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Corrina Cross, The People People, Dubai, asks if it's possible to have both.

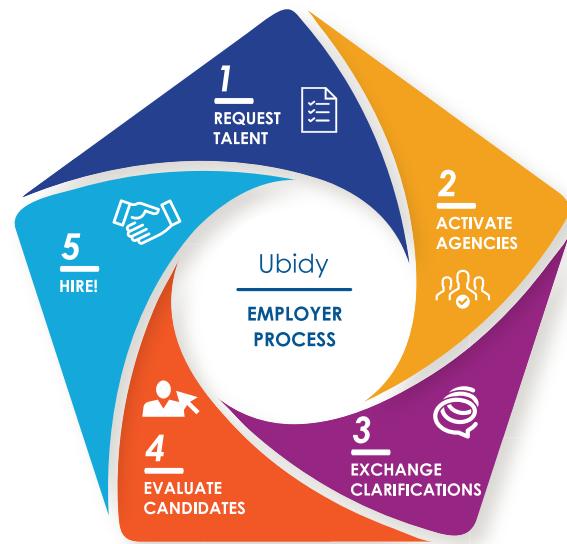
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Editor's Note

Hello Reader,

Get ready to ignite those creative engines because we're about to take this issue to new heights! With every article, every story, and every insight, we're not just sharing knowledge—we're sparking a revolution in HR and Learning that will inspire, engage, and transform our readers like never before!

Our mission? Simple: To deliver content that's not just read, but felt. We're talking articles that make hearts race, interviews that spark "Aha!" moments, and stories that leave a lasting impact on every professional who turns through our virtual pages.

This isn't just another issue—it's a rallying cry to every HR and L&D professional out there. We're here to challenge the status quo, break boundaries, and set the stage for the future of work. We're creating a buzz that's going to resonate across the industry, from boardrooms to break-rooms, and everywhere in between.

We are the ones who bring the human back into Human Resources, the learners back into Learning & Development, and the wowfactor into every single piece we produce. Let's make this issue not just a success, but a phenomenon!

So, buckle up and let's unleash our creativity, passion, and power to create something that's not just good—it's outrageously outstanding and outshining awesomeness! Let's make this issue a knockout, together!

Remember, we're not just a magazine. We're a movement. Let's make some magic happen! Here's to creating something

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Spotlight on: Khalid Aldosari, CSSO, AJEX Logistics Services

Khalid Aldosari Chief Shared Services Officer, shares the highlights of his HR Journey

1. Tell us about your career journey in HR.

With over 15 years of experience in both the government and private sectors, my career has been shaped by significant achievements in HR transformation, talent management, and organizational development. Currently, I hold the role of Chief Shared Services Officer (CSSO) at AJEX Logistics Services. In this capacity, I oversee human resources (HR), procurement, facilities, and legal operations across six countries.

My career began with pivotal roles in prominent organizations such as McDonald's, Aljomaih Consumer Division (Pepsi Cola), and National Air Services (NAS), where I initially focused on recruitment and Saudization, progressing to Head of Recruitment at Flyadeal, Talent Acquisition Consultant at Tabadul, and HR Director at Flynas.

Throughout my career, I've been dedicated to building robust HR frameworks, leading transformation projects, and implementing strategic talent initiatives that align HR with business goals.

2. What are the highs of your career so far?

National talent development has been an ongoing focus throughout my career, and I have successfully implemented Saudization strategies increasing local talent representation while ensuring business continuity and efficiency.

Currently, I'm building the AJEX Future Leaders Programme with two tracks - the Internal Career Path Programme which enables customer service employees to transition into officer-level roles through structured internal hiring and training; and the Future Leaders Program, which is designed to build a strong pipeline of future leaders. Today, AJEX has proudly achieved a Saudization rate of 31%. Part of our winning workplace culture, in 2024 AJEX also earned the Great Place to Work certification in Saudi Arabia.

Another highlight of my journey at AJEX has been leading shared services operations, where I helped set up and manage HR, procurement, and legal functions. I also worked closely with top consulting firms to drive key strategic growth initiatives across



2. Khalid Aldosari, CSSO AJEX Logistics Services

the company.

3. What is your current role, and how are you creating value for your company?

As Chief Shared Services Officer, my role at AJEX extends beyond traditional HR management—it is about creating strategic value, optimizing workforce capabilities, and ensuring business agility with Both Future Leaders programmes designed to ensure long-term career growth, enhance internal mobility and cultivate a strong pipeline of future leaders within AJEX.

On the operational side, I streamline HR, procurement, and facility management processes, improving compliance, reducing costs, and enabling business scalability. I have also introduced data-driven approaches to HR, enhancing workforce planning, performance management, and employee engagement, ensuring that HR and shared services drive business growth, operational efficiency, and long-term organizational success.

4. What are the challenges you foresee for the next five years?

The HR landscape is evolving rapidly in Saudi Arabia, the Middle East and indeed the world,

presenting increasingly complex challenges for organizations. One key challenge is talent retention. With mounting competition for skilled professionals, companies must focus on career development, employee engagement, and effective retention strategies and robust leadership development programmes, to build long-term workforce stability.

Regulatory compliance, particularly in relation to nationalization strategies and evolving labour laws while navigating localization policies and maintaining operational efficiency will be vital. Additionally, managing hybrid work models will be another challenge.

