

SAUDI ARABIA

FIVE YEARS FROM REACHING ITS GOALS, INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE KINGDOM ARE ATTRACTING FOREIGN PLAYERS IN THE SERVICES, INDUSTRY AS WELL AS IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

VISION رؤية
2030
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KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA



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UFG Overview

Arabian United Float Glass Company (UFG) the first independent Float Glass Manufacturer in the Middle East and North Africa. Was founded in 2006. UFG contacted reputed Technology Providers in Europe, USA and Far East to build our 350,000 square meters plant. Our production lines are equipped with Latest technology to produce 250,000 MT annually, ensuring the best quality of a wide range of thicknesses, colors and sizes enabling us to satisfy our valued customer's needs.



UFG ARALUX® product range

- Clear Float Glass
- Pattern Glass
- Sliver Mirror Glass
- Decorative Mirror Glass



ARALUX® Clear Float Glass



ARALUX® Pattern Glass



ARALUX® Sliver Mirror Glass



ARALUX® Decorative Mirror Glass

UFG HIGH QUALITY GLASS PRODUCTS ARE BRANDED ARALUX®

UFG caters to your vision with architectural, automotive, and silvering-quality float glass.

ISO 9001:2015

UFG established and applies a quality management system for manufacture and supply of Float Glass, Pattern Glass & Silver Mirror.

EN

ARALUX® products complies with EU legislation of a product and free movement within the European market.

JIS

UFG follows the strict Japanese Industrial Standards used for industrial activities in Japan.

SASO

Arabian United Float Glass Company Certified To Use The Quality Mark (SASO) From The Saudi Standards, Metrology, and Quality Organization.



SERVICES TO THRIVE UNDER VISION 2030

THE SERVICES SECTOR IS SET TO BECOME A DRIVING FORCE IN THE ECONOMY

Saudi Arabia is firmly in the global spotlight as it undergoes a fascinating transformation to overhaul its economy, society, governance and place in the world thanks to the reforms and mammoth projects embedded in Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's Vision 2030.

With the largest economy in the Middle East and as one of the major global petroleum producers, the Kingdom is the richest by far among its Gulf neighbors and is pouring an unprecedented fortune into hundreds of projects to ensure that the Vision achieves its ambitious goals.

And in the coming years, the capital will host the Expo 2030 world's fair and be the main city for the World Cup four years later, creating further demand.

Announced eight years ago, Vision 2030 has three main goals: radically reduce the economy's heavy dependence on oil and gas through diversification; develop sectors like financial services, healthcare, education, sports, housing, entertainment and tourism to world-class standards, and invigorate the new economy by introducing women and young people into the labor market.

A glance at a few of the plan's economic targets gives an idea of how ambitious it is:

Plans call for increasing the GDP share of non-oil exports from just under 10 per cent to 50 per cent; drive private sector contribution to the GDP from 40 per cent to 65 per cent; and increase foreign direct investment's contribution to the GDP from 4 per cent to 6 per cent.

On the human resources front, the government is working hard to boost female participation in the workforce from 22 per cent to 30 per cent as more and more Saudi women complete university education, and



BADER AL SHEHRI

CEO OF NATIONAL GENERAL AUTOMOTIVE

“THE ECONOMIC ATMOSPHERE FOR LONG TERM GROWTH IN SAUDI ARABIA IS VERY POSITIVE”

lower the overall jobless rate from more than 12 per cent to 7 per cent.

In another major step to modernize this vibrant nation of 38 million, the government has taken great strides in digitizing all its operations so citizens and foreign residents can more easily negotiate the maze of new rules and regulations aimed at smoothing the determined transition towards 2030.

But it's not only about the economy, streamlining officialdom and providing jobs. There is also a fun element to Vision 2030 with the country hosting regional and global artists of all genres at brand new entertainment venues, organizing must-see art festivals, and staging major sporting contests in football, tennis, golf and other activities.

Strong Performance

In any “gold rush” situation like that of Vision 2030, it is often not just the principles, in this case construction companies, logistics operators, architecture studios, engineering firms and the like, which are making big money, but also those providing the tools needed to make it all happen.

National General Automotive (NAT) is one such company which has seen its fortunes soar with Vision 2030 supplying commercial vehicles to serve the needs of the many, many entities, public and private, involved in the incredible undertaking.

“Vision 2030 has absolutely changed our industry and our market,” says Bader Al Shehri, who in 2019 became CEO of the company which is part of the Alissa Group that was established in the 1940's trading food and textiles. Over the decades it has diversified and now has 23 subsidiaries under its

control, with companies in the automotive transport sector its key enterprises.

“At NAT I'm running three companies Alissa Universal Motors which is an Isuzu dealership with 40 years in the business, also a dealership for Chinese motor vehicle brand JAC Motors and the third which is Autostar, the pioneer multi-brand company founded in Saudi Arabia,” the executive says.

“When I came to the company, the commercial vehicle market had just suffered two years of losses. But then things picked up as the economy got back on its feet and the market has been growing between 5 and 7 per cent annually since.”

As evidence of the rebound in the market, Al Shehri compares the 500,000 total units sold in 2018 in the Saudi commercial vehicle market with last year's sales figure of 780,000 units.

“It was also a huge increase over 2022 and it was due to all these projects going on in the Kingdom because those involved are purchasing commercial vehicles which represent 95 per cent of our business.”

It is clear, he argues, that the company's performance is a strong indicator of the Saudi economy in general and the good times should continue as there will be no slowdown in the construction sector and others linked to Vision 2030 for the foreseeable future.

The CEO expects 8 per cent growth in 2024 and says the dominant driver of NAT's sales is the logistics and delivery industry of which it has 86 per cent of the market.

“We lease or sell directly to contractors working on giga-projects construction sites like NEOM, the Qaddiya entertainment complex, new airports and many others,” he says.



National General Automotive Company (NAT) is a proud member of Abdullatif Alissa Group Holding. The Company oversees the strategic direction and monitors performance of three subsidiaries engaged in cars sales, after-sales services, maintenance and spare parts.









www.alissa-nat.com



DR. ATIYAH AL SULAIMI

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ENERZIA

“WE OFFER A FULL PACKAGE ENERGY SERVICE, SO ALL ANY CLIENT HAS TO DO IS PLUG IN”

In fact, business is so robust that Al Shehri worries about not receiving enough product from the manufacturers to meet demand. But he cautions that the only real risk to NAT’s growth is current high interest rates.

The company’s overall national market share of all commercial vehicles is 57 per cent with 78 per cent of light commercial vehicles and 85 per cent share of medium commercial vehicles.

Acting on the opportunities presented by Vision 2030, the CEO is looking to get into other promising markets in the future.

“What we are planning is first to increase our market share for Isuzu and also exploring those sectors that are currently under-served like logistics and transportation” he explains.

“What we have to do is study very well which sectors to serve that will give us the best prospects for long-term growth because the economic atmosphere in Saudi Arabia is very, very positive.”

Green Energy

Spotting a need in Saudi Arabia and setting up a business to address it was a smart move for a group of Indian investors who established Energia in 2011 to supply generators to the energy industry and others and then moved into other products and sectors.

“I joined the company in 2022,” recalls Executive Director Dr. Atiyah Al Sulaimi. “At that time this company only handled the



rental of generators and if anyone wanted a generator they came to us.

“I have a PhD in strategic planning so I studied what the company was doing and it gave me the idea to fully transform Energia by offering temporary power provider solutions and seek out new markets emerging because of Vision 2030.”

One of those markets was the events and entertainment sector and now the company works with the Riyadh Book Fair, Formula 1 and the Saudi Cup international horse race.

“Before, we used to rent the generators and let the client handle all the cables and connections. Now we do all of that, offering a full package service so all they have to do is plug the system in,” the executive explains.

This gave the company the idea to open a new division providing tents for events of all types manufactured to the highest international standards of quality and safety made from fire-resistant, European-sourced fabrics.

Energia can supply tents of all sizes and designs whether dome, pagoda, pyramid, cube or others perfect for hosting a wedding party or other social occasion, business conference, sporting event, trade fair or even to be used as a retail outlet.

Another business line is renting portable cabins which can be used for modular buildings of all sizes for accommodation units, storage, on-site offices and sanitary facilities offering mobility, durability, and functionality.

The company also has a division dedicated to providing top-of-the-line welding equipment from some of the most respected names in the business.



DR. ADIL M. ALI AL-NAJAEI

FOUNDER & CEO OF 4SiGHT

“WE’VE BECOME THE LEADING RESEARCH AGENCY IN USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE”

With all the demand for its generators, tents, portable cabins and welding products, the company reports annual revenue has reached around \$53 million with growth mostly in the power sector.

Al Sulaimi’s sole concern is providing the equipment to meet the demands.

“We have a big order coming here from Germany of generator engines made to our exact specifications such as being soundproof because they’ll be used in events,” he says.

“These will be tier-4 engines which means they produce very little carbon, almost zero, as they’ll be used in the NEOM project for which the government has very stringent green requirements.”

“In the energy sector, especially green energy, the demand is high, there is a lot of investment flowing in so my advice to those considering Saudi Arabia is to come here, join hands with existing companies and grab whatever opportunities present themselves.”

Research Leading

Studying the consumer market and passing on the findings to its long list of prestigious international and domestic clients is the work of 4SiGHT Research & Analytics which since its founding in 2009 has revolutionized the marketing research sector.

“Our objective was to be the leading market research agency in Saudi Arabia, providing services to the banking and telecom sectors which were booming when we started,” recalls founder and CEO Dr. Adil M. Ali Al-Najaei.

“During those first years we expanded into B2B, B2C, B2G and fast moving consumer goods until 2016 when Vision 2030 was announced and we started developing our own digital tools to be the leading agency using Artificial Intelligence.”

4SiGHT came up with its own AI and chatbot tools which give instant feedback on anything one can ask incorporated into the company’s website and portal.

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methodologies and a variety of research approaches are used to reveal and deepen consumer and market understanding, vital to the success of the agency's clients when it launches, relaunches or rebrands a product or service.

This research reveals answers such questions as why, what, where and when consumers purchase a product or service, how they decide to purchase, who they are and what they feel when they pull out their wallets.

4Sight also looks at the consumer perspective concerning such issues as is the product or service superior to others, is it easy to use and is it relevant to the consumer's needs.

From the client's perspective, the agency examines whether the business can make a product or perform a service, does it fill a gap in the market, how much can be invested, will it be profitable and is it fitting for the brand.

CX in Saudi Arabia is rapidly evolving as the country embraces digital transformation, customer-centric business practices, and global best standards. Vision 2030 is a driving force behind this transformation, influencing sectors like retail, tourism, banking, and government services.

By focusing on enhancing the customer experience, Saudi Arabia is positioning itself as a competitive, globally integrated economy capable of attracting investment, talent, and consumers.

We at 4sight research and analytics have opened up a specialized division for CX based on the vision of 2030 focusing on KEY sectors either Government or private – we help our clients achieve their targets and customer satisfaction in the best ways possible



BASSAM ALKHARASHI

CEO OF I-BE

“WE HAVE ALREADY HAD OVER 170 STARTUPS PRODUCED BY OUR INCUBATOR, I-BE HUB”

Our professionals will be as a consultant in each step of the way to get accurate feedback on data collected.

“Vision 2030 opened up new ideas for us, new ways of trying to tackle business and make sure that we are in the same line as the Vision. And we help all the government sectors reach their targets according to the Vision,” the executive explains.

“For example, we introduced a lot of new ideas for the tourism sector which is a big part of the Vision, so we gave the government the information on the experience tourists had, new ways to grade that experience and fresh ideas about tourism to implement

“Under the Vision the government has opened a lot of opportunities for foreign companies to invest in the Kingdom and I think the best time to do it is now because it gives you the infrastructure for future business across the globe,” he says.

Startup Economy

Vision 2030 was the driving force behind the creation, expansion, and success of i-be, which started as a consultancy in 2010 and has now become a leading center for innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting the growing number of startups in the Kingdom, according to CEO Bassam Alkharashi.

Alkharashi stated: “Our original concept as consultants was to focus on specific areas, particularly management, operatio-



nal excellence, and process management.”

He added: “In 2014, we felt the need to work with startups or small companies because we understood that during economic downturns, when spending by both public and corporate entities slowed significantly, impacting our core consulting business.”

However, after a government change, the economy took another downturn as projects were put on hold due to cuts in government spending. Then, Vision 2030, with its reforms and business restructuring, revitalized the market.

One of the government initiatives, the establishment of the Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monsha'at), introduced a new license for the private sector to set up incubators.

Alkharashi explained: “Before that, only universities were allowed to operate incubators, so we decided to move in that direction. We started offering a subscription service, where our team helps startups either develop a new idea or, if it's an existing business, we assist them in scaling up.”

He further noted: “We began our actual operations in 2019, so we've been active for five years. So far, we have supported over 170 startups through our center. We currently have offices in Riyadh, Dammam, and Oman, and our target this year is to expand across all major cities in Saudi Arabia.”

When considering the ideal places to expand, the center looks for the right partner with a similar mindset, ready to invest and grow a business in a new region or country.

4SIGHT uses a combination of **Human Intelligence & Artificial Intelligence** to generate insights that help our clients in enhancing their market presence, product development, branding, communication and customer experience.

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The I-be Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship operates under the slogan “Launching a Successful company every day.” It seeks to create an innovative entrepreneurial environment that enables companies and institutions to find solutions to challenges. It aims to develop and entrepreneurial community to encourage the culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.

INTERVIEW WITH SHARIQ CONTRACTOR

Chief Executive Officer
KMR LOGISTICS COMPANY

Running a tight ship and sticking to its core business has proven to be a successful formula for this new logistics venture coming from the UAE. As the market settles and grows, its founder explains where he sees the challenges and opportunities that will affect the shape of the nascent sector of last-mile-delivery now exploding in the Kingdom



Saudi Arabia's tremendous opportunities and a background in manpower management services led Shariq Contractor to set up KMR Logistics which after two-and-a-half years is one of the emerging market leaders in last-mile delivery.

"We're a business that operates under ISL Holdings and Najeeb Auto in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in 2018 we saw the huge potential in the Kingdom because of Vision 2030, how the logistics sector operates here, and what are the bottlenecks we can solve with our expertise," he says.

"ISL Holdings operates in three sectors: manpower and logistics services, telecommunications and health care services so we're a conglomerate with multiple entities in Saudi Arabia and 21 other countries, while our partners Najeeb Auto are one of the largest Automobile Dealers in the Kingdom with Brands like Suzuki under their belt."

Vast Experience

Considering the move to Saudi Arabia and launching the company, he felt that his experience in manpower solutions coupled with access like automobiles and especially motorbikes presented an interesting performance management challenge to drive maximum revenue from each employee.

When he started the firm, Contractor had his own vision: to become the largest last-mile delivery service provider in the Kingdom. "It's a very niche service we provide specifically for e-commerce and food delivery. That's all we do," he explains. "We don't touch other services and stick to our core business in the most asset light mechanism possible."

Last-mile delivery is taking off in Saudi Arabia where the sector lagged behind neighboring countries like the United Arab Emirates and Qatar where it had been around for years. Changes

in social behavior, the economy and technology brought about a growing need for such services.

Factors such as more women in the workplace instead of being home to prepare family meals, the pandemic-induced new businesses of e-commerce and food delivery, and the increase in the use of mobile devices had a lot to do with these changes.

According to recent market research, the market for food ordering and delivery in Saudi Arabia was worth \$2.5 billion in 2013 and is forecast to reach almost \$8 billion over the next five years.

