

SME revolution starts in Dubai/GCC

 By [Naseem Javed](#)

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The Western economies realised decades ago that small and medium enterprises are really the main drivers of the economy. The Middle East is now a new turning point for SMEs to begin a grassroots revolution.

While big businesses are necessary to preserve and maintain structure within the economy, surely they have considerable problems of their own? Mega corporations of the earlier era have increasingly lost their edge to smaller, nimbler organisations, which have sprouted up all over the Western landscape.

There are four driving forces:

The critical mass

Middle East and particularly the super-charged Gulf-Cooperative Council, known as a GCC region. The current GCC members are Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, and Oman. This also ripples into bigger Middle East and Middle East and North Africa, known as MENA regions.

GCC nations are in a major transition, something so dramatic and so powerful that when it comes to new business formation front, all of this is pointing to a mass incubation of new enterprises all over this region. Dubai is now such a dynamic place and unmatched by any other region on this planet; the examples set by Dubai provides the fuel to this expansion, and brings a brand new high level of confidence.

The speed and operational level is dramatically high, and it may continuously re-charge in a way that was similar to the 1990 American e-commerce boom, which erupted in a chain reaction of one success leading into several others, simultaneously. Though, at times, we refer this American boom period as 'irrational exuberance', but still the dotcom boom followed by a long bust was still only a small hiccup towards the long haul of the e-commerce revolution. There is a similar pattern emerging; this massive growth may get a bump here and there but it is gathering momentum and amassing its own critical mass with signs of longevity.

The integration

The shades and colours of extreme diversity combined with variety of loose floating ideas can become an awesome force: sometimes only the crude differences and wild ideas germinate great original concepts. This region is like an extraordinary bazaar of strange concepts, traditions, styles, personalities, and nationalities, parked in various geographies. Isn't this the same reason that the open diversity of America in the later parts of the last century made it a hot spot for innovation and the

introduction of hundreds of new concepts to the world?

This is what is in the making. Here the diversification and cultural integration is becoming the nurturing ground and technology is offering the tools to produce such concepts in a world-class manner. The SME sectors all over the GCC countries are poised for big gains.

The image and branding

Today, and all throughout history, no matter what, everyone is being branded, either for their origins, ideologies, presentations and interactions, plus hundreds of many other reasons. Everyone is branded. From mega personalities to little individuals, from Governmental institutions and big organisations to small businesses, nothing is left untouched.

Although there is nothing wrong with this, the most important part is to acquire tactical and highly-trained skills to develop a deeper understanding of this external branding force so as to combat all the undesired images with a professionally executed counter-action plan, aimed at continuously achieving a sharper and a desired image along the way.

The smart ones know this very well and this smartness is now slowly creeping throughout the region rapidly. This image building is going to create some new standards to be adopted by the rest of the globe. The culture is becoming image-savvy along the way, just like the West was all along.

The nationalization

The GCC countries are facing population and foreign workforce imbalances and therefore want to create and train their own nationals to be in the forefront of all sectors and also to become the driving force behind the business and corporate sectors in their own countries.

The issues of nationalisation are being discussed at all levels; this also is creating a positive interaction among nationals to take direct, active roles rather than passive bosses. Nationalisation is fuelling education and active engagement. This, when blended with a foreign workforce, creates a new kind of energy of its own, and this energy is what the new business climate needs, a blend of integrated highly efficient working environments.

Nationalisation is a very good thing, and the sooner the localisation picks up steam, it will be better for all sides.

Opportunities for the world

Today Dubai and GCC opens golden opportunities to the global business communities of the world. The business activities in the region are increasing at record pace by the day, Dubai now sets the standard, and every other city in the region wants to catch up fast.

Right now, Dubai International Exhibition Centre, the largest centre in Middle East, has 365 days of bookings for major fairs, exhibitions and conferences: millions of people are coming in to interact, exchange ideas to form alliances and sellers from all over the globe in search of business from this super-rich region:

"We are the gateway to the world now, and we can show it in technicolor. Just come and see what we have done here in last 10 years." So says Sateesh Khanna, an Indian born expatriate in Dubai since last the last 30 years, and now general manager at Al Fajer Information & Services, the largest exhibition company in the region and also the organiser of the SME Expo in Jan 2007 (www.gogcc.com or www.semeexpo.com). Sateesh further adds: "Easy access to ownership of your own business, property and no taxes have made this the top location now, and SMEs are coming in huge numbers."

Some 15 000 members of the SME community will visit this SME Expo from this region and the world. There will be some 300 SME-related businesses showcasing their strengths and innovative ideas. In the Golden Opportunity for SME in GCC Conference, there will be some 1000 delegates who will hear the top 20 speakers in this field. The theme is to offer a platform

to create new alliances and to team-up for greater exportable opportunities throughout the Middle East and MENA.

"Finally, we are ready to tackle this new frontier and we invite businesses from all over the world to come and explore the golden opportunities this region has to offer to SME", says Winnie Lugon, the event manager of the SME Expo.

The tourism and general traffic to Dubai is at a frantic pace, and people from all over the globe are exploring this to make a major branch operation or Asian head quarters, and this alone has brought a boom to the real-estate markets and foreign investments. There is a certainly a brand new SME business revolution starting in Dubai and spreading all over the GCC countries. Right now, everybody is talking about being Dubai-bound or going GCC. All aboard.

ABOUT NASEEM JAVED

Naseem Javed is recognised as a world authority on global name identities, corporate image, cyber-branding and digital branding assets. He introduced The Laws of Corporate Naming in the '80s and also founded www.abcnamebank.com, a consultancy established in New York and Toronto a quarter century ago. Currently, he is extensively touring Middle East on the lecture circuit.

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