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# SPEAK UP

an ASDA'A publication for the <communications industry>



## Shaping world opinion

Why CEOs need to look at the bigger picture

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The big interview: Richard Edelman

< **NO TIME FOR R&R**  
Reputations at risk in the fallout from crisis mismanagement

< **HISTORY RISING**  
Burj Dubai raises the bar as property looks up

quarterly > issue 1 > november 2004

“THIS IS AN AGENCY WITH GUTS, OR IT IS NOTHING.”

RAYMOND RUBICAM

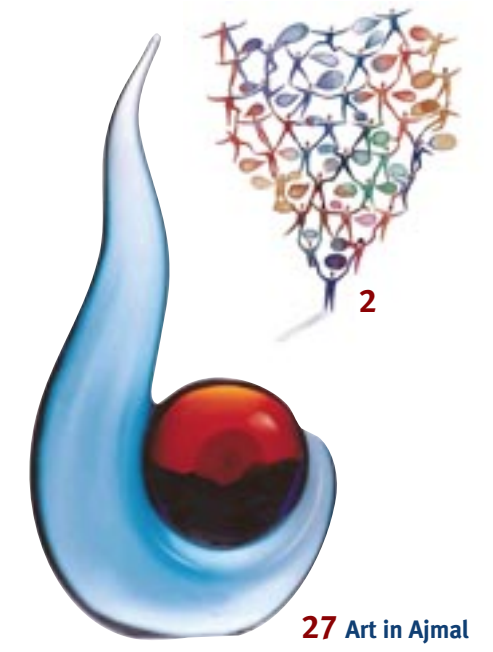


Team Young & Rubicam



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erhaps nothing underscores more eloquently the challenges which policymakers in the Arab countries face than to focus attention on the labour market. The labour force in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) is projected to swell from 104 million at the outset of this decade to 185 million by 2020. Just to keep unemployment rates at present levels - already among the world's highest - 80 million new jobs would have to be created.

To bring unemployment down to a more sustainable level 100 million new jobs is more appropriate, implying a rate of job creation of 4 per cent a year, this is extremely high by international standards.

None of this will happen without a major shift in policies and in the underlying philosophy that has driven them during the past two decades. A new model is needed that shifts the sources of growth in the region from an undue emphasis on the oil sector to non-oil industries, from state-dominated activities to those with a much larger private orientation, ideally involving the nourishing of competitive export-oriented activities.

One key component of this shift would have to be a major boost to trade and investment, well beyond the efforts made by a few countries in the region in the context of free trade bilateral deals or moves by others to join the World Trade Organisation.

The need for urgent action is highlighted by a combination of several factors. First, the region remains overly dependent on the energy sector. In Saudi Arabia close to 80 per cent of budget revenues and 90 per cent of exports are linked to sales of crude oil and refined products. Second, growing competition in world markets and the emergence of highly competitive economies in the Far East and in central and Eastern Europe risks leaving countries in the Arab world behind, with stagnant or falling levels of per capita income.

Third, it is not reasonable to assume that growing pressures in Arab countries' labour markets will be met by a major opening up in the European Union, many of whose economies have their own unemployment problems. Finally, failure to address this labour market time bomb is likely to raise persistent questions about government legitimacy.

Leaders in the region should take some comfort from the fact that the scope for gains in trade and investment is huge. Non-oil merchandise exports still account for a relatively small share of GDP - around 6 per cent - or less than one third of the levels prevailing in some of the East Asian economies. Inflows of foreign direct investment are likewise very small; at 0.5 per cent of GDP they could easily expand by four or five times, to levels seen in a large number of emerging markets. Tapping into some of this potential could create millions of jobs, many of them for women.

in perspective >  
hot topic



It is a big job and  
**100**  
million  
people demand that  
it must be done

**The prospect of 100 million people milling around with no prospect of finding any economically productive outlet for their energies or abilities is not one that can be regarded with equanimity. Yet, this is the calamitous medium term facing the Arab world, its people, institutions and governments, writes Augusto Lopez-Claros. He should know, he is the chief economist and director of the global competitiveness programme at the Geneva-based World Economic Forum**

So how do we move forward? Luckily, there is a broad body of knowledge and country-specific experience available that can be tapped to formulate major trade and investment liberalisation, as the primary aims of economic policy in coming years. There is broad consensus on what should be the key elements of a policy package aimed at opening up the economy.

Policies will have to be bold and ambitious. There will have to be a major reduction in import quotas and licensing monopolies and the phasing out of rent-seeking privileges, which have acquired an ubiquitous character in the region. Across the board cuts in tariffs to a fairly low uniform level will be necessary. Investment deregulation to free up new entry and to encourage private investment will need to be an integral component of this.