Because of the growing diversity of the Kingdom's population, the food delivery sector offers a broad range of culinary offerings from traditional local fare to many international cuisines.

Market analysts say that there is stiff competition in the sector, with e-commerce and food delivery platforms battling for business and the rivalries drive them to outdo each other in ease of use, speed and customer satisfaction.

Market Pivot

"We have pivoted from our original business model as we adjusted to the new efforts by the government to follow the concepts of the Vision such as making sure everything is streamlined and giving the correct type of service," the CEO explains.

"But most importantly, ensuring that everyone follows the industry requirement of which it seems there are new ones every week as food delivery on motorcycles, for example, has only been allowed for a year and the government is trying to keep pace."

But so far, so good for KMR Logistics which now has around 700 employees and expects to double the revenue in 2025. However, the executive complains that other challenges still exist such as further official regulations.



Recently, Contractor says, there was a report that the government was going to stop issuing motorcycle licenses and he has 1,000 drivers coming from India, Nepal and Pakistan to work in the Kingdom over the next three months.

"It's a big investment bringing these people here, but I think that it will get ironed out in the end, and not interacting with customers the way they should be solved.

"But we don't have those problems as we've had years of experience in the Emirates and we understand how to fix all of that," he explains.

Another complaint of the CEO's is the unregulated freelancers who operate in the sector. Often, they are personal drivers who work for families and on their downtime deliver e-commerce goods or food.

"So they register on an app, do some deliveries and pick up extra cash. That's cannibalizing our business because we're investing a lot to ensure that we provide a regulated quality service," he says.

Contractor estimates that there are between 100,000 and 150,000 delivery drivers in the Kingdom but that more than 60 per cent are freelancers.

"When you work for companies like ours, we've eradicated the threat of safety and regulated personnel because our drivers are completely monitored under our management. Thankfully, there are some new regulations coming which will get the freelancers in-line."

As the last-mile delivery service industry matures and freelance drivers and smaller companies fall to the wayside, Contractor predicts that KMR Logistics will be the largest company in the sector.

"This is a country we want to invest in because for this specific industry, Saudi Arabia is uncharted territory, motorcycle delivery is most effective in terms of unit economics, and the potential is limitless."



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INTERVIEW WITH MOHAMMED KHALID ALALI

**Chief Executive Officer
ARABIAN UNITED FLOAT GLASS CO.**

A larger furnace is in the plans for this leading company in the glass production, as demand increases along the construction boom originated by the Vision 2030 development spree. But the long term future of the company will depend on moving up the value chain with more added value products, as the experienced CEO explains in detail



A combination of ready access to raw materials, a buoyant and expanding market and the Saudi government's encouragement of industry under Vision 2030 has proved a triple blessing for Arabian United Float Glass Company, or UFG, which is undergoing exciting changes.

"UFG was established in 2006 to meet the local demand for glass, utilizing this country's vast mineral resources," explains CEO Mohammed Khalid Alali who joined the company 11 years ago.

"We take minerals and turn them into high-quality, value added glass products which we not only sell locally but are also increasingly exporting to many markets abroad."

Steady Growth

Originally founded as a closed stock company by a group of institutional investors including government entities, UFG recently was listed on the Saudi stock exchange, the latest chapter in the manufacturer's history.

"UFG started production in 2009 with one furnace with a capacity of 600 tonnes per day of clear float glass for the construction sector from our factory in the western city of Yanbu," he says.

"In 2010 we became the first manufacturer to produce tinted glass. A year later we got into the automotive market segment as a bid for further product diversification and global market expansion.

"And in 2012 we added a new line producing European standard silver-coated mirror, then in 2014 UFG started making patterned glass with different designs, thicknesses and dimensions."

Two years ago, the company increased its production capacity to 750 tonnes daily. It currently employs 350 people and this year the CEO expects revenue of around \$150 million.

Giga-Projects Demand

Alali credits Vision 2030 for much of the company's success, citing such government measures as local content requirements for the plan's giga-projects like NEOM, Qaddiya, stadiums, hospitality projects, airports and others.

"This has created huge demand for our products, especially in the construction sector."

"Also, the Vision calls for exploiting the Kingdom's mineral sector and almost 85 per cent of the raw materials we use come from Saudi Arabia. Then there are all the government require-

ments and regulations regarding higher quality standards which we are known for among our customer base," he explains.

The CEO notes that UFG was close to bankruptcy at one point but the changes to the market brought about by Vision 2030 dragged it back from the brink.

"There were no regulations then, you could not control your costs and it was difficult to export. That all changed thanks to the government which also helped industry by doing things like providing adequate testing to meet the new standards."

"Before Vision 2030, the construction sector was not regulated and builders could use glass without worrying about the quality. But the new building code requires top quality double glass that conserves energy so that doubled demand."

"Another key example is the government began providing insurance for our exports so if a customer abroad doesn't pay us for the UFG products we've shipped to them, the government will reimburse us for 90 per cent of our loss," he says.

Ideal Location

UFG's sales are equally split between the domestic market and exports with regional customers in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Jordan, Yemen and North Africa among the leaders.

It also exports to the United States, European countries, Latin America, East Africa and Asia.

"There was a slowdown in the global glass market in the middle of 2023 although Saudi Arabia was a much better market than others. Sales are now recovering and we're seeing growth," he says.

"Exporting raw glass is not profitable because of the cost of logistics. But specialty glass for solar panels or automotive glass or products such as smart windows are profitable as a finished product."

Saudi Arabia, he notes, is perfect for the glass industry as it boasts the necessary raw materials, plentiful energy, technology, reasonably low production costs and the country is well situated for exporting to world markets.

But the CEO complains that issues challenging the company at the present include supply chain problems aggravated by the situation in the Red Sea and keeping ahead of competitors as the industry introduces new technologies for creating innovative products.

"In the glass industry there are always in-



novations like smart windows which allow light control and solar glass which is becoming a big business. So you need to be able to cope, acquire the technology and employ talented people, otherwise you'll lose out."

UFG is working on both challenges by creating a specialized department tackling the supply chain problem, and building relationships with foreign partners to keep up with the innovative changes in the glass industry and increase its share of turning out high-quality value added products.

Investments Ahead

At present, 15 per cent of the company's production are of high-quality, value added and the executive wants to see that share increase to 60 per cent over the next three years.

"That's four times what we are doing, a big increase. That will be assisted by our plans to put a new furnace into operation. That will boost overall production from 750 tonnes a day to 1,600.

"This new furnace will cost almost \$110 million and be dedicated to the value added products. I have the land, all the facilities and I have quotes from the technology providers so we're all ready to go forward with this project," he explains.

Future endeavors could also involve solid partnerships with foreign companies.

"UFG has a good market, excellent cost structure and the government supports foreign investment with lots of benefits for the investor so it's attractive. I've been approached by a lot of interested parties but I'm looking for certain technologies and certain products," he says.

"And it has to be a true, long-term partnership, not one where the investor comes in, makes money and leaves. It has to be solid, like a good marriage."

AL MOUSA GROUP RIDES HIGH WAVES

VISION 2030 HAS PROPELLED THE GROUP TO A HIGHER LEVEL IN WATER BUSINESS

As can be imagined, water is a scarce and precious resource in Saudi Arabia and the government has long been deeply involved in water exploration, retrieval, storage and conservation to ensure that present and future generations have access to this vital and life-sustaining element.

And with climate change, global warming and population growth posing threats to the Kingdom's water sources, a reliable and safe supply has become even more urgent and Vision 2030 includes efforts to reach this objective.

"The government has placed significant emphasis on safeguarding the Kingdom's water security as part of Saudi Vision 2030, recognizing it as a vital aspect of the nation's broader security framework," according to the Saudi Water Authority.

"This has been accomplished by establishing key indicators and targets, along with appropriate mechanisms to ensure the conservation and sustainability of water resources, particularly for drinking, for the benefit of future generations," the authority adds.

Water is Key

One of the major players in the private sector spearheading this effort is the Al Mousa Group whose main businesses ensure easy and affordable access to water. Working closely with the government, it has benefited from the emphasis on wise water management emphasized by the Vision.



"Vision 2030 has affected us positively because through the Vision the Kingdom is working to achieve an impressive transformation by investing in human and physical capital," says Group CEO Eng. Saleh Alhlafi.

"This will boost both economic growth and diversification and aid the country in overcoming geographical and environmental challenges. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plan has created a new push for local investment and that is good for all the companies in the Al Mousa Group."

Vision 2030, he adds, has turned out to be much larger and much more important for his business than he was able to imagine when it was first announced in 2016.

The Al Mousa Group, founded in 1960 as a supplier of foreign-manufactured deep well pumps, has diversified over the years and now encompasses ten companies including several which deal with water: Al Mousa Trading Company, National Water Works Company and Sadan Saudi Water and Energy Company.

The CEO lauds Vision 2030 for projects which his company is working on, noting that the total number of employees has doubled over the past few years to 240 and he expects to add another 100 hires in 2025.

"These are long-term projects which will provide stability in employment and capital for years to come so we are very

happy to participate in Vision 2030 and all of its projects and goals," Alhlafi says.

"And regarding our ability to find the right people who possess the skills we need, we have a dedicated human resources department that searches for and hires those specialized engineers and technicians who are required in such a technical field."

The Vision, he notes, has facilitated the once lengthy and complicated process of hiring non-Saudis and today it only takes a month. At the same time, the group uses the talents of specialized consultants outside of Saudi Arabia.

Along with the three companies working with water, under its umbrella the Al Mousa Group also has Al Mousa Specialized Cables providing low, medium and high voltage cables; instrumental, thermocouple and communications cables, and other electric and lighting supplies.

Other companies in the conglomerate are Nufud Azriyah Contracting Company, Technology and Development Solutions Company (TDS), Technical Selection of Contracting, Al Mousa Company for Industrial Projects, Al Mousa Company for Electric Generators and Arabian Admas Company.

The group's prestigious client list includes the Saudi Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Health, Saudi Aramco, the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Environ-

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ment, Water and Agriculture and various municipalities.

“We are primarily focused on working on our home turf here in Saudi Arabia,” the CEO explains. “But we do have projects in Egypt and Sudan with the split around 93 per cent of our work here at home and 7 per cent outside the Kingdom.”

“And we are involved in some joint ventures with foreign companies and we are certainly open to more such arrangements.”

“Our annual revenue is around \$800 million and we think the group will do even better in the coming years as King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have made the water sector such a key part of Vision 2030,” he says.

“In fact it’s estimated that water projects across the Kingdom will be worth more than \$10 billion annually over the next five years, so our companies involved in many of these projects are sure to prosper.”

Team Effort

The group’s main company dealing with water production and related activities is Al Mousa Trading Company which distributes all types of water pumps and accessories for a wide range of uses both in the public and private sectors.

It also has full product service and maintenance centers to serve its clients.

“We are solution providers representing some of the most well-known water pump manufacturers around the world whether they are used in irrigation, domestic applications, housing projects, firefighting or HVAC,” says company CEO Lu’ay Altoussi.

“If you look at all the projects under Vision 2030 you will see that we are involved in many of them that we refer to as ‘high-connect’ projects and which are being developed by the government’s Public Investment Fund.”

Al Mousa Trading Company is supplying these giga-projects like NEOM, King Salman Park in Riyadh and Red Sea Global which is a complex of high-end, super luxury resorts which aims to become one of the top tourist destinations in the world by 2030.

Its water pump and suppliers of other items on its extensive productlist include Grundfos of Denmark, Italy’s Quadra, Stuart Turner of the United Kingdom and Germany’s Viessman.

Founded in 2018, the company operates individually within the Al Mousa Group,



“IF YOU DO HAVE THE RIGHT TEAM YOU CAN GO ALL THE WAY TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP”

employs 130 people at its three offices in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam and executives expect 2024 revenue to be in the neighborhood of \$22 million.

“Three years ago our revenue was around \$8 million and then last year it had almost doubled to \$15 million. Our growth was certainly helped by outside financing and we try to hold down costs which makes the banks happy so we can increase our business slowly but surely,” he explains.

“In fact, we could grow even faster but this way it’s more sustainable.”

There have been challenges along the way and Altoussi argues that a company is like a good football team: if you want to be a champion you have to have the right players so everyone can work together.

“And that is a challenge because you can find qualified people but they’re not always a good fit so we have to avoid hiring people who are not good team players.

“Another issue regarding human resources is the Saudization program where companies have to have a certain percentage of local employees. But the problem is that some people have no sense of lo-



yalty and once they get a better offer, they leave without notice,” he complains.

“This creates a huge conflict when you’re planning a project for a whole year and suddenly key staff members walk out the door. But then this is normal in business.”

The company’s COO, Issam Sleiman, adds that there have been other challenges in recent years starting with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, followed recently by the war in Ukraine and the disruption of marine traffic in the Red Sea.

“This last conflict led to a big shortage of raw materials which dramatically affected our suppliers so we can’t get the products we handle to clients like NEOM on time,” he explains.

“These problems have also had a role in triggering inflation so everything is more expensive. Once these conflicts are over and inflation is tamed, Al Mousa Trading will be something else.”

“Our next milestone is annual revenue of more than \$135 million,” says Altoussi, “because we need to invest in a new department and now is the time to do this because the market is booming and the government is so supportive.

“Recently we had a meeting with the National Water Authority and it’s doing all it can to bring the latest water-related technology to the Kingdom which will provide savings not only in money but in water as well.”

The CEO notes that during the 25 years he has lived in Saudi Arabia he has seen the economy go and up down several times but has never seen it doing as well as it is now.

“We have to catch this opportunity at this very moment because it’s the big time,” he says. “If you come today, you’ve lost yesterday and if you come tomorrow, you will have lost today.

“We are very optimistic about Vision 2030 as it is so promising. If you have the right team you can go all the way to the championship!”



INTERVIEW WITH DR. ENG. OBAID S. ALSOBIEI

**Chief Executive Officer
NORTHERN REGION CEMENT CO.**

Based on excellent location and the development of new products, the Northern Region Cement Co. is already reaping the fruits of its investment in new production facilities. As demand for cement and clinker soars and the giga-projects get underway, its seasoned CEO warns not to forget that keeping the company flexible and nimble is still paramount



Location has been a key factor for the success of Northern Region Cement Company (NRC) which was established in 2006 and is benefitting from its proximity to some of the Kingdom's ambitious Vision 2030 projects.

Its geographical situation in Tariff has also been instrumental in the manufacturer's expansion into nearby Jordan and Iraq, according to CEO Dr. Eng. Obaid S. Alsobiei.

"When we started this company we had only one production line turning out 6,000 tonnes per day of clinker and cement and within three years we launched our grinding unit in Jordan.

"A year later we began our second production line of 3,000 daily tonnes to support the Jordanian unit. In 2014, we began investing in plants owned by the Iraqi government in Baghdad and Basra. We're now building a new line there for 5,000 tonnes per day," he recalls.

"We are concentrating on these markets because clinker and cement are heavy materials and logistically it is only logical to operate in a radius of less than 500 kilometers," he explains.

New Direction

When Vision 2030 was announced, Alsobiei says it gave the company the momentum to chart a fresh direction and research new materials, with the creation of an R&D department.

"We did many of those and despite a string of failures we were finally successful in converting our line from making gray cement to white cement and we received a patent on the process from both Saudi Arabia and the U.S."