Critically the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital transformation in HR will reshape traditional HR functions. This shift will require the continuous upskilling and adoption of HR analytics to drive decision-making. Addressing these challenges will require HR leaders to be agile, data-driven, and deeply aligned with business strategy.

5. How do you see your role in HR developing?

HR is no longer just a support function—it has evolved into a strategic enabler of business success. For example, in terms of the digitalization of HR, predictive analytics and AI-driven insights will continue to enhance workforce planning, performance management, and recruitment strategies, requiring new skills to oversee. With that in mind, it is critical to underscore that HR should be aligned with business growth strategies, as it is essential to ensuring people are a key driver of organizational success.

At AJEX, we understand this and looking to the future we will continue to focus on leadership development, expanding initiatives like AJEX Future Leaders Program to nurture high-potential talent, and launching workforce transformation initiatives that focus on reskilling, upskilling, and developing talent to keep pace with changing business needs. We also pride ourselves on our workplace culture, and enhancing the employee experience will remain a central focus, as we work to ensure the well-being and mental health, and build a high-performance, employee-centric organization ♦

Where are they Now - Spotlight on: Karen Oliver MCC

Karen Oliver, MCC Dubai, shares her transition from the UAE to UK and her life now.

Tell us about your experience and what prompted the move?

I started my 30-year expatriate adventure in Hong Kong, and moved to Dubai in 1999 when my role with Marks and Spencer was made redundant. Dubai was home for the next 22 years creating amazing opportunities, I will always be grateful for. The onset of the COVID pandemic in 2020 brought a change in mindset. Knowing it was time to return home, it took a year to put plans in place, starting with selling our home and moving into an Apartment Hotel.

Looking back what were the high points and low points of your time in the UAE? What reflections can you share?

I remember how friendly and helpful people were, sharing experience and networking contacts. I purposefully kept in contact with the outplacement company providing support when I left M&S and jumped at the chance to open their Affiliate office in Dubai. Later part of the www.lhh.com global network, offering Career Transition, Leadership and Coaching services across the GCC.

From our office initially in Dubai Knowledge Village we worked with leaders and executive teams across a wide range of industries, from Banking and Finance, FMCG, Oil and Gas, Telecoms, IT, Pharmaceutical to Communications.

This was a very special time to be living in Dubai. With the increasing global interest in the region came invitations to speak at regional conferences and facilitate business events.

The major highlight of my time in the UAE has to be working and learning from amazing and talented people. Including the wonderful LHH Gulf team, Consultants and Coaches, many of who are still working with Nic Beesley, Managing Partner and LHH Gulf.

Low points



■ Karen Oliver MCC

Low points were being separated from family and loved ones, missing celebrations and not being there in challenging times including the impact of the COVID pandemic. I hope that sharing the benefits of living in the sunshine and expat life style, with family and friends on holiday in Dubai helped balance this in some way.

What were the biggest changes you faced in your new country?

During the first year I worked remotely with the Dubai team and focused on a personal goal to become an ICF accredited Master Coach. In the second year I set up 'Karen Oliver - Coaching Conversations', to work independently as a Business Leader Coach. To work with successful leaders who hit a bump in the road, helping them in our coaching conversations to get back on track to achieve their goals.

The biggest challenge working in the UK after 30 years, has been building a network and relationships with local business leaders of international and regional organisations. Joining local networking events and reached out to contacts on LinkedIn is helping overcome this. My clients since returning to the UK have all been referrals, living in UK, Canada, UAE, Switzerland and

Iceland, working across a wide range of industries. A Marketing Executive in the UAE focusing on a strategy to return to Europe, the CEO of a UK company considering career options, a lawyer offered partnership in a prominent law firm and IT Director aligning personal values with career direction.

If you had your time again, what might you have done differently?

Primarily, to acknowledge that this exciting journey was going to be confusing, messy, harder than I had imagined and would take longer than I thought. On reflection I would have set personal goals outside of the process of moving, to focus on direction. To have listened to Robin Sharma's words reminding us, 'Getting lost along your path is part of finding the path you are meant to be on'.

I would have started building a UK network earlier and had more fun getting lost along the way, for my path to become clearer, before I left Dubai. Back in the UK I have been working with Coaching Buddies for support, to encourage commitment and review progress. With hindsight I would have looked for Coaching Buddies much earlier.

What are your thoughts about your future?

I'm excited about the future and the path is clearer now. I am using my expat business background and experience of transition to work with successful leaders who hit a bump in the road. Offering a programme of confidential coaching conversations to help them get back on track to achieve their goals.

My 'blue-sky thinking' goals for 2025 include a pipeline of global clients including Hong Kong, Singapore and Asia Pacific. And to fulfil a personal goal to 'give something back', 20% of profit from Karen Oliver - Coaching Conversations' will be donated to support homeless charities ♦

Spotlight on: Farhan Bhatti, Senior Occupational Psychologist

Dubai based Leadership Strategist, Farhan talks about how psychological insights become high-impact solutions

1. Tell us about yourself and your professional journey.

I have always been fascinated by what makes people thrive at work. Over the past 15 or more years, I have worked across the Middle East and beyond, helping organizations unlock the full potential of their people. As a Senior Occupational Psychologist and business leader, my journey has taken me from global consulting firms like Willis Towers Watson to leading executive assessment, leadership development, and organizational transformation initiatives in the region. Today, I am at the forefront of business psychology in the GCC, blending science and strategy to shape resilient, high-performing workplaces.