The countries in the Arab world will need to improve the investment climate, enhance job opportunities for women and lay the foundation for improved governance. Notwithstanding relatively heavy investment in women's education, female labour force participation rates remain by far the lowest in the world.

Beyond issues of macroeconomic management successful economic development strategies have much to do with the role of government and the exercise of political authority for the management of resources. It matters a great deal whether governments are accountable to their respective populations.

Investors do care if judges and courts are reasonably independent. Do businesses have to pay bribes to clear goods through customs or to settle their taxes? Do governments show favouritism in their decisions or are they even-handed in their relations with the private sector? Are public resources being allocated to public health and education or to wasteful projects?

The rapid emergence of a single, fully integrated international economy is rapidly becoming a reality. Countries that do not face up to the challenges of global competition and fail to modernise their economies and make them flexible are likely to fall behind. Declining levels of per capita income could lead to growing political and social unrest making the task of efficient economic management more difficult.

Credible reforms, beginning with a substantial liberalisation of trade and investment, could go a long way toward releasing the great potential of the Arab countries and enable them to enter a critical stage of the hoped-for renaissance.



Augusto Lopez-Claros is Chief Economist and Director of the Global Competitiveness Programme at the Geneva-based World Economic Forum.

in perspective >  
straight talk

# It's time to remove the blinkers

**The ASDA'A-Edelman global CEO survey results are on how the global community views the Arab world are not surprising. But the question is, how do we get our message across faced with misconceptions? How do we manage reputation in the light of 9/11 and all that followed**

The Middle East is constantly in the headlines, more often than not for the wrong reasons.

War, terrorism, money laundering, women's emancipation, governance, transparency have each in turn and frequently together coloured perceptions of the region. There can be no denying that there are important issues to deal with but should these overshadow everything else that is happening in the Arab World?

The reality is that they continue to do so, with the result that the Arab world is often misunderstood and misrepresented.

Its 22 nations and 300 million people are relatively homogenous, with a common language, culture, heritage, and most importantly a sense of identity to bring them together. Yet the region displays tremendous diversity. There is enormous wealth and abject poverty, and all the shades between. There are different levels of education, unemployment and infrastructure, all contributing to the mix.

What is the upshot of this? If there is to be a change in perception, and a change for the better, the Arab world needs to talk to the rest of the world.

It was with this in mind that earlier this year ASDA'A launched the Speak Up! Forum. Much of what came out of the event is reported in the main feature (see page 8).

The forum analysed the communication challenges facing the region. There were important and telling contributions from those invited to attend. These included people from business, government, diplomacy, communications experts and journalism - a sufficiently diverse mixture of ideas and opinions to ensure even the more uncomfortable issues would be raised.

Needless to say they were. To kick off the debate ASDA'A and Edelman PR worldwide conducted a global CEO survey on how these business leaders perceive the Arab world. The ASDA'A-Edelman survey results

are not surprising. The prevailing image of the Arab world is in general unfavourable and based on headlines that fail to reflect the reality. So how do we get our message across, faced with these misconceptions? How do we manage reputation when 9/11 and the events that followed were so troubling? How do we avoid proceeding into isolation, with growing unemployment and minimal FDI. These are challenging issues.

We tend to shy away from disclosure, which frequently leads to smaller issues snowballing into something much bigger and far more painful. The Arab world must stand up and be counted. The onus is on each of us to get this message across.

The Arab world has to take responsibility for talking to the world - and must do so confidently - to tell its own version of the stories behind the headlines. It must establish its own agenda and pursue it rigorously and singlemindedly.

Clearly, the rest of the world has a vested interest in listening and paying close attention to the resulting message.

This is a call for action, a plea to avoid being deterred by labels such as "Western ally" or "the axis of evil." There is an opportunity for us to stand up. We need to show the Arab world in its true light. Every interaction is a possibility to talk to the outside world. We are proud of our

traditions and heritage. We need to stand by them. There are positives, as the example of Dubai demonstrates. Cities in the region must learn from it.

Or take the example of Singapore, a city state utterly without resources but able to project an image of a dynamic economy showing impressive growth. We can also learn from its development.

Emirates airlines, one of the Arab world's few international brands, is an example to us all. It has done such a brilliant job of projecting itself. This is an inspiration for communications people and for governments across the region. Emirates has risen above the tide of misapprehensions to project itself as a truly international brand. Others can and should do the same.