"And with the Vision's emphasis on green industry, we managed to develop changes in our

plant to cut back on fuel consumption and our white cement line dropped from 1,300 calories of heat per tonne to 900. It's the largest line in the world now," he says.

Another new product line launched by the company to meet the requirements of Vision 2030 was LC3, a type of cement which reduces carbon emissions in the manufacturing process that sparked the interest of the planners of the NEOM giga-project located on the Red Sea concerned with decarbonization.

"We've succeeded in providing any and all items they need. They've now completed most of the earthworks at NEOM and they're just beginning to need our cement," the CEO explains.

Wide Portfolio

NRC's range of products includes white Portland cement for construction, ready-mix concrete, fountains and swimming pools and in precast concrete, while its white limestone Portland cement is used largely in concrete products.

Its gray Portland cement is primarily for durable applications such as sidewalks, floors, concrete buildings, bridges, railway structures, warehouses, tanks, water pipes, and buildings. The company's other specialty products include gray sulfate resistant cement

"Our cooperation with the government extends to carrying out experiments to use waste materials produced by the government-owned mining company Ma'aden," Alsobiei explains.

"We signed an agreement with them to use the red mud rejected by them to make red cement. We're now in the process of obtaining a license to transport it as a hazardous material."



NRC is working with Ma'aden to develop a phosphate product and widening its R&D efforts in a bid to meet the technological and environmental requirements for the future.

"However, there are challenges to implement these programs for carbon reduction because it all needs investment for changes in equipment. And funding is not easy as you have to convince the financiers," he explains.

"Solar panels for supplying energy to our facility is an example of this new emphasis on green solutions. We've already applied for 30 megawatts for our plant and it's in the approval process. We're also looking at wind energy."

Another headache for the company is the fluid scheduling of some clients' projects.

"We have to be very flexible as the architects come up with the concept, then the design, then carry out the earthworks and then construction starts and they need cement," Alsobiei says.

Looking ahead, the CEO says despite the rocketing demand for NRC's products in the domestic market thanks to Vision 2030's building program, international expansion is still part of the company's strategy.

Northern Region Cement Co.

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VISION 2030 Northern Region Cement Company was founded in 2006, to provide for the Kingdom's cement needs in the Northern Region. Our Vision a global company specializing in the field of cement industry the highest quality standards and using the latest technology, contributing to our nation building effort.

NRC_Cement

INTERVIEW WITH AMER AL AJMI

Executive Vice President
ALFANAR PROJECTS

Thanks to the clear pipeline of projects aligned with the sustainability goals within Vision 2030, Saudi companies have started investing heavily to benefit from the plethora of projects across the country. As Eng. Al Ajmi explains, Alfanar Projects is leveraging this environment to maintain its leadership position in Saudi Arabia's green transition



Alfanar Group's Global Vision

Alfanar Projects, part of Alfanar Group; one of Saudi Arabia's largest conglomerates in manufacturing, construction, and engineering services, has fully committed to this ambitious plan. With over 35,000 employees, the group focuses on critical infrastructure projects globally and develops renewable energy solutions that align with Vision 2030.

Alfanar Group has also strengthened its global presence through strategic expansions, with manufacturing facilities spanning multiple countries. Its facilities in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Turkey specialize in advanced digitalization and automation solutions, including components for smart meters, relays, and rechargers. These facilities underscore the group's commitment to technological advancement and sustainability.

Sustainability and Vision 2030

Sustainability is one of the principal pillars of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, and it calls for the whole society, the government, and the business sector to come together to scale up the Kingdom's climate action rapidly. One of the key sustainability goals is to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2060 through a transition to a green economy, and all companies exploring these opportunities must be aligned with Vision 2030.

"Vision 2030 provides businesses and investors with three critical elements: geopolitical and regulatory stability, an influx of investment, and a clear project pipeline," says Amer Al Ajmi Executive Vice President of Alfanar Projects.

"This clarity enables us to identify project targets, anticipate market share in the green energy transition, optimize capabilities, and allocate resources

effectively," he explains.

These strategic advantages have led Alfanar Projects to achieve a record-breaking \$5.3 billion in orders for 2024. This includes projects across engineering, procurement, construction (EPC), and engineering services, reflecting the trust that Vision 2030 has inspired among Saudi investors and global stakeholders.

Focus on Renewable Energy Goals

Saudi Arabia's renewable energy target of 130 gigawatts by 2030 highlights the critical role of companies like Alfanar Projects in achieving this vision.

In the renewable energy sector, Alfanar Projects has spearheaded initiatives such as the Kingdom's energy digitalization through its smart meters program. Following Alfanar Group's initiatives of the first "Made in Saudi" server in partnership with Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) to enhance local content, electric vehicle charging, smart homes, smart grid automation, and high-tech electrical products tailored to regional needs, the company has delivered key solar projects, including a 50-megawatt solar initiative for residential communities and industrial giants, and is now building a 100-megawatt solar plant for the government.

Beyond those projects, Alfanar Projects' green energy solutions encompass advanced innovations like Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) technology.

Global Contributions to Sustainability

While deeply rooted in Saudi Arabia's green energy initiatives, Alfanar Projects has also made significant contributions internationally. In 2016,



the company launched a 500-megawatt wind energy facility in Spain, a 600-megawatt wind power project in India, and a 50-megawatt solar power farm in Egypt. Later, the company initiated a waste-to-energy project in the United Kingdom, which has evolved into a facility producing sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

Alfanar Projects' global reach includes a prominent presence in Madrid managing expansions into North America, Europe, and Latin America, with projects such as producing green ammonia in Paraguay and Chile.

Three years ago, Alfanar Projects acquired a German wind turbine manufacturer, including its R&D facility and patents. The company has also signed a memorandum of understanding to develop a green hydrogen project in Ain Sokhna, Egypt.

"We support every government in the countries where we operate to combat climate change and promote sustainability," Al Ajmi emphasizes.

"Through its commitment to Vision 2030 and beyond, Alfanar Projects demonstrates a balanced approach to sustainability, local content development, and international collaborations. By aligning with national objectives and investing in advanced technologies, the company solidifies its role in driving global green energy solutions." Al Ajmi concludes.

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SUSTAINABLE RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES IN NEOM SAUDI ARABIA

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INDUSTRY TAKES A BIG LEAP FORWARD

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND IN THE LARGEST INDUSTRIAL SECTOR IN THE ARAB WORLD

Expanding Saudi Arabia's industrial output is one of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's pillars of Vision 2030 to wean the country's overreliance on the petroleum sector with lots of help from local and foreign entrepreneurs in the private sector. By most counts, the Kingdom is already well on its way to accomplishing this goal.

As of the end of 2023, more than 11,000 Saudi factories produced industrial exports worth a total of around \$30 billion, with manufactured goods making up close to 100 per cent of the country's non-oil exports.

According to officials, the goal is to triple the industrial GDP to reach \$238 billion by 2030, double job opportunities in the sector to over 2 million and aim for industrial exports of \$150 billion.

In addition to diversifying the economy, Vision 2030 calls for developing human capital through education and job training, boosting productivity in key sectors and creating quality, long-term employment for Saudis, all of which is set to trigger unprecedented growth for the manufacturing sector.

The government has vowed "to support promising sectors and foster their success so that they become new pillars of our economy. In the manufacturing sector, we will work towards localizing renewable energy and industrial equipment sectors."

In addition, the government pledges "to create suitable job opportunities for our citizens by supporting small and medium-



THAMER AL-MUHID

GROUP CEO & MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SAUDI CHEMICAL COMPANY HOLDING

"WE WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT WHILE STILL GOING GLOBAL"

sized entrepreneurship, privatization and investments in new industries."

Among the ambitious steps Vision 2030 envisions are developing a local pharmaceutical and biotech sector, localizing the automotive and related parts industry, creating production centers for light industry and establishing a viable military manufacturing capability.

This diversification has been assisted by improvements in the regulatory and business environment with new laws to encourage entrepreneurship, protect local and foreign investors' rights, and lower the costs of doing business while the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) has been deploying capital to stimulate private investment.

Diversifying Activities

One company which is actively participating in and promoting several of Vision 2030's ambitions in the manufacturing industry is Saudi Chemical Company Holding which has made diversification a guiding principle during more than 50 years in business, says Group CEO and Managing Director Thamer Al-Muhid.

"We were founded in 1972 dealing in explosives for civilian use in partnership with Nitro-Nobel and later we became a wholly-owned Saudi Company," he says.

"Currently we have five companies in the



group, four in the Kingdom and one in Egypt, with two involved in civil and military explosives and the other three in health care."

With these activities, Saudi Chemical Company Holding supports the vital sectors in Vision 2030, such as the infrastructure, healthcare, mining, defence and education, which when announced triggered the transformation of the group in 2020 with executives mapping out how it could unleash the conglomerate's full value.

In contrast to other large Saudi firms, the group decided to concentrate not only on the domestic market to take advantage of the new business environment but also become a global company.

"So we built our strategy to be 50 per cent in the Kingdom and 50 per cent abroad. So when we began our transformation from 2020 onwards we hired talented people with global experience," he recalls.

"In order to minimize your risk you should enter several geographic markets. There is tremendous opportunity in Saudi Arabia but we're planning for the future and not just five or ten years but for the next 100 years. So we'll be local but global as well."

This effort is being supported by the new government initiatives encouraging exports from the Kingdom through financial assistance and the official sponsoring of participation in trade shows.

Inorganic growth is also in the group's plans with the acquisition of foreign companies in order to tap into markets abroad.

"One needs to do market studies to find those which require approvals especially with pharma products as it's a very sensitive sector. If you want to enter the European market, for example, you need to acquire a company there to get your foot in the door," Al-Muhid says.

Saudi Chemical Company Limited - SCCL is a subsidiary of Saudi Chemical Company Holding, producing civil explosives to serve the infrastructure, mining and cement industries, with three factories in Riyadh, Jeddah



and the north, and distribution centers around Saudi Arabia.

SCCL is carrying out several projects and the most prominent among them is the establishment of the Military Industries Complex in Riyadh to support the objectives of Vision 2030 to localize military industries; and it includes TNT, RDX and fuzes production facilities.

In addition, the Saudi Chemical Company Holding owns and manages the Suez International Nitrate Company - SINCO- in Egypt, producing nearly 80,000 metric tons yearly of ammonium nitrate used primarily as raw material for manufacturing explosives to ensure the security of supply for SCCL primary feedstock.

The subsidiary Saudi International Trading Company -SITCO Pharma- focuses on domestic distribution of pharmaceutical products and is the second largest company in the Kingdom, specializing in chilled vaccines and medicines and their stringent transportation and storage requirements.

The group's drug production arm is AJA Pharma which is a specialized in manufacturing and marketing a wide range of pharmaceutical products in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries through cooperation with the world's leading partners in the field of medicine manufacturing.

The wholesale and retail trade of healthy nutritional products is handled by the Chemical Company for Commercial Investment -CCCI-.

The full integrated pharma value chain of Saudi Chemical Company Holding contributes to the country's health care sector growth by enhancing drug security and producing high quality medicines..

"We are confident that our emphasis on our strategic pillars we're active in are a recipe for success as we tap into those programs and incentives provided by the government to help our new strategy to expand at home and abroad."



NAJAM SYED HUSSAIN

CEO OF ALPHA MIDDLE EAST

"THE PATH TO GET QUALIFIED AS LOCAL CONTENT COMPANY IS STILL A BIT CHALLENGING"

Green Field Investment

Vision 2030's emphasis on incorporating a high percentage of local content in its multibillion-dollar projects was the perfect reason for Alpha Middle East Group to establish a presence in the Kingdom three years ago. That initiative is about to generate some returns.

"It was a significant part of the decision making process regarding our opening here, if not the main factor because of the government support, facilitation and opportunities the Vision presented to us," says CEO Najam Syed Hussain.

The group is a subsidiary of U.S. based Alpha International, a company with over 20 years of experience providing consultancy services, products, and IT solutions to the American market. Its client base extends across various industries, including real estate, construction, healthcare, education, and more.

Along with broadband and IT solutions for the Saudi market, Alpha Middle East is about to open a manufacturing facility for some of its products used in high-tech applications such as fiber, copper and networking solutions for broadband applications.

"By Q1 of year 2025 we will be ready for production out of our facility in the Kingdom," the executive explains.

"We've complied with all of the government's requirements like having the



regional headquarters established in Riyadh, registering as a local content manufacturer having acquired land and building the facility and bringing all the machinery.

"We're at the stage now where the machinery is going through the setting up and testing process. It will be a total investment of around \$10 million. By the time we're operating at full capacity and our workforce will be north of 200 people with 80 percent of those as Saudi nationals," he says. The company has been fortunate to have access to a readily available workforce in the country, requiring only minimal training for potential employees.

He predicts annual revenue of more than \$50 million once the entire operation is up and running at full capacity by 2027 or 2028.

His main concern about operating in the Kingdom as a foreign firm is the occasional unclear status of businesses like Alpha Middle East, how despite fulfilling requirements remain uncertain of the future regulations.

"That could be our biggest challenge: navigating the path as in international brand to get ourself qualified as a local content manufacturer but with no clear cut process as to where a company like ours would be categorized and for how long," he says.

"On the one hand there's a positive push being made towards getting quality in local content productions, even though competi-



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tors offer neither quality nor local content are sometimes promoted. Things are changing for the better.”

The CEO emphasizes his full support for the government’s requirement that foreign companies establish their regional headquarters in Saudi Arabia to operate and focus on contributing to the local content push, as it demonstrates a commitment to investing substantial financial, labor, or technical resources into the local economy.

“It’s very important because complying with these initiatives shows that companies like Alpha Middle East are standing behind their investment. That their presence is not a short-term endeavor but a deep, long-term commitment to the Kingdom.”

“That’s certainly in line with our objectives as well, and if we don’t materialize our target and achieve our goals by 2030, then I don’t think we deserve to do business. The Saudi market presents such great opportunities, no business with a vision for growth can ignore” he says.

Competitive Advantage

Saudi Arabia’s targeting of tourism is expected to be a boon for family-owned and operated Arabian Development Company for Trading, or ADETCO, which handles snack foods, spices and pulses in the Saudi market and other food items produced at its plant in neighboring Jordan.

“This company was started by my uncle and a partner in 1978, then my father joined and at first it was a simple trading company dealing in agriculture products from cardamom to coffee to nuts,” explains Managing Director Fares Farouk Al-Bashiti.

“Through the years we have developed a lot and changed from only trading to now trading, manufacturing and distributing. Since Vision 2030 was implemented, we’ve opened multiple factories and just two months ago we opened our latest for roasting nuts and coffee, blending spices and repacking other products.”

The executive notes that the country’s ambitious plans to dramatically boost the number of tourists visiting the Kingdom have provided fresh opportunities for ADET- CO, along with the new fast-paced lifestyle Saudis are now engaged in.

With a diversity of nationalities now coming into the country, food providers have to cater to a number of tastes and the company is working to meet those needs.

“This has made us move towards repac-



kaged foods, snack foods, to-go foods. One example of the opportunities now available to us is supplying all the new hotels’ minibars in the rooms,” he says.

“This is a potential market to which we did not have exposure to before. Most people who used to stay in hotels were locals and if they were hungry they could just pop around the corner to a market.

“Foreign tourists go for the easy option. They want a bag of nuts, there is one in the minibar so they go for it,” Al Bashiti argues.

At the same time, the company is focusing on providing Saudis with the fresh, healthy and, equally important, convenient snacks they are demanding for their modern and sometimes hectic lifestyles.