My work is driven by a simple yet powerful belief: business success is built on people, and psychology holds the key to unlocking their best performance. Whether working with senior executives on leadership capability or helping organizations create cultures that inspire and retain top talent, I am passionate about turning psychological insights into practical, high-impact solutions.

2. How would you describe the culture within your organization?

The culture I cultivate—both within my teams and with the clients I advise—is one of clarity, ownership, and psychological safety. Through my C.A.P.T.U.R.E. Model, I emphasize:

- **Clarity:** Helping leaders and teams define success with precision.
- **Autonomy:** Encouraging initiative and accountability.
- **Psychological Safety:** Creating environments where people feel empowered to share, challenge, and innovate.
- **Task Significance:** Connecting work to purpose and meaning.
- **User-Centric Thinking:** Placing people at the heart of decision-making.
- **Resilience:** Building adaptive, high-performing teams.
- **Evaluation & Feedback:** Embedding continuous learning and improvement.

In the fast-evolving Middle Eastern business landscape, organizations need to strike a balance between traditional hierarchical structures and modern agile ways of working. My focus is on enabling leaders to shape cultures that drive engagement, performance, and long-term success.

3. How accessible are decision-makers within your organizational partnerships?

One of the defining traits of the organizations I partner with is the shifting role of leadership accessibility. Historically, decision-making in the region has been centralized, but we're seeing a shift toward more

collaborative, transparent, and data-driven leadership.

In my experience, the most forward-thinking leaders recognize that accessibility isn't just about being available—it's about being present, listening deeply, and fostering open dialogue. Whether working with senior executives or high-potential future leaders, I focus on enabling better decision-making through psychological insight, structured coaching, and evidence-based leadership development.

4. What do you see as the major challenges ahead in the next five years?

The next five years will be a defining era for organizations in the Middle East. From rapid digital transformation and AI integration to evolving workforce expectations, businesses will need to navigate a complex blend of change, uncertainty, and opportunity.

Key challenges I anticipate include:

- **Resilience in Uncertainty:** Leaders must build resilience—not just in themselves but in their organizations—so they can thrive in volatile and ambiguous environments.
- **Talent Retention & Development:** Organizations need to rethink how they attract, retain, and develop talent in a world where purpose, flexibility, and growth opportunities are top priorities for employees.
- **The Psychology of Change:** With transformation happening at an unprecedented pace, leaders need to move beyond traditional change management and tap into the psychology of change adoption and behavioral adaptability.
- **Balancing Tradition with Innovation:** The Middle East has a unique business culture rooted in tradition and relationships. The challenge is integrating global best practices with local cultural



Farhan Bhatti, Senior Occupational Psychologist

dynamics to create leadership models that work for the region.

5. What skills and competencies need to be developed to meet the region's talent demands?

Organizations need to invest in human-

centered skills as much as they do in technical and digital capabilities. I see three critical areas that will shape future talent development:

1. **Leadership Agility:** Leaders must develop the ability to pivot, adapt, and lead with confidence

in unpredictable conditions. This requires self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and decision-making under uncertainty.

2. **Resilience & Mental Toughness:**

In a region where high-performance expectations are the norm, employees need to be equipped with the tools to sustain performance, manage stress, and stay motivated under pressure.

3. **Strategic Influence &**

Communication: Whether leading teams or navigating complex stakeholder environments, the ability to communicate with impact, inspire others, and drive change is becoming a critical competitive advantage.

In my work, I integrate these skills into leadership assessments, executive coaching, and high-impact learning programs to help organizations develop leaders who are not just competent, but truly transformative.

Final Thoughts

The Middle East is an exciting and dynamic place to work. As organizations evolve, the role of business psychology in shaping leadership, culture, and performance has never been more vital. By combining scientific insight with real-world business application, we can create workplaces that are not just productive, but inspiring and future-ready ◆

Dichotomies of Our Times

Uzair Hassan, 3H Solutions Group, Dubai, muses current right wrong thinking and how it translates to HR practice

dichotomy

/dītōmē/ (dī-)

noun

1. a division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different.
"a rigid dichotomy between science and mysticism"
synonyms: **division, separation, divorce, split, gulf, chasm**; More
2. **BOTANY**
repeated branching into two equal parts.

We have all heard these maxim's that contradict each other:

- Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone.
- Misery loves company.

So, we cry alone or are we making sure we have company when we do cry?

- Too many cooks spoil the broth.
- Many hands make light work.

So, teamwork is best, or not?

- Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.
- Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

Work hard and plan for the future, Or not?

- Opposites attract.
- Birds of a feather flock together.

Find commonality, or, look for diversity?

- Clothes make the man.
- You cannot judge a book by its cover.

So pyjama's rule, or dress well?

- You're never too old to learn.
- You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Choose cats?

- Great minds think alike

adages provides an insight into how they operate and view the world around them. Their experiences, their environment, their prejudices or the lack of etc. Their values, their approaches to life, their leanings, their perspectives, their stance on issues, their mindset. In short, the entire structure of their being.

Our choices may haunt us or we may remain blissfully unaware of our chosen direction, but as far as the world at large is concerned, one is either on the right side of history, or they are not. Our chosen viewpoints shine the light through the prism of our own thoughts and provide contextual clarity to our life choices.

Bringing this all back to "people" in the HR context, if one wants to understand their leanings, simply provide relevant dichotomies and sit back and watch the person unfold as they select from the choices provided.

