISTER AS A DELEGATE**

**[www.futuresustainabilitysummit.com](http://www.futuresustainabilitysummit.com)**

Co-located with



Organised by





## FROM THE EDITOR

### QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Share your views on thought leadership and innovation by getting in touch.



**JOLA CHUDY**  
Editor in Chief

 [Jola.Chudy@itp.com](mailto:Jola.Chudy@itp.com)



# RINGING IN THE CHANGES

**“M**ore than 50 per cent of the world’s population lives in urban areas - it’s going to 60 per cent in 2030 and 70 per cent in 2050. The world is a city, more and more, at least for human beings,” says Airbus CEO, Guillaume Faury.

The ramifications for this are enormous and set to influence human life in ways that cannot be entirely anticipated.

But many of the leading companies making their mark in the world of business today are having to do exactly that. In an era defined by the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, humanity is poised for seismic change in how we live, work and communicate with each other.

With the First Industrial Revolution characterised by the widespread use of new manufacturing processes drawing on steam, coal and water-based power, it is a powerful statement of where humanity stands today that finding alternatives to centuries-old established sources of energy has become a priority.

“We want to decarbonise aviation,” Faury tells Shane McGinley in an exclusive interview on page 34, explaining a strategy that will change the face of aviation as we know it forever. He’s not the only one. At every level of enterprise, transformation,

artificial intelligence, digital technology, sustainability and change are key issues on the minds of leaders and CEOs.

The past few years have seen the enthralling emergence of ‘disruptive’ business models, fuelled by the increasing domination of the smartphone as the leading way customers connect to everything and everyone around them.

It’s particularly exciting to observe the role the United Arab Emirates is playing in this field, with world-leading initiatives and projects underscored by a government mandate for the country to be an elite digital and technology trailblazer.

Laurent Longuet is the CEO of Dubai-based SirajPower, the UAE’s leading provider of solar rooftops, itself an industry not immune to stratospheric change. On page 26, he tells *CEO Middle East*’s Gavin Gibbon that “the systems we are installing today were not in existence five years ago and what we will install in five years’, we won’t even have heard of today.”

It’s a sentiment echoed again and again: in the fulfilment industry, with IQ Fulfillment’s leadership team sharing how they are actively leveraging technology to keep up with the rise of e-commerce; in the travel industry, with FCM Travel Solutions revealing how the industry is increasingly

relying on AI; and in the banking sector. Our cover story this month takes a closer look at how digital has transformed, and continues to transform, this traditionally slow-to-change industry. Riyadh Bank’s CEO, Tareq A. Al-Sahdan, shares his vision on page 42.

With faster-than-ever change defining much of business in 2019, it seems almost a blessing that we have a few days off here and there to look forward to in December, before recharging for 2020.

Yes – the planet’s most hotly anticipated year is just around the corner and we at *CEO Middle East* can’t wait to report on the region’s electrifying, innovative and exciting business developments through every month in 2020.

Until then, from all of us at *CEO Middle East*, we wish you a happy, fulfilling and enjoyable festive season and our very best for that big number year ahead.

*Enjoy the issue!*

**Jola Chudy**  
Editor-in-Chief



A photograph of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) building at dusk. The building is a modern, multi-story structure with a prominent central tower and a wide, open atrium. The sky is a deep blue, and the building's lights are on, creating a warm glow. The word "DIFC" is overlaid in large, bold, blue letters across the center of the image.

# DIFC

## THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

**IF ONLY** there was a place that provided unparalleled access to the fast-growing Middle East, Africa and South Asia markets.

**IF ONLY** there was a place with an internationally recognised legal and regulatory infrastructure.

**IF ONLY** there was a place with an established ecosystem of over 24,000 professionals working across 2,200 top global companies.

There is. **DIFC.**

**Set up your business in the region's leading financial hub today.**

For more information  
[difc.ae](http://difc.ae) | [@difc](https://twitter.com/difc)



Dubai International  
Financial Centre

The most important  
business people  
and CEOs talk to  
the most important  
magazine



To receive your copy delivered directly  
to your door, subscribe online at  
[www.itp.net/subscriptions](http://www.itp.net/subscriptions)

# CEO MIDDLE EAST

PO BOX 500024, DUBAI, UAE  
+971 4 444 3000  
OFFICES IN ABU DHABI, DUBAI & LONDON

## ITP MEDIA GROUP CEO

**ALI AKAWI**

MANAGING DIRECTOR  
**SUE HOLT**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
**ANIL BHOYRUL**

## EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR  
**SHANE MCGINLEY**  
shane.mcginley@itp.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
**JOLA CHUDY**  
jola.chudy@itp.com

SUB EDITOR  
**EDWARD LIAMZON**

CONTRIBUTORS  
**BERND DEBUSMANN**  
**NEIL HALLIGAN**  
**LUBNA HAMDAN**

EVENTS & MARKETING  
DIRECTOR OF AWARDS & MARKETING

**DANIEL FEWTRELL**  
+971 4 444 3684  
Daniel.Fewtrell@itp.com

EVENTS & MARKETING MANAGER  
**JOANNA FARRER**  
+971 4 444 3328  
joanna.farrer@itp.com

## ADVERTISING

GROUP COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR

**JOE CHIDIAC**  
+971 4 444 3121  
joe.chidiac@itp.com

SALES MANAGER, CEO MIDDLE EAST

**TULEEN ABU SOUD**  
+971 4 444 3267  
+971 58 917 3496  
Tuleen.AbuSoud@itp.com

HEAD OF SALES - AGENCIES

**MARIO SAAIBY**  
+971 4 444 3592  
mario.saaiby@itp.com

## DESIGN

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
**ADRIAN LUCA**

ART DIRECTOR  
**MOHAMMED JUMA**

## PHOTOGRAPHY

SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

**EFRAIM EVIDOR**  
**ADEL RASHID**

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

**AASIYA JAGADEESH**  
**FRTZ JOHN ASURO**  
**AJITH NARENDRA**  
**YULIYA PETROVICH**  
**JESSICA SAMSON**

## PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION

GROUP PRODUCTION  
AND DISTRIBUTION DIRECTOR

**KYLE SMITH**

PRODUCTION MANAGER

**BASEL AL KASSEM**

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

**MANOJ MAHADEVAN**

SENIOR IMAGE EDITOR

**EMMALYN ROBLES**

## CIRCULATION

HEAD OF CIRCULATION

**VANESSA D'SOUZA**

## ITP LIVE

GENERAL MANAGER

**AHMAD BASHOUR**

## ITP GROUP

CEO

**ALI AKAWI**

CFO

**TOBY JAY SPENCER-DAVIES**

When you have finished with this magazine, please recycle it

The publishers regret that they cannot accept liability for error or omissions contained in this publication, however caused. The opinions and views contained in this publication are not necessarily those of the publishers. Readers are advised to seek specialist advice before acting on information contained in this publication which is provided for general use and may not be appropriate for the reader's particular circumstances. The ownership of trademarks is acknowledged. No part of this publication or any part of the contents thereof may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form without the permission of the publishers in writing. An exemption is hereby granted for extracts used for the purpose of fair review.



PUBLISHED BY AND © 2019 ITP MEDIA GROUP FZ-LLC.



**DGC** | E SPORTS  
SUMMIT

Book your place now | [www.dgcgames.com](http://www.dgcgames.com)

Join DGC Esports Summit the leading marketplace and forum for the Esports industry serving MENA region



**1-2 April 2020**

Dubai World Trade  
Centre, UAE

4th Edition



DGC DUBAI

Connecting the Global Game Industry

**500+**  
Companies

**100+**  
Speakers

**35**  
Countries

**C Level**  
Delegates

For more information

**Mr Habib Chams**

Dubai +971588152161

Beirut +961 76 704 978

[habib.chams@itp.com](mailto:habib.chams@itp.com)

[www.dgcgames.com](http://www.dgcgames.com)

ORGANISED BY





- NEWS
- INNOVATION
- MANAGEMENT
- LEADERSHIP

# BUSINESS

🎯 EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IS NOT JUST ABOUT THEIR SALARY

# IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE MONEY

SALARIES ARE NOT  
THE MAIN REASON  
EMPLOYEES CHANGE  
JOBS IN THE GCC  
BY LUBNA HAMDAN



## “WHILE SALARY IS IMPORTANT, HOW AN EMPLOYEE PERFORMS AND HOW LONG THEY STAY WITH AN EMPLOYER IS HUGEY INFLUENCED BY CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.”



**E**MPLOYEES ARE MORE INFLUENCED BY OTHER FACTORS, ACCORDING TO A REPORT BY

### RECRUITMENT GIANT HAYS

Salaries are not the main reason employees in the Gulf region seek to change jobs, according to the Hays Employee Attrition in the GCC Report 2019.

The research by the global recruiting group shows working professionals in the Gulf look to move companies to ‘start a new career’ or for ‘lack of future opportunities’ in their workplace.

“While salary is important, how an employee performs and how long they choose to stay with an employer is hugely influenced by the career development opportunities offered to them,” according to Chris Greaves, Managing Director of Hays Middle East.

This is particularly true for ‘Generation Z’ consisting of those born after 1995, who unlike the older generation, do not consider ‘job security’ when deciding on employment. Instead, they count developmental opportunities as the most important factor.

“Career opportunities are becoming the overriding focus for professionals in the region and this is only likely to grow in importance as the younger generations

of today become the core workforce of tomorrow,” said Greaves.

### Average stay

The report also found that 40 percent of employees in the GCC are likely to stay with a company for over five years on average.

“These are incredibly interesting insights for employers to see as there is often widespread belief that high employee turnover is inevitable in the region as expat workers leave to return to their home countries after only a short period of time here.

“In reality however, this research shows that longevity of employment is incredibly important to both national and expat workers and that employee turnover is entirely in the hands of the employer and the prospects they offer,” Greaves said.

### No appraisals

Moreover, 33 per cent of the more than 600 professionals who took part in the research have no regular appraisal, while 66 per cent received no role-specific training in the past 12 months.

Greaves said the statistics are “alarming”.

He said: “They suggest that a large number of organisations in the region offer no role-enhancing training or any form of performance feedback to their staff and it is therefore no wonder that employees rate career development so highly when considering new employment opportunities.”

He added that companies must better address their career development offerings to attract and retain the best employees by providing workers with job training, upskilling and more varied work.

The Hays Employee Attrition in the GCC Report 2019 took place during July and August 2019 and examines key factors driving employee turnover in the Gulf region.

---

**33% HAVE  
NO REGULAR  
APPRAISAL, WHILE  
66% RECEIVED  
NO ROLE-SPECIFIC  
TRAINING IN THE  
PAST 12 MONTHS.**

## HEALTHY BODY, HEALTHY MIND



The J Club, which specialises in keeping the body fit and the mind trained, has opened in Jumeirah Beach Hotel in Dubai. The luxury lifestyle members' facility balances an equal focus on specialised physical and mental wellness, encompassing a full range of sports and leisure facilities with the highest level of coaching and training.

## WELLNESS REWARDED



The Executive Council of Dubai, Schneider Electric, Alpin, Landmark Group and Fine Hygienic Holding have all been recognised at the sixth edition of the Daman Corporate Health and Wellness Awards 2019 for introducing exceptional health and wellness programmes to increase employee productivity in the workplace.



## END OF END OF SERVICE?

75 PERCENT OF COMPANIES DO NOT SET ASIDE 'RING FENCED' ASSETS TO COVER THEIR END OF SERVICE BENEFITS LIABILITIES

**END OF SERVICE BENEFITS IN THE UAE COULD SOON BE REPLACED BY MORE CONVENTIONAL WORKPLACE SAVINGS PLANS EMPLOYED BY COMPANIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.**

According to the latest 2019 End of Service Benefits report by Zurich in the Middle East and Insight Discovery, 75 percent of companies do not set aside 'ring fenced' assets to cover their end of service benefits liabilities and make these payments from their operating cashflow.

And of those that do set assets aside, 78 percent do not make these visible to employees.

Earlier this year, Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) launched its Employee Workplace Savings (DEWS) plan, offering a low-cost investment platform for receiving and managing mandatory end-of-service contributions on behalf of employees – similar to the pension system operated in the United Kingdom.

Employees can also add any voluntary savings, including cash or cash equivalent options, for those who

do not want to take investment risks with their contributions.

Through the report, 81 percent of companies revealed they would be open to change, believing that a mandatory funding requirement would be positive.

Reena Vivek, senior executive officer of Zurich Workplace Solutions, said: "Feedback from financial executives in the region reveals a real need for funded and professionally-managed, defined contribution plans that incorporate a voluntary savings component for employees.

"2019 is predicted to be the dawn of a new era for end of service benefits in the UAE. We should expect to see greater disclosure about the size of end of service benefits liabilities and an increase in employee education about the benefits of workplace savings.

"The DEWS plan combined with growing support for reform by various government bodies will likely see a wave of improved employee benefit structures for companies large and small in the region."



## AIR ARABIA'S Q3 PROFIT RISES 57%

LOW-COST AIRLINE CARRIED OVER 3.4 MILLION PASSENGERS IN THE THIRD QUARTER

**SHARJAH-BASED AIR ARABIA REPORTED A 57 PERCENT INCREASE IN Q3 PROFITS, THANKS TO AN INCREASE IN CUSTOMERS AND COST CONTROL MEASURES IMPLEMENTED ACROSS THE COMPANY.**

The low-cost carrier revealed a net profit of \$128m in Q3, with revenue during the three months of \$391m, an increase of 12 percent on last year.

Air Arabia said it carried over 3.4 million passengers from its four hubs in the UAE, Morocco and Egypt, an increase of 10 percent on the same period last year.

The airline managed to achieve average seat load factor of 82 percent, up slightly from last year.

“Air Arabia’s record performance in the third quarter of this year reflects the strength of the business model we operate and the added value we bring to our customers every day,” said Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohamed Al Thani, chairman of Air Arabia. The carrier received two Airbus A321neo LR aircraft this year – bringing its total fleet size to 55 – which the airline said will help it expand to new medium-haul markets.

Air Arabia today operates flights to over 170 global destinations in 50 countries from four hubs in the UAE, Morocco and Egypt. The carrier currently operates a total fleet of 53 Airbus A320 and A321 aircraft.

Additionally, the carrier announced in October the signing of an agreement with Etihad Aviation Group to launch “Air Arabia Abu Dhabi”, the capital’s first low-cost carrier.

Tony Douglas, chief executive of Etihad, said at the time: “At the end of the first quarter or second quarter next year, if you want to be on one of these aircraft, the opportunity will be there for you. What we’ll see is connectivity from Abu Dhabi using Air Arabia Abu Dhabi, which is going to be great for the travelling public and great for Etihad and we’re really excited about it.”

Today, the Middle East market enjoys the third highest gains in intra-regional low-cost carrier penetration rate. Low-cost carriers accounted for 17 percent share of seat capacity to and from the Middle East in 2018.

## DUO SIGN FUNDING DEAL



SocioLadder, a technology and consulting services leader in the humanitarian, charity and social development sector, has signed an agreement with Dubai Cares, to launch a crowdfunding platform, enabling the community to raise funds electronically in support of Dubai Cares’ educational programmes in developing countries.

## READY FOR A SMASHING TIME



Executives can take out their frustration from the day at a second Smash Room in Dubai. Newly opened, the Smash Room, Last Exit, is home to three identical smashing rooms, fully air-conditioned, for people to go in and smash anything and everything in sight, from glasses to electronics.



## WORKSPACE AND SOCIAL CLUB



### First member's only workspace and social club opens

Property developer Mohammed Zaal has launched Nasab, the first member's only workspace and social club in Dubai.

The facility is spread over three floors in KOA Gardens, Mohammad Bin Rashid Gardens, and provides an innovative hub for entrepreneurs, creatives, freelancers and big businesses.

Zaal said: "Collaboration through project-based consultants is becoming increasingly prevalent as a hiring strategy, while connection has moved to the forefront as brands are becoming more value driven and focussed on giving back. An increase in agile, flexible business models, diverse hiring etc, shows there is a trend in open-minded thinking that is surpassing the traditional business model."

The property includes a photography studio, gallery space, library, meeting rooms, privacy booths, a dedicated meditation room and a curated programme of cultural events that are actually unique, all with the intention of not only accommodating the new way of working/working out, but also feeding individual and communal creativity.

## BEST OF THE BEST NAMED IN THE UAE

TEN COMPANIES OPERATING IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA HAVE BEEN NAMED AS THE BEST EMPLOYERS IN THE REGION



### TEN COMPANIES OPERATING IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA HAVE BEEN NAMED AS THE BEST EMPLOYERS IN THE REGION.

Kincentric, a Spencer Stuart company, has announced the results of the 2019 Best Employers MENA programme, which recognises employers that strive to continuously spark change, inspire their people and accelerate business success.

DHL Express was named Best Employer MENA while DHL Global Forwarding picked up the award for Best Employer Oman.

InterContinental Hotels Group and Marriott International were named Best Employer (Global Programme) while Jumeirah Group and Atlantis, The Palm were picked as Best Employer UAE.

Novartis was named Best Employer Kuwait & Algeria while Procter & Gamble Near East Best was chosen as Best Employer Egypt, Teleperformance won the Best Employer Morocco and Tunisia award and TLScontact was named Best

Employer Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

Best Employers, the leading employer benchmarking programme in MENA, measures and recognises extraordinary employers that demonstrate workplace excellence, Kincentric said.

Findings from this year's study show that Best Employers in the region continue to invest in creating a highly engaged workforce, with an employee engagement score of 83 percent compared to 69 percent market average.

As many as 86 percent of employees at Best Employers believe their organisation is adopting agile practices and becoming more responsive to changing needs (compared to 69 percent market average), according to Kincentric.