ADETCO’s product lines include such items sold in bulk as green coffee, hazel nuts, cashews, pistachio nuts, almonds, dried ginger and lemon, coriander, cumin and other spices.

Under its Zain label, the company markets consumer-oriented packages of coconut powder, several styles of almonds, raisins, walnuts and pistachio nuts, while its Jordanian operation produces mayonnaise, ketchup, tomato paste and cheeses.

According to the managing director, the company’s total revenue this year is expected to be around \$65 million growing from \$16 million over the past five years.

“So we’ve been showing enormous growth and we forecast that revenue will be some \$95 million by the end of next year. A lot of this is thanks to Vision 2030 and the government pushing the industrial sector forward in the country and improving production,” he says.

“Under the Vision, the government is coming to startups and small companies to give full guidance on such issues as quality control, exporting and other key elements so the Saudi manufacturing sector can do better at home and abroad.”

With an eye to exporting, Albashiti says the company is studying the developing markets in the region to pinpoint possible opportunities where ADETCO has a competitive advantage.

“Saudi Arabia,” he says, “is an amazing environment for investment. It has a strong economy, a supportive government, new and business-friendly regulations, modern infrastructure and technology.

“Wherever you’re coming from you’ll find an ideal investment destination in the Kingdom.”

Market Dominance

These days it seems the world is flocking to Saudi Arabia and it’s not only businesses and employees who are heading there to take advantage of the opportunities emerging thanks to Vision 2030.

The Kingdom is also becoming a global powerhouse in staging events, whether they are major trade shows, entertainment or sports.

Over the past four years an estimated 120 million people, both locals and visitors, have attended these gatherings and analysts say the annual spend on the events industry will grow from \$6 billion in 2021 to a projected \$17.5 billion by 2031.

In a bid to supercharge the events sector, the government has created an online licensing system, eased the bureaucracy and spent millions on touting Saudi Arabia as the perfect host with the best venue and facilities for whatever the occasion.

Successfully riding this event wave by providing much-needed display materials and infrastructure is Riyadh-based E9 Production which got a head start back in the business back in 1999.

“My father came here then from Jordan looking for new opportunities in the Saudi market,” recalls Executive Manager Jehad Ashouri. “He found there was a huge demand for digital printing which at that time was all done in China.

“So he ordered some digital printing machines and began getting orders from Dubai, Kuwait and the rest of the region becoming one of the pioneer companies in the field.”

The executive manager and his brother arrived several years later and set up a small manufacturing facility to build display booths while the printing business expanded in specialty events products like pull-ups, banners, popups and other items.



At the time, competition was from just a handful of companies using outdated machines and methods and Ashouri saw an opportunity to leave E9 Production’s rivals in the dust.

“I’d worked with high-end C&C digital industrial machinery in the United States and so with this cutting-edge equipment we could hire engineers and have the machines do all the custom sheets, cutting and other processes instead of the old way,” he explains.

“What would take another company one week to complete a project we could do it in two days. In the exhibition field, time is of the essence because the clients are always

in a hurry because there is always a fixed date for the event.

“All of this gave us a huge advantage over our competitors and within two or three years we were number one in the market,” the executive says.

By 2017, the size of the company’s plant had doubled to 4,000 square meters employing 120 people and posted annual revenue of \$10 million. But with Vision 2030 new rules on localization, many foreign companies began moving into the business and with the arrival of the pandemic the events business took a nose dive.

Ashouri used the downtime to explore how to grow large enough in order to compete



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te with the foreign arrivals and ironically the effects of the pandemic provided the solution.

“With the dire economic situation companies were shutting down, the value of real estate plunged and we were able to find a facility of 15,000 square meters and we moved there in 2020,” he recalls.

“And of course everyone was laying off employees so we could hire the best engineers, carpenters, welders and craftsmen I could lay my hands on and we were ready to get back into the game.”

E9 Production’s first order as the Covid-19 emergency eased was for the 2020 Formula 1 race in Jeddah as no other company in Saudi Arabia could handle such a big and complicated job. The earnings from that one event enabled Ashouri to pay off the debts accrued from the pandemic and the expansion.

Since then, the company has forged joint-venture partnerships with a number of international firms, specialized even further into offering its customers ever more complicated design work and focused on raising its creativity level to compete with foreign rivals.

“And now we’ve established a brand-new film studio that concentrates on content development for the clients. I think we’ll be growing by 20 to 30 per cent annually over the next several years and continue as the sector leader,” the executive manager predicts.

Positive Impact

Since its founding in 1995, Alabuo Group has had its hand in dozens of prestigious steel structure projects in the Kingdom from royal palaces, airports, and hospitals, to bridges, warehouses and grain silos.

Based in Riyadh, the group’s four companies are now heavily involved in the storied giga-projects many of which have become symbols of the physical transformation Saudi Arabia is undergoing thanks to Vision 2030.

“Right here in Riyadh we have three projects at the Boulevard City complex and we’re also in Qaddiya,” says founder and Group Chairman Ahmed Hussein Alabuo.

“And in the Red Sea projects, we were involved in the hospital and royal section of NEOM completing 25,000 square meters in 60 days working 24/7. It was a turnkey project.”

Those projects were carried out by the group’s original and still principal business, Alshahba for Constructions Company, which specializes in designing, engineering and installing metal and industrial buildings either as the main contractor or subcontractor.

Most of its clients are ministries or governmental agencies such as the Public Investment Fund, SABIC, or the Qaddiya entertainment center but it has also worked for leading private sector companies such as Siemens.

“Our second company is SBSCO which is our manufacturing arm for the steel build-

ing and structures called space frames produced at our 25,000-square-meter factory in Dammam,” the executive says.

Space frames are rigid, lightweight, truss-like structures built from interlocking struts in a geometric pattern providing strength without needing extensive support.

“It’s the largest space frame factory in Saudi Arabia and the leader in automation with design, cutting, bending, joining, painting, installation, etc.” he says.

“Our space frames have been approved by ARAMCO which is a client and now we’re starting a new production line that may gear up in mid-2025.”

A combination of needs arising from Saudi Arabia’s weather and Arab tradition is the idea behind another group company, TACO, which manufactures tents, tensile structures and awnings at a 12,000-square meter facility in Dammam.

A visitor to the Kingdom will notice tent-like structures either as stand-alone edifices or as graceful, shade-providing additions to larger buildings including at airports, sports and entertainment complexes, schools and other sites.

One of TACO’s most recent projects and one which is linked to Vision 2030’s tourism efforts are luxury hotel guest rooms housed in individual tents at the historic ancient oasis city of AlUla.

“Our other two companies under the Alabuo Group umbrella are Alabuo Trading which deals in selling steel much of it brought in from China, the United Arab Emirates or local production mills here in the Kingdom,” the chairman says.

“We are seeing a boom in the Kingdom and it is positively impacting our group. I’m bringing new machinery in for our projects we’re planning with special engineering personnel because this technology has never been used, before,” he says.

INTERVIEW WITH YASER A. AL-QAZLAN

Chief Executive Officer
ZOOD

As the young and dynamic force behind the new star in the real estate firmament in the Kingdom, Mr Al-Qazlan explains the key ingredients for Zood's success: community, as Vision 2030 upgrades the quality of life expectations of well-traveled Saudis, and location, with a sharp focus on the most promising areas in the capital Riyadh



Getting in on the real estate gold rush now taking place in the Saudi capital city of Riyadh has been the key to success for investor and developer Zood.

"We developed a lot of projects because there are many foreign visitors going to the Red Sea cities for the Umrah and Hajj pilgrimages," says CEO Yaser A. Al-Qazlan. "We took the opportunity at the time because most of the development projects were being carried out by the government.

"So we decided to start there, we got a lot of projects and worked smoothly with both the Makkah and Jeddah municipal authorities."

Starting off with infrastructure projects, the company is now involved in one of the biggest private sector developments in the capital, Nukhba, which means "elite" in Arabic, with Zood developing 7,400 plots.

That's only the largest distinguished project the company has developed over the years in the most prestigious districts of Riyadh and, along with Makkah and Jeddah, in Medina, Taif, Al-Qassim and other cities.

Focus on Riyadh

"Right now we have four mega-projects as I call them," the executive explains. "They consist of mix-use towers, apartments, hospitality, offices and retail as well.

"One of our largest planned developments is in front of the King Abdullah Financial District and we've initiated the approval process with the authorities."

"Most of these projects are in the King Fahd and King Salman Road areas because we see the future of Riyadh developing in that neighborhood, and also in the city center," he says. "We believe that district will be very popular because they are near metro stations and bus stops."

Al-Qazlan stresses that the company works closely with city officials on Riyadh's real estate needs and sees itself as filling the gap between the mammoth government-sponsored projects carried out by master developers like Roshn and the mid-scale projects of the private sector.

Along with real estate investment and development, Zood also offers related services such as design and construction, research and consultation, and asset management.

One of its latest projects is the Lavie Yards development in Riyadh, consisting of several towers and mixed-use buildings on an area of more than 20,000 square meters containing luxury residential units of different sizes and designs, and featuring extensive green spaces.

According to the CEO, the company has hugely benefitted from Vision 2030 thanks to the plan's emphasis on sectors such as tourism,



residential construction and others, which are driving the Kingdom's economy to new heights.

"We're actually now seeing some real results from the Vision in terms of the economy like the boom in hospitality, and then there is Expo 2030 which is opening huge real estate opportunities in commercial and retail.

"At the same time, many Saudis are moving to Riyadh because of the jobs being created by these high-profile projects and that's a real boost for our housing business," Al-Qazlan says.

"And you can't forget all the international companies moving with their thousands of employees to the capital attracted by the infrastructure, government offices and even entertainment options."

Sense of Community

The executive explains that Zood approaches its residential development in a different manner than other companies, placing more importance on creating a sense of community.

"Most developers are carrying out stand-alone projects but we zone for the community and organize activities which are in big demand now among Saudis who have traveled or studied abroad, where they saw this kind of community-focused living in Europe and the United States."

"And the government is taking the lead in this community focus if you look at the very large projects it is developing. They're creating a life and a lifestyle," the executive argues.



SAUDI'S IT SECTOR THRIVES ON AI BOOM

AI HAS COME JUST AT THE RIGHT TIME TO ACCELERATE THE VISION'S EFFECT ON IT

When Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and his advisers created the transformative Vision 2030 they were sure to make Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence the bedrocks for the incredible changes which were soon to sweep the Kingdom.

"We are living in a time of scientific innovation, unprecedented technology, and unlimited growth prospects," the heir to the Saudi throne said in commenting on the issue.

"These new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things, if used optimally, can spare the world many disadvantages and bring enormous benefits."

Indeed, a senior official at the Saudi Data and AI Authority, a government agency overseeing the country's high-tech efforts, said 70 per cent of the almost 100 strategic goals of Vision 2030 involved using data and AI.

Examples of the Vision's emphasis on IT include the ambitious plan to digitize all government operations in a scheme known as "e-governance" and offering generous financial help to players in the sector whether major international tech companies setting up shop in Saudi Arabia or new startups.

Over the next four years, revenue from the country's IT market is forecast to register 3.4 per cent annual growth to



WARIS ANSARI
CEO OF MUHIMMA DIGITAL PLATFORM CO.

"AT MUHIMMA WE DO HELP BRANDS AND RETAILERS MAKE DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS"

yield a market volume of \$1.64 billion by 2028, attracting investors both domestic and foreign.

Earlier this year, Amazon's cloud computing division announced investment of \$5.3 billion for AI technology and data centers and the government created a \$100 billion fund for investing in AI and other tech research and programs.

In another move, the Kingdom said it would invest a further \$1 billion in a start-up accelerator similar to those in California's Silicon Valley known as the Generative AI Accelerator or GAIA.

Every startup that spends at least 90 days in the Kingdom, registers their company locally receives a grant of some \$40,000 and the chance at a further \$100,000 investment which they must spend in the country.

So far, the program has attracted dozens of startups from around the world eager to get in on the amazing and well-funded IT and AI environment that is developing in Saudi Arabia today.

Data in Context

Making sure that Saudi businesses make the best use of all this new technology in attracting and keeping customers is the job of Muhimma Digital Platform Co., which collects, analyzes, and contex-



tualizes data for firms serving the Arab consumer market.

"Muhimma was created in 2017 by three friends discussing the challenges brands face in understanding the Arab consumer and the legacy model of local market research providers," says CEO Waris Ansari.

"They decided to set up a two-sided technology platform that allows retailers and brands to interact directly with real consumers."

Muhimma was the first in the region to adopt a crowdsourcing model of gathering consumer insights. "Data quality was one of the key challenges identified by the retail industry in our prelaunch feasibility.

The reason was the panel approach followed by research providers, who had no means to validate the identities and responses of their panel members. We found a solution in attracting real consumers, micro-segmenting them by understanding who they are, and helping our customers interact directly with them. This approach resulted in phenomenal success."

Five years of working with brands and retailers, Muhimma realized that they were collecting more data than they could process and make sense of.

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This led to a pivot in their growth model toward data analytics.

“We realized that the retail industry was collecting far too much data than they could process and make sense of. We spotted an opportunity to transform Muhimma from a market research company into a data analytics and insights company,” the executive recalls.

“It took us 18 months to build in-house capabilities in AI data analytics using machine learning (ML) and large language models (LLM). To mature the model, we adopted a strategy where we invested a lot in conducting studies for marketing purposes. We shared the AI-generated findings with customers, and even offered some studies for free.

The model proved successful. Today, we help over 80 brands understand their consumers. These include the top three retailers in Saudi Arabia, around 40 F&B companies, and several others in FMCG, automotive, and lifestyle,” the CEO says.

First Mover Advantage

Frustration in trying to buy tickets for a Chelsea football match led years later to the founding of Grintahub, Saudi Arabia’s leading secondary market online ticket seller for the profusion of entertainment, sports, art and other events of global interest unleashed in the Kingdom by Vision 2030.

“Back in 2015 when I was in medical school and my friend was studying software engineering, we wanted to go to London to see Chelsea play Paris Saint-Germain,” recalls CEO and co-founder Abdullah Aljassim.

“One month before the match we went on the Chelsea website and were shocked to find that all the tickets were sold. A friend at Chelsea told me there were only two ways to get tickets, the unreliable black market and the guaranteed secondary market.”

So the two football fans chose the latter, scored their tickets and headed to London. Two or three years later, the friends were questioning whether to continue in their present occupations when Vision 2030 with its emphasis on providing entertainment, sports and art events came into being.

One of the biggest of the annual events is Riyadh Season when an entire range of events are held at venues in



ABDULLAH ALJASSIM

CEO OF GRINTAHUB

“WE THEN FOLLOWED THE MINISTER’S ADVICE: INNOVATE, THEN WE WILL REGULATE”

the Saudi capital ranging from stand-up comedy, Middle Eastern and Western music concerts and circus performances to special restaurant events, participatory activities, boxing matches and even horse races.

“With the 2019 Riyadh Season lots of people had tickets but decided not to attend and there were no refunds. On the other hand, people wanted to go but didn’t know how to connect with those wishing to unload their tickets,” the executive explains.

“So we remembered our experience with the Chelsea match and eventually started up Grintahub charging ticket sellers and buyers a commission on each transaction.

“Then Covid-19 arrived the following year and we returned to our previous jobs. But once the pandemic was over, we went back into action and after the lockdown everyone wanted to get out and about and the business took off.”

On an investment of around \$270,000 the partners focused on dealing in entertainment ticket sales at first as Vision 2030 suggested that families spend as much as 6 per cent of their monthly income on entertainment.

