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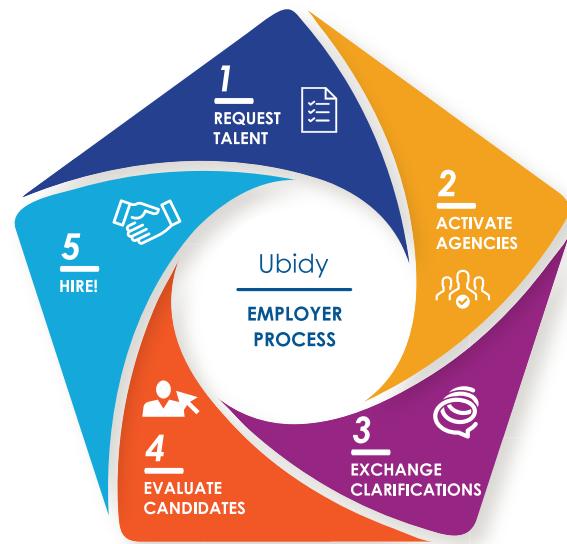
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# Editor's Note

## 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: Ammar Shams, Dubai resident who becomes a Taxi driver

Ammar Shams shares his experience to explore how expatriates view the UAE national

**A**fter almost 30 years of corporate life, usually heading the HR function in the organization I worked in and dealing with the same challenges over and over again, I desperately wanted to change direction and go as far away from my comfort zone as was possible.

The challenge was for me to find something that would be cerebral, fun, and could potentially add value (all of those 3, 4, or 5 filters that defined strategy planning during my corporate life have been seared into my mind). At the bright young age of 54, I applied for, and was accepted at SOAS, University of London, for a full time PhD exploring the intersectionality between gender rights and Sharia Law, and as soon as that was completed 4 years later, I wanted to do something completely different.

Like most people I have interacted with, I have voluntarily lived in an echo chamber where my friends and colleagues have been mostly mirror images of myself. They have shared my educational and social background, my political beliefs, my social outlook, and my primary values. I have previously chosen to walk away from people who are very different and that has been my loss. It had allowed me (and everybody else I know) to develop an intolerance to others and an illogical belief that I am right.

I have also always been fascinated by people, the way they think, they way they see my country, and the way they interact with complete strangers. I have been aware that most people



▲ **Ammar Shams**, Dubai, UAE

will talk to me only through the filter of who I am, whether it is as a man, an older man, an Arab, a Muslim, or as a person in authority, and I wanted to see if they would be different if I wasn't any of those things to them. The perfect setting for me was to anonymously drive a taxi and have random conversations with strangers whom I could prompt to discuss everything and anything during the course of our journey.

I cannot begin to describe how amazingly fulfilling, enjoyable, educational, and eye opening the experience has been. Amongst the most interesting aspects of the experience was the realization that absolutely everybody has an interesting story to tell, and that given the opportunity, they would be willing to share it with a totally random stranger. Also, everybody is carrying some sort

of cross all the time, and that some people are desperate to share that burden if they believe that they are in a safe space, free from judgement or retribution. One particular insight I gained was based on an experience where another taxi driver would not believe that I was a citizen of the UAE, and when he insisted on me showing him my ID card, refused to acknowledge me as the same person in the picture. He was willing to believe his bias rather than what his eyes could see.

More than anything else, the experience allowed me to see the kaleidoscope that is Dubai and interact with every element of society in any given day and better appreciate our similarities. I have learnt something from every person I met during the adventure, and have become a better person for it, and I'm itching to try a new adventure soon.... Any suggestions? ♦

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# Spotlight on: Fadi El Husseini at RateMe, Dubai

Great People Bring Great Results

**Tell us about you, your experience, and your time in the Middle East.**

A Founder's Mission: Recognizing the People Who Make Service Great

I was born and raised in Lebanon, where hard work and perseverance shaped my early years. At the age of 21, I made a bold move to Zambia to start a one-man creative agency - a decision that would define my career. What began as a small venture eventually grew into Giraffe Creatives, an award-winning marketing and advertising agency working with national and international brands, media companies, and a team of over 40 people.

While my journey in marketing and advertising was filled with creative challenges and achievements, I often found myself "selling" ideas and products I didn't fully believe in. This sparked a deeper realization. I wanted to use my creativity and energy to build something that mattered, something that left a lasting impact on people's lives.

The turning point came during my visit to Dubai in 2022. A simple dinner outing turned into an "aha" moment when I experienced two vastly different levels of customer service at two different restaurants. One encounter left me feeling undervalued, while the other made me feel genuinely appreciated. I wished there was a way to recognize great service beyond just a tip - something lasting, something that could be carried forward.

That idea became RateMe, a platform designed to empower, recognize, and reward service providers in a way that truly matters. Given the Middle East's reputation for service excellence,



**Fadi El Husseini**, RateMe, Dubai, UAE

there was no better place to launch this movement. That's why, in early 2023, I made the decision to move to Dubai and embark on this journey of redefining feedback for service providers - making great service truly count.

## How would your business impact the work culture in service businesses?

Turning Customer Feedback into a Powerful Retention & Motivation Tool

RateMe is a cultural transformation tool that shifts performance management from traditional, top-down reviews to real-time, customer-driven insights.

Instead of relying on occasional surveys, yearly appraisals, or manager assessments, RateMe captures instant customer and peer feedback, focusing on key soft skills: Personality, Professionalism, Communication, Knowledge, and Leadership.

## Key Cultural Impacts:

1. **Recognition-Driven Motivation:** Employees perform better when their efforts are acknowledged. RateMe fosters a culture of real-time appreciation.
2. **Better Customer Experience:** Employees are more engaged when they know every interaction counts, leading to improved service standards.
3. **Fair & Transparent Performance Measurement:** Unlike subjective reviews, RateMe ensures data-backed, constructive, real-time insights.
4. **Seamless Development:** Employees can track performance, receive AI-driven recommendations, and enhance their career growth.

By integrating instant feedback with employee development, RateMe helps

businesses create happier, more productive teams.

### As a founder, what do you hope that decision-makers see in your product?

If you are in the service business, you are in the people business. Your People Are Your Brand - Make Sure They Feel Valued

Decision-makers should view RateMe as a strategic asset that enhances customer experience, employee performance, and revenue growth.