The COVID-19 climate provided ample opportunities to see this unfurl in front of us. To some, this predicament provided an opportunity to grow, hone their skills, develop deeper relationships, balance life & work, learn new skills, start something they always wanted to but never had the time etc. To others, it was depressing, stressful, tough and unravelled the social fabric of our society. We all have our own perspective on everything in life. Why not this. We are not talking about being right or wrong. It's simply providing context and perspective on how people take on challenges and see the world.

If we were to read everything that has ever been written, one would find contradictions in virtually every aspect. It is up to us to choose what fits our approach to life. Staying positive is a choice one makes. Stay the course ◆



Uzair Hassan CEO, 3H Solutions Group, Dubai



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Fancy Proposal or Fantastic Training Solution?

Corrina Cross, The People People, Dubai, asks if it's possible to have both.

I spent hours today working on a proposal. Way more time than I should have.

And it got me thinking...

The client had put out a tender which means other companies would be pitching for the same business.

I bet they didn't spend hours putting their proposals together. Who does in this age of AI? 'Charlie' (my name for ChatGPT) could rustle up a pretty whizzy Proposal in no time.

- 'He' would use all the key words mentioned in the brief.
- He would recommend all the latest gimmicks like gamification, micro-learning and experiential learning.
- He would respond to every request - Methodology / Timelines / Evaluation, etc.
- And he would finish it all before your cuppa tea got cold!!

If it was then put into some fancy graphics (again, with the help of AI), that proposal would certainly stand out from the crowd. And that company may well win the project.

But then what?

Somebody - probably some poor freelance soft skills trainer - would need to understand the brief; make sense of the proposal; study the content (which may contain models they have never even heard of?); find out as much about the audience as possible; then turn up on the day and deliver the content in an impactful and engaging way. Ta daaaaa!

But what if that didn't happen? What if the training company that sent in the proposal...

- Didn't double-check the information Charlie spat out because it was TLDR (too long; didn't read)?
- Didn't check if it made sense or would



■ **Corrina Cross**, Founder and Lead Facilitator of The People People. Dubai

meet your needs exactly?

- Didn't work out if the logistics and timeline proposed were actually possible?
- Don't actually have a trainer who is knowledgeable on the topic and can deliver the content? or
- Does manage to find someone knowledgeable on the topic but who speaks in a monotone voice, has no personality and has your precious employees falling asleep before the morning coffee break? (After all 'Charlie' can't drive to the training venue and deliver the content in a charismatic way... not yet anyway).

By then it's too late to turn back the clocks. A chunk of your training budget has 'gone for a six', your participants are all complaining and you still have a series of online, face-to-face and micro-learning sessions to be delivered

by the same company. All because the proposal looked 'the business'!

So, L&D managers, beware! With AI making tasks so quick and easy these days, it's more important than ever to do your research.

Don't be swayed by a fancy proposal alone. Take the time to scrutinise the content, check it really does meet your needs (and that the models suggested do actually exist!). Ask tough questions, and demand to meet the trainer who will be delivering the programme.

Your employees deserve better than a monotone voice and a series of snooze-fest sessions. And you deserve a decent return on your training budget!

Corrina Cross is the Founder and Lead Facilitator of The People People.

Thanks For leadership development programmes that truly 'hit the nail on the head' ♦

The Future of AI Needs More Women at the Helm

Ergul Hemmingsen, Chief Human Capital Officer, Core42, talks women in AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cloud computing are redefining industries, fueling innovation, and transforming economies. But as these technologies shape the future, a crucial question remains: Who is shaping them?

AI and cloud must be built by diverse minds - ones that bring different perspectives, experiences, and expertise to ensure that the digital world is inclusive, ethical, and representative. Women hold just 22% of AI-related roles globally and a mere 16% of senior executive positions, according to the report by World Economic Forum. Despite the growing pipeline of female talent, systemic barriers—from unconscious bias to a lack of visible role models—continue to hinder progress.

This year's International Women's Day urges us to accelerate action for gender equality. The momentum is real; at Core42, we are seeing more women than ever applying for AI and cloud roles. But enthusiasm alone isn't enough. Women must not only enter these fields but also be empowered to thrive and lead within them.

The Reality of Women in AI and Cloud

The push for gender diversity in AI and cloud is not just about fairness; it's a strategic and economic imperative. Research consistently shows that diverse teams make better decisions, drive stronger financial performance, and spark greater innovation. While more women are entering these fields at junior levels, leadership opportunities remain limited, emphasizing the need for structured career pathways, sponsorship programs, and visibility initiatives.

Beyond representation, the gender gap in AI has deeper implications. AI



■ **Ergul Hemmingsen.** Chief Human Capital Officer, Core42

systems are only as fair as the data they are trained on, and studies including those from UN Women, show that male-dominated datasets often reinforce biases in hiring, healthcare, and financial services. Without diverse representation in AI development, we risk embedding inequality into the very technologies meant to serve humanity.

Why Gender Diversity in AI and Cloud Matters

Diversity in AI isn't restricted to fairness; it's a catalyst for smarter, more effective AI. When AI is built by homogeneous teams, it inherits their blind spots. Research consistently shows that diverse teams drive better financial performance, enhance innovation, and improve decision-making. Gender-balanced AI teams are also critical to reducing algorithmic bias and ensuring that AI solutions serve all communities equitably.