Furthermore, 84 percent believe their organisation is retaining the people they need to achieve their business goals (compared to 60 percent market average), demonstrating their commitment to retaining top talent in today's highly competitive job market.





## UAE ENVIRONMENTALIST ON ANTARCTIC MISSION

UAE ENVIRONMENTALIST HAS BEEN SELECTED TO TAKE PART IN FOUR-WEEK EXPEDITION

**RASHA EL SALEH, A PASSIONATE ENVIRONMENTALIST IN THE UAE, HAS BEEN SELECTED FROM TENS OF THOUSANDS OF APPLICANTS TO TRAVEL TO EARTH'S MOST REMOTE CONTINENT ON A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH MISSION, SPEARHEADED BY AIRBNB AND OCEAN CONSERVANCY.**

The 25-year-old will take part in the four-week mission where she will complete scientific research in the Antarctic.

El Saleh, who currently works for Connect With Nature in Dubai, a youth conservation movement run by Emirates Nature-WWF and the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, was selected over more than 140,000 other applicants from over 200 countries around the world and is the youngest person out of the five volunteers.

"I feel that everything that I have worked for: my passion, my commitment, my efforts have all come together to prepare me for this once-in-a-life opportunity, to be able to make an even bigger change. Our planet depends on me; it depends on every single one of us," she said.

On the month-long expedition in December, the citizen scientists will collect snow samples and study the extent to which microplastics have made their way to the interior of Antarctica. By understanding the impact of plastic pollution in such a remote location, it is hoped that the five volunteers will deliver insights on how people can help protect the Antarctic and the wider world.

Antarctic Scientist Kirstie Jones-Williams said: "This is an incredible opportunity for the five volunteers who all bring their own experiences and perspectives to the project.

"Collaboration is a fundamental part of solving environmental problems and, through first-hand experience, I know that they will be inspired to share what they have learnt when they return home. I was overwhelmed with the level of interest and quality of applications, and I'm really excited for our message and expedition to be shared by our volunteers on this global platform with Airbnb and Ocean Conservancy."

## TACKLING FOOD WASTE ON THE MENU



### W Dubai - The Palm joins with UAE Food Bank to address issue

UAE residents and restaurants were given a masterclass in how to reduce food waste by master chef Massimo Bottura.

The initiative was launched by the Italian culinary mastermind and W Dubai - The Palm in collaboration with the UAE Food Bank.

Alongside chef de cuisine, Bernardo Paladini, the recent masterclass showed guests and attendees how to use ingredients with the respect they deserve.

A passionate advocate for reducing food waste, Chef Bottura heads up the 'Food for Soul' initiative, a non-profit organisation that empowers communities internationally to fight food waste through social inclusion.

He said: It's time to act. We have to step out of the kitchen and involve people across the UAE and the UAE Food Bank - they care a lot about the issue of food waste. If a hotel like this can become a symbol for ethics it is something incredible and a powerful message for all other hotels to emulate."

Food waste is a major issue in the UAE, with AED13bn of food being thrown out each year.



# FULFILLING THE DEMAND

AS ECOMMERCE CONTINUES TO GROW, MARKET LEADERS **IQ FULFILLMENT** IS PERFECTLY POISED TO PROVIDE BUSINESSES WITH TAILORED SOLUTIONS TO MEET DEMAND IN THE DIGITAL AGE

**W**ith a dramatic rise in global e-commerce transactions over the past few years, the fulfilment sector has been trying to leverage technologies to keep up with the shift, especially with the e-commerce sector expected to become the largest retail channel in the world by 2021, outpacing sales from supermarkets, groceries, apparel, and footwear retailers.

Researches state that e-commerce is projected to generate \$4.479 trillion in retail sales by 2021, soaring over 140 per cent from \$1.859 trillion in 2016. As a result, companies are being forced to create and comply with omnichannel fulfilment strategies to meet the modern consumer's needs.

E-commerce expansion and the growth of online buying options have contributed to the need of having technologically capable solutions

to keep pace with the fast-growing industry and benefit from it. In terms of statistics, IQ Fulfillment is a facilitator. With the e-commerce market in the MENA region expected to reach \$28.5 billion by 2022, the company is presented with an opportunity to cater to various clients and help them derive revenue through apt use of technology. It is notable that the market value currently is \$8.3 billion and is expected to grow by 3.5 times. Regionally, the UAE has the highest penetration of e-commerce.

The change in the quality of e-commerce demands has also altered the way warehouses and distribution patterns work. Companies today are looking at e-fulfilment operations and services, making it important for industry players to either enhance their technological capabilities or hire service providers who are capable of tech and digital innovations.

The first robotic fulfilment centre in the region, IQ Fulfillment was launched in Dubai by IQ Holding to support the needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), incubators, accelerators, and e-commerce players. The company seeks to accelerate its business growth for enterprises, with a warehouse spanning an area of 45,000 sq. ft, deploying robotics and artificial intelligence (AI).

Its services are designed to maximise revenue by eliminating the impact of damaged goods or misplaced or wrong orders, putting technology at the centre of its work, with intelligent solutions and a cutting-edge software platform for innovative businesses solutions.

## What's in store:

A \$2.3 trillion global e-commerce market is a reflection of the changing shopper expectations



worldwide. Digital disruption has refurbished the consumer habits; the connected, tech-savvy, and aware consumer today expects a seamless, faster-purchasing journey, whether online or in-store delivery. The e-commerce and its related sectors are growing, and facilitating this is the region's young population — estimated to be at 60 per cent of the total — accounting for nearly 200 million people below the age of 30. These factors combine to open avenues of growth and development for IQ Fulfillments.

A report on the sector by Zebra Technologies, a US-based technology and research firm states, "In the digital economy, manual processes leftover from the pre-Internet era continue to vanish from warehouse and fulfillment operations. Decision-makers looking to the future said next-generation supply chains will reflect connected, business-intelligence and automated solutions suited to the on-demand, omnichannel landscape."

Digital transformation has changed the dynamics of the retail supply chain, creating an ecosystem that is in flux. The future, therefore, is going to be dynamic, driven by technological creations and tools.

### How do we meet the challenge?

It is the only organisation to offer a full range of digital and physical infrastructure to support the digital ambitions of businesses across

the spectrum of start-ups and established companies. Utilising robotics and AI solutions, IQ Fulfillment boosts efficiency and productivity. It helps process 12,000 robotic orders daily, with a 99.9 per cent accuracy rate, and productivity is three times the human output.

In addition, IQ Robotics, IQ Fulfillment's sister, is a robotics AI-driven business that's spearheading the digital transformation of the logistics sector. IQ Robotics is a provider of tailor-made technology solutions that seek to promote the automation of all processes, offering solutions that cover robotics, warehouse automation, software solutions, package protection, labelling solutions, and other related services. IQ Robotics has fostered exclusive international partnerships with companies like Quicktron, Honeywell Logistics Technology company, Damon technologies, Locked Air, COTAO, and CubiLink.

IQ Fulfillment puts technology at the centre of its work. With intelligent solutions and cutting-edge software platforms, it provides innovative solutions for businesses. It integrates seamlessly with business operations, thus removing the burden of fulfillment and freeing up the resources that brands can use to grow and further develop. The technology being used by IQ Fulfillment is capable of managing exchanges, quality control, product testing, product assessment, and sorting. It allows

effortless application programming interface (API), with highly scalable and configurable Warehouse Management System (WMS), Order Management System (OMS), and Transportation Management System (TMS) processes, linked into a data Hub Transparent 3PL (Third-party logistics) integration for domestic and cross-border shipping, along with secure and climate-controlled facilities.

Other value-added services provided by the company include kitting & bundling, cross-docking, labelling and tagging, branding, weighing & scanning (DWS), insert gift cards, fragile packing and protection, loading and offloading, multiple 3PL, last-mile delivery options, and shipping documentation.

With a proof of concept warehouse, a team of experts and features like robotics picking, end-to-end track and trace, full live visibility, intelligence storage, package protection, cross-docking, return management, and customised value-added services, IQ Fulfillments is catering to all market needs. In short, IQ Fulfillments takes care of everything an enterprise needs to build a thriving e-commerce business. Essentially, SMEs only need to build an app or website based on their business model, and IQ Fulfillment supports them with warehousing, order processing, and delivery by taking all logistical aspects, with highest levels of efficiency



# IT'S ALL ABOUT

# ALIGNMENT

PORTFOLIO OWNERS NEED HIGHLY SPECIALISED ADVICE, SAYS **DONALD BREMNER** OF STIRLING HOSPITALITY ADVISORS

**W**e may be partisan, but we strongly believe that owners should have a professional advisory firm to investigate their business model and offer a tailored solution. Advisory services analyse a business proposition with independence and industry specific skill sets and provide guidance on optimal strategies for given scenarios.

Among the biggest threats to any business is to limit the range of options to those that are most appealing in the short-term, while an advisory firm will look at the business cycle in a holistic manner, providing second level thinking to deliver long-term performance.

Dubai continues to be one of the most visited destinations in the world, consistently recording year-on-year growth that exceeds 6 percent. To cater to this growing demand, the Emirate has encouraged investors to develop a wider range of hospitality products, diversifying hotel inventory to expand segmentation.

As a result, while average rate remains at international levels, revenue per available room (RevPAR) has registered its fifth consecutive year of decline (source: STRHI 2019). While the increase in the number of mid and upscale hotels is pressuring rates, the most important reason, and perhaps the most overlooked, is that Dubai is going through an anticipated industry cycle experienced by all global markets at some point in time. After years of double-digit RevPAR growth, performance will inevitably decline, correcting the supply /demand imbalance in order to allow the industry to re-enter a new growth cycle.

In the short-term, this slowdown is proving to be a testing time for owners. Some hotels have been slow at implementing efficiencies to decrease costs and protect profitability and after several years of decline, some owners are questioning the traditional operating models employed within the region and are

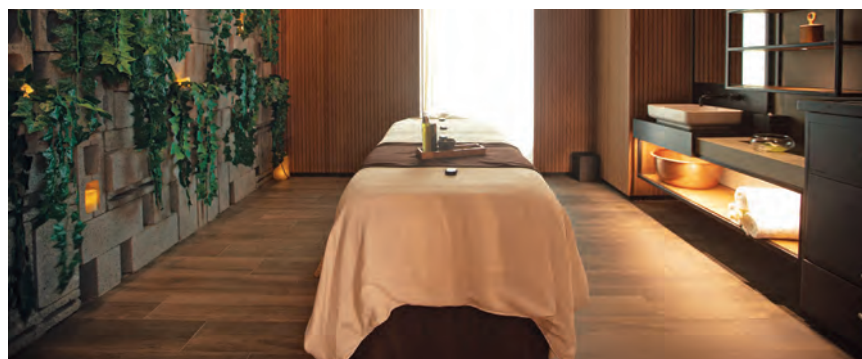
looking for alternatives, sometimes at any cost. Moreover, the rigid owner/operator duality has been disrupted by the possibility of the sharing economy, providing the customer with alternative lodging and stay options.

For owners disgruntled by deteriorating returns, change can come at a high cost. Whether it's breaking the current management contract, de-branding a property, hiring and training the staff, changing the administrative IT systems, etc, the costs associated with breaking or even just changing the nature of the relationship will be expensive. There are, however, other options available to owners to improve their bargaining position with the operator and most will involve less drastic changes and, therefore, lower costs.

In this time of change for the regional hospitality industry, the asset manager remains the best partner for the hotel owner. Every owner's reasons and circumstances for wanting



## “THE REGION’S HOTEL OWNER/ OPERATOR RELATIONSHIP HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN DOMINATED BY BRANDS AND MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS”



management change are different: whether it is unsatisfactory operating margins, lack of transparency on fees paid, lack of brand’s focus on the property, etc. The asset manager’s in-depth understanding of the hotel’s situation, current and future market conditions and relationships with brands will prove highly valuable when considering change, whether it’s moving towards franchising or white-label management or renegotiating the terms of the existing agreement.

### **The rise of new business models**

The region’s hotel owner/operator relationship has traditionally been dominated by brands and management agreements. In the years of high performances, this business model attracted little criticism, with both owners and operators enjoying healthy financial returns. However, the declining operating performance

has made owners feel like they should regain control of their properties’ profit and loss (P&L). This change is being further accelerated by the maturing of historical management agreements, allowing owners to pursue alternative business relationships. The monolithic relationship between operator and owner no longer reflects the dynamics and evolution speed of the industry and consumer habits. As a result, two alternative business models are now becoming mainstream: franchising or operating as an independent brand. Under both models, owners can either manage the property themselves or contract a white label operator to manage it on their behalf. Both models empower owners to take control over the day-to-day operation and cash-flow for their business. While these models are highly popular in mature markets, they remain new opportunities for the Middle East. **CEO**



# APPLYING AI IN THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

THE MIDDLE EAST IS POSITIONING ITSELF TO BE A WORLD LEADER IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. **CIARÁN KELLY**, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT FCM TRAVEL SOLUTIONS, EXPLAINS HOW THE WORLD OF BUSINESS TRAVEL IS EMBRACING THIS INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY



**T**he next time you travel to meet investors, visit your most valued client or attend a thought leadership conference, it is likely that some part of your journey will have been touched by artificial intelligence (AI).

AI is becoming integral to an increasing number of business processes.

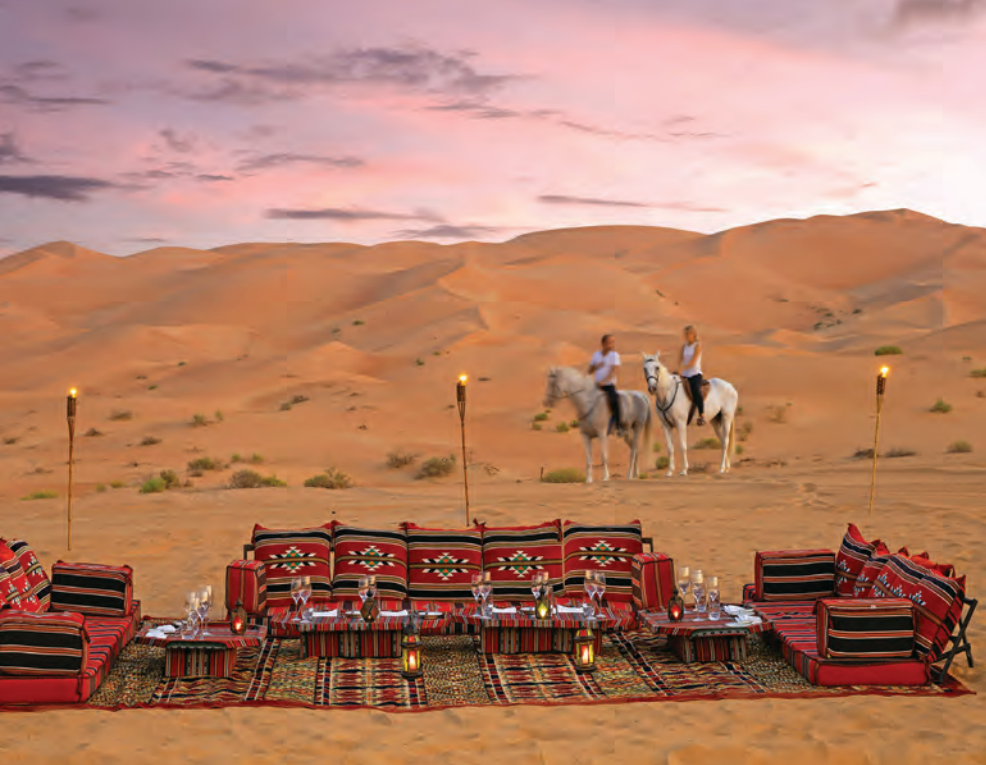
A recent survey by McKinsey shows that 47 percent of companies have embedded at least one AI function in their business processes, up from 20 percent in 2017.

Spending on artificial intelligence (AI) in the Middle East and Africa will reach more than \$500m by 2022, according to market research company IDC.

The region is already at the forefront of AI. In October 2017, the UAE signalled its intention to be a world leader in AI by becoming the first country in the world to appoint a dedicated AI minister, Omar Bin Sultan Al Olama.

In 2020, the world's first university dedicated to AI will open in Abu Dhabi while Saudi Arabia will host the region's first Global AI Summit in Riyadh. Business travel is one of the sectors ahead of the curve in AI implementation in the Middle East.

In Dubai, AI is being trialled for handling baggage, managing air traffic and even replacing immigration officials. In Abu Dhabi, Etihad has partnered with Microsoft to launch an in-house AI Academy which will be used to fast-track business ideas proposed by the



airline's workforce.

In Saudi Arabia's futuristic Neom Bay airport, AI will power robotic cars, help make cargo loading more efficient and guide passengers around the airport more smoothly.

AI is already changing business travel in the Middle East. We think this will continue in 2020 as more and more applications for this innovative tech are discovered.

Our company, FCM Travel Solutions, is heavily focused on technology. We are working together with companies that have innovative solutions to problems, helping them commercialise those solutions and bringing them to the Middle East consumer.

Our technology offering, coupled with our human touch, has had an exceptional influence on our success with retaining and gaining clients in the region and winning awards – we have been named the Middle East's leading travel management company for eight consecutive years in the World Travel Awards.

Innovative technology is at the heart of helping our clients in the Middle East spend less on business travel and make the experience of business travellers smoother and less stressful.

FCM Travel Solutions has been a pioneer in the use of AI. Earlier this year, we launched a chatbot called Sam (Smart Assistant for Mobile) in the Middle East. Sam is a hybrid, bringing together sophisticated AI and the expert knowledge of FCM's travel consultants.

**“I BELIEVE WE ARE ON THE VERGE OF AN AI-POWERED REVOLUTION AND ANYONE WHO TRAVELS ON BUSINESS CAN ALREADY SEE THE SHAPE OF THAT FUTURE”**

One of the key advantages of chatbots like Sam is that it helps remove friction in the travel experience, whether at the booking, planning or the actual travel stage. Rather than having to wait for an email response or for someone to pick up the phone, queries can be resolved by the chatbot in real time.