#### Why RateMe Matters to Businesses:

1. Boosts Revenue Through Better Service: Poor service leads to lost customers. RateMe helps businesses identify service gaps and improve customer retention.
2. Reduces Employee Turnover: High turnover is a major issue in service industries. RateMe fosters recognition and growth opportunities, increasing retention.
3. Data-Driven HR Decisions: Traditional performance reviews are often inconsistent. RateMe provides quantifiable, AI-powered insights for improvement, promotions, and training.
4. Seamless, Self-Service Platform: Designed for easy adoption, RateMe ensures fast, intuitive onboarding for businesses and employees.

For leaders looking to modernize performance management, RateMe is an investment in people, brand reputation, and long-term business success.

### What are your biggest challenges in the next five years?

Adapting to New Generations of Workers Who Crave Instant Recognition

Launching an innovative platform like RateMe comes with challenges. The

key ones over the next five years are:

1. Market Adoption & Behavioural Change: Shifting businesses from traditional reviews to real-time feedback requires education, strong case studies, and early success stories.
2. Scaling Across Industries & Markets: RateMe is launching in hospitality, healthcare, retail, and customer service, but expanding into government sectors will require adaptation.
3. Maintaining a Positive Feedback Culture: Ensuring RateMe is used to motivate, not punish, is critical to long-term adoption.
4. Empowering Human Service Providers in an AI-Driven World: As AI takes on a growing role in customer service, RateMe ensures that human service providers remain at the heart of customer interactions. By recognizing and rewarding great service, RateMe reinforces the unique value of human connection, proving that empathy, personality, and professionalism are irreplaceable in the service industry. Rather than replacing human workers, RateMe helps businesses invest in their people, ensuring they continue to be the driving force behind exceptional customer experiences.

### What impact do you hope to make in the Middle East's business landscape?

Revolutionizing Employee Recognition in a Market Built on Customer Experience

The Middle East has one of the fastest-growing service industries globally. With its reliance on hospitality, retail, and tourism, the region needs innovative tools to measure and enhance service quality. RateMe is poised to become a game-changer.

### Key Impact Goals:

1. Elevating Customer Service Standards: RateMe provides businesses with real-time data on service quality, helping them refine processes.
2. Creating a Performance-Based Workforce: Offering instant recognition and constructive feedback are more engaged and committed. RateMe fosters a culture of accountability and excellence.
3. Bridging the Gap Between Employees & Customers: The best businesses listen to their customers. RateMe enables direct, structured feedback, ensuring employees grow while customers feel heard.
4. Supporting Workforce Development Initiatives: Many governments in the Middle East are prioritizing upskilling and talent retention. RateMe aligns with these efforts by helping individuals build verified performance records.

By redefining how service excellence is measured, RateMe is shaping the future of business success in the Middle East and beyond.

### Final Thoughts

My journey from humble beginnings in Lebanon to founding RateMe has been about seeing potential where others see limitations. By combining data, psychology, and AI, RateMe transforms how businesses evaluate their staff, ensuring service excellence is rewarded and developed. I'm excited to see how it will shape the future of customer experience and workplace culture in the Middle East and beyond.◆

# Spotlight on: Frederik Haentjens, Founder of Boxology

From Curiosity to Capability, Leading AI Adoption Across Industries in the Region

**W**hat do you get when you combine structured AI, human-centered design, and Middle Eastern ambition? A new blueprint for transformation—one that doesn't start with technology, but with trust, collaboration, and better questions. What we've learned at Boxology is simple: AI isn't the hard part. Thinking with AI is. That's where we come in.

**Tell us a little about your background and how Boxology fits into the AI transformation landscape.**

I've lived and worked across the Middle East for the past two decades, partnering with public and private sector leaders on organizational design, strategy execution, and transformation.

Boxology was born out of a desire to move beyond consulting slide decks. We focus on co-creation—building with our clients, not just for them. And when generative AI hit the mainstream, we knew the opportunity was bigger than automation. It was about rethinking how people solve problems together.

We built CHAD—our structured GPT assistant—to guide teams through transformation design in real time. Think of it as a coach, synthesizer, and co-designer all in one. It's allowed us to support strategy sprints, operating model redesigns, and innovation workshops in ways that are faster, smarter, and more collaborative.

**You've delivered projects across major sectors. What did AI adoption actually look like in these different contexts?**

It was different each time—but the common thread was intention.

In the aviation sector, we partnered with a national carrier headquartered in the Gulf region. They weren't just looking for AI implementation—they wanted to build internal confidence around AI. Over three days, we guided multiple cohorts across seven business functions through capstone innovation sprints - they left with credible, presentation-ready proposals they could

bring straight into planning meetings. That's what makes a difference: velocity with direction.

In the retail and automotive space, we worked with a regional conglomerate employing over 30,000 people. The challenge was alignment. We used a mix of facilitation and CHAD to help each team co-create functional models and process maps. The fact that they walked out with frameworks they could immediately use internally was powerful. It built belief.

And in the energy sector, we facilitated a sprint with a global player headquartered in the UAE, focused on service operations. Their teams needed a scalable, AI-integrated service model. We helped them prototype one in two days, more importantly, it unlocked a mindset shift: AI wasn't a future idea. It was now part of their operating model.

**What lessons have you learned from working across these different industries?**

First—AI adoption has less to do with tools, and everything to do with trust.

In every engagement, we didn't start with tech. We started by surfacing pain points, unpacking logic gaps, and reconnecting teams to purpose.

Second—design trumps delivery. You can't automate chaos. AI only adds value if it's

embedded in a workflow that already makes sense. So we always build from the inside out—whether it's a service model, a talent pipeline, or a decision-making framework.

And finally—co-creation builds capability. We don't deliver finished frameworks. We co-build them with the client in the room. That's what makes the work stick. That's what gives people the confidence to continue using AI after we leave.

**What advice do you have for HR leaders navigating AI right now?**

Start small, but start right.

Don't fall into the trap of delegating AI to a data team or tech vendor. The most meaningful AI work happens in the HRBP's conversations, the recruiter's decision trees, the L&D designer's workflow. That's where the nuance lives. And that's where AI can truly augment human value.