At Core42, we believe that diversity fuels innovation and also drives results. We are committed to diversity through targeted hiring, structured career development, and strong academic partnerships that encourage more

women to pursue careers in AI. We also believe that one of the most powerful tools for change is mentorship and sponsorship. I am personally invested in mentoring women both within our organization and beyond, ensuring they have the guidance, visibility, and support to advance into leadership roles.

Beyond mentorship, we have also launched reskilling initiatives to help women from adjacent industries transition into AI and cloud by equipping them with the technical skills needed to succeed. Many women already possess critical thinking, analytical, and problem-solving skills - our role is to provide the opportunities that translate those strengths into high-tech careers.

Shaping the Future

The increasing interest from women in AI and cloud is promising, but interest alone is not enough. As this year's International Women's Day theme suggests, we must create real opportunities - opportunities for women to grow, lead, and drive the future of AI. This means setting clear diversity targets, holding each other accountable, and breaking down stereotypes that discourage women from pursuing careers in technology. It also requires collaboration between businesses, governments, and educational institutions to create policies that drive systemic change rather than one-off diversity initiatives.

The future of AI and cloud is being shaped today. To build a truly intelligent and inclusive digital world, we must ensure that diverse voices are at the helm of this transformation. Women are not just participants in this journey; they are leaders, innovators, and changemakers who will define the next chapter of AI ◆

Dubai Culture Wins Two Awards at International Brilliance Awards 2025

Awards underscore Dubai Culture's commitment to innovation and excellence in human resources

Dubai Culture and Arts Authority (Dubai Culture) has been recognised with two HR Brilliance Awards as part of the 2025 International Brilliance Awards, an annual event held in the United Kingdom. This achievement underscores Dubai Culture's commitment to innovation and excellence in human

resources, showcasing its outstanding performance in implementing best practices that drive employment and productivity. Additionally, the Authority has successfully developed and implemented programmes to empower employees, reinforcing its role in shaping the cultural movement in Dubai.

Dubai Culture won the Gold Award in

the 'Innovative HR Team of the Year' category, celebrating its focus on collaboration and advancement in human resources. Mohammed Obaid Al Marri, Director of the Human Resources Department at Dubai Culture, received the Silver Award for 'HR Professional of the Year' in recognition of his leadership and contributions to advancing HR practices.

Expressing pride in this milestone, Mohammed Obaid Al Marri credited the achievement to Dubai Culture's dedication to fostering a culture of innovation and employee empowerment. He said: "These awards reflect our commitment to investing in people, equipping teams with the support, skills, and resources they need to excel. They also highlight our efforts to maintain a comprehensive management system that upholds transparency and facilitates positive outcomes at all levels while creating an inclusive and attractive work environment."

The International Brilliance Awards set global excellence standards, encouraging individuals and organisations to strive for creativity and distinction across various fields. Recognising leadership, innovation, growth, and sustainability, they celebrate achievements in business, human resources, internal communications, marketing, and public relations. The awards also emphasise the importance of diversity, inclusion, and employee well-being in different work environments. ♦



These awards reflect our commitment to empowering teams, fostering transparency, and creating an inclusive, supportive work environment.



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UAE Workforce Risks in 2025

Cybercrime and Workforce Stress and Burnout Take Centre Stage

International SOS, the global leader in health and security risk management, has released its highly anticipated Risk Outlook 2025 Report on 'Navigating a Fragmenting World'. The report highlights the evolving global risk landscape and thereby the critical need for organisations in the UAE and globally to enhance resilience in the wake of unprecedented cross-border, environmental, and security challenges.

The Risk Outlook 2025 Report¹ underscores the volatility witnessed globally that is reshaping business operations and workforce safety across the world. The study, based on expert analysis and insights from over 800 senior risk decision-makers across 96 countries, including the UAE, identifies three key amplifiers of global instability and its potential impact locally:

- Geopolitical Conflicts & Internal Fragmentation - Tensions in the Middle East, Russia-Ukraine, and broader economic and political shifts are leading to a more multipolar and unpredictable global environment influencing local business operations.
- Climate Change & Health Risks - Extreme weather, resource scarcity, and the resurgence of infectious diseases pose growing risks to businesses and employees in the Middle East region and beyond.
- Misinformation & Digital Threats - The rapid spread of misinformation, combined with evolving AI risks, is creating new security vulnerabilities for



 **Sebastien Bedu**, GM SOS International, Dubai

organisations.

Top Risks Seniority Split

Additionally, 69% of the senior risk professionals who are also primary decision makers surveyed, expect geopolitical events to significantly impact their operations in 2025, while 65% of risk leaders cite political stress and social unrest as major concerns compelling organisations in the UAE to adopt smarter and more unified approaches to protect their operations and ensure business growth.

The global report reveals that 78 per cent of respondents who are on the decisionmaking team with significant influence consider cyber attacks and online crimes, as well as work stress and burnout tops the list of risks perceived within the workforce. 75% reported to be impacted by the growing cost of living followed by mental health concerns noted at 70 per cent - requiring businesses in the UAE to reassess how they safeguard workforce wellbeing.

According to Sebastien Bedu, General Manager Middle East, International SOS, "As we enter 2025, organisations in the region must prioritise Resilience and Duty of Care by moving from reactive to proactive risk management approach. The ability to anticipate, prepare for, and mitigate risks - whether geopolitical, health-related, or digital-is now a business imperative. Our mission is to provide organisations in the UAE amongst others with real-time intelligence, expert analysis, and on-the-ground support to help them navigate this increasingly complex landscape."