Travellers in the region want to have access to information all the time, be it human or AI as a form of reassurance that someone is there to help in the event of emergencies.

Travellers in the Middle East travel to some high-risk destinations and want as seamless an experience as possible.

Sam takes the wealth of information out there – the context of your booking, where you are and your profile, the check-in time for the flight, any delays, security alerts for example – and gives you something more personalised.

Automated customer support assistants like Sam are set to be at the forefront of AI implementation in the Middle East and Africa, according to IDC, which says they will see growth of more than 25 percent a year until 2022. While most companies are using AI in customer-facing roles, a growing number of companies are starting to use the technology in managing their supply chains, according to the McKinsey research.

For the past two years, FCM has been embedding AI technology in its processes to optimise airfares and hotel rates after booking.

We are also using AI within our online booking tool to filter search results. We take a blend of traveller preferences – if they want to fly at certain times perhaps – and corporate travel policy. The booking tool can take these rules and use AI to determine if something matches both criteria.

Further ahead, we are looking at how to build AI into our end-to-end workflows. When someone calls in or emails us, AI can determine whether it is a support issue, an urgent flight change request or a regular flight enquiry and offer up information to our travel consultants to provide an even better level of service.

Deep learning algorithms can help get the most out of customer data and provide the best possible value to them, enabling us to provide better service to travellers. Companies in the UAE and across the region deserve this type of information to add more value to their business. Inevitably, business travel suppliers, such as airlines and hotel groups, are also looking to AI to improve their operations and are already investing heavily. One area which is attracting a lot of investment is revenue management which has traditionally used historical statistics for its models.

I believe we are on the verge of an AI-powered revolution and anyone who travels on business can already see the shape of that future. **CEO**



# THE THREE PHASES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IS A JOURNEY, WRITES **GENG LIN**, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, F5 NETWORKS

**I**n recent years, enterprises in every industry sector have embarked on a digital transformation journey in one way or another. Businesses are taking advantage of the proliferation of digital technologies to define new business models or to improve business productivity with existing models. While the pace of digital transformation varies based on the business and the sector it is in, overall, the journey of digital transformation has three stages.

## Task automation

In this stage, digitalisation leads businesses to turn human-oriented business tasks to various forms of automation, which means more applications are introduced or created as part of the business flow. This begins with automating well-defined, individual tasks to improve efficiencies. A common example is IVR systems that answer common questions about a product or service but may need to hand off to a human representative.

## Digital expansion

As businesses start taking advantage of cloud-

native infrastructures and driving automation through their own software development, it leads to a new generation of applications to support the scaling and further expansion of their digital model. The driver behind this phase is business leaders who become involved in application decisions designed to differentiate or provide unique customer engagement.

For example, healthcare providers are increasingly integrating patient records and billing with admission, discharge, and scheduling systems. Automated appointment reminders can then eliminate manual processes. Focussing on end-to-end business process improvement are common themes in this phase.

## AI-assisted business augmentation

As businesses further advance on their digital journey and leverage more advanced capabilities in application platforms, business telemetry and data analytics, and ML/AI technologies, businesses will become AI-assisted. This phase opens new areas of business productivity gains that were previously unavailable. For example, a retailer found that 10 percent to 20 percent of its failed login

attempts were legitimate users struggling with the validation process. Denying access by default represented a potentially significant revenue loss. Behavioural analysis can be used to distinguish legitimate users from bots attempting to gain access. Technology and analytics have enabled AI-assisted identification of those users to let them in, boosting revenue.

The steady rise in leveraging application, business telemetry and data analytics enables organisations to scale digitally. Adopting an agile development methodology to quickly iterate modifications has shortened the lifecycle of “code to users.” In digital enterprises, the “code” embodies the business flow and the speed of change in “code to users” represents business agility. In this new era of digital economy, applications have become the life blood of the global economy. Every business is becoming an application business.

As IT infrastructure automation and application-driven DevOps processes have been largely established across the industry, we envision that a layer of distributed application services that unifies application infrastructure, telemetry, and analytics services is emerging. **CEO**





# THE CURRENCY OF SUCCESS

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICERS CAN TAKE ACTION TO POSITION THEIR ORGANISATIONS FOR GROWTH, SAYS **JONATHAN WOOD**, GENERAL MANAGER, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA, INFOR

**W**hen CFOs adopt innovative technology, they help build organisations that are more agile, profitable, effective, and positioned for growth. Here are the five actions CFOs can take immediately to get started down the right path:

**1.** Develop one single source of the truth – Data is the currency of success. Effective data management translates to big opportunities for companies that are intent on growth. But the key to effective data management is creating one source of the truth – a central data repository. Everyone needs to work from the same set of information, if your organisation is going to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. Companies can uncover key insights about their customers and business processes by breaking down data silos and building one single source of the truth.

**2.** Make that truth available and actionable – Data is only useful if the people who need it, both inside and outside your organisation,

can access it and act upon it to make faster, more informed decisions. Having the right technology to not only access data from across the organisation but also to provide meaningful insights to stakeholders can help you build a path to growth. Data analytics can perform what-if scenarios that help you cut costs, identify new opportunities with existing customers, and even create new business models and processes.

**3.** Connect everything – No system can operate in a vacuum. Connect all your product, sales, financials, HR, etc. systems and you're on your way to having the visibility you need to grow profitably. Consider adding cloud-based ERP and product systems, which can be among the most crucial and transformative investments a company makes. Because these systems reach into every part of an organisation, from manufacturing and sales, to finance, human resources, and more, they can significantly improve your company's efficiency, helping to drive its growth to the next level.

**4.** Connect everyone – True communication and collaboration can deliver great benefits. Just as all your systems need to be connected, so too do your employees and partners along your value chain. Social collaboration tools available from within the applications people use to get their jobs done make it easier to get work done. Users within your organisation and all along your value chain can get information where and when they need it, at their fingertips, without having to break their workflow. The system can capture these interactions, so the information becomes part of the organisation's knowledge base, helping to drive greater insight and productivity.

**5.** Make it all available all the time – Business happens around the clock, everywhere. Cloud-enable all your most important systems and you ensure that your business can operate from any geography, at any time. Looking beyond the cloud, make sure as many of your core systems as possible are fully mobile-enabled. **CEO**



AS MORE GOVERNMENTS AND BUSINESSES FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY, SIRAJPOWER CEO **LAURENT LONGUET** EXPLAINS HOW HIS COMPANY IS HELPING CHANGE THE WAY THE REGION IS POWERED. BY GAVIN GIBBON

**L**aurent Longuet worked as project director on the Shams 1 joint venture solar project between Masdar and Total, back in 2010.

Looking back, he laughs as he describes, what was at the time, the biggest solar energy system in the world, as “prehistoric”.

He jests, of course. Shams 1 occupies 2.5 sq km and has a capacity of 100 megawatts (MW). The plant displaces about 175,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, which is the equivalent of planting 1.5 million trees or removing 15,000 cars from Abu Dhabi’s roads.

Prehistoric it may not be, but Longuet’s words are put into context slightly, with the opening of the AED3.2bn (\$871m) Noor Abu Dhabi, at Sweihan, in July – the world’s largest single-site solar project – boasting a capacity of 1,177MW.

Providing enough capacity to cover the demand of 90,000 people, the plant features more than 3.2 million solar panels,

installed across an 8 sq km site.

“Here we are talking about 12 times more (than Shams 1),” says Longuet, who is CEO of Dubai-based SirajPower, the UAE’s leading provider of solar rooftops.

“In only five or six years, the scale has changed completely.”

The same can be said for SirajPower, which was founded five years ago by Longuet with backing from Green Coast Enterprise, owned by the Abdulgaffar Hussein family in Dubai. From an initial modest staff of just a couple of workers, the company has grown with over 40 staff and a turnover this year expected to hit more than \$30m.

One of the greatest challenges now for Longuet and SirajPower is to maintain this while keeping up with an ever-changing industry.

He says: “The agreements we are installing today were not in existence five years ago and probably what we will install and propose in five years’ we won’t

even have heard of today.”

SirajPower currently has a portfolio of 15 large solar energy systems running on industrial roofs in Dubai. The company has secured the equivalent of 50MW of projects with another 100MW “at a very advanced stage of negotiation”, according to Longuet.

He smiles as he recalls the early days of the company, which were tough, even when Dubai approved legislation allowing the private sector to have their own source of electricity.

He says: “Solar is new to the region and is very new to industrial companies. People were interested in the philosophy and the idea stirred some interest, but they considered it more as, ‘electric cars, great, but that will be another 50 years’, instead it was, ‘solar, sounds great, but it’ll be another 20 years’. That was very much what we were facing at the time.”

He reveals that discussions with their first ever client, RSA Logistics, lasted almost 18 months before the agreement



↑ **Clean and green** Solar energy is fast gaining ground in the Middle East



was signed. “We started with one system back in 2017, we have now covered all their buildings in Dubai and we are proposing new solutions for them to save electricity consumption and anticipate future consumption whenever they have new buildings,” he says.

Longuet describes that first deal, a 1MW system producing more than 40 percent of the electricity for the factory, as a “game changer” as he was able to show the potential of the company and the solar power it specialises in.

He says: “We were able to demonstrate on a large scale, a private company can produce its own electricity in a significant manner. That has definitely been a game changer, making many others believe they can do the same. It’s not slides, it’s not just ideas, it’s a reality.”

Longuet says it was a similar story with lenders in the region, who were initially reluctant to back solar energy schemes before big hitters such as DEWA, ADWEA and Masdar began announcing developments. “If you’re an entrepreneur, your appetite for risk is there and still it has taken us a long time to get people

**WE’RE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE ON A LARGE SCALE A PRIVATE COMPANY CAN PRODUCE ITS OWN ELECTRICITY. THAT HAS BEEN A GAME CHANGER, MAKING OTHERS BELIEVE THEY CAN DO THE SAME. IT’S NOT JUST IDEAS, IT’S A REALITY**

on board. Imagine talking to bankers, whose appetite for risk is slightly less. Banks have been hesitant to engage in this sector,” Longuet says.

One of the secrets behind their success in attracting clients and new investors is their local roots and commitment to their home city and country.

He says: “When we install solar systems it’s for 20 years and we do it with the idea that we will, for 20 years, meet the owner and the operator of the system and

we are able to share this with customers. The customers we talk to, they value the fact that we are not an international company that may decide to withdraw from this market next year. We are not investors from wherever putting money here to recycle it. We are here to stay. It means a lot in terms of the way we work.”

That’s not to say Longuet won’t be taking SirajPower and its expertise to a wider audience than Dubai, where the company currently has around a one to 1.5GW share of the market.

In January this year, SirajPower expanded its operations in Abu Dhabi with the signing of the first commercial lease in the emirate, with Hepworth, a manufacturer of plastic piping solutions.

And Longuet reveals further expansion plans for the future. He says: “Abu Dhabi was the first step and that will be followed by Oman, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and then we have the plan to identify countries a bit outside of the Gulf, but in the near Middle East.

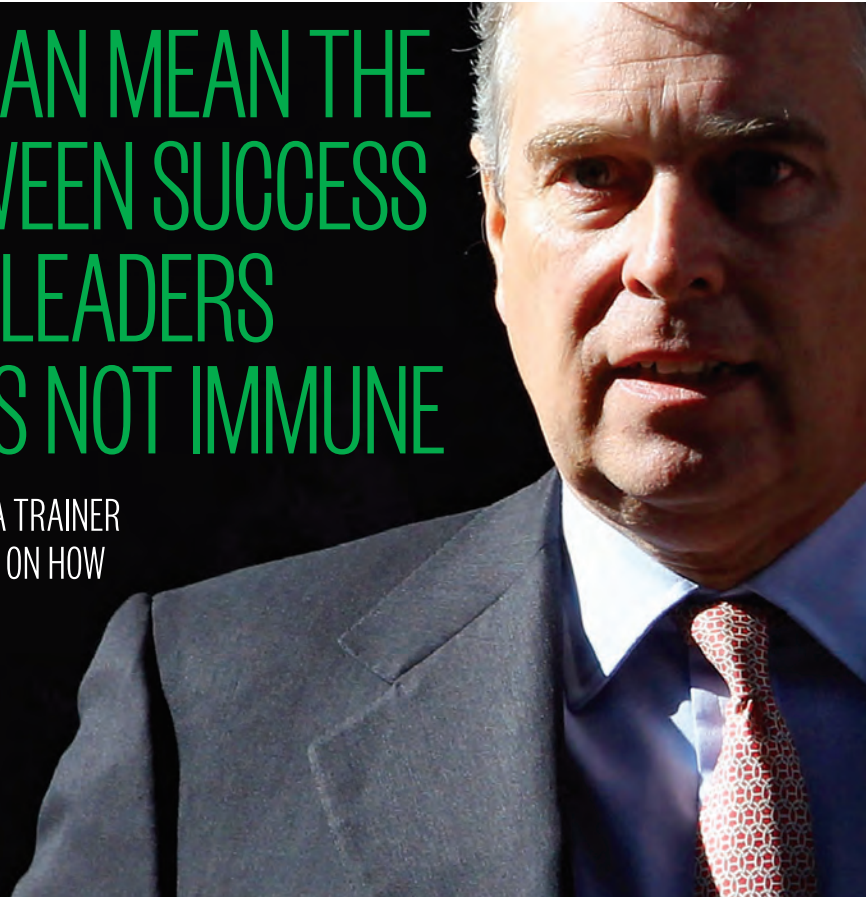
“The first market to develop was Dubai. Dubai has been at the forefront in putting in place a framework to allow private companies to have their own source of electricity. We see now that the same is being implemented in other countries. It has been set up in Oman and Saudi Arabia and we believe that other regions are going in this direction.” **CEO**

# LEADERSHIP

🎯 LEARNING FOR LEADERS

## DISASTROUS PR CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE FOR LEADERS – EVEN ROYALTY IS NOT IMMUNE

**ZAIB SHADANI**, PR CONSULTANT & MEDIA TRAINER  
AT SHADANI CONSULTING, SHARES FIVE TIPS ON HOW  
TO DO BETTER THAN PRINCE ANDREW



**W**HAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AN INTERVIEW TO END ALL SPECULATION HAS DONE THE OPPOSITE AND HAS FANNED THE FLAMES TO SUPERNOVA PROPORTIONS.

Prince Andrew's BBC Newsnight interview was like watching a live action PR masterclass in 'What not to do' during an interview. Undoubtedly, the most significant one-on-one with a senior royal since Princess Diana on Panorama (1995), the Prince Andrew interview raised more questions and controversy than it did to placate the rumours and gossip that have been following him for months.

The second son of the Queen of England, Prince Andrew's dismal attempts to defend

his relationship with disgraced financier and convicted sex offender, Jeffrey Epstein, has not only done severe damage to his reputation, but the blows keep coming as multiple businesses, like KPMG, Standard Chartered and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, have publicly withdrawn support for the prince.

Two particular moments from the 60-minute interview stand out as acutely cringeworthy and have been widely condemned as lacking perspective or remorse: The first was when Prince Andrew referred to Epstein's behaviour as "a manner unbecoming" – to which an incredulous Emily Maitlis responded: "Unbecoming? He was a

sex offender." And the second was when he stated that he did not regret his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, as it had "seriously beneficial outcomes" for him.

While the missteps kept coming, it was the complete absence of sympathy for Epstein's victims, juxtaposed with Prince Andrew's insistence on underscoring his friendship with Epstein that were the hardest to comprehend. A close second were the bizarre alibi of eating at Pizza Express and his inability to sweat, due to a medical condition.

By the end of the interview, Prince Andrew had come off as defensive, unconvincing in his answers and, most of all, unrepentant

# “WHILE IT MAY BE HARD TO BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN CONTROL THE NARRATIVE, THE MARK OF A SEASONED SPOKESPERSON IS THE ABILITY TO STAY ON TOPIC AND ON MESSAGE”



↑ **Expert insight** Zaib Shadani is a PR strategist for a number of high profile brands in the region

of his friendship with Epstein. Launching dozens of memes and the trending hashtag of #PizzaGate, the blowback will be felt by Prince Andrew for years to come.

The PR learnings from this disastrous interview are many, but here are the top five tips on how to correctly prepare for an interview, so that you can deliver your message in a powerful way.

## 1. Anticipate the hard questions

As evidenced by Prince Andrew's answers and reactions, where he seemed caught off guard, one should always try to anticipate a reporter's questions. Prepare questions in advance

that include a wide spectrum, ranging from the basic and unexpected, all the way to the sensational. This is the foundation for all media training, where interviewees are introduced to the hard questions that may be asked, so that they can familiarise themselves with what to expect and can practice their facial reactions, body language and answers.

## 2. Prepare your messaging

It doesn't matter what the question is, if the messaging is strong, any question can be answered. What are you trying to achieve through the interview and what are the top three points that you want to leave the

audience with? This question, unfortunately, remained unanswered during Prince Andrew's interview as he struggled to deliver any key messages, and, moreover, ended up calling into question both his credibility and reputation. Strong messaging is the cornerstone of all media training.

## 3. Choose your words with care

Interviews are a great opportunity to share views, so try to convey your points in a succinct matter. With a television sound bite running for an average of seven – nine seconds, there is no room for long-winded answers, so make sure you deliver strong sound bites.

When in doubt you can also rely on key phrases that underscore a point, for e.g.: “What I really want to leave the audience with is...” or if you would like to avoid a question: “I'm not able to answer that, but what I do know is...”