Also, be intentional about capability. Most teams don't need more tools. They need more structure around how to think with AI. Prompting isn't about magic—it's about logic, clarity, and strategic framing.

And finally, remember: AI is fast. But transformation still takes leadership.

Use the speed AI gives you to slow down and make better decisions.

**Q: What's next for Boxology in the region?**

We're building on our momentum by scaling CHAD into more domains—training design, innovation labs, and strategic planning. We're also building out an AI Academy in partnership with regional stakeholders to help organizations not just use AI, but build AI-ready thinking environments.

And we're expanding our work with mid-sized enterprises who are often overlooked in the AI conversation. These companies don't have an AI lab—but they do have ambition. And we want to help them turn that ambition into action.

For me personally, the mission remains the same: make strategy more human, even in an AI world.



 **Frederik Haentjens**, Founder of Boxology, Dubai, UAE

# Spotlight on: Fox22 Consulting with Ryan Shaw

## Transforming HR with Technology

### Tell us about you, your experience, and your time in the Middle East.

I grew up in Botswana and was schooled in and later moved to South Africa, where I graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce in Economics. I first engaged with HR technology as part of an Optimisation Team, focusing on Workforce Management, at Africa's largest apparel retailer.

Later, in the UK, I completed BambooHR, Dayforce, and PeakOn employee voice implementations for a consulting firm and a health-tech start-up. This enabled integrations and improved business processes to be built out, upgraded IT security, and unleashed people insights through people analytics. Since moving to Dubai in 2022 I've focused on project management, leading multiple global Workday implementations and setting up a PMO to oversee the workstreams.

Over the years I've essentially been involved in rescuing HR technology implementations that, for one reason or another, are not bringing the expected benefits to businesses. With this, my mission has become one of simplifying processes, fostering collaboration, and building a robust foundation that allows businesses to truly elevate their people and operational efficiency.

Rather than simply configuring or implementing systems, I see my role as that of an embedded partner - working closely with teams to bridge the gap between business and technology. The goal is to ensure that technology doesn't just get implemented, but actually transforms the way a company operates.

### How does HR tech transform the way a company operates?

HR tech has an impact on people, processes, and strategies. If implemented well it transforms daily operations, leading to cost savings and longer-term changes in organisational dynamics



 **Ryan Shaw Fox22 Consulting, Dubai, UAE**

When a company implements an HRIS (Human Resource Information System) the primary goal should be to automate and streamline administrative work, by doing this companies experience a significant improvement in operational effectiveness, and free up time for HR to focus on more value add activities, such as talent management, employee development, and strategy.

These systems also generate data; this can be used to enable data driven decision making. Companies can get a view on employee turnover, performance, absenteeism, and more in real time. This allows them to address any gaps in performance through targeted strategies, watch them play out live, and adapt and respond quickly.

### How big should a company be to invest in an HRIS?

This is dependent on the company and its growth plans. Generally speaking, a fast-growing startup wants an HRIS from day 1 so that they can build out effective processes while they scale, whereas a

smaller established business should get one from roughly 50 employees.

That said, I've done an implementation for a small business of 11 employees; they saw value in an HRIS as the founder was managing the HR admin himself, we automated 80% of the work so he saved himself a lot of time for around AED450 per month.

### What does the next 5 years look like for HR tech in the UAE?

Everyone is talking about AI in HR, this will happen at the enterprise level first as we still need to see greater adoption of HR technology by mid-market companies. The amendments to the labour law mean companies need to be much sharper on compliance and in time the mid-market will realise how an HRIS can support this. Traditional enterprise players such as Oracle and SAP will push into this mid-market as they seek revenue sources outside of large organisations; we will also see increased penetration from international mid-market players like BambooHR who are more competitively priced and offer solid functionality local solutions lack.

### Where will AI help HR?

The biggest area we will see AI helping HR is in recruitment. Job posts often have hundreds of applications against them. Chatbots can enhance candidate experience and AI can scan CV's, quickly shortlisting candidates with the right skills, qualifications, and experience. Interviews can be conducted via AI powered video platforms, which can scan candidate's facial expressions, tone of voice, word choice, and more to assess confidence and communication skills. Ultimately this should reduce bias, reduce costs, be faster and more efficient, and lead to a greater quality of hire ◆

# Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing at Work Boosts Productivity

Dr Ryan Copeland, Regional Medical Director, Assistance, Europe, MEA at International SOS tells us how!

**H**uman Resources (HR) has often been perceived as a support function rather than a strategic one. Over the past decade, this underestimation has taken its toll, with HR professionals grappling with disengagement, disillusionment, and a sense of hopelessness. Perhaps this resonates with you or your colleagues. However, not everyone in HR is struggling. In fact, I've identified a common denominator amongst HR leaders who are currently highly energized and optimistic:

The increasing rate of stress and anxiety in the workplace is evident, with around 40% of the workforce reporting stress levels that have increasingly affected their ability to perform. By fostering an environment where mental health resilience is a priority, employees are empowered

and educated to address the challenges affecting their wellbeing.

International SOS, the world's leading health and security risk services company, calls on organisations to take proactive steps in addressing the mental health challenges of employees and has identified the frequent mental health-related requests it has received from workforces worldwide across various sectors over the past three years. These include support and assistance for:

1. **Anxiety:** Intense and excessive fear and distress, often accompanied by physical tension.
2. **Depression:** A mental health condition characterised by persistent feelings of sadness, emptiness, or a loss of interest. It can significantly affect an

employee's emotions, behaviour, and physical health.

3. **Panic Disorder:** A condition in which an employee experiences repeated, unexpected panic attacks and constantly worries about when the next one might occur.

There is a strong link between mental health and physical wellbeing. When an employee experiences prolonged workplace stress, it leads to an increase in anxiety-inducing hormones. This continuous pressure can leave employees feeling fatigued and drained and, ultimately, may contribute to burnout. Without strong support, mental health conditions can significantly affect an individual's self-confidence, job satisfaction, and ability to flourish in the workplace.

Five key points for organisations to implement proactive strategies to address stress and anxiety in the workforce:

## SUPPORT

Cultivate a supportive workplace culture: Build an environment that values open dialogue and mutual support. Encourage employees to openly discuss their stress levels and create a safe space for them to voice concerns without fear of judgment or consequences.