Soon, Grintahub added major sports contests such as the English Premier

League or major boxing bouts taking place both in the region and in Europe, and is the official partner for Formula 1 Saudi.

In entertainment the company handles tickets for performances of local and regional artists in the Kingdom and other GCC countries as well concerts by international artists like Taylor Swift or Adele as far away as the United States.

“The challenge we encountered was regulation by the authorities but the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah Alswaha was impressed by what we were doing and told us, ‘Don’t wait for regulation. Innovate, then regulate.’”

“We are now the biggest mover in the Saudi market for secondary ticket sales with full guarantees for the buyer and seller and with over 1 million customers. We have 100 employees and we’re expecting revenue of close to \$70 million next year,” Aljassim says.

The CEO admits that Grintahub wouldn’t exist without the reforms carried out thanks to Vision 2030 and now he sees the company expanding even further as more events are scheduled and tourism, another Vision priority with much of it linked to global sporting events in the Kingdom, grows.





RAED SAEB HAJ KHALIL

CEO OF INTERACTIVE CREATIVITY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

“WE WANT TO EXPAND IN THE REGION TO DUBAI, BAHRAIN, EGYPT AS WELL AS JORDAN”

“The market here is huge but it’s still immature and that’s a good thing as there is plenty of room for growth. We need to work hard to inform people outside Saudi Arabia of the worldwide events available here,” he says.

“And with the country advancing so far and so fast in technology, it’s also a great place for IT companies to do business.”

Complete Solutions

In a little over a decade, the number of employees at Interactive Creativity Information Technology has grown by ten times, and its revenue has quintupled, demonstrating just how much Saudi Arabia has embraced IT and the technological focus driven by Vision 2030.

“We began as a systems integrator in 2013 to provide all typo of innovative solutions using out-of-the-box technology to build and integrate between multiple systems,” notes CEO Raed Saeb Haj Khalil.

“We’re talking about delivering a complete solution from a different pers-



pective, not from legacy or normal products but rather from different products.”

The tech exec sees Vision 2030 partly as a call by the Saudi authorities to develop a new way of doing business backed by the country’s oil wealth and using the latest and fastest performing technology, describing it as “the new generation of business.”

Interactive Creativity Information Technology has the experience and range of services to be involved in every aspect of IT and related activities. It’s IT and low-current solutions include data center and cloud, data network infrastructure, data wireless, mobility and data structured solutions, physical security solutions and audio/visual solutions, digital signage, and public address, paging, and room booking systems.

The company’s services cover cloud migration, collaboration and unified communications, e-commerce and social media consultancy, network and data security consultancy, system analysis, and many more.

Interactive Creativity Information Technology offers enterprise assets, performance and warehouse management, digital transformation, risk governance, AI for business, and e-mail signature management tools for its clients.

They are also specialized in technology solutions for hospitality and retail businesses and security services and solutions covering threat intelligence, cyberattacks, email security, brand name protection, penetration testing, and a long list of others.

Raed Saeb Haj Khalil says the company works with well-known multinationals in Saudi Arabia and one of its biggest clients in the Shahia Food Limited Company - Dunkin’ DD KSA.

“We digitalized their drive-thru orders with a system that can be activated anytime, and promotions can be put up and audio orders accepted. It also analyzes all the orders simultaneously,” he explains.

“We are implementing what is called ‘self-ordering through AI’, which is in Arabic and minimizes the interaction with humans, placing orders directly at the point of sales and easing the tasks for the employee and customer.”

Annual revenue is around \$5 million, up from \$1 million in 2016 before Vision 2030 was announced, and the number of employees has ballooned from five to 50 over the same period. The CEO says growth has slowed this year and is looking abroad to boost business over the next several years.

“Next year, we’re looking forward to exporting because we want to go international, first targeting the immediate Middle Eastern region, starting with Dubai, Bahrain, Egypt, and Jordan, where we already have locations,” he explains.

“We’ll do this on our own for the moment, but will be looking for partners if we go further afield. We also want to build our products for export, with full automation of solutions but between different integrated brands. It won’t be easy, but it’s the way of the future for the company.”





MOHAMMED SIDDIQUI

GENERAL MANAGER OF FUTURE TECH

“IF YOU CREATE JOBS AND DO TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, THE GOVERNMENT IS HERE TO HELP”

Cloud-based Platform

Two decades ago Mohammed Siddiqui decided that after working in IT for three different companies for the past 11 years, including one of his own, it was time to come up with a new idea and start fresh.

“I came up with the name Future Tech Group and launched it in 2004 to act as a trading company for hardware, which was totally different to what I had been doing before as I could tell the market was getting more and more mature day-by-day,” the Indian-born general manager recalls.

“At that time the Saudis allowed foreigners to directly invest through a government agency and that gave me the opportunity to set up my own business.”

Four years after, the company branched out into networking projects, infrastructure services and deployments and operation maintenance, and by 2012 was taking on software development projects.

Then the pandemic arrived with the resulting economic downturn and Siddiqui had the notion to change the company’s focus on marketing other people’s products and develop its own.

This dovetailed neatly with Vision 2030’s aim of boosting local production in all sectors, but especially in IT.

“This switch meant that we reduced our turnover from around \$17 million to

between \$2.5 million and \$4 million and we cut back on staff. So we went from higher revenue but smaller margins to less turnover but bigger margins,” he explains.

Future Tech Group came up with a cloud-hosted, contactless visitor management system with built-in meeting room booking and scheduling features. Dubbed Provizit, it offers an easy to use, smart and secure system that not only enhances the organization’s security arrangements but also offers a pleasing experience to the visitors.

“Accessing any entity, whether it’s a high-security government office or a lower security sensitive private business is always an issue of interaction, visiting or initiating contact with the right person,” the general manager says.

“Normally people in an SME or large government agency use one system to issue an invitation, another to book a meeting room, another to set up an appointment and it’s all very time consuming.

“So I came up with the idea of one integrated platform application that supports interaction inside the entity between employees and visitors whether contractors, clients, customers, suppliers or any other stakeholder,” he says.

It took time for the market to respond to the product as customers were used to international brands coming from Europe or the US. But then customers noticed that being local Provizit provided more security for their data and the product took off.

The general manager’s next project could disrupt the advertising industry, he says.

“In any country in the world SMEs make up 28 to 35 per cent of the GDP but because of their size they have limited ability to advertise their brand, product or service on television, social media, radio, etc.

“Our idea is to advertise these businesses on the underutilized digital screens you see in coffee shops, spas and other points of sale with our platform removing the ad agencies from the traditional equation,” he explains.

Siddiqui argues that coming up with innovative products has been helped immensely by Vision 2030, its focus on aiding the Kingdom’s tech industry and its open invitation for foreigners to invest.

“They’re very keen on investment from companies which create jobs and are open to technology and knowledge transfer. If you can meet those two conditions the market is here and the government support.”



Investors Welcome

Saudi Arabians are renowned for the warm welcome they extend to strangers, whether simple travelers or those seeking to do business in the Kingdom. That was certainly the case for Ahmed Salem, an Egyptian who arrived just two-and-half years ago and is now the CEO of Omed Group for Communication.

The company is part of the Al Janahain conglomerate and is active in IT, electric and low current infrastructure work with many projects for the government in its portfolio around the country.

“Vision 2030 has certainly changed the company and on a much wider scale the entire Saudi economy with 5,000 projects in all these new areas like the Red Sea, NEOM, The Line and others like the stadiums in all the big cities” he says.

“It’s huge and we all want to work with the Vision. We’ve already begun working with the government and we hope we can participate widely in these projects because they are so large.”

With less than three years in operation, jumping into all this frenetic activity and grabbing a piece of the action has not been easy with the executive saying the company has to keep ahead of the already fierce competition and move quickly when opportunities arise.



“We have to move fast because now Saudi Arabia is moving so fast and there is no time to waste. There are always new projects being announced and it is very complicated to keep up,” he explains.

“Saudi Arabia supports your company 100 per cent, even non-Saudi investors although our company is Saudi. That’s why I say Omed Group can grow as we already have a lot of business with the government,” the CEO says.

Development Manager and engineer Mohammed Zaher says that along with IT, low current and low voltage projects, the company also handles material installations and manpower supply.

“All along we’ve been lucky to get prestigious jobs such as a huge one we have on the border between Saudi Arabia and Oman, and large hospital projects. We also have work in the south of the Kingdom,” he says.

Omed Group also currently has three projects in Riyadh but the executives say that extending their presence across the country is their eventual aim as the capital is now so crowded with work.

“Everything is already getting done,” the CEO explains.

“We get hired for these jobs because we have many well-qualified technicians and excellent management professionals, much better than our rivals in the sector and the Saudi government knows and appreciates this.”

Salem says the company is open to working with foreign partners but warns now is the time to come to Saudi Arabia before all the work is snapped up.

“Over the past five or six years the Kingdom has welcomed anyone with a new idea and who wants to invest, to make a new business here. At this time, I believe it is the best country in the world to do business and certainly the best in this region.”



DR. MAJID ALDRAEHIM

CEO OF DIGITAL SUSTAIN COMPANY

“FOR US LEADING THE ARABIC LANGUAGE IN AI DEVELOPMENT IS A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY”

Leader in AI

With Artificial Intelligence on everyone’s minds as either the greatest step forward in technology or an existential threat to mankind, one pioneer company is forging ahead to ensure that the Arabic language is well represented in AI.

“We were a startup company in 2019 focusing specifically on AI and especially in the Arabic language,” recalls Dr. Majid Aldraehim, the CEO of Digital Sustain Company. “We started with three partners, all of whom obtained PhD’s in IT in different fields.

“When we began we had five or six separate tracks we needed to concentrate on, such as digital transformation and cyber security and of course AI was one of them. So we went forward with AI and we discovered that the Arabic language is not well established in the Artificial Intelligence field.”

With the Saudi government keen to see the country make a great leap forward in IT as one of the chief goals of Vision 2030, the young company turned to official entities which were seeking to establish AI labs and enhance the activity in the sector.

Digital Sustain Company came up with a proposal and set up five AI labs over a period of between 12 and 14 months.

“It took place in three different phases,” the CEO recalls. “Phase one was to establish the labs, then activate the labs, then go out

and attract people from different fields to use these machines to come up with products using the Arabic language.

“We now have 20 people working for the company and we’re predicting revenue this year at around \$2.5 million,” he says.

Saudi Arabia faces stiff competition in the Arabic-language sweepstakes with the United Arab Emirates also making great strides in the field. But Dr. Aldraehim says that Vision 2030 is fueling the domestic effort.

Vision 2030, he notes, is based on three pillars and one of which is for the Kingdom to lead the Arab and Muslim worlds. “So we are serving that pillar in different sectors and one of them is the Arabic language,” he explains.

“I believe we have already achieved leadership in Arabic-language AI so fulfilling this role of leadership is very crucial for us and we need to utilize this advantage as a fantastic opportunity.

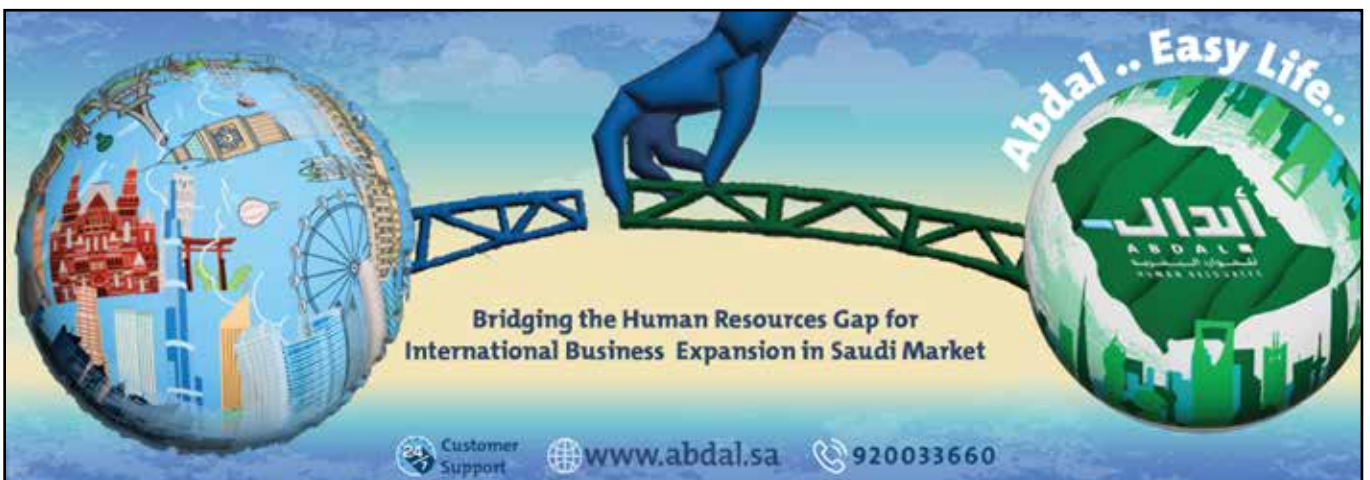
“So we are planning to expand our activities so as to make Arabic-language AI tools serve different needs in a wide range of different fields like IT, medicine, engineering and so many others. That’s what we are planning to do over the next two or three years.”

Dr. Aldraehim points out that there are still some gaps in various Arabic-language AI tools and cites the need for local partners for cooperative efforts in identifying those gaps and developing the tools specific to Arabic.

“We’re not seeking out foreign partnerships at the moment for this but we are interested in other types of partnerships like training,” he says.

The CEO also suggests modifying current AI tools in other languages.

“We need these tools to be designed basically for the Arabic language in order to maintain Saudi Arabia’s leadership role in this exciting and constantly evolving field that will soon be playing such a major role in virtually every human activity.”



INTERVIEW WITH ABDULRAHMAN ALMOHAIMID

Chief Executive Officer

ABDAL HUMAN RESOURCES - The Gateway for Foreign Businesses Entering Saudi Arabia

With economic growth and the construction of the Vision 2030 giga-projects come an increased need for human resources, not just in quantity but of a higher caliber as well. Mr. Almohaimid understood that the human resources industry needed to be taken a level up and has made of his company a leader in serving its clients in the Kingdom



As Saudi Arabia's ambitious Vision 2030 plans fuel unprecedented economic growth, foreign investors and companies are increasingly drawn to the Kingdom's potential. However, navigating regulatory requirements, securing local talent, and setting up operations in an unfamiliar market can be daunting. That's where Abdal Human Resources steps in, acting as a reliable partner to make this transition smooth and fully compliant. We sat down with Abdal's CEO, Abdulrahman Almohaimid, to understand how his company is bridging the gap for international businesses looking to establish a foothold in Saudi Arabia.

A Vision for Growth

Abdal Human Resources started at an interesting time—just as Vision 2030 was announced.

"When we heard about Vision 2030, we were thrilled", recalls the CEO - Abdulrahman Almohaimid. "We saw an extraordinary wave of economic activity coming, and with it, the need for highly skilled human resources. We knew there would be new projects, new businesses, and a demand for international standards in HR. Abdal was created to meet these demands. So, we spent time studying advanced markets and structured our services to match what a modern Saudi Arabia would need. We wanted to offer foreign businesses a simple, streamlined way to build their workforce here."

A Comprehensive Partner for Foreign Companies

When we ask on what makes Abdal the ideal choice for international companies trying to enter the Saudi market?