## 4. Maintain control

While it may be hard to believe that you can control the narrative, the mark of a seasoned spokesperson is the ability to stay on topic and on message. “Bridging” is a technique that allows one to move from a difficult or uncomfortable question to a prepared key message. When a reporter moves away from the subject you want to discuss, you can bring the conversation back via ‘bridge’ phrases like “What is important here...” “Let's look at it from this point of view...”. Bridging is useful to reiterate your position, but one must always acknowledge the question of the reporter, before seeking a ‘bridge’, to give it context.

## 5. Be accountable for your actions

Audiences can sense it when you are insincere, so it's important to be honest. Especially when trying to present your side of a story, it is critical to be genuine, acknowledge the responsibility of your role in the situation and offer to help in any way that you can. [CEO](#)

# 'TRANSFORMING THE BUSINESS OF FUN'

GLOBAL LEADER IN CASHLESS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE **AMUSEMENT, ENTERTAINMENT AND LEISURE INDUSTRIES**, EMBED IS SET TO EMPOWER FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT (FEC) BUSINESSES WITH DIRECT SALES, SERVICES AND SUPPORT

BY MEGHA MERANI

**T**ap. Repeat. Reload. That, in a nutshell, is how Embed's Mobile Wallet helps businesses transform the way they deal with customers in the amusement, entertainment and leisure industries.

A virtual game card that can be added to Apple Wallet and Google Pay, the Mobile Wallet means guests no longer have to stand in line at the kiosk, cashier or balance-check machines.

It's no secret that guests, especially today's millennial kind, have little or no patience for wasting time standing in line. The immediacy of reloading virtual game cards not only appeals to the instant generation, better known as Gen Z, but also equals greater revenue, less manpower, less hardware costs and greater profit.

"This breakthrough enables any business currently using the Embed Toolkit system to simply add the Mobile Wallet module to

their existing business solution and offering it to their customers," Renee Welsh tells CEO Middle East.

The Embed CEO says going cashless has become crucial to customer retention and Embed's Mobile Wallet, part of its Mobile Portal module, is simple and convenient for guests to use because it is completely cloud-based and enables operators to bundle offers, drive repeat visits and improve customer loyalty.

The Toolkit includes kiosks, game cards, smart TOUCH readers and a range of business solutions.

With Embed's platform, a business has real-time visibility and control across its entire operation from guest party-planning and bookings via mobile to integrated point-of-sales, including bundles and up-sell packages, a full range of games management,

real-time prize inventory, game card kiosks and so much more.

In November, Embed said in a press statement that it signed an exclusive three-year partnership with US-based Shaffer Entertainment to transform its coin-operated arcades to cashless systems. Shaffer, a provider of currency-operated games, jukeboxes, and ATMs, currently manages over 50 locations installed with Embed's technology. Operators at these facilities no longer have to worry about coin jams or lengthy service calls, the statement said, enabling business owners to achieve greater operational efficiency while reducing costs and increasing profitability.

Shaffer added that they also decided to implement the Embed System after realizing their centers were hosting a lot of parties, and they were floating an accounting security



Closer to home, Embed is also part of the 24th Season reopening of Global Village in Dubai. The multicultural festival park, which reopened its doors in October, features an 40 new smartTOUCH readers in addition to the existing 300 smartTOUCH readers to support the site's huge infrastructure enhancements and enhance guests' experience.

The destination is packed with attractions and games for kids, families and thrill seekers, and also features internationally-themed markets, unique food and beverage concepts with over 150 dining outlets and 26 shopping pavilions showcasing unique cultures from 78 countries. Embed said in statement that the upgrade is geared to help the Global Village team drive operational efficiency across the huge park and increase their card sales revenue and profit this season.

Transforming the business of fun since 2001, Welsh says Embed is the first to go-to-market with the Mobile Wallet. It has the exact same functionality as the game card, but sits in the guest's mobile wallet, enabling guests to tap and reload without leaving the game, while operators drive return visits and get to know customer behaviour, usage and spend habits.

"Working on a new product module for our existing Toolkit system that enables existing Embed customers' to offer their guests the ability to register the game card in the operator's Mobile Portal, [which is] part of the

Embed solution, and the option to add the game card to their mobile wallet is a win-win for the operator and their guests," Welsh explains.

"This development and offer make Embed the only non-banking finance-payment or loyalty-card business and brand card that sits in the mobile wallet."

Customers can purchase and register the physical game card in the Mobile Portal at a kiosk or online. The portal shows users a virtual card featuring their card balance with an option to add the virtual card to the Mobile Wallet.

Users can also redeem prizes for the games they win from their wallet. Most importantly, game card related information is protected by advanced security and encrypted mobile technology, so neither guests nor operators have to deal with lost game cards any more.

Welsh, who is the co-creator of award-winning ticketing and booking management platform Booking Boss, says retention and loyalty strategies are an integral part of a business's success plan.

Booking Boss was sold to Helix Leisure in 2017. In 2018 she became CEO of Solutions Group, where she is now responsible for two of Helix's companies - Booking Boss and Embed.

With over 1,000 customers and more than 3,000 installations around the world, Embed has also been working on further redefining the 'game card' by combining fashion and textile design, with various materials and technology to reimagine wearables that drive return visits and customer loyalty.

The company said in a statement that its new collection includes a variety of wristbands in various fabrics and materials, game cards and lanyards, calling its series "unlike anything currently in the industry".

"We've been in the design lab working on these for some time," Welsh shares, adding that the focus is on designing the type of wearable media users want to keep, collect and reuse.

"This ultimately drives repeat business for our Embed customer, which gives them an edge over their competition, strengthening their business. Ultimately, these design innovations are about elevating the entire media category in this industry." **CEO**

risk by continuing to use coin operated games. The company said in a statement that it witnessed a 70 percent reduction in service calls by implementing the Embed System and moving away from tickets, tokens, change and coin-accepting machines.

"Our 'customer first' approach focuses on solutions that enable the optimum guest experience and it's the driver behind our efforts," Welsh explains. "We know consumers don't want to use cash, or fumble with tokens, they pervasively use their Mobile Wallet to pay for everything - millennials being the largest demographic and growing uptake across all demographics - because it guarantees convenience, speed, and security."



**WE KNOW  
CONSUMERS  
DON'T WANT  
TO USE  
CASH, OR  
FUMBLE WITH  
TOKENS.**



# THE GREENER DREAM

NEW START-UP ZAETO IS OFFERING A COST EFFECTIVE WAY TO REDUCE THE NEGATIVE IMPACT ENVIRONMENTALLY DAMAGING MATERIALS HAVE ON THE LOCAL ECOLOGY  
BY LUBNA HAMDAN

**T**he Dubai-based company's goal for the region is to reduce the environmental impact of heavy industry. It plans to achieve this by adding a simple additive to fuel tanks or applied on parts, allowing companies to benefit from immediate results rather than having to formulate and implement major investments that cost them a fortune and take years to come to fruition.

It also excels in all environments, including those with extreme heat, making it perfect for the local desert market in the Middle East.

## How did the idea for Zaeto Middle East come about?

A long-term friend and previous business partner started the Zaeto conversation several years ago, as we wanted to develop a product specifically for the GCC and one with a core focus on the environment, alongside cost effectiveness for businesses – and thus, Zaeto

was born in 2018. The Middle East market needed something like Zaeto – to make a difference now rather than another unrealistic five/ten year plan that requires major financial and infrastructure investment before producing any results.

## What makes Zaeto Middle East unique?

Many of the region's heavy industry companies involved in areas such as manufacturing and marine transport, use lubrication and grease products that contain environmentally damaging materials that can lead to pollution. Zaeto products reduce Carbon Dioxide and Nitrogen Dioxide levels substantially in diesel emissions. The latter is a key focus in Europe to tackle pollution, and more so than CO<sub>2</sub>, due to the critical health impact. Dubai is currently ranked as the 10th most polluted city in the world, and eight million people globally die from NO<sub>x</sub> related gas emissions per year. While Zaeto can be generalised as a lubricants and

grease company, it is so much more than that. It impacts the environment positively by reducing harmful emissions by up to 35 percent, while increasing fuel economy; and lubricating parts better and more efficiently, which results in improvements in sustainability. Zaeto benefits a company's bottom line, a community's health and the country's goals of 2020, through to 2071. Zaeto has to date shown fuel savings of up to 15 per cent, general emissions improvements by 70 per cent and engine performance improvements of up to 9 per cent. We need to continue our efforts and spread this to a wider audience, to ensure we make a considerable impact.

## What is your business model?

We are a typical 'price based on product with margin' business. The key focus for us is for the consumer/customer to receive a commercial benefit by using Zaeto products, and at the same time making a positive environmental





impact. We can charge more based on the bottom line results, but we choose to have better commercials for customers as they can then pass them on to their customers.

### What are your main challenges?

Zaeto is only 18 months old, with the majority of our initial focus placed on building the brand equity and credibility in the region. There has been some initial resistance to using the product due to warranties on new technologies and servicing parts, as well as cemented relationships amongst procurement and operational teams, which we didn't initially anticipate. Brands like Castrol and Caterpillar are well known and trusted within the region, with strong reputations in the market when it comes to lubricants and greases.

### Tell us about your funding journey?

Funding has been supported by our partners, as we really live the 'if it is to be, it's up to me' approach. The true interest on emissions, outside of CO2 is still very low compared to other wastes, but savings are a key focus today. This, coupled with the continued factual results we are achieving, is why we have attracted interest from investors and accelerators.

### How has Zaeto been performing?

Since launching in early 2018, Zaeto has run numerous successful local and international



**ZAETO BENEFITS  
A COMPANY'S  
BOTTOM LINE, A  
COMMUNITY'S  
HEALTH AND THE  
COUNTRY'S GOALS  
OF 2020**

trials with companies like Emirates Leisure Group, Dulasco, City Sightseeing, Volvo, Vendetta Racing, Savaterre as well as Semi-Governmental Departments. Zaeto's social impact shows a 70 percent measured reduction in CO2 emissions when adding D-ZEL Aid to regular diesel fuel; a 35 percent reduction in deadly NOx emissions and an eight percent Carbon Monoxide reduction. Economically, Zaeto has demonstrated 20 percent saving on part replacement and a 15-20 percent reduction on maintenance costs.

### What are some trends in the green technology sector in the region?

We see more being done around recycling, reusing, renewing and upcycling. I'm a fan of SET, which has a great unit to 'compost' food waste, keeping it from landfill. The final product can fertilise your garden, and some large hotels use it already. Adrienne Doolan from Green Touches creates Aqueous Ozone to 'clean' and disinfect surfaces. Simple tap water is passed through the small unit to create it - it's brilliant.

### If you could go back, what would you do differently with Zaeto Middle East?

Initially I may have spent too long listening to the wrong people. In the end, people only know what they know, so this can sometimes hamper your progression.

### What is the best advice anyone has ever given you?

Say hello to people - in business and in life. Phones do just as much to kill an unknown opportunity by having your head down in a crowd, than they do to deliver one to your inbox. They might be out of your work environment today, but tomorrow a valuable asset.

### What is it like being an entrepreneur?

Being an entrepreneur is like jumping off a cliff and building your wings on the way down. You have to believe in yourself. There is no "off switch" so learning how to manage this is key. You will experience the highest 'high' you've ever had, but at the same time the lowest 'low' when things don't go to plan. That being said, I would not change a thing as I have never felt more alive than the last 18 months. **CEO**



# HIGH FLIER

FROM ENVIRONMENTALISTS, TRADE WARS AND THE A380 TO FLYING CARS, PILOTLESS PLANES AND BOEING'S 737 MAX PROBLEMS, **GUILLAUME FAURY**, THE NEW CEO OF EUROPEAN GIANT AIRBUS, IS NOT AFRAID TO SHY AWAY FROM THE BIG ISSUES FACING THE AVIATION SECTOR  
**BY SHANE MCGINLEY**





**W**hen *The Jetsons* cartoon burst onto TV screens in 1962, with its flying cars, robot maids and holograms, it was seen as the futuristic counterpart to the popular Stone Age setting of *The Flintstones*.

The cartoon was set 100 years in the future, but the idea of it has always intrigued me and I have doggedly asked every senior aviation executive I have interviewed over the last decade whether this may become a reality soon or if I'll have to wait until 2062 to be like George Jetson and jump in a bubble pod to work.

Sitting down in a Paris office with Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury was no different, but the answer certainly took me by surprise.

"Yes, it's an area for us," Faury confirms. No fluffy futuristic navel-gazing or vague generalisations like I was used to, just straight to the point and a definitive confirmation that things are happening and very soon.

"We think there will be a business; it's coming because there is a convergence of needs and technologies. The needs are coming from the fact that we have more than 50 percent of the world's population living in urban areas - it's going to 60 percent in 2030 and 70 percent in 2050. The world is a city, more and more, at least for human beings," he says.

### Putting his money where his mouth is

Flying cars pose a number of challenges such as security, fuel and safety, but it is something the Airbus chief confirms he is actively pumping money into in order to make it a reality. "Yes, it needs to be decarbonised for pollution reasons more than CO<sub>2</sub>, so it needs to be electrically powered. It's not long distance so it can fly with batteries, we are pursuing this avenue. We think that safety is absolutely critical, it's even more than any other aviation device because it's flying over cities. That's maybe the next step."

"If a coal plant powers the electricity then it's powered by coal. It's not what we want to do in aviation, we want to decarbonise aviation"

Airbus is synonymous with developing the massive A380 double decker jumbo jet (more about its fate later) so why is it now focussing on smaller urban flying people carriers? "Another reason why we're very serious about urban



**"WE DELIVER IN THE US. WE NEED A GLOBAL, OPEN TRADE SCHEME FOR AVIATION, THAT'S THE WAY IT WORKS AND THE DAY WE STOP IT, WE WILL DESTROY VALUE, BIG TIME, FOR ALL PLAYERS"**

air mobility and those vehicles is because it's a playground for us for decarbonised technologies. We can test on a small scale... And then we can scale up to bigger planes when we think we have something. So it's a way to prepare the decarbonised technologies of large planes on a smaller scale and much faster and with less money," he explains.

Faury was appointed CEO in April this year and the decarbonisation issue has been a top priority for him. A former automobile executive, having worked at French carmaker Peugeot from 2009 to 2013, he observed how electric cars took hold among motor fans but he believes the answer is not so simple when it comes to commercial aviation, which explains why they are looking to trial the technology on smaller flying cars first.

"Electricity is just a way to carry power, it's not a source of energy. If a coal plant powers the electricity then it's powered by coal. It's not what we want to do in aviation, we want to decarbonise aviation. Therefore, we need liquid fuels because the energy density of kerosene is around 12,000 watt hours per kilogram. A battery is 200 to 500 watt hours per kilogram, it doesn't work for us unless you're going very short distances for urban mobility," he says.

In terms of a timeline, Faury says the industry wants to be in a position by 2050 where CO<sub>2</sub> emission levels are half what they were in 2005. But, like *The Jetsons* and their flying cars, Faury says these cleaner, greener planes are not a pipe dream and could also soon be a reality. "We believe it will take three, four, five years to develop some of those technologies, then [we'll] start the development somewhere in the middle of the second half of the decade to have planes entering into service before 2035 and [then] start to decarbonise big time from 2035 onwards," he says.

### Flying into a political storm

For environmentalists, aviation has become the whipping boy and everyone from Prince Harry to actress Emma Thompson have been branded hypocrites for campaigning about climate change but then using private jets to travel to events. Faury thinks it is unfair that plane travel has been made a target.

"The impact of planes on the environment



↑ **At the helm** Faury was appointed CEO of the aviation giant in April this year

is quite new and to some extent is quite unfair because we are 2 percent to 2.5 percent of the CO2 emissions. It's recently become very trendy to attack people travelling by plane. There is a lot of lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of data, that's the part that I don't like and think we need to do more in terms of explaining the fact that the fuel consumption per passenger per 100 kilometres on the [Airbus] 321 is two litres, which is significantly less than a car. So, if you have to go from Paris to Marseille, it's much better to fly than to go by car."

So does Faury believe the aviation industry just needs to get better PR? "I was in the car business 10 years ago and the scapegoat was the diesel. Things are changing with time, I think we need to explain better as an industry what our carbon footprint is. People who are flying in planes are challenged by some people who are using internet, telephones and so on... They don't realise these industries are far more carbon emitting than aviation. It's always easier to put the challenge on others. It's the same with heating systems and basic things we do every day, and we don't fly every day. So I think we need to look at the global picture, aviation is 1/50th of the CO2 emissions, so let's put the level of energy on aviation that is consistent with aviation."

### Trump card

When it comes to geopolitics, Faury does not shy away from addressing these issues, especially with President Donald Trump's 'America First' nationalist approach. While this may be seen as bonus for rival Boeing, Faury

**"SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AIRLINES ARE BASED IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THEY'RE ALSO CONNECTING THE WORLD BECAUSE THE MIDDLE EAST IS ALMOST THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD IN MANY PERSPECTIVES"**

says the trade war issues between the US and Europe are not clear cut and a large percentage of Airbus planes and parts are made and sourced in the US.

"First, it's not something we control. But it's something that we can influence. I think there was a big misunderstanding on how the supply chain of aviation is working... I would like to remind that 40 percent of what we buy

on an Airbus that goes to the US, 40 percent on any Airbus comes from the US. We procure 40 percent of what we buy from the US. We procure from the US, we manufacture in the US... We deliver in the US. We need a global, open trade scheme for aviation, that's the way it works and the day we stop it, we will destroy value, big time, for all players.

"This is what I have tried to explain, that raising the tariffs on both sides of the Atlantic will be lose-lose for everybody. What we're trying to achieve is both the US and the EU coming to the table to have a negotiation, a settlement, before it impacts aviation, travel, industries, jobs, which we think would be a pity," he adds.

### Winging it on Brexit

Similarly, closer to his home base, Faury believes a no-deal Brexit would be bad news for Airbus as the company has 14,000 staff in the United Kingdom and all of its wings are manufactured in Britain.