## BALANCE

Encourage a healthy work-life balance and introduce flexible work options: Reevaluate time-off policies to better accommodate employees' mental health needs. Support employees in taking regular breaks and establishing clear boundaries between work and personal time.

## ASSESS

Implement regular stress evaluations: Routinely measure stress levels within the organisation using surveys, feedback sessions,



**By prioritising mental health resilience and fostering open communication, organisations empower employees to manage challenges and build a more engaged, productive, and resilient workforce.**



 **Dr Ryan Copeland**, Regional Medical Director, Assistance, Europe, MEA

and health screenings. Analyse the data to identify sources of stress and introduce focused measures to address them.

#### ASSIST

Provide access to Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs):

Ensure that mental health resources, such as stress management workshops, counselling services, and mental health hotlines, are readily available and easily accessible to all employees.

#### TRAIN

Provide managers with mental health first-aid training: Equip managers with the skills to recognise signs of distress and offer initial support to employees who may be experiencing mental health challenges.

As workplace stress and anxiety continue to rise, it is imperative that organisations take proactive steps to support the mental wellbeing of their employees. By prioritising mental health resilience and fostering an environment where open communication and support are encouraged, businesses can empower their workforce to manage the challenges they face.

Organisations that actively support their employees' mental health see not only significant improvements in retention rates, but also benefit from improved employee engagement and productivity.

International SOS underscores the importance of addressing anxiety, depression, and panic disorders, which are among the most common mental health concerns impacting employees globally. Ultimately, by investing in mental health, organisations not only support the wellbeing of their employees but also foster a more productive, engaged, and resilient workforce. ♦

# Listening Starts Before Solutions

Renu Varun of The Connect Hut, Dubai, talks reclaiming the human in corporate learning & development

We spend over 45% of our communication time listening—more than speaking, reading, or writing. Yet, when asked what listening looks like, most people respond with “nodding,” “eye contact,” or a few well-placed “hmm’s.” But real listening goes far deeper.

The International Listening Association reports that ineffective listening costs organizations billions each year. Despite this, 80% of corporate communication resources go to speaking, while just 2% of organizations offer formal listening education. A staggering 93% of employees in India—and 86% globally—feel unheard at work. According to Deloitte, 83% of professionals say workplace stress negatively affects their personal relationships. Listening training is not a soft skill—it’s a business imperative.

## Why Listening Matters More Than Ever

Workplace stress is rarely just about KPIs and deadlines. Many employees carry invisible burdens—family issues, personal struggles, mental health concerns—that directly impact their performance. When these voices go unheard, organizations see rising burnout, absenteeism, and disengagement. Listening, then, isn’t just kind; it’s strategic.

In an era dominated by AI and automation, we risk reducing people to data points. At The Connect Hut, we challenge that trend. We train organizations to listen with awareness, values, and presence—not just ears.

## The DOT Active Listening Framework: Listening That Transforms

Our signature approach, the DOT Active Listening Framework, helps teams and leaders resolve conflicts by enabling



them to:

- Recognize biases and blind spots
- Respond with curiosity, not assumptions
- Hold space for discomfort without rushing to fix

These are trainable skills that boost trust, engagement, and psychological safety at every level.

## Listening in Action: The SmartLife Case Study

In our recent work with SmartLife Foundation UAE, we connected with blue-collar migrant workers—men living far from home, often without emotional support. Typically excluded from well-being conversations, these workers face immense stress with limited outlets.

We created sessions that were stigma-free, culturally sensitive, and accessible—no clinical terms, no jargon. More importantly, we trained local facilitators to listen. These trained listeners are now embedded in job sites, creating everyday spaces of care and support.

The biggest lesson? In high-stress, underserved environments, human connection is the most powerful

intervention.

## What This Means for L&D

Across industries—from oil to IT, marine to legal—Banking to Hospitality, we’ve noticed the same pattern: people know how to solve problems, but not how to sit with someone’s pain. As AI takes over routine tasks, human skills will define the next generation of leadership: empathy, emotional intelligence, and presence.

Our programs are designed to help people be human again—to lead with empathy, listen without judgment, and build cultures of psychological safety.

## One participant said it best:

“The best part of the training was the discussion. My biggest takeaway? Actionable steps I can use every day.”

## In Conclusion

Listening isn’t passive. It’s a daily act of compassion. And when done right, it doesn’t just boost performance—it helps people stay, connect, and thrive.

## Who We Are

The Connect Hut is a social enterprise specializing in Listening and Conflict Resolution, Mental Health Awareness, and Crisis Prevention. With 25+ years of collective experience, we help individuals and organizations recognize, address, and prevent conflict and emotional distress.

We’ve worked with clients across the UAE, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, the Philippines, and India—partnering with corporates, governments, educational institutions, law enforcement, and NGOs. Our training has reached thousands, from top executives at Google and Indian Oil to families in community workshops ♦

# Learning to Lean Into your Downtime

Shelley Bosworth, Business & Mindset Coach stresses the need for getting your balance right.

For entrepreneurs, having too much downtime can be seen as negative. Hustle culture tells us founders who aren't constantly busy must be wasting time, standing still, or not striving hard enough. But that's certainly not the case, and optimising your downtime is essential for productivity, creativity and growth. Like most things, how we perceive downtime is really about mindset. When you adjust your mindset, you see that embracing downtime can make you a happier, healthier person and a better business owner.

When we're talking about downtime in this context, I would define it in three ways:

## 1. Time off:

Everyone needs mental and physical breaks from work. I definitely believe in putting in the effort to get results, which is likely to mean some late nights or weekend shifts when it's your own business. That's fine, providing it's bringing you closer to achieving your goals, and you still take time to switch off. How and when you rest is really up to you, just don't neglect it altogether.

If you keep pushing ahead without stopping, you can soon compromise your cognitive ability, slowing down progress.

## 2. Business thinking time:

This is less about switching off and more about stepping back. I advise clients to schedule a period of deliberate thinking time into their diary every month to reflect on where they are and what their business needs right now. Minimise any distractions and remove yourself from the day-to-day business environment so you can



 **Shelley Bosworth**, Business & Mindset Coach, Dubai, UAE

focus on developing new strategies, overcoming persistent issues, and generating innovative ideas.