To address these escalating risks, a data-driven approach by International SOS is paving the way for global and local risk management by understanding and tackling the destabilising effect of external forces on business operations and employees. The Risk Outlook 2025 report introduces an advanced risk intelligence platform that integrates AI-driven analytics with expert-led risk assessments. This new technology aims to enhance situational awareness, improve crisis response times, and streamline business continuity planning specially for multinational organisations based in the UAE.

The full Risk Outlook 2025 report is linked [here](#) ◆

MBZUAI Unveils First-of-Its-Kind Undergraduate Programme in Artificial Intelligence

MBZUAI is designed to empower future AI leaders enabling real world impact.

The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) is disrupting the AI education landscape with the launch of its first-ever undergraduate programme. Unlike traditional AI curricula, this Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence programme blends core AI expertise with leadership, entrepreneurship, industry experience, and real-world impact.

MBZUAI's undergraduate programme is innovative and multidisciplinary as it will equip students with a strong foundation in AI fields such as machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, and robotics, and provide cross-disciplinary training in business, finance, industrial design, market analysis, management, and communication. Students will benefit from a hands-on experiential curriculum to develop an entrepreneurial mindset to lead AI transformations. The goal is to develop visionary thinkers and multi-faceted problem-solvers who will lead the AI evolution globally.

His Excellency Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of MBZUAI's Board of Trustees, stated: "This undergraduate program will play a transformative role in fulfilling our leadership's vision of ensuring that the UAE continues to lead in AI research, application, and commercialization to drive innovation, economic growth, and societal progress. It will equip the next generation of homegrown talent with deep technical expertise and an understanding of AI's broader impact. In doing so, it will strengthen the nation's ability to foster a skilled workforce capable of driving AI advancements that benefit not only our country and the region but the world."

Beyond the core technical AI skills, MBZUAI is committed to shaping the next generation of AI innovators, developers, managers, and visionaries. This comprehensive program equips them with the leadership acumen, financial and legal fundamentals, and essential

human skills such as management, communication, and critical thinking that are crucial for driving the future of AI development and deployment.

MBZUAI's new undergraduate program embraces a co-pilot education model, which integrates AI into every aspect of the student educational journey. AI will assume a central role in the student learning experience, enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills and preparing students to excel in a rapidly evolving AI landscape.

The curriculum will cover advanced topics such as deep learning, generative AI, and AI for science, alongside business and entrepreneurial training. Students will also explore cutting-edge areas such as AI for health and medicine, AI for sustainable living, and 3D vision and mixed reality. They will have the opportunity to work with true global leaders across all domains of AI and gain unparalleled hands-on experience with the teams who develop state-of-the-art large language models including MBZUAI's world-leading JAIS, the world's most advanced Arabic LLM, and K2, the only third-party reproducible LLM to outperform major private sector models.

MBZUAI President and University Professor Eric Xing emphasized the university's forward-thinking approach: "Our undergraduate program will be the first of its kind, as it integrates AI education with entrepreneurship, problem-discovery, and key skills for a product journey. We are reshaping what it means to be educated in AI—producing not just engineers, but also entrepreneurs, designers, influencers, executives, and visionary innovators prepared to drive AI innovation in every sector at all stages."

Cross-disciplinary training and hands-on learning will be the cornerstone of the program. Students will embrace the humanities, business and a liberal arts curriculum, as they work well outside

the bounds of classic computer science and STEM. Furthermore, they will engage in co-operative industry placements, internships, mentorships, and partnerships with top players in industry and AI research.

Professor Xing added, "Our students won't just be taught theory and programming. They will graduate with critical understandings of society and people, of markets and the economy, and the practical experience and confidence to drive and lead AI initiatives, whether within established companies or through their own entrepreneurial ventures. We're focused on preparing our graduates for the rapidly changing landscape of AI."

MBZUAI's program offers two distinct streams: a Bachelor of Science in AI - Business, which focuses on business integration and entrepreneurship, and a Bachelor of Science in AI - Engineering, which centers on AI model development and deployment across the breadth of AI, and real-world applications in different sectors.

Students will benefit from an environment that includes high-end AI computational resources, smart classrooms, dedicated incubation spaces, and world-renowned faculty with backgrounds in both academia and industry.

This pioneering program is open to both local and international students and aims to attract the brightest and most ambitious minds, positioning MBZUAI at the forefront of undergraduate AI education.

"We are not just educating students; we are building future generations of workforce and community of AI. With this undergraduate program, MBZUAI is setting a new standard in AI education, ensuring our graduates are equipped to transform industries and drive global progress," Professor Xing concluded.♦

Empowering Women, Accelerating Action

AJEX Marks International Women's Day 2025 with Career Empowerment Event

AJEX Logistics Services, a partner of DHL eCommerce, marked International Women's Day (IWD) 2025 with an event dedicated to empowering its female staff. Embracing this year's IWD theme—Accelerate Action—the workshop, hosted in Riyadh, aimed to support women in advancing their careers and achieving their professional aspirations.

Accompanied by 70 AJEX female employees, a core highlight of the event was a keynote address delivered by special guest, Mae Saleh Al Mozaini, Founder and CEO of The Arab Institute for Women's Empowerment-Nusf, an organization dedicated to supporting Saudi and Arab women develop leadership skills and creating a lasting positive impact on society and the economy. Al Mozaini was also recognized with the Arabian Business Woman of the Year KSA Excellence Awards for her efforts in advancing women's empowerment.