According to the CEO, "Abdal offers more than just recruitment. We provide a full suite of services tailored to the needs of foreign businesses, whether they're looking to secure entry permits for employees, manage compliance with Saudi labor laws, or support employees after hiring. We work with a range of sectors—construction, hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing—and have helped some of the biggest names in Saudi industry, including ARAMCO, SABIC, and Ritz Carlton, build strong, reliable teams."

Almohaimid explains that Abdal's clients include high-profile names in nearly every sec-

tor. Abdal supplies 90% of employees to five-star hotels in the Kingdom and a similar share to private hospitals. The company's extensive client base speaks to its reputation as a trusted, well-established partner in the market.

Beyond Recruitment: Supporting Every Stage of the Process

On a follow up question, we asked the CEO to elaborate how Abdal supports its clients beyond recruitment and how that looks like for your clients?

The Chief Executive highlighted and said, "Our approach is very client-centered. We realized early on that our competitors often fall short after recruitment, so we created a dedicated team to handle post-hire needs for clients and employees alike. Let's say a worker faces an issue with their bank or insurance—we'll handle that. For foreign businesses, this means they can rely on us to manage these details so they can focus on their core operations."

This emphasis on support and aftercare helps ensure employee satisfaction and compliance with Saudi regulations, making Abdal a dependable choice for investors. Almohaimid emphasizes that Abdal also acts as an advocate for the employees it hires, protecting their rights and ensuring that job conditions meet contract standards, creating a work environment where employees can thrive.

Competing Globally for the Best Talent

When asked about the competition for talent is growing worldwide. How does Abdal manage to attract top talent to Saudi Arabia?

"Absolutely", the CEO positively answered. "The competition is fierce—especially for roles in healthcare and other specialized fields. For example, during a recent recruiting mission in the Philippines, we saw the high demand for nurses from countries like Germany. We offer comprehensive packages that make it attractive for foreign workers to come to Saudi Arabia: their living expenses are covered, they can save more, and they can eventually return home with their earnings intact. This is a strong draw for professionals looking to secure a financial future for their families."

Abdal's strategy of providing attractive compensation packages and an accommodating



environment allows it to recruit top talent from India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and other countries, ensuring clients have access to a reliable workforce.

Preparing for the Future

Looking to the future, Abdal is planning for continued growth, aiming to manage a workforce of 30,000 hires by 2025 and project revenues exceeding \$250 million. Almohaimid envisions Abdal evolving into a holding company with specialized subsidiaries that cater to sectors like healthcare, hospitality, and construction.

We asked the CEO on what's his message to international companies considering Saudi Arabia for their next business venture.

"If you're looking to expand, Saudi Arabia is a place you don't want to miss", the chief quoted. "The opportunities here are vast, but you need the right partner to navigate the regulations, secure the manpower, and handle the paperwork. At Abdal, we're here to make that happen efficiently and reliably. This is based on our experience on currently helping many foreign businesses all over the globe."

Abdal: A Bridge to Success in Saudi Arabia

For businesses and investors eager to explore the vast potential of the Saudi market, Abdal Human Resources stands as the go-to partner. By combining market expertise, commitment to client support, and a strong understanding of regulatory compliance, Abdal ensures foreign businesses can establish themselves confidently, knowing they have a partner dedicated to their success in Saudi Arabia.

CONSTRUCTION TO BREAK ALL RECORDS

THE SECTOR IS NOW FIRING ON ALL CYLINDER AS THE VISION DRIVES MOMENTUM

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's Vision 2030's array of what are termed as giga-projects has caught the attention of the entire world as hundreds of billions of dollars are plowed into such developments as NEOM, The Line, the Red Sea Project, Diriyah, King Salman Park and half-a-dozen others.

And these are just the ones generating headlines.

The Kingdom is also experiencing a boom in government-funded construction of new airports, highways, seaports, hospitals and other civil infrastructure, while private investors are putting up office complexes, hotels, residential developments, entertainment venues and shopping complexes.

Analysts who have studied the construction market estimate that it is worth now around \$70 billion and should hit some \$90 billion by 2029 as it rises over 5 per cent at a compound annual rate of growth.

Sector experts say it is certain that the Saudi building industry is emerging stronger than ever from the sharp drop triggered by Covid-19 and resulting plunge in oil prices with a record number of new construction projects announced and awarded.

Along with stumping up the cash for much of this, the government is urging Saudi citizens to jump into housing market while there is also a rising demand for offices as existing businesses expand, new enterprises open and foreign businesses arrive to take



advantage of this new day in the Kingdom's fortunes.

At the same time, the country's young, expanding demographic and rising income are fueling consumer spending in Saudi Arabia with the plethora of new shopping malls, restaurants and retail outlets across the country as clear evidence that Vision 2030 is transforming the Kingdom.

Proximity Advantage

Sama Hail Contracting CEO Eng. Melshayeb is certainly a staunch supporter of the Vision as his company's profits quintupled from \$2.6 million in 2015 to \$13.5 million last year thanks to work generated by the plan.

"The Vision has made a big change in the real estate market especially over the past five years and it will be even bigger over the coming five years," he predicts. "This is because the rate of growth of real estate projects go up and that means more profit."

"We expect revenue this year to reach around \$25 million from our work in the three types of construction we do: infrastructure, real estate and advanced projects like water supply.

"Before we worked in small real estate projects but now we're involved with developments like NEOM where we're working on the primary facilities for The Line," the executive explains, "and it's convenient that

we're located in the north central city of Hail, which is closer to NEOM than our competitors in Riyadh."

Vision 2030, he continues, has changed the whole business culture in the real estate and related sectors such as construction with companies now understanding how best to manage the work and bring in skilled staff and new machinery.

New requirements and regulations stipulated by the Vision push the contractors and the developers to upgrade their operations with the result that many smaller companies are not able to understand the requirements of the new market.

"Any small or medium-sized companies that don't change and accept the Vision can't continue to work and succeed," the executive warns. "The challenge now is to grow with the Vision because things are moving quickly.

"Vision 2030 has reached 60 per cent to 70 per cent of its real estate targets and shows that companies are interested in investment but they must be quick!

"Sometimes you meet people who don't accept the concept of the Vision but more and more people are now coming on board," he says. "And these are the ones who see the tangible results, as the government and private sector are pushing to meet the targets and that means there's no chance to fail."



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“BY 2027 WE’D LIKE TO BUILD A SMART CITY FOR THE SAUDIS IN RIYADH WITH 1 MILLION SQM”

Manpower Challenges

Melshayeb has an even more optimistic take on the future of the sector than the analysts, arguing that the real estate market will grow by 8 per cent annually over the following five years from \$96 to \$101 billion.

“This gives you an indicator of how the Vision has changed the mechanisms of marketing regarding this industry,” he says.

Sama Hail was founded in 1994 and initially focused on the domestic market. It made a foray into the U.A.E but found the sector saturated and is now concentrating again on Saudi Arabia where the CEO says investment opportunities are almost endless.

“Here in the Kingdom,” he notes, “the minimum for real estate projects has become 1 million square meters which is a huge area of 3,000 buildings. Now is the opportune moment for real estate in Saudi Arabia.”

“By the time the Vision’s goals should be achieved in 2030, I see Sama Hail having around 5 per cent of the real estate infrastructure market across the Kingdom because we’re now taking calculated risks,” Melshayeb says.

“At this time, if you weigh the risks and bet on the future you will reap the rewards because that is what the Vision is all about. So I would urge foreign investors to come to the Kingdom and we are ready to become partners with anyone coming here to put their money into real estate infrastructure.”

A story that is fairly typical in the Saudi business world is that of a company which starts out in one sector easy to enter and then diversifies into other industries as experience, opportunities and resources allow.

Such is the case with the firm Al Qasr Al Makhmali Co. which started out in 1970 as a company trading in retail goods but which now is involved in manufacturing and construction, explains CEO Alaa Abduljawad.

“Our manufacturing division turns our wooden furniture and home décor items which are connecting to the main business we are really concentrating on which is construction.

“Al Makhkamli’s special forte is the development, building and sales of residential projects like duplexes and Vision current 2030’s emphasis on boosting home ownership across the Kingdom, especially for the young people, has provided a mammoth opportunity for us in the Saudi market,” he says.

Launched in 2018 shortly after the Vision was unveiled, the Housing Program revolutionized the country’s housing sector by broadening access to finance, simplifying pertinent regulations, streamlining permission processes, digitizing

documentation and providing diverse housing options.

As a result, homeownership increased from 47 per cent to more than 60 per cent by the end of 2022 and Saudi Arabia is well on its way to meeting the government’s goal of 70 per cent homeownership by 2030.

“This has all helped our company enjoy a huge surge in growth through the chance to bid for more residential developments,” the CEO says.

“And it’s not just the potential homeowners who are getting financial support for purchases but companies like ours also now getting easy loans and staking claims in the share of this vital market.”

At present, the group is posting annual revenue of between \$5.5 and \$6.5 million and employs more than 250 people. But Abduljawad cautions that his company’s growth could be slowed by the shortage of labor which is a struggle.

“Manpower is the big challenge right now because with these huge projects you need lots of labor. We ourselves have very big projects going on for which I need workers and I need visas for them which is difficult because of the red tape,” he complains.

“But despite this there are good opportunities and the business is growing. And I have to acknowledge that the government agencies are trying to improve the visa process and the bureaucracy involved in doing business.

“And that is not only true in construction and real estate development but also for manufacturing which is enjoying strong governmental support as ‘Made in Saudi’ is a prime goal for the Vision,” the executive adds. “So that’s fantastic for our industrial wooden furniture as well as for our décor division.”

Abduljawad is using this growth across the group to build towards the future and has ambitious plans for the next few years.

“By 2027 we’d like to have achieved our own vision which is to build a ‘smart city’ for Saudis, a community here in Riyadh of 1 million square meters without any automobiles and featuring all electric vehicles.

“It is still only an idea but it fits in perfectly with Vision 2030 as a technology-driven development providing citizens with 21st century housing they can enjoy and be proud of.”

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ZAKARIYA
ALMOZAIYEN

GENERAL
MANAGER OF
REMAL RABIGH

“WITH VISION 2030 THE SKILLS PROVIDED BY OUR COMPANY ARE IN SUCH A HIGH DEMAND”

High Demand

Construction in any form whether infrastructure, residential, office buildings or commercial involves many specialized subcontracting and the Remal Rabigh company has emerged as one of Riyadh’s leading go-to firms for insulation, waterproofing, floor protection and boxing for parking garages.

According to General Manager Zakariya Almozaïyen, the company is now moving into a new sector: wayfinding in parking lots.

“Right now we’re working on a big housing project installing roof insulations and also on another large development involving the parking structure. But for the past 18 months we have been focusing on becoming experts in way finding,” he says.

“Wayfinding”, he explains, “is designing and putting in the lines, digital signage and other elements that assist drivers to find their way in parking garages. We’ve done a huge project in this for the KAFD in Riyadh and we did excellent work.”

Almozaïyen had long experience as an entrepreneur in several sectors including gas and oil, water treatment and consulting before going to Canada and the United States for four years.

On his return he began working in building insulation and concrete repair and eventually founded Remal Rabigh, soon ex-



panding into other specializations.

“With Vision 2030 driving the construction business and those special skills provided by our company in very high demand, the opportunities are multiplying like crazy and it’s huge,” the general manager says.

“And it all requires outfits like ours which focus on a special field like digital signage. We are now partnering with a Dubai firm which is getting a lot of contracts for signage and digital screens and we’re doing the wall repairs backgrounds, and other tasks for them.”

Business may be going well for Remal Rabigh but Almozaïyen says it could be better if financial challenges are overcome.

“As a small business our biggest headache is getting financing from the banks and we’re dealing with delayed payments from large clients we’ve worked for,” he complains.

“It’s also difficult to get credit from manufacturers and suppliers. Outside of financial obstacles we also need to get more visas for foreign workers to add to our current staff of 19 people.

“These are the things that are affecting our growth and once they’re solved we can go forward and in coming years increase our annual revenue which is now around \$3 million,” the executive says.

That future includes garnering enough business in the vibrant construction industry for Remal Rabigh to become a medium-sized enterprise, deepening its specialization in its current fields of operation and partnering with foreign manufacturers to be the Saudi representative for products related to the company’s activities.

“For example there is a special paint that glows at night for up to eight hours which is used in Europe and North America and it’s not available in Saudi Arabia yet.

“That’s the type of product we’d like to represent for a foreign partner so we can both benefit from the amazing place the Kingdom’s construction sector is in right now,” Almozaïyen says.

Spanish Connection

As a largely desert nation, Saudi Arabia boasts oases, often rare picturesque and vibrant spots of water, greenery and palm trees in the expanse of sand and scrub that are a delight to the eye of the traveler and in some cases can even be lifesaving.

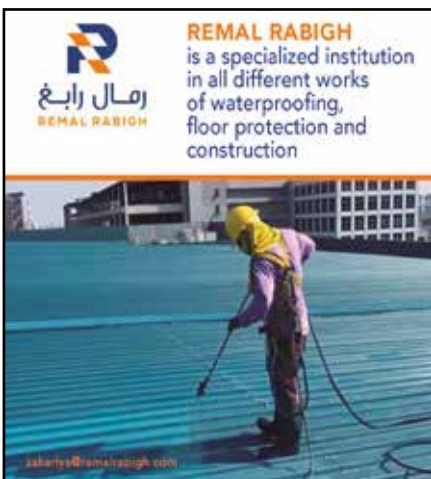
So it’s no surprise that as their clients enjoy more options in their immediate surroundings, Saudi real estate developers are offering landscaping that brings that notion of refreshing nature to a harsh environment.

And that’s the role of Jardin de Arboles, a company founded in 2022 to fill a gap in the local landscaping business as the country’s residential real estate sector expands thanks to plans under Vision 2030.

“Our name is Spanish and means Garden of Trees because our trees are from Spain which has an arid and sunny climate,” says founder and CEO Sulman Hisham Alhamdan.

“And the company was established because there was a shortage of landscaping companies in the market. Our government is focusing on this and has the goal of planting 10 million trees, as a decorative element but also as a way of stemming global warming.”

Most of Jardin de Arboles’ projects are B2B for resorts, housing and other developments with the company’s permanent staff of some 20 employees involved in design



and tree management.

In keeping with its Spanish-themed corporate name, the company offers elegant Andalusian designs for clients as well as Bohemian, Greek and classical-themed landscape schemes along with modern and minimalist styles for a perfect fit with the property's architectural composition.

After only a few years in business, Jardin de Arboles' annual revenue of around \$8 million testifies to its rapid growth although operating in such an environment as Saudi Arabia's can be challenging.

"What's important is getting the right tree for weather here and August can be a real headache with the high temperatures affecting the trees," the CEO explains.

"Also people are still a bit reticent about landscaping their homes, although most of our business is with developers and such, and that's where the real money is: the larger real estate developments and the government-sponsored giga-projects."

One of the latter is the Green Riyadh Project which will create several mammoth parks in the capital with millions of trees which is said to be the largest urban forestation scheme in the world.

In addition to providing shade, the project will reduce the city's ambient temperature, cut down on dust and encourage citizens to get out and enjoy the fresh air encouraging Vision 2030's healthy lifestyle goals.

"With the Green Riyadh Project, people are starting to care about landscaping and it is beginning to become part of the culture. So there is high demand now for our services as there are few other companies doing this," notes Alhamdan.

"This is creating opportunities not only for ourselves but also for foreign companies who could partner with us to provide added value. Over the short term I foresee Jardin de Arboles with ten branches around the country and our own farm for Saudi Arabia's 72 native species of trees."