## 3. Quiet periods:

Many local business owners dread the UAE summer and start worrying about falling sales months in advance, creating significant stress. Of course, quiet times are not unique to this region; business will always have ups and downs. Do your best to avoid worrying about lower revenue. Instead, if you know it's likely to be a quiet period, use the time to build your cashflow, or use this time to focus on strategising. Quiet times are a great opportunity for reflection, and planning ahead so you can hit the ground running when things pick up.

## Banishing the guilt

Many people say they feel guilty for taking time off. It's a common reaction, but it's useful to understand

what's behind that feeling. All of these emotions require work to move forward. If guilt is a big one for you, stop to think about what you're really telling yourself. Then, reframe those limiting beliefs by considering how this time would benefit you, your family and your business. Remember, you are the boss now, so you define the rules.

## Tips to build downtime into your routine

- Start by reconnecting with why you started your business. What were your goals? What about you why?
- Explore how you can use downtime to achieve those goals. Do you more need time off or space to think rather than being in 'doing' mode all the time?
- Planning is key - book holidays like you would as an employee. Block the time in your diary and plan how to handle the workload while you are away.
- Book meetings with yourself in the diary - you wouldn't miss a meeting with a client, so show the same respect for personal thinking time.
- Commit to having at least one day off a week and establish some rules that work for you. For me, it's no time at my desk and laptop. My clients know that I am unavailable one day a week as it is built into my agreement.

There's a prevailing attitude that entrepreneurs can't be successful unless they give it their all. If you don't create intentional downtime you can also become resentful of the business. If you're happy and achieving your goals, you've likely got the balance right for you ♦

# HR Disconnect

Uzair Hassan, 3H Solutions Group, Dubai, calls for a need for change in HR

I know people will not like this article. But, I am also certain that they absolutely need to go through it. This is a wake-up call for many, stuck in the daily grind. Working hard, maybe even productively as well as effectively. But, towards what? Clear direction, is of even greater importance. We cannot allow ourselves to get lost in "busy".

HR is lost. It is stuck with processes, policies, procedures, mapping, automating, graphical representation, statistical backup, paradigm shifting and whatever other jargon that resonates.

I understand all this may be needed, but in this push for all the above, the critical part of it all, the Human part, is getting increasingly lost. In diligently working on (buzzword) that would improve the (target aspect) the connection with the people on the ground is getting ever weaker.

My extensive and regular meetings with HR have made it very clear. We are focusing too much on the cocoon, while the butterfly inside needs to fly.

HR disconnect has become a thing. People focus, human touch and social/individual connections are now needed, more than ever. HR leaders may be facing unprecedented challenges and have a lot on their plate. Understood. Accepted. Appreciated.

But, do we look the other way when the primary focus of their work is the human, who is now flailing about without a life jacket? Everything that they do and are doing is in context, correct. But, losing touch with the reason for their efforts is not.

Disruptive tech (Including AI), workforce changes, work ethic



## HR disconnect has become a thing. People focus, human touch, and social/individual connections are now needed more than ever.

changes and digital transformations are lending to the obsolescence of HR, as we know it. They must look to transform/pivot. Not only embrace technologies, but also embrace the humans they are being deployed for.

The workforce is now a smorgasbord of baby boomers, millennials, gig economy workers, part timers, work from homers, digital nomads and the old full timers. Dovetail that with a veritable multicultural salad, with very different needs and expectations, their management is not a standardized template from which HR can extract what they "think" is an averaged random sampling bell curve to base policies or initiatives on.

Being an active (not reactive) and

credible stakeholder business partner is only half the battle. The other half is the people.

Keeping in mind contextual sensitivity this article is more for re-activating people that had gotten caught up with pressures of work and driven into a daze by workloads and timelines. A push back on the daze, a short pull back from it all, may give rise to a fresh perspective on how to best move forward given the disconnect.

Things are not changing "slowly but surely". They are transforming right in front of our eyes. Let's see who blinks first ◆

# Emotional Intelligence Reaches The Arab Speaking Market

Six Seconds Middle East, Africa & India launches in Arabic

**T**he first virtual Emotional Intelligence Practitioner Certification in Arabic, will be facilitated soon in the Middle East. This is a huge milestone for the whole team at Six Seconds Middle East, Africa & India on this milestone.

One of the participants had been before on an EQ certificate course, and had shared with Jayne Morrison how powerful it would be to get to experience this transformational program in her own language.

Part of the “impossible” wonderful vision behind Six Seconds is that we’re committed to bringing emotional intelligence tools and skills to EVERYONE, everywhere. It would be so much easier to have a small focus, but that would undermine our very purpose. To increase the world’s emotional intelligence, we need to get out of our boxes, out of our comfort zones, and out into the world.

So, we’re engaged with people in over 150 countries and territories, in 30 plus languages, weaving and reweaving the tattered threads.

Many people say that there’s something deeper in talking about emotions in your native language. How about for you?

One more step, together!



**Six Seconds comes closer to reaching its target of bringing Emotional Intelligence to 1 Billion People!**



# Read the latest Global Duty of Care Report 2025

International SOS share key findings in ensuring employee wellbeing.



International SOS share some key findings from the latest Global Duty of Care Report 2025. A global leader in health and security services, the report highlights the growing importance of employee visibility in managing Duty of Care, mitigating legal risks, and ensuring the well-being of remote and traveling employees.

International SOS share key

findings in ensuring employee wellbeing. Key Stats & Insights:

- **44%** of organizations cite compliance as their biggest challenge in Duty of Care
- **30%** struggle to understand and meet legal obligations in this area
- **18%** of respondents find it difficult to track employee locations

during overseas assignments

- **66%** face challenges in delivering timely and relevant communication to their mobile workforce
- **38%** of respondents are unfamiliar with their organization's legal responsibilities regarding Duty of Care

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# Oman Strengthens the Presence of Women in Leadership

National Finance appoints a Chief People Officer, Ms. Marwa Al Kharusi

**T**his strategic leadership appointment underscores the company's ongoing commitment to cultivating a high-performance

National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance company, recently announced the appointment of Ms. Marwa Ali Al Kharusi as Chief People Officer - General Manager. This strategic leadership appointment underscores the company's ongoing commitment to cultivating a high-performance, people-centric workplace culture that supports its long-term vision for sustainable growth and operational excellence. Her appointment underscores National Finance's strategic focus on reinforcing its leadership team to ensure effective and forward-looking management.