"We hope the UK will remain competitive for us because we like our presence in the UK, it's a very strong industrial base, but if there is uncertainty or if there is a bad ecosystem, degrading competitiveness on the long-term, we could make different investments," he says.

"We believe a no-deal Brexit would not be favourable for a good long-term relationship... If we had to make a decision today to invest in a new wing, it would be very difficult to make the decision to invest in the UK, with the huge level of uncertainty. Fortunately, we are not in that situation. But if in two years from now and



## AIRBUS CEO ON... THE DUBAI AIRSHOW

“Some of the most important airlines are based in the Middle East and they’re also connecting the world because the Middle East is almost the centre of the world in many perspectives. So, it’s always a very good place to understand what’s happening on a world scale... It is one of the shows that has a really global scale.”

### Carbon offsetting

“I think we have to improve the transparency and the way this offsetting market can be understood... I think more and more people are ready to offset their flight. The quality of the offset today is still a big debate. I have looked at it personally, not as the CEO of a company but as an individual, and it’s very confusing. We need, as an industry, to get maturity on what is a good offset, how do we spend the money appropriately to decarbonise what we are emitting.”

### Pilotless planes

“No, it will come, step-by-step. Many steps are required before it becomes a reality. The first one is technology, it’s not yet there but we are making progress. The second one is regulations. Once you have a technology how do you certify, how do you make sure it is safe? And the third one will be public acceptance. And this one might take even more time.”

we still have to make a decision and it’s still very unclear, it puts the UK industrial base at risk. So it has to come to an end,” he believes.

### Max exposure

Another area it could be perceived that Airbus may gain the upper hand on rival Boeing is the issues the American planemaker has had with the 737 Max, which was grounded by authorities after two fatal crashes in the space of five months that killed 346 people. Despite this, Faury says Airbus has not taken advantage of this and seen any change in its own order book, due to the long-term nature of plane manufacturing cycles.

“On the short-term there is no way for us to take any benefit from the situation. We stick with the commitment we have made to our customers, who are in the ramp up stage, which is quite difficult in the number of planes and in the complexity of the planes... In the long-term it might be different, but in the short-term, in the last six months, there has been nothing positive,” he admits.

When it comes to the Middle East and Airbus, the big story is, of course, the announcement earlier this year that the beloved superjumbo – the A380 – would stop deliveries within the next two years.

“Following a review of its operations, and in light of developments in aircraft and engine technologies, Emirates is reducing its A380 orderbook from 162 to 123 aircraft,” Airbus said in a statement in February. “As a consequence and given the lack of order backlog with other

airlines, Airbus will cease deliveries of the A380 in 2021.”

Faury is pragmatic about the winding down of the world’s biggest superjumbo. “I love the plane and I think many passengers enjoy flying on the 380, it’s a great plane for passengers. But the world has changed, the environment is more important, specifically fuel consumption is making the life of four engine planes more difficult than it used to be in the past. This being said, some airlines manage to have a business case that works... Emirates is an airline that has managed to make fantastic use of the 380 in the way that they have structured their network and we really are thankful for that.”

Faury believes the trend is moving more towards point-to-point routes for airlines, but the A380 is not going to disappear altogether and he believes that on some busy routes it has a bright future for a long time to come.

“There are exceptions. One is going to London, when you’re really limited by slots and therefore having a big capacity really makes sense. Therefore I think we can anticipate that there will be a lot of A380s flying to London for the decade to come, maybe more than what we see today.”

So while I may soon realise my dream of flying in a bubble like *The Jetsons*, it seems travel further ahead to other planets and solar systems will remain a cartoonish fantasy as Faury is characteristically blunt that space travel is not high on Airbus’ agenda. “No it’s not a priority for us. Our priority is connecting people and going environmentally friendly.” Those alien introductions will just have to wait then. **CEO**



# A SECOND CHANGE

**PAUL EVANS**, CEO OF SOLUTIONS LEISURE GROUP, HAS WRITTEN A BOOK, 'WHEN I WOKE UP', WHICH INCLUDES SOME LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES THAT MIGHT MAKE HOLLYWOOD SCRIPTWRITERS SALIVATE. HERE HE TELLS **CEO MIDDLE EAST** HOW THE OLD ADAGE, 'WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER', DEFINITELY APPLIES TO HIM AND HIS BUSINESS DEALINGS TODAY **BY GAVIN GIBBON**

**F**ast-forwarding at great speed through a recorded conversation on my dictaphone with Paul Evans, CEO of Solutions Leisure Group, I can just about make out only a handful of words from the hour-long interview, "bullying", "suicide", "death", "life" and "business".

Regardless of how he wants to play it down, Evans's 45 years on this planet have been anything but normal. But, as he tells *CEO Middle East*, everything that's happened to him and every decision he has made, has led to his current role as boss of one of Dubai's most successful F&B and entertainment companies.

He says: "I don't regret a single road I've been down, as painful as they may have been. I've been on some very painful journeys. Every one of those roads was there for a purpose and that purpose is to be the 45-year-old that sits here today, knowing what I know, experiencing what I've experienced, being able to teach my

children and my loved ones and my friends and my colleagues and the people who work for me, not to make the same silly mistakes that I made."

Solutions Leisure Group, which turned over \$150m last year, operates Lock, Stock & Barrel (LSB), Asia Asia, STK, Wavehouse, Karma Kafe, Q43, The Central and District.

Evans' story is a cyclical one of failure to success, to failure, back to success and repeat. Don't take my word for it, read his book, *When I Woke Up*, described as 'One man's unbreakable spirit to survive'.

It would be fair to say his life is currently on an upward curve, with two LSBs in Dubai (Barsha Heights and JBR) and a third one pencilled in to open in Downtown next year, along with another in Abu Dhabi. LSB opened in Russia at the start of 2019 and 2020 promises a venue in the centre of London and possibly a further spot in Amsterdam.

His enthusiasm is infectious and it's easy to

see why he made so much money as a college student selling discounted sportswear; how he became top salesman at Northwest Securities Bank and then GE Capital; how he launched the biggest marina development in Hurghada, Egypt; and how he founded his current empire with little more than \$20,000 in his pocket.

However, as the laws of gravity state, what goes up must come down. And Evans' downs have been lower than most. He was horrifically bullied at school, which led to an attempted suicide aged just 14. It seemed like he had overcome this trauma in his formative years, with high-profile career successes defining his life as an adult.

However, it seems that his demons were not quite done with him, and amidst the trappings of an outwardly successful life, they began to resurface, characterised by increasingly frequent and self-destructive behaviour.

As understated as ever, Evans opens the



↑ **Popular venues** Solutions Leisure Group operates Lock, Stock & Barrel (LSB), Asia Asia, STK, Wavehouse, Karma Kafe, Q43, The Central and District

## “I WAS JUST NOT A NICE HUMAN BEING AND I NEEDED SOMETHING TO KNOCK ME OUT OF THAT PATH”

interview by saying: “To sit here and say I’ve had an incredible life I find incredibly difficult because it’s just been my life. I’ve had a few bumps and it’s been an interesting journey. There’s some funny stories, some interesting stories and I think everyone who reads it (the book) can be the judge of whether they consider that to be incredible or not.”

What Evans describes as “bumps”, others may call giant peaks. What he classes as “interesting” you could substitute the word, terrifying. And “funny”? Are you mad?

One event in this rich tapestry of a life, which stands out more than others, is a coma and Evans’ near-death experience while in Egypt, the result of his increasingly unhealthy lifestyle and destructive life choices, as he readily admits.

“I was drinking, I was selfish, I was self-indulgent. I was just not a nice human being and I needed something to knock me out of that path. It gave me something,” he says. His

lifestyle eventually led to being hospitalised with pancreatitis, which resulted in a coma. Fortunately, it was not the end, but a beginning.

“Ever since I woke up that day I’ve tried to live my life in the best possible way. I was a father within 18 months of waking up from that coma and I never really wanted children. It’s the greatest gift anyone can ever be given and I absolutely adore and dote on those two boys of mine. They’re destined for incredible things. They’re the reason I survived because they’re going to go off to do ground-breaking stuff.

“It’s given me an empathy and a passion to get involved in some stuff that can help other people because I’ve experienced it. In today’s world we’re running around trying to be men, there’s so many challenges, so many difficulties that we have in today’s society, the pressures, am I a good husband, am I good dad, am I spending enough time with my children, am I working hard enough? It’s just relentless.”

He’s certainly working hard enough and reveals he’s worked, on average, 14-hour days since he woke up from his coma.

And he believes this is one of the secrets to the success of Solutions Leisure Group so far in what is an incredibly crowded marketplace.

The industry as a whole has seen an increase of 20 percent in demand, as more entrepreneurs enter the market. And this is expected to expand further, with analysts at KPMG forecasting the number of food and beverage venues in the UAE to swell to over 19,000 by 2020.

But Evans says: “It’s easy to crawl back in your shell and say it’s quiet and it’s challenging. It’s never been easy here. Who wants it to be easy? I don’t. I like the fact that it’s tough, but then that makes you work harder.

“There’s not a single F&B guy owning a company today who’s going to bed at midnight, waking up at 2 and then spending seven hours on his emails. There’s not one guy.”

Given his tumultuous life so far, it may seem a ridiculous question to ask where Evans sees himself in five years’ time, but that enthusiasm bursts forward again. “I think we’ll probably have 20 Lock Stocks around the globe. As we’ve gone from being Dubai’s leading F&B company, my next plan is to take us onto the world stage and be considered to be one of the leading F&B providers on the planet,” he says.

There’s plenty of time for a sequel, although family and friends will be hoping for a little less drama. **CEO**



# HOW KIBSONS TOOK ON THE SUPERMARKETS AND WON

**HALIMA JUMANI**, HEAD OF OPERATIONS AT THE ONLINE FRUIT, VEGETABLE, DAIRY AND MEAT DISTRIBUTOR REVEALS HOW THE COMPANY HAS GROWN IN THE FACE OF BIG CHALLENGES



**T**here's nothing wrong with a little healthy competition – and it doesn't get much healthier than when you're talking about fruit and vegetables.

Kibsons was founded in 1982 in Dubai's Fruit and Vegetable Market. For almost four decades the family-owned business served the emirate and beyond, sourcing produce from all over the world. The rapid expansion of the business saw more and more shops acquired and staffing numbers grow from an initial 20 up to 600.

However, the growth of supermarkets and hypermarkets began to take its toll on the bottom line as they were able to be more aggressive in their negotiations and pricing structures. Head of operations, Halima Jumani, tells *CEO Middle East*: "Our distribution department, whereby we catered to the different supermarkets in the country, was struggling to break even. This was because of the bargaining power of the supermarkets getting stronger. At that stage we were forced to look at our business from a strategic point of view and we went back to our basic strategy and asked ourselves, 'what is our value proposition?'

That was simple, our value proposition was that we were the first points of contact when it came to quality and price.

We asked ourselves, 'who is the real customer out there who would appreciate this value proposition and could benefit from it?', 'is the supermarket the right customer for this?'

### Blueberries: the new popcorn

Something had to change. And so the seed was planted. It was nurtured purely by chance as Jumani settled down to watch a movie one evening. She explains:

"One night I was watching a movie with my husband Jamal and I remember I had four tubs of blueberries next to me, my 'popcorn' for watching a movie. I turned round and said to Jamal, 'how many people in Dubai could sit with four tubs of blueberries and treat that as popcorn?' Even if you are a CEO of a company and have a great salary, AED22 a punnet in Spinneys? You could afford it, but you would budget it for the week. Wouldn't it be nice if we could extend this privilege to all those kids out there, whose parents actually understand

**"OUR DISTRIBUTION DEPARTMENT, WAS STRUGGLING TO BREAK EVEN. THIS WAS BECAUSE OF THE BARGAINING POWER OF THE SUPERMARKETS GETTING STRONGER"**





a new 130,000 square foot head office and cold storage warehouse in Dubai will see that number increase further to 10,000 orders per day.

The new facility will triple distribution capacity, which currently stands at more than 250,000 kilograms of fresh produce daily and it will also triple its meat processing capabilities. While the new head office is expected to create more than 200 new jobs, taking the total workforce up to 600 employees.

### Cautious expansion

But Jumani admits it may not be big enough.

“This facility was conceived about five years ago at the time when we did not have home delivery as part of our foreseeable future. It was primarily designed for our wholesale segment of the business. When we moved into the facility, given the fact that home delivery had become so huge, a piece of the facility had to be dedicated to home delivery, which we are very pleased with because it has allowed us to grow, physically into this space.

Having said that, it deserves its own area, which is customised especially for home delivery, so we could take it to the next level of optimisation and we could have a custom-built facility, exclusively for this segment.

We are thinking about that very seriously. We have many ideas and we have a whole plan almost complete and now we’re working towards how we can make that idea come to life.”

Jumani reveals plans to expand into product categories, including pet care, home care and baby care.

However, she says that while regional expansion is a goal in the future, she’s happy to watch the business grow slowly.

“The journey is so important,” she says. “Rather than agree to just go out there and multiply and open something in Saudi or somewhere else. I think we really want to be good at what we do and hold ourselves accountable to the originally promise that we started out with. If we lose that core, I think something about Kibsons changes and that’s not something we want.” **ceo**

the value of healthy lifestyles like we do. What started off as a service for friends, from a Excel spreadsheet, quickly grew into a basic website and then into the makings of the delivery service as we know it today.

One issue that weighed heavily on Jumani’s mind, however, was finding employment for the staff who were employed in merchandising Kibsons to the large supermarket chains.

“When we decided to walk away from the supermarket business, what bothered me was how get the staff other jobs, because Bangladeshis do not get a fresh visa unless they go in freezones. These guys have been with us for years and I knew so much about them, to have them go back home and suffer was something I was not happy with. The home delivery segment gave them a job. Initially it ticked my boxes of giving 50 people a job and giving families a chance or an option for healthy living and I was very happy.”

### Hitting targets

An evening of celebrations to mark the start of a new era ensued as Jumani and her husband

treated staff to a party in Mirdif City Centre Mall. At the end of the night, Jumani explains, her husband agreed to throw another bash once they achieved 1,000 deliveries a day.

It was an ambitious target, one that Jumani felt was possibly too ambitious.

She explains: “I remember on the way back home saying to Jamal, ‘if you didn’t want to give a party to them, you could have just said, why set them a benchmark that’s so high, they will never achieve’. He said ‘we are going to achieve it’. I don’t know if he really believed it or he kept me motivated. But whether it was the next February or the February after, on February 14 there was a Bollywood offer at the theme park (Dubai Parks & Resorts).

We did achieve the 1,000 deliveries-a-day and I took all my employees, all the drivers, all the pickers for a fantastic party. We had a whole day of fun.”

That target has since been dwarfed, with the online fruit, vegetable, dairy and meat distributor currently fulfilling over 2,500 home delivery orders per day. While



# RENAISSANCE

# MAN

RIYAD BANK'S NEW CEO, **TARIO AL-SADHAN**, IS TASKED WITH TAKING THE COMPANY INTO A DIGITAL FUTURE AHEAD OF VISION 2030. IT'S NO SMALL FEAT, WRITES ALICIA BULLER





**T**he appointment of Riyadh Bank's newest CEO could not have come at a more critical time.

As the kingdom gears up for its colossal economical transformation by 2030, Tariq Al-Sadhan is tasked with supporting the country's radical privatisation drive. In many ways, this kingdom's ambitious plan is good news for Riyadh Bank because local economic confidence is buoyed by the nation's massive government support initiative.

In an exclusive interview, Sadhan tells *CEO Middle East* that he is confident of what the future will bring.

"We are locally aligning ourselves with Vision 2030. The fast progress of the economy of Saudi Arabia needs a lot from the banking industry," he says.

A man of no small ambition, the CEO adds, "We are working towards being the number one bank in the kingdom. We are positioning Riyadh to be among the top players in the market across corporates, SMEs, and financial technology."

As well as joining Riyadh at the cusp of the kingdom's economic revolution, Al-Sadhan arrived amid the bank's discussions to merge with the National Commercial Bank (NCB). The CEO joined in February this year, just a few months after Riyadh's decision to enter talks with NCB.

Riyadh Bank and NCB, which counts Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund the Public Investment Fund among its shareholders, announced intentions to merge in December last year. If the proposed union goes ahead, it will create a financial institution with 748bn riyals in assets.

The potential deal would be the second major bank merger in the kingdom, following that of Saudi British Bank and Alawwal Bank. Riyadh Bank is currently the third-biggest

## ALIGNING WITH VISION 2030

**We are positioning Riyadh to be among the top players in the market across corporates, SMEs, and financial technology.**



retail bank in the kingdom in revenue terms, with a 7.6 per cent market share. NCB is the second-biggest, with a share of 22.2 per cent, while Al Rajhi Bank leads the retail market with a 30.6 per cent share.

**Profit boom**

But Al-Sadha's immediate concern has been steering the bank towards optimum profits – a goal which he has achieved by some margin this year.

Riyad reported a 59 per cent year-on-year jump in its third-quarter net profit as operating income rose.

Net profit for the three-month period ending September 30 climbed to 1.51 billion Saudi riyals (Dh1.47bn), the lender said in a regulatory statement to the Tadawul stock exchange, where its shares trade.

“Our strong performance reflects the dedication and focus of our management team to make every effort to achieve the bank’s strategic objectives,” Al-Sadha said. In the nine-month period ending September 30, the bank’s net profit climbed 63 per cent year-on-year to 4.49bn riyals, mainly driven by higher net commission income and fee income.

Riyad Bank’s loans and advances grew to 166.27bn riyals, a 14 per cent year-on-year rise, while customer deposits advanced 11.5 per cent to 177.67bn riyals.