"That's my goal for 2027."

Market Opportunity

Location and the new market for mammoth construction projects created by Vision 2030 have been instrumental in the success of GR8 Choice whose co-founder and CEO and his partner were casting about for an industry to invest in before settling on the building sector.

"My cousin and I thought that with the Vision we should participate in one of the



"WE ARE BUILDING OUR TEAM AND OUR NAME SO WE'LL BE READY FOR THE GIGA-PROJECTS"

businesses set to take off and looked at finance, marketing, events and real estate before deciding to get into construction in 2021 just after the pandemic," Naif Alaskar recalls.

"And once it was announced that the giga-projects were to be built in the north and the Red Sea region, we realized that all the construction firms here in Riyadh would head there, creating a gap and opportunities for GR8 Choice here in the capital."

"It's the perfect chance for us to build our name, build our team and then once we are really established and on the map we can join in on those giga-projects the government is doing," he says.

Since its founding the company has completed ten office building projects including one in Riyadh's King Abdullah Financial District and has two more in the pipeline with a total value of around \$25 million.

The executive says there are three factors which helped the firm stand out in the market and attract clients.

"One, I invest in my people, our high-quality designers and engineers and two, I have good financial control as I have a background in finance so that means a lot to our clients.

"And three, we always have our engineers and our design staff on the site so they are on hand to handle any questions or con-



cerns the clients may have.

"It's all in house so the client brings the design and we consult with them and tell them 'You should do this or that' or 'this is going to cost you a lot' or 'you should think about changing this.'"

Alaskar, like other construction executives, bemoans the shortage of qualified potential hires especially for GR8 Choice's design and engineering departments but has been fortunate in finding some foreign staff.

"We have 45 people among our engineers, designers and finance folks and between 150 and 200 laborers.

And he has a strategy to retain those key employees he believes are a good fit for the company.

"I have a plan about which I have told everyone who works here and it is that in five to seven years everyone will have a share in the company. "So I'm doing an IPO in five years and if you leave the company before then you'll be out of luck," the CEO explains.

"Along with the IPO I hope to have landed a contract with one of the huge government projects. It's still a good time for companies like ours to get a piece of the action and for foreign investors in this sector. We're open to partnerships as a joint venture would help us move up quickly.

A large advertisement for GR8 Choice. On the left is the logo, a stylized bar chart with three bars of increasing height. To the right of the logo is the text: "شركة الخيار الأفضل للمقاولات العامة" and "GR8 CHOICE General Construction Co.". Below the logo and text is the slogan "Building visions into reality". At the bottom, it says "We provide comprehensive construction solutions tailored to meet the needs of both residential and commercial property owners" and "WWW.gr8choice.com". The background of the advertisement shows a silhouette of a city skyline.

INTERVIEW WITH MOUSA ALSHAYEB

**Chief Executive Officer
TASAMI MEDICAL**

Based on his long experience in different pharmaceutical and medical companies, Mr Alshayeb has taken the opportunity to set up an industrial concern for the growing sector of medical supplies in the Kingdom. After three years of preparation, 2025 will be the year when he hits the market with its advanced wound care products



Creating a groundbreaking industry in high-tech medical materials is no small feat, yet Mousa Alshayeb, the Co-Founder and CEO of Tasami Medical, has turned this challenge into an opportunity. Drawing on decades of experience in pharmaceutical sales, marketing, and manufacturing, Alshayeb has spearheaded efforts to position Saudi Arabia at the forefront of advanced wound care production.

After an impressive career with international and local corporations, including Abbott Laboratories and 3M, where he honed leadership and strategic skills, Alshayeb envisioned Tasami Medical as a game-changer. "I gained valuable insights into manufacturing during my time at 3M and later with a local company. This experience laid the groundwork for launching Tasami," Alshayeb shared.

Founded in 2021, Tasami Medical focuses on state-of-the-art wound dressings. However, the journey has been filled with challenges, particularly in educating investors about the unique complexities of manufacturing compared to trading. "Manufacturing requires a completely different mindset and commitment to quality," Alshayeb noted.

Unwavering Commitment to Quality

For Tasami Medical, excellence is non-negotiable. From sourcing the finest raw materials to investing in top-tier machinery, the company is dedicated to producing premium products that meet the highest standards. "You can't take shortcuts in this industry," emphasized Alshayeb. The recruitment and training of skilled professionals, both locally and internationally, have been key to achieving this goal.



After three years of meticulous preparation, including facility setup, equipment procurement, and regulatory compliance, Tasami Medical is set to commence production in early 2025. The initial €12.5 million investment will support the production of advanced wound care products, such as hydrofiber, multi-layer foam, film, and hemostatic dressings designed for superior absorption, protection, and enhanced healing.

Aligning with Vision 2030

Tasami Medical is poised to contribute significantly to Saudi Arabia's healthcare transformation under Vision 2030. "The Saudi healthcare market is thriving, thanks to government initiatives promoting medical insurance and expanding health services," Alshayeb remarked. With 70% of sales expected from public hospi-

tals, Tasami aims to become a trusted partner within the Kingdom and the GCC region.

Saudi Arabia's stringent regulatory standards, coupled with government incentives for local manufacturing, have positioned "Made in Saudi Arabia" products as globally competitive. Alshayeb remains optimistic about international expansion, leveraging collaborations with multinational corporations to amplify the company's reach and capabilities. "Partnerships-whether through joint ventures, licensing, or contract manufacturing-are essential for long-term success," he said.

Pioneering the Future of Healthcare

Looking ahead, Alshayeb envisions Tasami Medical operating five production lines within the next five years, with an expanded product portfolio and deeper collaborations with global leaders. Reflecting on the Kingdom's evolving business landscape, he acknowledged the remarkable support from government ministries in facilitating the company's establishment and growth.

"We are laying the foundation for a transformative industry," Alshayeb concluded. "With the right team, innovation, and partnerships, Tasami Medical will not only break even in its first year of production but also set new benchmarks for excellence in advanced wound care."



INTERVIEW WITH FARAG TAHBOUB

President - Chief of the Board of Directors
TECHNO ORBITS

Managing an already successful company importing medical equipment, the founder of Techno Orbits saw the writing on the wall once Vision 2030 was announced. So he quickly pivoted his efforts to becoming a full solution provider to the health care sector, and the phenomenal growth of the company testifies to his business acumen



Protecting human life from its first precious moments was the initial idea behind Techno Orbits, a Saudi company which supplies high technology equipment and products to Saudi health care facilities around the country, when it launched 20 years ago.

"When we started this business I thought of two things," recalls founder, president and chief of the board of directors, Farag Tahboub. "First of all, the health care sector was clearly growing because of things like the building of new hospitals."

"Secondly, we didn't want to be just another trading company importing medical equipment and consumables but rather we wanted to bring in the newest technologies and services and be unique and niche in that regard to establish ourselves.

"So we settled on targeting neonatal care which is for those babies born prematurely or who are sick, because we felt it was the most important of health care concerns and which the World Health Organization says is vital to a country's overall health care ranking," he says.

Market Changes

At first, the market resisted Techno Orbits because many health care professionals were unsure of the cutting-edge technology that the company was selling.

But once those in the sector were convinced that this was the next step in medical care, the company became what the executive calls "the standard" for the health technology industry.

In its first decade of doing business, Techno Orbits operated as usual by bringing in equipment and selling it to the hospitals. But when Vision 2030 was announced with its strong emphasis on rearranging the health care model in the Kingdom, the company realized a huge change was in the offing.

"Now, the government health care authorities wanted companies to be solution driven as they began to think beyond just curing patients but helping them from falling ill in the first place," Tahboub explains.

"Before, a patient would go in for testing, then perhaps treatment with pharmaceuticals or surgery. But now the government has urged health professionals to practice preventative care.

"Here in Saudi Arabia," he continues, "scree-

ning starts before the baby is born and we are one of the few countries which carries out screening for things like hearing problems and we're also involved in this," he says.

Solution-driven Approach

Techno Orbits moved next into critical care solutions, the laboratory sector and several years ago began providing screening equipment for colorectal cancer.

"It was a challenge to adapt to the new requirements under Vision 2030 because before it was the simple tender system to get a government contract but now they want you to provide a solution.

"Luckily, we've been following the Vision and understanding how the market is changing because a lot of companies couldn't do that and didn't survive. However, we're being flexible and meeting that challenge," the president says.

One test for the company was finding the skilled employees it needed for its transition as it moved to meet the Vision's requirements beginning in 2016 but the executive says he was pleasantly surprised how quickly the problem was solved.

"After 2018 we began to see higher caliber people entering the sector and applying for jobs with us and they are not only coming to work but really trying hard to develop themselves," he explains.

"As an example around 10 per cent of our workforce were Saudi nationals but now they account for more than 45 per cent with many medical engineers. They're eager to work, they're learning fast and that has been key to our success as without true professionals you can't expand."

Techno Orbits began with the founder and two others on the payroll. Now it has 200 employees and along with its headquarters in Riyadh has offices in Jeddah, Dammam and Abha.

Since Vision 2030, the size of the company has doubled and posts annual revenue or around \$180 million.

The firm's roster of suppliers includes such prestigious medical equipment and products companies as Fujifilm of Japan, International Biomedical and Healthmark of the United States, Sedana of Sweden, Sharpline of Germany, Oxford Immunotec of the United Kingdom and MEKICS of South Korea.



Health Clusters

Over the short term, Tahboub says the sector and the company will have to adjust to planned changes in the way the state health care system is organized as the Ministry of Health moves towards forming what it terms as "health clusters".

These clusters will be established across all regions of the Kingdom and operated through regional business units established and supervised by the Health Holding Company as a state-owned government entity.

According to the ministry, this model will free the health clusters from centralized decision-making.

"It's a smart move but for us it's a challenge because we don't know how they will run and manage things," the executive says. "But the plan is also an opportunity because it will mean an expansion in the market with many more patients."

Another opportunity opening up for Techno Orbits is deepening its partnerships with suppliers by having them license the Saudi firm to manufacture products in the Kingdom which goes along with Vision 2030's demand for local content for those companies with government contracts.

"We're already doing this with one of our American partners which granted us a license to make their wound treatment products here and we want to get their permission to export this to other markets in the Middle East and North Africa," he says.

"So we want to expand here in Saudi Arabia and abroad and we aim to again double the size of our business as the demand for quality health care increases. Vision 2030 is like a fast train and if you don't get aboard now, you'll never be able to catch it again," he concludes.

HEALTH INDUSTRY TAKES A GIANT STEP

PROFOUND CHANGES ARE HAPPENING IN THIS TRADITIONAL SECTOR

Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's Vision 2030 is not just all about building projects. There is also a social element which includes an expansive effort to overhaul the Kingdom's healthcare system through major public and private participation.

According to officials, the government is to invest more than \$65 billion to upgrade healthcare infrastructure, reorganize and privatize health services and insurance, set up almost two dozen health clusters around the country, and further develop high tech, e-health and AI-related health infrastructure.

Shortly after Vision 2030 was unveiled, in a bid to attract funding from outside the country, the Ministry of Investment announced that foreign businesses could have 100 per cent ownership in healthcare, among other sectors, opening up opportunities worth \$180 billion according to some estimates.

The privatization program complements an already impressive public system which provides health care to more than 32 million citizens and residents, as well as the annual visitors for the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages, through facilities that include medical complexes, specialized hospitals, primary care centers and university and military hospitals.

A growing population, rising income and the government's plans for the sector mean that there is a very strong market for pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and health-related services.

As just one example of the opportunities available, analysts estimate that the annual Saudi market for medical devices alone is estimated at just under US\$2 billion and is growing yearly at around 10 per cent.

Business Automation

One of the main companies in the Kingdom supplying these medical devices and other health care products is Rawafed Health International Co. whose CEO, Tareq Anees, has observed the amazing transformation of Saudi Arabia during his 38 years there.

"Our whole world here has changed so fast," he says. "When I came here in 1987 you



TAREQ ANEES

CEO OF RAWAFED HEALTH INTERNATIONAL

"WITH VISION 2030 YOU CAN'T DO BUSINESS ANYMORE IN A CONVENTIONAL MANNER"

had only two television channels, women were not allowed outside their homes and the religious police were everywhere.

"Now women are driving and it was like a dream before!"

The executive is just as impressed by the changes in business practices which have accelerated with the raft of reforms introduced by Vision 2030 and that affected his company since its opening in 2008.

He cites the government's embrace of technology as the game changer and the use of the Internet to ease doing business, saying that while before a sales rep. would be the intermediary between the producer and customer, now the transaction is direct.

"These days in Saudi Arabia what I call 'business automation' is vital. For example, doing business with the government. You've hired an employee from abroad and instead of having to go from office to office getting this stamp and that stamp, it's all done online," he says.

"It's all digital and now you have to go along with this new Vision 2030 concept of business or you lose out. And Artificial Intelligence is going absolutely crazy here."

Rawafed Health International Co. serves both public and private health care organizations, importing, distributing and providing after-sales service for an entire range of me-



medical devices and other items from toothpaste to operating tables.

Its line of oral health products includes Waterpik flossers, Sunstar toothpaste and toothbrushes, and for its dentist clientele Sirona patient chairs, dentist and dental hygienist chairs and stools, and imaging screens.

In orthopedics, the company supplies Bauerfeind back, shoulder and joint supports and braces to treat bone and muscle trauma and sports injuries, and Orlima compression thigh sleeves and socks.

One of its most advanced product lines is for physical rehabilitation following physical or neurological injuries and includes robotic gait, balance and arm movement devices.

"We work with only the top global brands and they're all either North American or European and most of these are from Germany, Finland, Switzerland or Denmark," Anees says.

"Our one challenge in this field is finding accredited physical therapists in Saudi Arabia who know how to work with the new robotic systems now on the market. I have a brand, for example, from Switzerland that uses Artificial Intelligence

"But the problem is that local manpower with these high-tech skills is not available so you have to hire people and then educate them yourselves," he complains. "Highly-advance robotics is the trend now so we don't



At Rawafed Health International Co, we're dedicated to helping people live healthier and strive to make a difference in their day-to-day activities with the latest technology

شركة روافد الصحة العالمية
Rawafed Health International Co.

www.rawafedhealth.com



**MOHAMMED
JOBTRAN**

FOUNDER OF
PHARMAKNOWL
CONSULTING

“FOREIGN FIRMS ESTABLISH A LOCAL SAUDI PRESENCE TO ACCESS REGIONAL MARKETS”

work with ordinary equipment anymore.”

Rawafed Health International employs almost 100 staff and the CEO says he expects revenue for 2024 to be in the neighborhood of between \$80 million and \$90 million.

With the government’s emphasis on expanding the country’s health care sector and its efforts to boost privatization, business is forecast to be buoyant in the future for companies like Rawafed Health International.

“My goal now is for us to be a smart company, 100 per cent smart. If you want to start a business here or keep an already successful one, you absolutely must understand the market needs and market trends,” Anees says.

“And with Vision 2030, you can’t do business in a conventional manner anymore. The challenges are unbelievable and you just have to grab the opportunities now being presented in this new Saudi Arabia.”

Local Presence

Ensuring the safety of new medications and medical devices is all important to patients and medical practitioners. Experience in the SFDA -Saudi Food and Drug Authority- plus five years in the private sector was the perfect background for Mohammed Jobran to found PharmaKnowl Consulting to streamline official compliance for the pharma, medical technology and related industries.