She brings over 21 years of extensive experience in executive Human Resources (HR) leadership across key sectors, including Telecommunications, Oil & Gas, and Professional Services. She has held senior roles at renowned organizations such as Deloitte Consulting, Omantel, Shell, and Ooredoo Group in Qatar. In her roles, she has played a pivotal role in driving HR transformation, nationalization programs, performance management, and employee engagement initiatives.

A passionate advocate for people development and workplace excellence, she is recognized for her strategic insight, strong leadership, and deep expertise in corporate culture, diversity and inclusion, and organizational effectiveness.



▲ **Ms. Marwa Ali Al Kharusi** as Chief People Officer & GM, National Finance, Oman

Notably, her role as Change & Engage Planner at Shell's Downstream-One Project was highly impactful, driving operational efficiency and effectively implementing organizational change management.

In addition to her corporate achievements, she is an engaged speaker and facilitator, having conducted leadership workshops and participated in international conferences. Her dedication to mental well-being, coaching programs, and interpersonal skills development highlights her ability to develop female talent, and her comprehensive approach to people leadership.

Ms. Marwa holds a Master of Science Degree in International Management from the University of the West of England, UK, along with a Higher Diploma in Information Technology. She is also a member of



**Ms. Marwa brings 21 years of executive HR leadership experience across key sectors.**

the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and brings extensive technical expertise in Oracle HRMS systems.

National Finance eagerly anticipates Marwa's leadership as the company continues to empower its people, cultivate a dynamic workplace culture, and create meaningful impact across the organization ♦

# UAE at the Forefront Of International and Arab Labour Ecosystems

UAE elected as member of the Arab Labour Organisation's Board of Directors for the 2025-2027 period

The General Conference of the Arab Labour Organisation (ALO) has elected the United Arab Emirates, represented by the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE), to be a member of its Board of Directors for the 2025-2027 period.

The announcement was made during the 51st session of the Arab Labour Conference in Cairo, Egypt, where the UAE was elected as a member of the Governments group on the Board.

His Excellency Dr. Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, Acting Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and head of the UAE delegation at the Conference, said: "The UAE's election to the Board of Directors of

the Arab Labour Organisation reflects the country's active and pioneering role in the international and Arab labour ecosystems, as well as its commitment to enhancing regional coordination, building on its balanced approach across various fields and its world-leading humanitarian efforts."

"The UAE Government's election as a member of the Organisation's Board of Directors highlights member states' appreciation for its distinguished track record and dedication to enhancing employment opportunities and developing policies that allow for navigating the developments transforming Arab labour markets, fostering collective Arab action, and pursuing Arab countries' common interests," His Excellency added.

The UAE Government, represented by the MoHRE, was elected to the ALO Board of Directors as a member of the Governments group, along with Egypt, Algeria, and Jordan, all of whom will serve as Titular Members of the Board for the 2025-2027 period. Representatives of Arab workers' and employers' organisations were also voted into the Board during the Conference.

The Board of Directors of the Arab Labour Organisation is composed of eight Titular Members, four of whom represent governments, two represent employers, and the remaining two represent workers. Three Deputy Members also serve on the Board, with one member representing each of the aforementioned groups.

The ALO's statutes stipulate that the General Conference shall select the Board of Directors from among its members for a period of two years, based on nominations submitted by the Board's three groups: governments, employers, and workers.

The 51st session of the Arab Labour Conference highlights pressing issues and challenges facing the region's labour markets, while exploring tactics for enhancing collective Arab action to achieve economic and social stability. The Conference also discusses key topics included in the Director-General's Report, titled 'Economic Diversification as a Pathway to Development: Promising Economies in Arab Countries', where the UAE presented its pioneering experience in that regard ◆



## The UAE's election to the ALO Board reflects its pioneering role in the Arab labour ecosystem.

- Dr. Abdulrahman Al Awar



# UAE Pride In Private Sector National Workforce

His Excellency Dr. Abdulrahman Al Awar, MoHRE, stresses the importance of engagement with Emiratis in the private sector.

His Excellency Dr. Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, and Acting Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, reaffirmed the UAE's pride in its national workforce employed in the private sector, praising their meaningful contributions to the country's leadership and competitiveness. He highlighted that the private sector plays a vital role as a strategic partner to the government in nurturing Emirati talent and empowering them within the labour market.

This came during His Excellency's visit to GEMS Dubai American Academy, accompanied by senior officials from the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE), where he met with more than 80 UAE citizens among over 790 employed across 44 establishments within GEMS Education Group. His Excellency was welcomed by top executives from the GEMS Education Group, namely, Dino Varkey, Group CEO; Jay Varkey, Deputy CEO; and Fatima Alshamsi, Head of Emiratisation. The visit was part of the Ministry's extensive and diversified programme to celebrate workers on International Workers' Day.

Al Awar stressed the importance of continuous engagement with Emiratis working in the private sector to listen to their insights and experiences, understand their professional journeys, and address any challenges they may face, in an effort to support their job stability and career development. He also highlighted the Ministry's efforts to strengthen partnerships with companies that are committed to meeting Emiratisation targets; this includes organising site visits and highlighting the responsible role these establishments play in advancing



government initiatives and supporting the UAE's ambitious vision and future plans.

Moreover, Al Awar urged the Emirati employees he met to continue developing their skills and to approach their professional roles with a spirit of initiative and contribution. Following a briefing about the training and recruitment programmes that GEMS Education implements, His Excellency praised the institution for its efforts to provide a stable, supportive work environment, and its commitment to Emiratisation.

"Private education is one of the priority sectors in the Emiratisation mandate," Al Awar noted. "Efforts to drive Emiratisation in the private sector are steadily progressing towards achieving national targets, in line with the directives of His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the Presidential Court, and Chairman of the Emirati Talent Competitiveness Council."

His Excellency commended GEMS Education for its proactive role in achieving Emiratisation targets and its commitment to cultivating an attractive workplace that inspires creativity and excellence.