Given the bank’s strong performance this year, the CEO said he is positive about continued exemplary results in 2019. “Because of the results we’ve had so far, I feel confident this will be continued in the coming year,” he says.

**Digital drive**

Al-Sadha says one of the biggest challenges weighing on his shoulders is the rapid evolution of digital banking, both globally and regionally.

“To stay in the lead, we need to keep up with what’s going on around us,” he says. “There’s no doubt that digital banking is the future.” The CEO says Riyad is working around-the-clock to advance its services to suit the needs of Saudi’s fast-moving environment and digitally savvy customers.

**ACCORDING TO AL-SADHA, THE LAUNCH OF SAUDI ARABIA’S FIRST CONTACTLESS PAYMENT WRISTBAND IS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF RIYAD BANK’S COMMITMENT TO “AN ENHANCED AND DISTINCTIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE”**



And these words are not just lip service: Riyad was the first bank in the country to launch the contactless card and the first to activate Apple Pay.

The bank has even launched an innovative wristband payment system. The bracelets are linked to the user’s existing debit or credit account and offer the freedom to make swift ‘tap and go’ payments with wearables. Riyad has also launched a contactless sticker which can be fixed to the back of any cell phone to turn it into a secure contactless payment device.

According to Al-Sadha, the launch of Saudi Arabia’s first contactless payment wristband is a prime example of Riyad Bank’s commitment to “an enhanced and distinctive customer experience”.

But digital banking is not just about consumers; it requires deep digital thinking that permeates the heart of banking culture and innovation. Al-Sadha is aware that making such a huge digital leap requires tech-savvy partners combined with fresh,

disruptive thinking. One of the initiatives closest to the innovative CEO’s heart is the Digital Partnership Programme (DPP) that he launched in October this year. The DPP is linked a venture capital fund of SAR 100 million (\$26.6 million).

Announced on the sidelines of the Future Investment Initiative 2019 (FII) in Riyadh, the fund aims to forge strategic partnerships with entrepreneurs and technology companies, and provide solutions and support in the field of financial technology. It also targets creating new industries and innovative business models.

Al-Sadha says Riyad will be partnering with digital startups and entrepreneurs to enhance digital services and expedite the process of launching new products.

The CEO also points out that the fund aims to empower innovation and support entrepreneurs through Research and Development (R&D), in addition to the funds. The Fintech Fund will look to defining a proper mechanism for the country’s fintech



TO STAY IN THE LEAD,  
WE NEED TO KEEP UP  
WITH WHAT'S GOING  
ON AROUND US.  
DIGITAL BANKING IS  
THE FUTURE

‘sandbox’ experimental environment and further support entrepreneurship. Al-Sadhan says the establishment of such a fund is critical because of “the movement of the kingdom towards a new economy that is spurred by the digital world.”

#### Facing the future

As Al-Sadhan takes Riyad bank into the future, he constantly has his eye on the needs of the market. “It’s all about understanding what people want and having clear visions and ambitions for the team,” he says. “Ultimately, it is about the right leadership.” Going forward, Al-Sadhan says that the

↑ **Riyad Bank** is leading the way in Saudi Arabia, with an immersive, customer-focused brand strategy.

opening up of Saudi Arabia will present its own challenges as well as boons. As the kingdom opens up for international business, the CEO is mindful of the many challenges that globalisation will bring, such as increased competition and fast-moving innovation.

The CEO says he is always on the look out for lessons from abroad that can help Saudi Arabia on its digital journey. “We have to take the world around us into consideration by looking at their experiments and experience. We have to keep our business.” **CEO**



# IS YOUR TALENT FIT FOR THE FUTURE?

YOUR BUSINESS IS ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR TALENT. BUT ONCE YOU'VE HIRED THE BEST, HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT YOUR ELITE WORKFORCE STAYS THAT WAY?

**JONATHAN ROOK**, DIRECTOR OF SOVA MIDDLE EAST, SHARES HIS INSIGHT



↑ **Proficient** Jonathan Rook, director of Sova Middle East, is a chartered occupational psychologist and associate fellow of the British Psychological Society. He holds a master's degree and postgraduate certificate in Occupational Psychology and leads Sova Assessment in the Gulf region

**S**ova was founded in 2015 by well-known innovator in the world of psychometric assessment, Dr Alan Bourne. With a team comprising organisational psychologists, product developers and technical experts, they are a leading innovator in the assessment market, providing a future-focussed view of people and potential for recruitment and development at every career stage.

Getting the right talent in the business is, for some leaders, even more important than having the right business strategy. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, is famous for his candid, talent centric leadership style: "This whole game of business revolves around one thing, you build the best team, you win." His strategy is built on the theory that successful talent management is critical to business performance and therefore success in a business's chosen markets.

Ensuring that your talent management strategy aligns to your business strategy is, of course, key. However, the biggest issue facing anyone designing a talent

management strategy for business success today is how much organisations are changing and have to change in order to succeed. This is particularly prevalent in the Middle East where the speed of change is exponential, driven by public sector as well as private, for example, the UAE government's work in activating their strategy for Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The 'gap' between the pace of transformational change (from forces such as AI and digitalisation) and business capability means that leaders have work to do to ensure the people side of change is a success. They also have work to do to ensure those people, and therefore their organisations, are agile enough to deal with that transformational change.

To achieve organisational agility, we must put people at the heart of organisation design, aiming for structures where no one group is privileged and where power is distributed in egalitarian and evidence-based ways. This is achieved by optimising four key elements of organisational agility – leadership (leading and managing complex

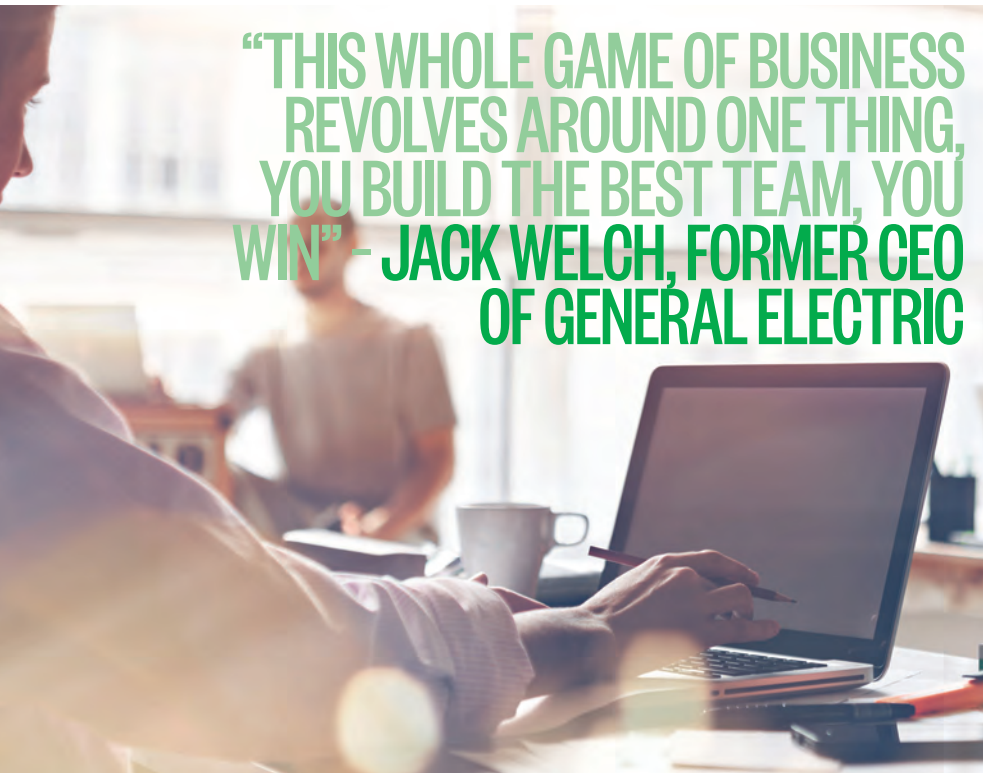
change), culture (building connection, clarity and visible commitment), business (structural, physical and operational flexibility) and career (agile talent and performance systems).

The most logical and natural place to start to introduce this agility into a workforce is when hiring staff, quickly followed by ensuring that staff are then assessed against the same values during performance management. Traditional approaches of hiring talent using biased recruitment techniques (such as unstructured interviews or tests which are difficult to understand) has changed. We are now seeing a desire from organisations to use the latest technology in recruitment, and 2020 should start to deliver tech solutions that are outcomes driven, compliant, joined-up and strategic. HRDs will be able to optimise process, deliver cost savings, increase diversity and improve speed to hire and quality of hire, and at the same time ensure legal compliance.

Increasingly, organisations are asking for customised digital assessment solutions that



**“THIS WHOLE GAME OF BUSINESS  
REVOLVES AROUND ONE THING,  
YOU BUILD THE BEST TEAM, YOU  
WIN” - JACK WELCH, FORMER CEO  
OF GENERAL ELECTRIC**



fit their needs – by measuring talent against their own requirements, this increases the quality of talent within a business and in turn, business success. It also improves the ability of an organisation to hire for agility and other key future skills that complement the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, for example, interpersonal and analytical skills, having a growth mindset, intuition and morality.

**Five questions to ask if your talent assessment process is fit for the future**

**1. Are your assessments aligned with your business objectives?**

Getting the right talent in place from the front line all the way through to leadership has a clear long-term impact on business success, and organisational agility is essential to enable organisations to prosper in today’s fast-paced, digital world.

The connection between the two is ensuring that a talent management strategy is put in place that links inseparably with an agile business strategy. You can do this by ensuring it is future-focussed, outcome-

driven (aligned to business goals) and data rich, and once defined, begins at recruitment and follows the employee journey through to line management, productivity and retention. Modern assessments can be more precise and targeted through the use of assessment content that is designed specifically to measure those competencies or skill requirements specific to your organisation.

Through the use of tailored assessment content, it is now possible to reduce the time required to complete assessments, whilst at the same time increasing the scientific robustness of the assessment given that it is measuring those things specific to your organisation.

**2. Is the way in which you attract talent into the business time efficient and cost effective?**

Increasingly, organisations deploy an online filtering process of some sort to ensure a faster process. This could include realistic job previews which are extremely useful in helping to establish culture and values fit to your organisation; they can also help candidates to de-select themselves from the hiring process.

**3. Are your assessments engaging and a positive reflection of your brand?**

Even if candidates are unsuccessful in their applications, ensuring that they have a positive experience of the organisational brand is key. Technology means that it is now possible to make assessments, whether online or face to face, engaging in terms brand look and feel and the use of digital technology to enable a seamless and positive experience.

It is also vital that candidates receive appropriate and targeted feedback on their performance and to understand where they stand in the application process – automated candidate feedback reports and reports giving scores against organisational requirements can ensure feedback is appropriate and talent professionals can deliver it quickly and accurately.

**4. Are you measuring the right things and are they aligned to your future needs?**

Often, if organisations have decided to use assessments beyond the traditional unstructured interview, such as a personality or cognitive assessment, there is still a risk that it might not be measuring the right things. For industry 4.0, it is important to assess and measure the psychological attributes that are important to your organisation – this will differ depending on the role and organisational requirements, but it is vital to ensure that you are measuring the attributes to future proof your business.

**5. Are you able to understand the data from your assessments and link it to job performance and organisational success?**

Organisations have struggled to make the connections between how people are performing in jobs to how they were recruited. It’s important to understand an employee journey in the same way as you would a customer journey.

If you join up all the processes and capture the data in one platform from the whole recruitment journey, not only do you then have the ability to start automating it, but you are able to start applying the learning through human and AI to your talent management and planning as well. [cfo](#)

# PLEASURE



-  STYLE
-  WATCHES
-  TRAVEL
-  ACCESSORIES

 BREITLING TAKES OFF

## BREITLING CELEBRATES UAE AEROBATICS TEAM WITH LIMITED-EDITION AVENGER TIMEPIECE

FURSAN AL EMARAT JOIN THE SWISS WATCHMAKER TO UNVEIL A WRISTWATCH DEDICATED TO THEIR AEROBATIC SKILLS

**A**VIATION-LOVING WATCHMAKER BREITLING PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE UAE'S OWN AERODYNAMICS TEAM WITH A LIMITED-EDITION AVENGER CHRONOGRAPH.

Produced in a run of just 250, the 43mm timepiece shines a light on the skill of the UAE pilots who fly under the name of Fursan Al Emarat (The Emirati Knights), and have been demonstrating their prowess in high-speed formation flying since 2010. Their planes are painted black and gold to represent oil and sands and are sometimes spotted above the skies of the Emirates on occasions such as UAE National Day, where they paint the sky in plumes of white, red, black and green smoke, the colours of the UAE flag. The team flies Italian jet fighters called Aermacchi MB-339s.

"Breitling and Fursan Al Emarat make ideal partners, both enjoying a shared passion for aviation and precision. The Fursan Al Emarat team has been wearing the latest models from Breitling since 2011. We are proud to take to the skies wearing the aviation inspired Avenger Chronograph 43, completed with the Fursan Al Emarat logo," said Fursan Al Emarat leader, Nasser Al Obaidli, during the recent Dubai Airshow, where the timepiece was unveiled.

The Avenger Chronograph 43 Fursan Al

Emarat Limited Edition is a classic pilot's watch which has a 43mm stainless steel case with a unidirectional ratcheted bezel. The Fursan Al Emarat logo is showcased on a black dial and presented on a stainless steel bracelet with a folding clasp. The watch is powered by a self-winding Breitling Caliber 13 mechanical chronograph movement and features a power reserve of around 48 hours. A true tool watch, the watch is a COSC-certified chronometer resistant to 300 metres and features a dial that is legible and functional, with Super-Luminova coating the hands and indexes; the classic pilot's watch also features a unidirectional ratcheted bezel – the Fursan Al Emarat logo is showcased on a black dial and presented on a stainless steel bracelet with folding clasp.

"Like the Navitimer and Aviator 8 collections, the Avenger has its own personality. It was created as a reliable companion for aerial adventurers who want to achieve something outstanding and unexpected. We are proud to include Fursan Al Emarat in this elite line up and to mark the team's global success," said Aed Adwan, Managing Director of Breitling MEA. The watch will be landing in the UAE at the beginning of 2020.





**“THE AVENGER HAS ITS OWN PERSONALITY. IT WAS CREATED AS A RELIABLE COMPANION FOR AERIAL ADVENTURERS WHO WANT TO ACHIEVE SOMETHING OUTSTANDING AND UNEXPECTED”**





YOU'VE REACHED THE **C-SUITE**, THE CORNER OFFICE IS YOURS AND LIFE IS WONDERFUL. WHAT BETTER WAY TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SUCCESSES THAN BY DIVING INTO THE RAREFIED WORLD OF LUXURY YACHTING. DG MARINE'S CHAIRMAN **GREGORY DELHAYE** TELLS GEO MIDDLE EAST ABOUT THE VARIOUS OPTIONS FOR THOSE WITH A HANKERING FOR THE OPEN SEAS  
**BY JOLA CHUDY**

# FLOTATION FANTASY

**L**unched in 2016, DG Marine, a member of Delhaye Gregory Group, provides unrivalled quality and service to yacht owners, investors and adventurers. Its expertise in all things yacht-related speaks to both those for whom maritime experiences are a fundamental lifestyle, as well as those interested in dipping their foot in the water for the first time. In addition to yacht sales, the company also offers luxury yacht charters in Dubai and the Mediterranean.

Helmed by Gregory Delhaye, DG Marine has been expanding into new markets and launching new brands for the yachting industry; the company is also the official representative for Italian yacht brand Mangusta in the GCC region. Mangusta yachts range from 100 feet (30 metres) to 200 feet (60 metres).

**At one end you can organise spectacular charters for a business event, at the other help the purchase of a dream yacht. Can you give insight into these elements of the business?**

At DG Marine we do organise some exceptional yacht charters locally in Dubai and around in the Mediterranean. We have access to a fleet of approximately 100 yachts in Dubai and more than 1,500 vessels on the Mediterranean charter market. Charters in Dubai are usually aiming to celebrate a particular event or special occasion.

You can cruise around the Burj Al Arab and Palm Jumeirah enjoying five-star service and catering. We can also request the services of a trendy band or particular singer for the occasion upon budget. Mediterranean yacht charters generally are longer in length (most of the time a full week is spent onboard). Charter in Mediterranean is much more part of the lifestyle of a loyal clientele who naturally associates yachting to summer holidays and family time.

**If our readership is in the market for a boat, whether that be a Mangusta or one of the other brands you specialise in, what should they consider?**

Purchasing a yacht must be a well thought



**“PURCHASING A YACHT MUST BE A WELL THOUGHT OUT PROCESS AND POTENTIAL OWNERS MUST ASK THEMSELVES THE RIGHT QUESTIONS”**

out process and potential owners must ask themselves the right questions. Does the person have enough free time to enjoy their yacht? Could chartering be a better option considering the substantial running costs, which is approximately 10 percent of the asking price yearly for a 50-metre yacht?

On the other side, owning a newly built yacht will grant the owner total freedom to define factors on the general layout, interior space and bespoke design. It will also allow them access at any time. Secondly, the owner can also choose to put the yacht on the charter market which will allow him or her to rent the vessel and cover a decent part of the running costs.

**You are the official representative for Mangusta in the GCC region – can you tell our readers about this brand?**

(Overmarine shipyard) has been known for over 30 years for its sporty look maxi open yachts ranging from 30 metres to 50 metres, seeking for owners willing to enjoy high performances and nice speed at sea.

However, over the last 10 years, the company has reached a turning point in its history and corporate strategy with the entry of two very different lines: Mangusta Oceano and Mangusta GranSport.

Those two new lines cover the rest of the 30 metre – 60 metre market. Those are long range propelled multi-deck yachts with higher range, better fuel efficiency as well as speed flexibility.