“While at the Saudi FDA as chief regulatory pharmacist, I was always interested in working in the industry and so I left the Authority and set up this company in 2014,” he recalls. “However, after I left I discovered that the industry had its own dimensions and I had a lot to learn.

“So I found an expat to run the new business and went to work for a multinational as a scientific office manager and then a consultant to other foreign pharma countries. I finally took over as director of PharmaKnowl Consulting in 2019.”

The company provides services for Saudi and multinational firms seeking government



approval for medications and medtech products including Saudi market entry strategies, registration plans for product approvals and licenses, and post-market safety and pharmacovigilance surveillance for medicines, medical devices, cosmetics, dietary supplements and veterinary products.

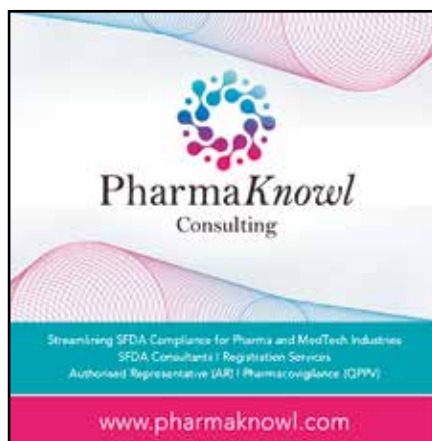
As a close participant in both sides of the regulatory process, the executive says he is impressed by the major changes driven by Vision 2030 making it more patient centric and speeding up the access to medication.

Among those changes were relaxing the laws and regulations for market access with new pathways to approval while still maintaining world-standard quality assurances for drugs and medical devices.

“One of those pathways is called the ‘reliance method’, or to rely on other respected authorities’ expertise. If these worldwide authorities approve a product then the Saudi FDA will do a minimum review,” he explains.

“However, the Saudi FDA still reserves the right to reject a drug even if it has been approved by a foreign authority like the U.S. FDA or the European Medicines Agency.”

“I can confidentially say that Saudi Arabia’s requirements are easier than other Gulf Cooperation Council and many other regional countries because our authorities are very confident of their scientific review and can easily spot a non-compliant product,” he adds.



Most of PharmaKnowl Consulting’s clients are multinational companies seeking to register their products in the Kingdom like Abbott, AstraZeneca, Chiesi, Samsung Biologics, Lundbeck, Armstrong Medical, Schwarzer Cardiotek and many others.

In addition to speeding up and facilitating the medical products approval and registration processes, the Vision 2030 reforms have also encouraged companies active in the import sector to go for “Made in Saudi.”

“Most health care suppliers used to just rely on taking commissions from the foreign manufacturers whose products they were importing,” Jobran says. “But since the Vision most top importers have invested in their own local manufacturing and some have started early stage packaging of medicines.”

“Many of these Saudi firms have signed joint ventures with their global suppliers to extend their partnerships into manufacturing through technology transfers for biotech products and medicines as drug security is a big part of Vision 2030,” he says.

PharmaKnowl Consulting itself is expanding into another medicines-related priority of the Vision which is motivating international companies to pay for clinical trials for drugs which they have developed for the potential treatment of illnesses or conditions, especially for rare diseases and unmet medical needs.

“We would like to execute the trials in Saudi Arabia under the supervision of the sponsoring companies as they have the protocols. Our role would be to contract the patients, doctors and hospitals where the trials would take place,” Jobran explains, “and we already have our license from the Saudi FDA for clinical trials.”

“All of this shows that there is a big demand for global companies to come to Saudi Arabia to either localize manufacturing or services. They need to establish their presence here not only for the local market but also throughout the region where the Saudi label is highly trusted.”

Selective process

A major restructuring after the traumas of the pandemic years has been instrumental to the recent success of Dar Al-Najat Medical Technology which supplies sophisticated medical equipment and other products to dozens of hospitals throughout the Kingdom, says CEO Ahmad Al-Amoudi.

“I took over this standalone subsidiary of the Deyarat Group founded in 1998 as they



wanted to grow in the medical field relying on my 20 years in the field. They were struggling a bit from the effects of Covid-19 and had some losses because there were no back orders or projects,” he recalls.

“So we took the decision to restructure and consider getting into medical consumables and supplies as well as digital products which is the future in this sector and so we engaged with new vendors.”

One of the main moves by the company was to open new business lines such as hemodialysis consumables and it participated in the main tender for these products put out by NUPCO, the government procurement, logistics and supply chain management agency for pharma, medical devices and supplies for government hospitals in Saudi Arabia.

Winning the contract in 2022, Dar Al-Najat was on the road back to success, tripling its annual revenue to between \$6 million and \$7 million. This year the company has expanded its business line again, this time into surgical supplies and equipment, digital health care solutions, expanded ICU equipment offerings and other products.

“Under Vision 2030, the government health authorities are looking for a good balance between quality and price. This is one of the fastest growing markets in the region and any company, local or foreign,

has to realize it’s not like before,” the executive says.

“You need to be very competitive in quality and pricing. Even if you have the best quality but your price is not competitive you’ll be faced with some difficulties.”

“And with the new environment in the health care sector, the government is moving away from healing or curing patients to a strategy of early diagnosis and this needs to be taken into consideration,” he adds.

“There is also the new emphasis on home care services which can digitally transfer test results from a patient’s home to their hospital and we’re handling the software for that, along with blood product tracking with a partner from Australia.”

Dar Al-Najat’s product line includes cardiology, mortuary, neonatology, respiratory, patient monitoring, urology and sterilizing equipment, as well as microscopes, MRI isolation shields, sterilizers and vein detectors.

Its suppliers come from the US, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Taiwan, the UK, Turkey, Italy, Argentina and China.

Once the company’s financial crisis was solved and there was a return to profit, further restructuring took place regarding an overhaul of the sales and support teams.

“We’ve been very selective in choosing our sales and in-house support teams which was key. We based our selection on picking those employees who were truly motivated and we looked at the salaries in our industry.

“You can’t attract talented people unless you’re in parallel with the salaries or you lose your staff,” Al Amoudi explains.

With the new business lines, fresh approach to management and more opportunities under Vision 2030, the CEO says he is optimistic of continuing success.

“Our goal is to post revenue of \$27 million within three years and if all goes well, we’re confident that will become a reality.”



ABDULRAHMAN ALDAJANI

CEO OF DENT MEDICAL CENTER

“ONCE THE INSURANCE PROBLEM IS SOLVED, INVESTING WILL BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL”

Insurance Opportunity

Introducing new product lines or services is practically a given for businesses in Saudi Arabia as the economy expands and opportunities present themselves. And it is certainly true for the health care sector with another example in Dent Medical Center which started off as a dental clinic but is continuing to add new specialties.

“We began this business in 2011 specifically offering dental care but within two years we opened a dermatology department and began thinking about diversifying into other disciplines like obstetrics and gynecology,” says CEO Abdulrahman Aldajani.

“Now we have a physiotherapy department as well and we’re thinking of getting into other disciplines although now almost 80 per cent of our business is dental treatment and care.”

The executive says Vision 2030 has yet to have made a huge impact on the clinic but is hoping that the plan’s call for all Saudi citizens to be covered by insurance will transform the business, boosting the number of patients and the services the clinic offers.

Aldajani is currently in talks with insu-





THAMIR ALBALLAA

FOUNDER & CEO OF ALPHAIOTA

“I THINK THIS IS THE BEST TIME TO GET ENGAGED IN DATA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE”

insurance companies to include the clinic's services but it says it's a struggle and perhaps it is best to wait for the Vision 2030 insurance requirement to be implemented.

There are also ongoing negotiations to partner with one of the largest Saudi-owned and operated dermatology clinics with three branches in the Kingdom.

“One of our biggest challenges is there is a lot of competition now and we have to make sure our quality is at the absolute highest level or otherwise we're going to lose patients,” the CEO explains.

“So that we're really focusing on improving our quality and ensuring our patients are 100 per cent satisfied with our dentists, doctors and service.”

Based in Riyadh, the clinic is opening another branch in Shaqra, a small city 200 kilometers from the capital and is looking to expand into a northern district of Riyadh.

“The area we're looking at is growing rapidly and it's an upscale neighborhood. We offer a quality service so we're able to increase our fees,” he notes.

“That, of course, wouldn't be the case if we expand into southern areas of the city. Once we are more established in Riyadh we'd like to set up a branch first in Jeddah and then maybe Dammam.”

Many citizens, they say, prefer private dental services instead of government-provided care as the private sector is thought to provide superior care and demographics is also a factor in the need to increase the number of dental clinics.

“This is an interesting sector to enter. According to our studies we are seeing that 60 per cent of the population is under 30 years of age so for sure the future demand for all health care services, including dental, will increase,” Aldajani says.

“As I mentioned, the issue of the insurance companies is a hindrance right now but once the government solves that, investing in this sector is a fantastic opportunity.”

Leading in AI

Leading the AI charge in Saudi Arabia's private tech sector is Alphaiota, a company established four years ago and that is already a valued partner of Saudi ministries, agencies and major private healthcare companies.

“What we are doing is driving the future of healthcare in the Kingdom by investing, localizing and deploying transformational AI solutions for improved, quicker and more human-oriented patient care,” explains founder and CEO Thamir Alballaa.

In 2010, he was introduced to the health tech industry participating in many transformational projects from the ideation phase, realizing that Saudi Arabia needed to start adopting the latest technology to the healthcare process such as creating electronic medical records for every Saudi.

“With the publication of Vision 2030 we knew that the country would be setting out ambitious healthcare initiatives with pioneering goals for the population,” he recalls.

“When Covid-19 came we saw how the Saudi Data and AI Authority, or SDAIA, utilized technology and infrastructure in easing the impact of the pandemic, using the tech to implement prevention measures.

“This was an eye opener and around this time a friend of mine with a financial background and I came up with the idea to create a fund to invest in data and AI in health care. We built our strategy from that,” Alballaa says.

Armed with the argument that healthcare data possessed by ministries and private

operators in the sector was a valuable resource, the partners went to the government, the SDAIA and companies and suggested helping them use this data for intelligent decision making instead of for pure analytics.

“So we proposed our product to the Ministry of Health to build a sandbox, or safe development testing environment, at the ministry level of the entire health care sector to certify algorithms by listing them using the data in the hands of the ministry,” he explains.

According to Alphaiota, the global market for health care AI is forecast to grow 45 per cent annually over the next five years to reach \$39.5 billion by 2026 driven by a number of factors

These include the need to cut health care costs, a surge in large and complex health care datasets, an improvement in computing power and falling hardware costs, a rise in cross-industry partnerships and cooperation and a rising need for enhanced health care services as the world population ages.

Alphaiota executives recently signed a partnership with the government-backed Saudi Company for Artificial Intelligence to be the exclusive arm of its projects in the health care sector, and other such collaborative deals are in the works.

“I think this is the best time to get engaged in the data and AI market,” the CEO says. “You can see how much the government is investing. And if you're not in this space you need to build your business today. These are exciting times indeed!”



INTERVIEW WITH DR. RASHEED AL EID

**Chief Executive Officer
DWAM GROUP**

With an extensive experience in both business and the medical field, the leader of DWAM Group has identified two new ventures to expand its already successful business portfolio: the lack of proper facilities for substance abuse treatment in the Kingdom, and the booming demand for protein powder, now sourced internationally



Diversity is the keyword when describing the DWAM Group which has evolved from its founding in 2003 as a manufacturer and importer of a range of goods to now being active in the medical field.

"We started manufacturing items in China and then shipping them to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region with myself as a silent partner as I had a job as a physician at the time," CEO Dr. Rasheed Al Eid recalls.

"I eventually became the vice president of the Saudi Red Crescent, served in that post for six years and then resigned in 2016 to join DWAM Group full time to diversify the organization and focus on startups."

One of the first ventures was a partnership with the leading manpower solutions company SMASCO to start up a home health care operation and then expanded into a Covid-19 testing service for public spaces before DWAM cashed out.

The group has maintained its original mainstream industrial production and import operation with the manufacturing in China of such items as corporate gifts with logos, dinnerware, furniture and playground equipment through DWAM Industrial Company.

The group has launched DWAM Training which provides medical training for clinician, military personnel and others.

"We are the only training center accredited by NAEMT USA, and we also have several national and international accreditations that keep us on the lead when it comes to training and consultations for staff excellence.

"And we have BME which is an online shop that sells fast-moving, imported items for women like perfumes, cosmetics and other beauty and skin-care products. Across all our divisions we employ around 130 people and we're expecting revenue this year of around \$25 million," Al Eid predicts.

Biggest Venture

The group's biggest venture at the moment is a \$27 million investment by DWAM Medical in a 100-bed addiction treatment center for dealing with those in the Kingdom suffering substance abuse problems.

"It's estimated that there are more than 200,000 addicts and I'm only talking about drugs, not alcohol or other types of addictions. And most of them are not getting the right treatment or are going to the U.A.E, Egypt, Jordan or even Europe," he says.

"Those small clinics here which have a different method of treatment from ours offer much fewer services and have very long waiting lists for people seeking help."

Al Eid explains that DWAM Medical is looking for a partner experienced in addiction rehabilitation to join the endeavor and has screened many candidates who are always asked about their rate of relapsed patients, those who do the cure, are released but then fall back into drug abuse. He wants to make sure this is going to change.

"The relapse rate in Saudi Arabia today is 80 per cent so four out of five will go back to addiction after rehabilitation which is very bad. The average international goal is between 40 and 75 percent depending on the drug, the country and the rehab provider.

"I want our relapse rate to be 20 per cent and we expect our addiction rehabilitation to be up and running in early 2026," the CEO adds.

But he cautions that staffing the facility with Saudi doctors, social workers and nurses could be a challenge as it is for the entire Saudi health care sector, and these key employees need to be brought in from abroad which presents its own problems.

"Good local psychiatrists and psychologists are hard to find so it's easy for me to go to Europe or North America and fetch good talent. But it's not cost efficient because first of all they're very expensive and secondly, and especially in this field, they don't understand the Saudi patient.

"When you're dealing with addiction and its mental, psychological and social causes, you need someone who has deep knowledge of the culture," he explains.



Health Supplements

DWAM Health is also expanding in the health supplements market with the opening within three years of its second factory for producing protein powder near Jeddah and is in talks with three potential partners.

The group received generous support from the government as it plans to export more than 80 per cent of production. Once domestic demand is satisfied, the plan is to target other regional markets such as Egypt and Turkey.

The CEO notes that the Saudi market for protein powder is around \$270 million with most of it imported and the closest rival manufacturer is in India.

"It's a great opportunity as we make a lot of money and produce locally which is another Vision 2030 goal and I'd like for us to be one of the main health supplement providers and sponsors for the 2034 World Cup."

Al Eid credits Vision 2030 with opening the doors which has allowed Dwam Group to diversify into these new lines of business, saying there are now opportunities that did not exist prior to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's announcement and implementation of the sweeping overhaul of the Saudi economy and society.

Setting up a manufacturing facility, for example, was a real headache with all the procedures, bureaucratic bottlenecks, licenses and permissions, with little effective government support.

"Now we receive all the support we need," he says. "I have a loan for 75 per cent of the budget for a manufacturing project and in the industrial park where the factory will be built I pay one riyal, or 26 U.S. cents, per square meter per year.

"With the changes under Vision 2030, you do your job, do your homework and you'll be a success. If you can't get your business successful in Saudi Arabia, maybe business is not your thing!"



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DR. RASHEED AL EID
CEO

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