During his meeting with officials at GEMS Dubai American Academy, Al Awar reaffirmed the key role that Emirati talents play, underlining their competitiveness in the education sector, the added value they bring by supporting innovation, and their ability to navigate contemporary academic requirements related to the economy of the future - all of which is made possible by the level of preparedness of Emirati professionals, the advanced qualifications of academic institutions and universities in the UAE, and the support provided by the Nafis programme.

For his part, Sunny Varkey, Founder and Executive Chairman of GEMS Education Group, said: "At GEMS Education, we are committed to supporting the UAE's Emiratisation strategy. We are proud to welcome so many talented Emiratis to the GEMS family and deeply appreciate their positive contributions to our school communities and the nation's education sector as a whole. Today, we celebrate the success of our Emiratisation efforts and look forward to continuing this important work together with our MOHRE partners."

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, continues to establish effective partnerships with private sector establishments, and particularly leading education and higher education institutions in the UAE, with the aim of developing advanced academic programmes that equip a new generation of Emirati talent with the skills needed to meet the evolving demands of the labour market and embrace emerging technologies in education. ♦

# MoHRE once again smashes records for Smart Transactions in 2024

MoHRE completes over 34 million smart transactions marking 59% growth on 2023

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE) announced that it completed more than 34 million smart transactions during 2024, representing a 59% growth compared to the previous year, which saw over 20 million transactions.

This growth reflects the Ministry's successful adoption of digital solutions and deployment of AI technologies, supporting its efforts to eliminate bureaucracy, enhance its service ecosystem and improve the overall customer experience. It also contributes to the country's leadership and competitiveness in government services, reinforcing the UAE's position as a top global digital economy and the best place to live and work.

The growth also demonstrates



**MOHRE's 59% growth in smart transactions reflects its successful adoption of digital solutions and AI technologies, enhancing service delivery and customer experience.**

how well MoHRE's smart service ecosystem aligns with the evolving needs and expectations of customers, offering greater reliability, security, and accessibility. This, in turn, increases customer satisfaction and enhances the Ministry's commitment to timely service delivery with the highest standards of efficiency, excellence and competitiveness.

The Ministry remains steadfast in its efforts to govern and refine its smart

services platform, which includes over 100 services available 24/7 via its website and mobile app, as part of a broader vision to enhance labour market competitiveness, improve business flexibility and deliver world-class services. These efforts are in alignment with the government's digital transformation agenda, supporting the UAE National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence 2031, and facilitating seamless and efficient business operations ◆



# Fines for Domestic Recruitment Offices

MoHRE fines 22 Recruitment Offices for refusing to refund recruitment fees to employers

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) has taken legal and administrative action against 22 domestic worker recruitment offices in February this year for committing 37 violations of the Federal Decree-Law Concerning Domestic Workers.

The violations consisted of failing to refund all or part of the recruitment fees owed to employers within the legally mandated two-week period. This period begins from either the date that the domestic worker was returned to the recruitment office or the date the worker was reported to have stopped working.

In a statement released to the press, the Ministry cautioned domestic worker recruitment offices against failure to comply with the legislations regulating their operations, asserting that the Ministry would implement strict measures against violating offices, where legal and administrative actions could be escalated to cancellation of licenses for offices whose offences warrant closure.

MoHRE reaffirmed the efficacy of its monitoring system for domestic worker recruitment offices in ensuring that they meet the legal conditions and requirements that protect the rights of all parties in the employment relationship and commended compliant offices for their role in providing high-quality services to their clients.

The Ministry urged employers to report any violations by the domestic worker recruitment offices they engage with or file complaints against non-



**MoHRE cautioned domestic worker recruitment offices against failing to comply with regulations, warning that violations could lead to license cancellations.**

compliant offices via the Ministry's digital platforms or by contacting the Labour Consultation and Claims Centre on 80084.

Furthermore, the Ministry warned that dealing with unlicensed domestic worker recruitment offices or non-

credible social media platforms that provide domestic worker services could result in the loss of clients' legal rights, which are assured only when transacting with licensed offices that have been approved by the Ministry.◆



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# New Book Launch - Redefining Coaching

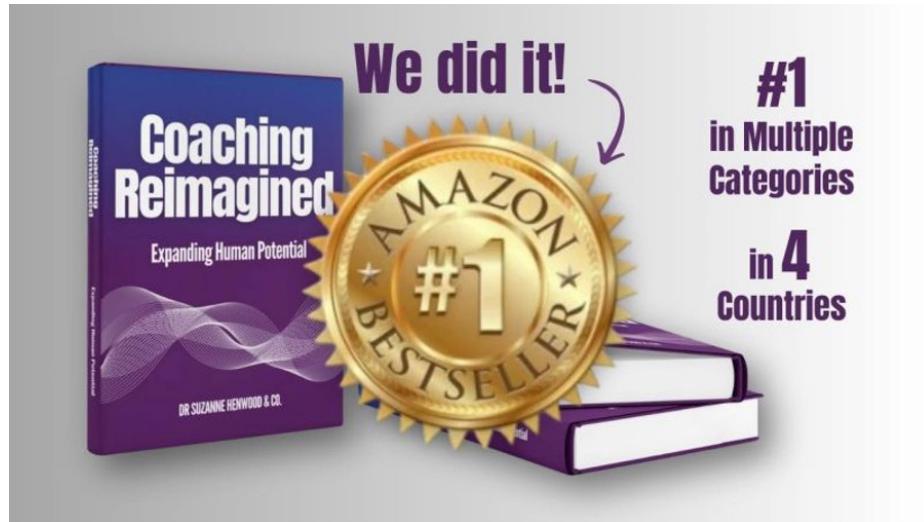
Putting the UAE on the map with Wendy Shaw and Kerry Smith

This groundbreaking book brings together 23 global coaching experts, each exploring the edges of what's possible. With over 350 years of collective experience, they challenge conventional coaching wisdom, integrate emerging modalities, and expand the boundaries of human potential.

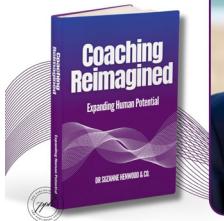
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Grab your copy today and immerse yourself in a book that redefines what it means to be a coach today!

Let's celebrate with Middle East Co-authors Wendy Shaw & Kerry Smith, two of the expert co-authors of a new coaching book, launched this week.