**Looking at the recent offering at Monaco Yacht Show, the trend for big boats seems only surpassed by the appetite for incredible interiors – are clients becoming more demanding?**

There are different types of clientele when it comes to yachting on the 24-metre plus market. Some clients are looking for interior volume at affordable price; we do find a lot of those clients in the UAE where locals are willing to welcome their extended family and group of friends onboard.

The clientele attending Monaco Yacht Show is, however, different; this show offers on display super yachts of 40 metres and

above. Monaco is very much a brokerage show (carefully used super yachts for sale) where the clientele usually expects a certain standard when it comes to interior as well as a maximise use of the interior space. Those clients are looking for the ideal super yacht to meet their requirements and are keen to sign on the spot for the yacht of their dreams.

**What are some of the key innovations in terms of products?**

As far as key innovations over the last 10 years, engineers always seek for the best performance with less fuel consumption and increased range to meet with the high expectations of the owners. As far as general arrangement is concerned, private balcony in the owner cabins is a must these days, lifts to switch from deck to deck are also more demanded even on triple deck vessels.

Most of the yacht builders now provide owners with a sun area at the rear of the vessel on the lower deck at sea level; this area is called the “beach club”. This space used to be dedicated as a garage and usually accommodate tenders and water toys, in some cases the engines were also occupying a decent part of this space. Mangusta well understood the needs of the owners and fully dedicated this space to a relaxing sunbed area with closer access to the sea and to the water toys for maximum fun.

**UHNW client marketing is very different to even luxury marketing. How do you communicate with this segment?**

The products we are offering automatically put us in touch with the right clientele. In the first stance, we do focus on events attended by HNWI within the industry: yacht shows are a good example (Dubai International Boat Show, Qatar Boat Show, Cannes Yachting Festival, Monaco Yacht Show).

In a second stance, we also do attend non-related events where HNWI are likely to be invited: The *Arabian Business* Awards ceremony that we have sponsored in October this year is another opportunity to get in touch with HNWI and show them what we do. **CEO**



# RAHM'S RACE

GOLFING SUPERSTAR **JON RAHM** TELLS NEIL HALLIGAN ABOUT THE EUPHORIA OF WINNING AT THE RECENT 2019 DP WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, AND WHY BEING A ROLEX TESTIMONEE IS JUST THE ICING ON THE CAKE



**T**he Spaniard rolled in a five-foot putt to clinch the Race to Dubai and DP World Tour Championship, netting the 25-year-old a total of \$5 million in prizemoney, and a season-ending position as world number 3, behind Rory McIlroy and Brooks Koepka.

It was an emotional win for Rahm. Not realising the feat until being told in a post event interview, he emulated the legendary Seve Ballesteros by becoming second ever player from Spain to win the Race to Dubai.

Choking back the emotion, Rahm shook his head in disbelief, barely able to believe he was now in the same company as his hero.

Rahm, though, is no ordinary golfer. For those who have followed his career, there's no surprise in his rise in the sport. There's a stat released recently that compares Rahm's first 89 tournaments with that of Tiger Woods. The 15-time major champion won 13, compared to Rahm's 9. Thereafter, the stats are virtually identical. Rahm's titles are divided between the PGA Tour (3), and the European Tour (6). He admits it has been a balancing act trying to compete in both.

"I want to be a member of both. Unlike most Europeans, I had my start in the PGA Tour. I'm really focused there. I come back for what I can and what I want to play," he says. "I've had more success in the European Tour so I know, mentally, since I grew up in Europe, I am maybe a little more used to European play, but each Tour has got its challenges."

Next year will be one of the busiest ever, with four majors, the Olympics and the Ryder Cup all crammed in between both tours.

"We're going to have to pace ourselves," he says. "It's incredible to think that we might be part of the Olympics. As a golfer, you grow up with hopefully winning Majors or big events and The Ryder Cup. Olympics was never a possibility until four years ago. So, it's a big deal for me. It's the ultimate competition for an athlete. I don't think it gets the recognition it deserves yet because there's been no golf there for a long time, but soon it will. And being called an Olympian is not something that a lot of people can say. It's a select club."

The same year Rahm turned pro, Rolex spotted his potential and enrolled him as one of its brand ambassadors – a Rolex Testimonee



**“HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU DREAM OF HAVING A BIRDIE TO WIN ON THE LAST HOLE OF A TOURNAMENT?” AN EXHAUSTED JON RAHM POSED THE RHETORICAL QUESTION AT THE END OF FOUR DAYS AT DUBAI’S JUMEIRAH GOLF ESTATES**

– under the umbrella of the ‘Rolex New Guard’, a new generation of elite golfers. Rolex has been at the heart of golf for more than 50 years, dating back to 1967 and its initial partnership with Arnold Palmer, and later Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player, who would be dubbed the ‘The Big Three’ by the Swiss watchmaker.

“I was fortunate and happy they allowed me to be in the Rolex family,” says Rahm. “I had just turned pro. I think I had just got my tour card or I was about to.”

Rolex has, since 1997, been the Official Timekeeper of the European Tour. The Rolex Series was launched in partnership with the European Tour in 2017. Listing current players, sport stars like Roger Federer, and film director James Cameron, Rahm is aware of the enormity of being part of ‘the family’.

“It was scary. But, at the same time, it’s comforting and motivating because if Rolex chooses you, it’s because they see something in you. So, there’s no reason why I shouldn’t believe in myself. They put their trust in me.”

Rahm has been steadily building his own collection - Rolex GMT with a meteorite face; GMT stainless-steel blue face; stainless-steel Daytona white face with a black ceramic bezel; a Datejust; a Sky-Dweller and a two-toned Daytona stainless steel, his first ever one.

“I try to go for unique pieces. I don’t only think of it as a great timepiece, but something that just fits. I think of it as well as an investment. It’s like it’s an asset. I mean, I would say almost all Rolex watches appreciate in value but I try to go for more unique ones. Hence, this one. The Sky-Dweller as well.”

Rahm says he tries to add at least one to his collection each year.

“I usually just wear one for a long time. And for two years in a row, I wore the Sky-Dweller, up until I got this one (GMT),” he says, adding that Sky-Dweller’s dual time is important for travelling. Rolex’s involvement in golf – in particular the Rolex Series, which runs across eight tournaments in the European Tour – has been huge for Rahm.

“It gives a lot of people a big chance to play for, obviously, more money, more points and bigger events, which, at the same time, is going to better prepare you for winning World Golf Championships and Majors at some point,” he says. **CEO**



# PARADIGM SHIFT

ROLLS-ROYCE REDEFINES WHAT LUXURY MEANS  
AT THE VERY PINNACLE OF ITS EXPRESSION,  
BELIEVES CEO **TORSTEN MÜLLER-ÖTVÖS**  
BY ALP SARPÉR



**T**here are some things in this world one may presume are immune to changing with the times, the way a gentlemen should wear a suit, for example, but even amongst the most heritage-laden expressions of luxury, change is inevitable.

Rolls-Royce, a heritage brand at the top of all heritage brands, is no exception and the British car marque has redefined the paradigm with the all-new Cullinan Black Badge.

Rolls-Royce is a synonym for matchless luxury. We often use the 115-year old brand name to say, 'It's the Rolls-Royce of...'. It embodies tradition and often a Rolls-Royce is passed down through the generations, along with the castle and the family silver.

However, the 21st century in particular has seen the concept of luxury and the allocation of wealth change at a rapid rate. Considerable amounts of money have been accumulated by self-made entrepreneurs, millennials, sports personalities, actors, musicians as well as new tech millionaires who often want to be accepted into an exclusive club and to identify with Rolls-Royce yet remain contemporary.

So why has this century-old institution broken the golden self-imposed rule - 'Thou shall not touch the logo'?

Perhaps because of the company's visionary advocate of change and its current CEO, Torsten Müller-Ötvös. During the Dubai launch of Rolls-Royce's latest edition to the Black Badge Family, Cullinan, Torsten spoke about how Rolls-Royce identifies itself as a house of luxury rather than a car maker, and how the brand has fully adapted to the changing trends in the luxury market by contemporising its core business with a real jolt to the system.

"The Black Badge concept was first introduced to the market in 2016 with models such as Dawn, Wraith, and Ghost," he notes. The double RR Silver Badge which was as much a British institution as tea at Fortnum & Mason gave way to the radical Black Badge to identify with a new, younger clientele.

Three years down the line and Torsten reveals that "sales have increased 13.5 per cent this year alone. Rolls-Royce recently added 200 jobs in anticipation of the expected demand for Cullinan."



**"WE HAVE NEVER SAID NO TO A CLIENT, UNLESS WHAT THEY ASKED FOR WAS AGAINST ROAD SAFETY REGULATIONS"**  
**TORSTEN MÜLLER-ÖTVÖS, CEO, ROLLS-ROYCE**

The company prides itself on knowing all their clients and offering a degree of bespoke options far beyond anything anyone else can match. Everything, within the bounds of reason, is possible.

"We have never said no to a client, unless what they asked for was against road safety regulations," he says.

Since its introduction, Black Badge sales have increased from 1,000 cars per year to over 4,000. The Cullinan Black Badge is no doubt one of the most luxurious SUVs in the market and the clever move to the SUV market has done wonders for luxury car makers. For the ordinary fellow, spotting the difference between the Cullinan Black Badge and the Silver Badge may be harder than anticipated, since the differences are subtle, yet there are some significant ones: the darkened grille and Spirit of Ecstasy hood ornament have all been coated with a new high-gloss black chrome colour finish.

Inside its pretty much business as usual, if peerless luxury can ever be described as 'usual' and the extremely well appointed and spacious front and back cabins make it a true cocoon of luxury in which to drive or be driven. The centre console is perfectly laid out for ease of use and has just the right amount of buttons, eschewing an oversized computer screen so as not to dampen the luxury heritage feel.

Tilt your head up and you'll see 1,344 individual fibre-optic cables that mimic star formations, this of course is the signature Starlight Headliner. Once darkness sets outside, it gives the car a mystical feeling of the famed magic carpet ride with the added ambience of a twinkling night sky.

Under the hood, the Cullinan Black Badge packs a 6.7-liter V12 that produces 600 horsepower, and while Rolls-Royce don't disclose the 0 to 100 km/h stats, we took it upon ourselves to test, and around five seconds seemed to be our result.

It is a vehicle that cannot be matched by any other in the market and it seems written in those starlight twinkles that there will be a waiting list. It seems that even matchless luxury can be improved upon; and that careful brand evolution remains the unifying theme of the ongoing Rolls-Royce story.



WITH MORE THAN 20 YEARS IN THE RICHEMONT GROUP, **JEAN-MARC PONTROUÉ** IS A WATCH WORLD MAVEN. WITH STINTS AT MONTBLANC, LVMH AND ROGER DUBUIS, HIS NEWEST ROLE AT PANERAI SEES HIM DIVING INTO THE UNIVERSE OF ITALY'S FAMOUS LUXURY WATCH BRAND. **BY JOLA CHUDY**

**S**ince joining Panerai, have you felt a desire to change a lot?

A brand like Panerai, your first mission is not to change anything in some areas. Change for change's sake is not good. We have a unique product with its case shape, its numbers, its size. Hundreds of brands dream of having our essence, of having a case, dial and indexes which speak for themselves the way Panerai does. There are so many products in the industry that all look the same. So no, there is not going to be any change in products, just more clarification in the stories, and looking more at dedicated lines.

I always say you should not have to explain a product. If you have to start to explain a brand, people today are not interested, because they are bombarded with information. Panerai is a visual brand, so, simply, if you don't like big watches, don't come to Panerai. Will we ever make small watches? No. Everything in the future of Panerai is about revisiting the hundreds of stories we have. Some of them have been forgotten and we want to make them known again.

**Is it a challenge to plan for the long-term but be nimble enough to change your plans when market conditions,**

**“IF YOU DON'T LIKE BIG WATCHES, DON'T COME TO PANERAI”**



**trends or other unexpected influences demand this?**

It is like flying a plane. You have the capability to go from one point to the next, but sometimes you encounter turbulence. You revise your plans down if you are underperforming and you revise upwards if you are overperforming. But the direction of Panerai is very clear. Panerai is strong and has its particular positioning amongst the other brands to be perceived as a brand with its own territory, and this is what we want to protect as much as possible. We are the only pure Italian watchmaker. There are jewellers who also make watches, but we are the only one who makes watches, and Italy retains that resonance of craft, design, craftsmanship and style.

**How are the collections being distinguished?**

The idea is to create four worlds each with a relevance to Panerai. Radomir is a line associated with the history of the brand because it was the first launched by Panerai. Luminor is our iconic model with its contemporary Italian style. The Luminor Due is a Luminor that has all the spirit of Panerai, but the dimensions and weight are slightly lighter and smaller watches. It remains a big watch – it's small





such as hotels or aviation to watchmaking as that would be very different. But it is like driving a car and it didn't take me a lot of time to adjust, but that's not because because I'm so brilliant (laughs).

**But even with your intimate knowledge of the industry, you must have felt some challenges?**

The biggest story is creating and growing the team. The people in where you need the longest time to make it happen, because of change of management style, or a vision.

The rhythm and direction and evolution must be shared with people who may have been with the brand for 20 years. You are not the one who is most impacted, it is the 730-odd people who are impacted by your arrival.

**Do you think change management is trickier to effect in watchmaking because it is an industry that changes a little less quickly than others?**

That's nicely said (laughs) I love your expression. I think it very much depends on brand to brand. I actually don't read many articles about the watch business, but I do get inspiration from reading about other industries. I was reading an article about a beauty brand, Shiseido, with a new CEO implementing a direction that was very different to what was happening before.

The decision-making for various divisions in the brand was split by countries and the company, very Japanese, became that much more international because of it. I find these kind of articles about other industries very inspiring for the watch industry.

Today, when you see Panerai, which is one of the least Swiss brands – we have a manufacture in Neuchâtel, a lot of our people and a large part of our competency in Milan, we have the headquarters in Geneva. But in 2019, this is not an obstacle. Does it make it simpler? No. Does it mean a lot of extra phone calls and videos? Yes. But, at the end of the day, all these things are easier than we believe. There is a tendency to believe that because something has been a certain way for many years, it shouldn't change. **CEO**

at 38mm for us, but big for the industry. Panerai has no plans to go below 38mm! And then you have Submersible, the sports line, which is for adventurers. You can dive 300 metres, you can run, ski, dive, jump with your watch.

**When you've immersed yourself so deeply in the universe of one brand, what is it like moving to a new company and an entirely new brand?**

It's probably a bit like when you write an article about one thing, and then write about another the next day! For me, even though I moved from Montblanc to Panerai, I am still in the same group, so the architecture, methodology and processes are the same. It is a different 'playground' because obviously the brand is different in terms of price, style or brand values. I would be more worried moving from a different industry



← **Italian engineering**  
Panerai is a blend of adventure and craftsmanship; pictured here, 38mm Luminor Due.

# WATCH

# THIS SPACE

THE REGION'S PRE-OWNED LUXURY WATCHES MARKETPLACE IS GETTING AN INNOVATIVE NEW PLATFORM, EXCITING NEWS FOR COLLECTORS IN THE MIDDLE EAST **BY JOLA CHUDY**



**A**hmed Seddiqi & Sons, the region's largest official brand distributor to more than 60 Swiss luxury and high street watch brands in the region, is joining forces with WatchBox, the world's biggest online platform for pre-owned luxury watches.

"This partnership signifies a very important milestone for the luxury watch market in the region," says Mohammed Abdulmagied Seddiqi, Chief Commercial Officer of Seddiqi Holding. "We want to create a safe space for those looking to invest in a second-hand luxury watch, and we believe that it is our duty to drive this movement into the second-hand space. WatchBox is a renowned global leader in the industry and we are thrilled to join forces with them, not only to provide this exciting concept to Ahmed Seddiqi & Sons' customers, but to revolutionise the sector across the Middle East."

"The history behind WatchBox is a company called Govberg that has been around for many generations," says Watchbox co-founder Amanda Ellison.

"There is a respect for the brands and the rules. We want to elevate and underpin the watches and brand value."

The global grey market for watches is estimated to be in the billions of dollars a year. Meanwhile, according to figures released by the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry, Swiss watch exports from the beginning of this year to September alone totalled CHF15.9bn (\$15.9bn). The US, China, Japan and Singapore are the biggest markets, with the UAE coming in ninth, with watch exports in 2018 totalling CHF911.9m (\$911.9m).

It's a well-known fact to those who buy and collect watches that there are some models that appear permanently unavailable to purchase anywhere except through resellers. Brands such as Rolex and Patek Philippe are perhaps the best-known examples of this, with collectors bemoaning the fact that the most desired models never seem to actually arrive in boutiques. The region's appetite for high-end watches is one of the highest per capita in the world and has spawned its own grey market, with second-hand boutiques, watch clubs, Instagram resellers, influencers,

networking events and online portals contributing to an ecosystem that was previously dominated by official retailers. With the increasing democratisation of how a watch seller can reach their audience, the partnership between the region's largest retailer and the world's largest reseller is redefining the industry as we know it.

"WatchBox has a \$80m global inventory – the largest in the world – that is owned by us and is not on consignment or a marketplace. There are 4,000 pre-owned watches, and more than 90 unique brands. The breadth of collection is unlike anyone else's," says Ellison. "Our average per watch sale in the United States is around \$15,000, although we suspect it will go up once we launch in the UAE."

To date, the most expensive single purchase on Watchbox reached \$2m, while the least expensive watches go for around \$1,000, the entry level.

The top brands represented at Watchbox are Patek Philippe, Rolex, Audemars Piguet, Panerai, F.P. Journe and A. Lange & Söhne, reflecting the high-end focus of the company.