During the AJEX IWD event, she shared her personal experience and life journey with participants, along with insights on how to position themselves for future success.

With a career spanning four decades, international leadership coach Gill How meanwhile ran a workshop to equip participants with practical steps on how to identify and leverage their individual strengths. How has significant experience in supporting organizations inspire, develop and retain talent worldwide, and running women's development programs in predominantly male-dominated industries.

"At AJEX, we are committed to advancing gender equality across the logistics sector, in the firm belief that greater diversity makes us more innovative, resilient, and profitable. In line with both IWD as well as Vision 2030 goals, we continue to support our female staff in

their career aspirations and leadership journeys, while also encouraging more women to join the logistics sector," said Munirah Altamimi, AJEX Learning and Development Supervisor, and organizer of the program.

The IWD workshop hosted by AJEX is part of a broader range of initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion. This includes the AJEX Customer Service Career Path, which helps fresh graduate transition from frontline roles—such as customer service, which are predominantly held by women—into leadership positions. Currently 45 women are participating in the program. AJEX also partners with the Saudi Logistics Academy to provide participants with both theoretical knowledge and practical, hands-on training. Women represent over 50% of the participants. In 2024, AJEX was recognized as a Great Place to Work in Saudi Arabia ◆



22 Percent Increase in MoHRE Interactions in 2024

MoHRE reports more than 62.8 million interactions with customers.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) has carried out more than 62.8 million communication engagements with its customers through the Tawasul system in 2024, marking a 22% increase compared with 2023, when the total number of interactions was approximately 51 million.

The growth, which exceeded 11.5 million additional interactions, reflects the efficiency of MoHRE's customer service, as well as the level of preparedness of the Tawasul system, the confidence customers have in it, and their ability to engage with it effectively and seamlessly across 14 smart and online channels.

This is made possible by the system's integrated and secure technological infrastructure and advanced processes, which ensure transparency and privacy in service delivery, achieve high levels of customer satisfaction and happiness, and align with future-oriented strategies that support the UAE government's vision for next-generation services.

The Tawasul system has undergone numerous developments since its launch in 2022, which included upgrading 11 services to meet proactivity standards, in addition to launching 9 direct services that use innovative mechanisms to engage customers in the process of prioritising services based on their needs, discussing challenges they face with MoHRE services, proposing solutions, and implementing them in line with the highest standards of competitiveness, agility, and efficiency.

Hussain Al Alili, Director of the Customer Voice Department at MoHRE, said: "The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation continues to develop its tools to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, and meet the highest standards of readiness, competitiveness, and efficiency. These efforts align with our wise leadership's directives to reinforce the UAE's role as a pioneer in government services, while ensuring they consistently rank among the best, fastest, most competitive, and most efficient in the world, which in turn, strengthens the UAE's position as an ideal global destination for living, working, and investing."



"The Ministry is committed to meeting the growing needs of the business sector in the UAE and keeping pace with the requirements of sustainable development by launching innovative smart services, in line with government directives, the UAE's vision for driving digital transformation in services, and the Zero Government Bureaucracy Programme," he added.

"The advanced technological infrastructure has significantly accelerated digital transformation in services, in parallel with the UAE's efficient legislative infrastructure, the competitiveness of the country's labour market, and its rapid sustainable development," Al Alili explained. "These foundational pillars have supported the Ministry's efforts to upgrade its services and enhance its training and development programmes, which helped improve the efficiency of human resources and their ability to meet growing demands and effectively engage with the system."

A detailed breakdown of the operations conducted by the Ministry through the Tawasul system in 2024 indicates that the total number of inbound and outbound voice and video calls handled by the MoHRE call centre exceeded two million, recording a customer satisfaction rate of 91.1%.

The call centre served more than 7,000 establishments benefitting from the Diamond Tier premium services, processing around 67,000 inbound and outbound communications, in addition to 55,000 proactive communications handled by

the account manager for the Diamond category. The premium service provides beneficiaries with priority when responding to calls, along with expedited transaction processing and proactive communication through a dedicated account manager.

Moreover, the Tawasul system processed more than 982,000 digital interactions through various channels, including email, chat, social media platforms, and WhatsApp. The Customer Voice System, for its part, received over 347,000 requests, including feedback, suggestions, requests for technical support, and positive reviews for services.

Meanwhile, more than 8.58 million account statements were sent to establishments via the Tawasul system, providing business owners with monthly updates on their records.

In terms of raising awareness, the Ministry conducted 52 awareness sessions under the Customer Councils initiative, engaging around 9,000 participants to discuss decisions and recent updates. Additionally, more than 47 million awareness messages were sent to customers via SMS, voice messages, email, and WhatsApp, while the volume of interactions recorded through surveys and opinion polls across various channels added up to approximately 3.9 million. ♦

UAE Recruitment Companies Penalised under Employment Laws

Domestic Worker Recruitment Agencies Sanctioned for Failing to Refund Recruitment Fees to Employers in January

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) has announced that legal and administrative action has been taken against 14 domestic worker recruitment agencies during the month of January this year, after detecting 22 violations of the Domestic Workers Law and the legislation and regulations governing them.