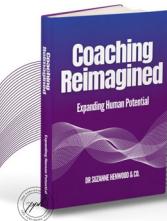
## Meet Wendy Shaw



Wendy & Kerry are 2 of the contributing authors to this global book collaboration!

Wendy's chapter shares how "the Queen of Reframing" has evolved perceptual positions, blending with other coaching modalities to help client's "unstuck" themselves. Some fascinating case studies... including her Mum's dream becoming a reality!

## Meet Kerry Smith



Kerry's chapter shares her awesome insights of coaching BIG emotions in LITTLE people. In her work with children, guiding them to handle their emotions and to effectively express themselves. So many insightful and useful tools, brought to life in David's journey.

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**Bringing together 23 global experts, this book challenges traditional coaching approaches and explores new ways to unlock human potential.**

# New Book Launch - Self Reflections How Your Inner Game Creates Your Outer Game

Dubai based author Kamran Tork releases his third book in June

**A**t the core of every human being is a universal desire for fulfillment and Happiness. Regardless of our backgrounds, we all seek fulfillment and contentment that gives life meaning.

To guide you on this journey, the book focuses on two essential questions:

First, what is my purpose?

This question shapes your actions and career. Without clarity about your purpose, recognizing and sharing your gifts becomes difficult. Your work may feel mundane, and you might struggle to find true motivation and fulfillment.

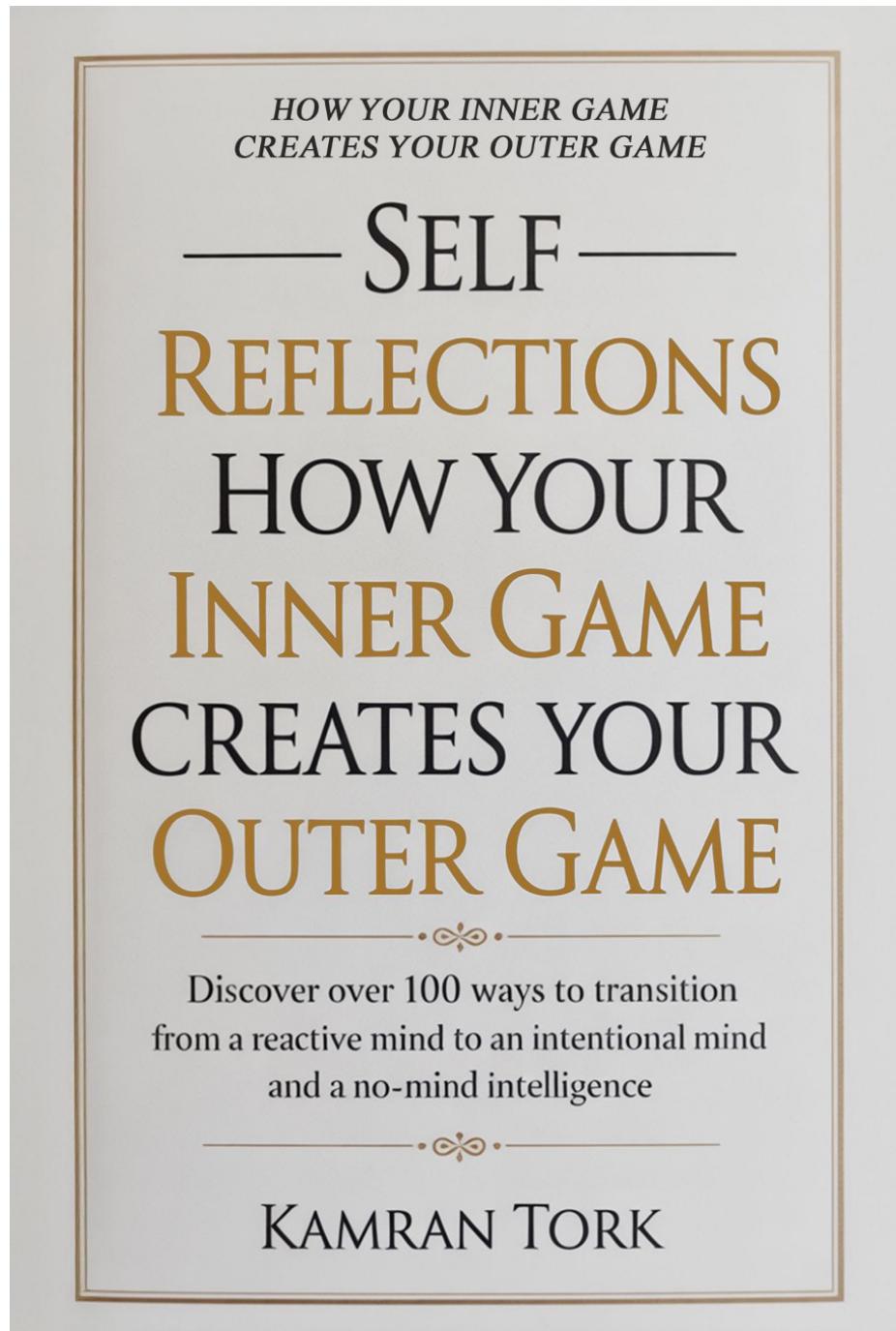
Second, who am I?

This question uncovers your true self beyond false societal labels. It's a journey of self-discovery that liberates you from limiting, disempowering perceptions that bind you. It's the master key to a truly authentic and Happy life.

Unless you find the answer to these questions, fulfillment and Happiness will elude you.

This insight-packed read is designed to help you discover your authentic voice while fostering a sense of fulfillment. At the same time, the book encourages you to tap into a profound inner state that enhances your decision-making and problem-solving skills, providing you with the insights and intuition needed to navigate our complex world.

Every reading, every page, and every moment of reflection serves as a gentle poke at the shell of old mind, until cracks begin to happen. The person you are when you start the book will undoubtedly differ from the person you become when you turn the last page.♦





# WoW HR & Learning Awards 2025

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**A**s 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

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- 1) What new initiatives are you introducing in 2025?
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- 3) What are your key measurements of success in 2025 for HR & Learning?

We will then:

- a) Publish this on our site
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- 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](mailto:info@me-hrl.com)◆

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