# \$80M

## THE VALUE OF WATCHBOX'S WORLDWIDE WATCH INVENTORY

Complementing the brands is a team of traders, watch enthusiasts and experts who are passionate about watchmaking. Authenticity is guaranteed and watches are serviced before being offered for sale. The company has established a sophisticated production studio and platform to enhance the user experience.

“Technology and the user experience is something we have focussed on, and we have a robust video platform, live streaming, reviews, interviews and expert commentary and since launching we have achieved a cumulative viewing minutes of 125 million,” she notes.

The brand has achieved an audience of over 14 million views of the Watchbox studio, with 110,000 Instagram followers. There are 3 million monthly web page views, 325,000 WatchBox app downloads. The app has a feature that allows collectors to see the current value of their watches within a private space accessible only to them.

There are \$1.3bn in assets within it in total, a figure expected to rise when WatchBox users in the Middle East begin to come on board.

“We have invested heavily in technology such as AI, analytics, data capture, which I think distinguishes us from other players in the industry. We have a fully loaded ecommerce site at watchbox.com and three apps – the WatchBox app, an instore app allowing the customer to choose to browse instore as well as speak to our experts, rather like having a guide in a museum. And our third is our Chronofy platform and app to help retailers and an acquisition tool for our inventory.”

The trader’s desktop is a highly proprietary technology that the company has been working on for the past two years and Ellison describes it as the Bloomberg of the watch industry. All of this allows WatchBox to harness a data-driven understanding of the watch marketplace at any given moment in time.

“We always ask what the customer wants. They want trust, transparency and enjoyment. We provide a white glove concierge service for the highest value purchases, just as if you were standing in a Seddiqi boutique. They want to sell, trade and buy – rare models, those no longer available and that’s not always available in the primary market.”

A risk management division monitors its inventory, looking at factors such as the brand, style, quality and criteria based on inventory turn and market demand which are all calculated within the trader’s platform.

Ellison adds that the perception of repurposing watches has now become a good thing, thanks in part to millennial mindsets; the company engages its customers through a range of digitally led communities. “We call it ‘personal commerce’, not ecommerce. We want to talk to our customers and be part of their watch journey.”

In a global first, the company is opening its first standalone boutique in Dubai, which will be supported by the Seddiqi service centre.

“We know that this is something that will be exciting for our customers. We never had the option to offer this service at Seddiqi in the past, and our customers often ended up going to the Gold Souk and getting ripped off. It will give options to end consumers to trade their watches. It will be exciting!” Seddiqi says. [cfo](#)

# GLAM REBEL

**A GLAMOROUS, HIGH-OCTANE STATEMENT COMES COURTESY OF BULGARI THIS AUTUMN WITH ITS NEW COLLECTION OF BAGS**

Bulgari revisits its Serpenti bags with an eclectic collection that blends jewellery artistry and the touch of the artisan. A collection that draws on geometric motifs, elements of nature and the textures of high jewellery, the irreverent, edgy collection is crafted from ultra-luxurious materials in a rock-chick aesthetic that lends itself perfectly to the party season. Amongst the touches include hand-stitched butterfly appliques, mother-of-pearl jewel studs and onyx and pearl detailing.

[Bulgari.com](http://Bulgari.com)



## SHADY LADY

EYEWEAR IS A YEAR-ROUND OPTION IN THE REGION; HERE'S CEO'S PICK OF THE LATEST DESIGNER SUNNIES TO SHIELD YOUR EYES FROM THE SUN



### SWAROVSKI CATS-EYE SUNGLASSES

A 1950s aesthetic meets sleek pink lenses; la vie en rose.



### EMPORIO ARMANI AVIATOR SHADES

A classic aviator silhouette is revisited in a sleek, minimalist way.



### DOLCE & GABBANA SUNGLASSES

With a cats-eye shape and opulent floral detailing, these sunglasses make an eye-catching statement.



### MONTBLANC SUNGLASSES

See the world through a new perspective with these highly crafted sunglasses featuring a two-tone rendition of the world map.

# SCENT FROM HEAVEN

Founded by a royal Emirati artisan, Lava candles are inspired by nature and made in the UAE. Their hand-crafted design and irresistible scent fill your home with a glorious aroma; there are more than 35 to choose from. The Tasamoh Collection has been created to honour the Year of Tolerance in the UAE and features three candles –Noor meaning light, Amal giving connotations of hope and Sahar resembling long sleepless nights. Meanwhile, Louis Vuitton has collaborated with a non-profit organisation called Red. The company will donate \$60 for each candle sold to the RED, to provide 300 days of lifesaving medication to someone living with HIV/AIDS.

**THESE UPSCALE HOME CANDLES IMBUE YOUR HOME WITH A SIGNATURE SCENT AND HAVE A SPECIAL MESSAGE, TOO**



# PARTY TIME!

SPARKLE, ELEGANCE AND A LOT OF SOCIALISING; IT MUST BE THE SEASON FOR PARTIES. PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD WITH THESE LUXURIOUS STATEMENT LOOKS THAT WILL SEE YOU THROUGH FROM FESTIVE GET-TOGETHERS TO THE FINAL FIREWORKS OF 2019



## MASSIMO DUTTI GOES FOR GOLD

THE PERFECT SOLUTION IF YOU'RE HEADING OUT STRAIGHT FROM THE OFFICE, MASSIMO DUTTI ENSEMBLES TAKE YOU FROM DAY TO EVENING WITH STYLISH EASE

### AQUAZZURA PARTY SHOES

**SOUL PUMP**  
'Lipstick' shoe in red



**WILD FRINGE**  
shoe with  
crystal details



**'CAROLYNE'**  
sandal in soft gold leather



**RUFFLE**  
detail silver sandal with  
embellishments



# IT'S THE SEASON TO SPARKLE

DIVE INTO THE FESTIVE SEASON ADORNED WITH THE UNMISTAKABLE GLOW OF GOLD AND THE SHIMMER OF DIAMONDS





**Tiffany & Co.** HardWear chain wrap necklace in 18-carat yellow gold, price on request.



**Tiffany & Co.** HardWear large chain bracelet in 18-carat yellow gold, price on request.



**Fabergé** Festive Star Locket in 18-carat rose gold with diamond-set star surprise, price on request.



**Bulgari** Fiorever necklace with yellow diamond solitaire and white diamond pavé petals, price on request.



**Bovet** Amadeo Fleurier 39 'Poppies' Grand Feu Enamel with alligator strap, self-winding mechanical movement, price on request.

**Roger Dubuis** Excalibur Shooting Star with white strap, price on request.



**Bulgari** Fiorever ring with yellow diamond solitaire and white diamond pavé petals, price on request.



**Jaeger-LeCoultre** Reverso with diamonds, price on request.



**Chanel Coco** Crush earrings in 18-carat beige gold with diamonds, price on request.



**MKS** Girl Code ring in yellow gold, price on request.

**Versace Virya** ring in rose gold set with diamonds and red stone, price on request.



**Van Cleef & Arpels** Perlée clovers bracelet in rose gold and diamonds, price on request.



**MB&F** Flying T with diamonds and black lacquer, white face, price on request.

# AYA'S SEASONED TALENT

SERIAL RESTAURATEUR **IZU ANI** IS ON A GASTRONOMIC ROLL, WITH A SERIES OF OPENINGS THAT CAN DO NO WRONG IN THE EYES OF DUBAI'S FICKLE FOODIES

**A**ya is the fifth restaurant of Chef Izu Ani, a leading talent in the city's food scene. Behind the popular Carine, Fika, The Lighthouse, Izu Brasserie and Gaia, he helped to propel Dubai stalwarts La Petit Maison and La Serre to huge popularity as their opening head chef.

His newest dining destination is Aya, a restaurant that takes the place of Galvin Dubai in CityWalk. CityWalk is an upscale destination with a boutique feel to it, but thanks to its largely outdoor design, the summer months can find it devoid of the kind of crowd that gives retailers and food and beverage outlets their necessary lifeblood. Perhaps the addition of one of the city's most charismatic and well-regarded chefs will change that.

Aya, according to its publicity material, is "where tradition meets gastronomic creations" and if the slick concepts and delivery of Ani's other outlets are anything to go by, it should deliver on both counts and more.

A cherry blossom tree welcomes diners to the space that nods to Asian style – Aya means beautiful in Japanese – and the surroundings are certainly that, with an indoor-outdoor terrace vibe and neutral palette punctuated by pink. Dishes on the menu include Wagyu Sirloin with Miso Caper Butter, Spanish Octopus with Red Yuzukosho Glaze and Coriander Emulsion. The menu offers a combination of soups, starters, light bites as well as rolls, buns and mains and desserts, each prepared and presented.

**For reservations: 04 343 3330, [Reservations@aya-dubai.com](mailto:Reservations@aya-dubai.com)**



## RAINFOREST RESTAURANT

AMAZONICO OPENS IN DIFC



Taking rich inspiration from Latin-American culture, Amazonico descends from Madrid, admittedly not a particularly rainforestry place, but that hasn't stopped the founders, husband-and-wife team Sandro Silvia and Marta Seco, from dreaming up a richly verdant interior in which to celebrate the heartfelt hospitality of Latin America. Located in Gate Village, DIFC, a hotspot for fascinating restaurants, the dishes are complemented by the ambience and

atmosphere filled with details and charm. Chef Sandro Silva and his wife Marta Seco are the founders and majority partners in Paraguas Group, the largest F&B group in Spain. Their restaurants cover a wide array of cuisine and clientele from fine dining to casual dining through restaurants more lifestyle oriented, so this addition to Dubai's dining scene is definitely one to watch.



**For reservations: 04 571 3999, [reservations@amazonico.ae](mailto:reservations@amazonico.ae)**



# A LITTLE TASTE OF ITALY

FOR SOPHISTICATED AESTHETES IN SEARCH OF UPSCALE WEEKEND DINING OPTIONS, THE BRUNCH AT **BULGARI YACHT CLUB** REPRESENTS A CHANCE TO RELAX WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY AND ENJOY THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE



**T**here's something about the idea of a typical Dubai brunch that instils a slight sense of misgiving in those who appreciate the finer things in life. Overly loud music, a focus on pile-it-high quantity over quality, and a crowd that gets increasingly less elegant as the afternoon wears on, make brunching a no-go area for connoisseurs of truly crafted experiences.

Thankfully, there is an alternative, and it offers an abundance of elegance, sophistication and style. You will find no undesirable hordes at the Bulgari Hotel in Jumeirah. Its salubrious and chic Yacht Club, overlooking the beautiful marina and its impressive yachts, caters to an entirely different kind of crowd, immersing guests in an ambience that is more high-end

than high-volume. Here, the opportunity to savour something truly crafted and refined in a beautiful setting, beckons.

The restaurant exudes a nautical, coastal village vibe, underscored by the exceptional design aesthetic of Bulgari. And, fortunately for fussy foodies, what's on the menu is pretty appealing, too.

The Yacht Club Restaurant Brunch unfurls every Friday from 1pm to 4pm, and unsurprisingly, it is a deliciously Italian affair. But forget about congealing tureens of pasta and sad, limp-looking pizzas. Absolutely not on the menu here, instead guests can look forward to indulging in a fresh, light, seafood-focused menu that is all about flavour and finesse. There

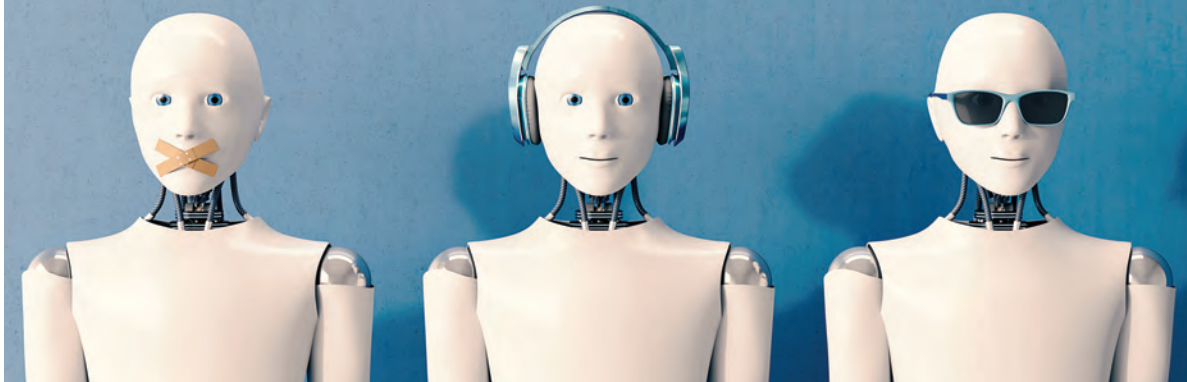
is a fresh oyster bar and array of antipasti to whet the appetite, with main courses also looking to the oceans for inspiration and ingredients. Lobster thermidor and seafood risotto are on offer as are impeccably al dente pasta dishes that are made to order and brought to your table against a backdrop of live music and some seriously impressive yachts.

It's a chance to experience the lifestyle and aesthetic of this exceptional Italian brand, with, of course, impeccably timed service courtesy of the staff. For those wishing to extend their enjoyment further, the brunch includes access to the club swimming pool and access to the kids' club and pool.

**For reservations: 04 777 5433, [dine@bulgarihotels.com](mailto:dine@bulgarihotels.com).**

# DO YOUR STAFF TRUST ROBOTS MORE THAN YOU?

A STUDY REVEALS THAT THE MAJORITY OF UAE WORKERS TRUST A ROBOT MORE THAN THEIR MANAGER BY ALICIA BULLER



## **G**LOBAL RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS HOW AI IS CHANGING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGY AT WORK.

UAE workers have more trust in robots than their managers, according to a global survey released last month.

In the UAE, 72 percent of employees have turned to AI over their managers, said the latest report from software firm Oracle.

UAE survey respondents said robots are better at maintaining work schedules (42 percent), problem solving (34 percent) and providing unbiased information (32 percent).

On average globally, 64 percent of people would trust a robot more than their manager and half have turned to a robot instead of their manager for advice, the survey results showed.

The increasing adoption of AI at work is having a significant impact on the way employees interact with their managers, said the second global 'AI at Work' study, which was conducted in partnership with research company Future Workplace.

### UAE workers 'open' to AI

"In the UAE, in particular, employees are open and positive about the role of AI in HR and manager relations," Emily He, SVP - HCM Cloud Business Group, told *CEO Middle East*.

The country is ahead of the game when it comes to AI compared to other regions, said He, citing the UAE's pro-AI government backing as a major innovation driver.

"In some cases, people feel machines know them better than humans; they feel AI knows them well," the Oracle SVP said.

"They feel their managers don't understand them

and they want better coaching and guidance. Companies should now be asking: "What is the role of the manager?"

### East and West divide

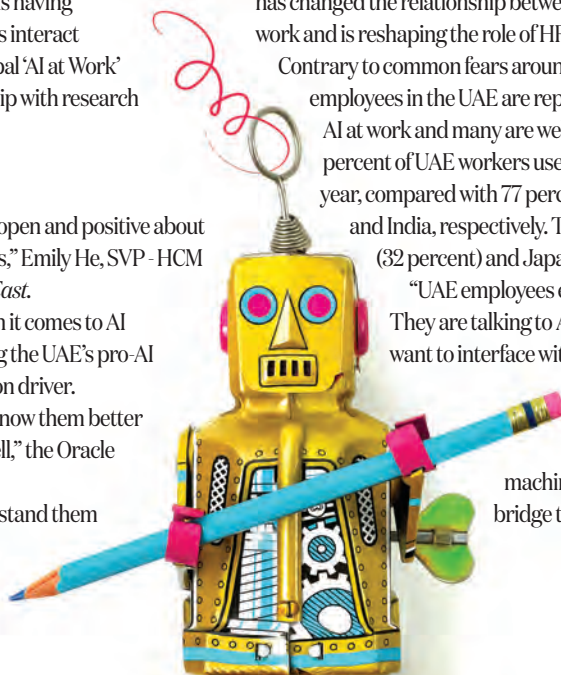
However, there is a noticeable difference in perceptions of AI across the East and the West. Workers in India (60 percent) and China (56 percent) are the most excited about AI, followed by the UAE (44 percent), which compares starkly with Japan (25 percent), the US (22 percent), UK (20 percent) and France (8 percent), the study said.

The study of 8,370 employees and managers across 10 countries - including 246 respondents in the UAE - found that AI has changed the relationship between people and technology at work and is reshaping the role of HR teams and managers.

Contrary to common fears around how AI will impact jobs, employees in the UAE are reporting increased adoption of AI at work and many are welcoming AI with optimism. 62 percent of UAE workers used some form of AI at work last year, compared with 77 percent and 78 percent in China and India, respectively. Take up was lowest in France (32 percent) and Japan (29 percent).

"UAE employees expect AI in the workplace. They are talking to Alexa and Siri at home and they want to interface with technology in a similar way at work," He said.

"They also want to find out things quickly through machine learning. It's important to bridge that gap," she added. **CEO**



# Aspirations



Progression towards your aspirations

Private Banking that revolves around your aspirations determined to provide you with all the success factors.

800 760 0000 | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [LinkedIn](#) @/alahlincb | [www.alahli.com](http://www.alahli.com)

National Commercial Bank is a Saudi joint stock company under the supervision and control of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency

NCB الأهلي   
المصرفية الخاصة  
Private Banking



LAKE VIEW  
HOTEL  
DUBAI

A BRAND-NEW HOTEL DESIGNED TO  
**SUSTAIN NATURE** AND **YOUR HAPPINESS.**



THE RESORT

**3** FIVE-STAR HOTELS

**25** WORLD-CLASS DINING OUTLETS

**40** EXHILARATING ACTIVITIES

[JAresorts.com](http://JAresorts.com)

[f@JATHERESORT](https://www.facebook.com/JATHERESORT)

[@jatheresort](https://www.instagram.com/jatheresort)