The Ministry stated that the violations included 20 cases where the agencies failed to refund recruitment fees to employers within two weeks of a domestic worker's return or reported absence. Additionally, two violations were recorded for non-compliance with the Ministry's regulations, circulars, decisions, commitments and other work guidelines related to domestic worker recruitment agencies.

In a statement, MoHRE stressed that it will take the necessary action against any agency proven to have committed violations, including revoking the license of offices involved in violations that warrant closure. The Ministry also highlighted its ongoing monitoring of recruitment agencies to ensure compliance with legal conditions and regulations to protect the rights of all parties.

The Ministry has called on employers to reach out through its approved digital channels and platforms or via the Labour Claims and Advisory Call Centre on 80084 to report any violations committed by domestic worker recruitment agencies, particularly regarding the failure to adhere to the legal timeframe for refunding all or part of the recruitment fees. The Ministry reiterated its



We are committed to handling violations with seriousness, firmness, and transparency to protect the rights of all parties

commitment to being responsive to employer feedback on recruitment agencies and to handling violations with seriousness, firmness, and transparency.

The Ministry affirmed the crucial role of domestic worker recruitment agencies in providing quality services to clients. These agencies must provide qualified domestic workers who can fulfill assigned tasks, while adhering to all legal regulations governing employer-employee relationships.

It urged both national and resident families to refrain from dealing with unlicensed domestic worker

recruitment agencies and untrustworthy social media pages that promote services for this category of the workforce. Such practices may result in significant health and security risks to families, in addition to having to face the legal consequences for employing unlicensed workers.

Employers can view the official list of licensed agencies through the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation's website at www.mohre.gov.ae, to avoid falling victim to misleading and fraudulent operations, as well as unlawful practices, and to prevent any problems or risks.♦

MoHRE and UAE Food Bank Distribute Ramadan Food Packages Across the UAE

Ministry's initiative of generosity and compassion targets workers nationwide.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE), in collaboration with the UAE Food Bank, distributed Ramadan food packages 'Ramadan Mir' to workers in labour accommodations across the country.

The initiative is part of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to implement community-focused events and activities in collaboration with its partners, targeting workers nationwide, reflecting the values of generosity, compassion, and social solidarity. The Ramadan Mir, a cherished social custom in the UAE, brings joy and happiness to all members of society, particularly those most in need.

This initiative demonstrates the Ministry's commitment to improving workforce participation in community

events and ensuring a decent living environment for all workers, considering their crucial role in contributing to the UAE's leadership and excellence. Such initiatives, fostering solidarity, partnership, goodwill, affection, and harmonious coexistence, are well-received by workers and often include social and recreational gatherings with Ministry leadership.

The Ministry is set to expand the

initiative, to provide Ramadan Mir to a greater number of workers living in labour accommodations across the UAE. Furthermore, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, in collaboration with its partners, is implementing additional Ramadan programmes across the country, including Iftar meal distribution, communal Iftars, and other festive activities to celebrate the holy month.◆



Our Ramadan Mir initiative reflects generosity, compassion, and social solidarity, ensuring a decent living environment for all workers.



Finally Find Freedom by Philip Wride

How to uncover and break life's 12 hidden chains and find freedom, success and happiness



Do you feel like life is a never-ending struggle, where every step forward is met with resistance and frustration?

Do you have a burning desire for more time, location and financial freedom in your personal and professional life but are struggling to achieve them?

You might be trapped by life's chains.

"Finally Find Freedom" is your beacon of hope, shining a light on the invisible chains that bind us and providing a roadmap for breaking free so you can find more success and happiness in life.

In this transformative book author Philip Wride takes you on a journey from breaking his neck playing sport to uncovering the 12 chains that hold countless individuals back from realizing their dreams and how he's broken the chains in his



own life. Through a mix of personal stories, practical exercises, and empowering insights, Philip offers a powerful but simple guide for freeing yourself and helping you to achieve a life of freedom, success, and happiness.

Here's what you'll discover inside this book:

- The TALE Grid exercise for crafting a vision for your future and a marker for how you want to live
- The 12 chains that hold us back from finding the freedom, success and happiness we desire
- Which 4 chains are the easiest to break and why breaking some

chains takes longer than others

- A 4-step process to start breaking the chains and move towards the time, location and financial freedom you want

- The mindset of a Freedom Hunter and why embracing it can help you achieve your goals more quickly

By the end of this book you'll have learned how to create a vision and plan that aligns with your deepest desires, how to break life's chains and how to take decisive action to find the freedom you seek.

Uncover your chains, embrace your freedom, and take the first step toward a life of limitless possibilities. Are you ready to break free? ◆

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WoW HR & Learning Awards 2025

Recognition for exceptional initiatives dedicated to improving HR & Learning

As part of a new Initiative in 2025 ME HR & Learning set out to recognise individuals and or their organizations who are making exceptional contributions in the World of Work (WOW) in HR & Learning throughout our region.

If you recognise individuals', external organisations, or your own please contact us with a short paragraph and photo describing one, some, or all of the questions below:

- 1) What new initiatives are you introducing in 2025?
- 2) How are you able to build a better culture of L&D in your organisations?
- 3) What are your key measurements of success in 2025 for HR & Learning?

We will then:

- a) Publish this on our site
- b) Add to our next virtual magazine issue
- c) Enter you into the 2025 Annual Awards at the end of the year.

We would love to hear how you are contributing to HR & Learning in 2025.

Email us at info@me-hrl.com ♦



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