Sunil John is Managing Director, Middle East, of ASDA'A

in perspective >  
interview

'In the 21st century, a company's ability to stand out will be defined more by its relationships with the outside world and its image than by its quarterly numbers and its financial strength. And it is the job of the CEO to set the tone from the top'

# Edelman

<From the top down>

As the man in the hotseat of one of the world's leading public relations consultancy **Richard Edelman** is in a better position than most to forecast where the corporate world is heading

These days a successful chief executive has to operate more like a national president or foreign minister, exercising hard power and soft power in equal measure, says **Richard Edelman**, the New York-based president and chief executive officer of **Edelman**, the world's largest independent public relations firm and international partner of ASDA'A.

As the man in the hotseat of one of the world's leading public relations consultancy he is in a better position than most to forecast where the corporate world is heading. In an interview with *Speak Up!* magazine he said: "In the 21st century, a company's ability to stand out will be defined more by its relationships with the outside world and its image than by its quarterly numbers and its financial strength. And it is the job of the CEO to set the tone from the top."

He believes recent history not only underpins this view but also lays the groundwork for the way forward. He said: "As the new millennium dawned, business was in the ascendant. The power of the free market was unleashed, with millions of jobs created each year. Stock markets were ebullient, as retail investors and employees poured retirement savings into equities.

"Chief executives were icons of the new economy, lionised on morning business television and in cover stories in the leading news magazines. Companies established within the previous decade were touted as best in class, often on the basis of fast-rising stock prices."

Until that defining moment that has been responsible for much of what has happened in the past few years. He said: "Then came the reckoning of the past three years. Financial scandals engulfed several of the high-flyers, including Ahold, Enron, Tyco and Worldcom, as well as established accounting firms such as Arthur Andersen."

He added: "Employees have been devastated by a double dose of bad news - a precipitous decline in their retirement plans and massive job cuts that have ensued from the global recession. Professional services firms, from accountancy groups to investment banks, to law firms, to mutual fund managers, have been exposed as being prone to questionable ethical practices. A void of trust has resulted, opening the way for new players such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to claim a major role in global governance."

The effect has been that "many chief executives have responded to this 'perfect storm' by focusing on achieving quarterly financial results and reducing their visibility with stakeholders beyond Wall Street".

Edelman believes the effect has been counter-productive. He said: "This heads-down, risk-averse behaviour is having exactly the opposite effect of what is intended by the chief executives. The pendulum has swung too far in the direction of the quiet leader."

Nevertheless, he said: "Thankfully, the era of the imperial chief executive officer is over. Command and control behaviour is not acceptable in today's business climate. Neither is the not-at-home CEO, who fails to engage public communities on shared challenges or to interact with those critical of the company's behaviour."

*The Economist* recently reported: "Effective communication skills are a relatively new requirement, the result of the increasing intrusion of the outside world. A corporate leader must talk convincingly. Motivating a large workforce requires a gift to present a clear vision persuasively. A leader who cannot inspire trust and convey authenticity will find the task difficult."

Edelman goes a step further, insisting: "The traditional model of communications, the pyramid of authority - where companies distribute controlled information through elites to the mass audience - is simply outmoded."

**'With many of the world's economies growing again, now is the time to adopt a new model of communications. Rather than opting out or returning to a disastrous over-reach, chief executive officers have an opportunity to frame a middle way'**

"Today, corporate reputation is shaped by the interactions between and among an array of involved and equally empowered interest groups - including employees, regulators, trade partners, academics, consumer enthusiasts, investors, NGOs and media. Corporations now operate in a sphere of cross-influence, where ideas are continuously exchanged and subjected to re-examination."

"With many of the world's economies growing again, now is the time to adopt a new model of communications. Rather than opting out or returning to a disastrous over-reach, chief executive officers have an opportunity to frame a middle way."

He said there is a clear analogy for business in the foreign policy model propounded recently by professor Joseph Nye, dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Nye talks about the hard power of military force and coercion, while soft power is based on attraction and intellectual legitimacy. "For a chief executive, hard

power is in making the numbers; soft power is about values, ideals and leadership," Edelman said. "Soft power has the ability to inspire and to justify corporate decisions, which may be founded on hard power considerations. Just as the US should not rely exclusively on its hard-power, leading-edge armed forces, chief executives cannot operate effectively by failing to explain the context of decisions and to establish a vision for the company."

He is convinced that there is a true involvement imperative for chief executives. He said: "They need to exert leadership on the public stage, interacting with key players in government, civil society and the community. Their personal initiative is required on complex issues such as drug pricing, intellectual property protection, global trade and obesity."

"The absence of CEOs from the stage relinquishes the spotlight to all manner of opponents, from disgruntled employees to demagogic public officials."

This is not to forget the core responsibilities. "At the same time, CEOs must be custodians of the corporate brand, which acts as an umbrella for workplace values, product excellence and social responsibility," Edelman said. "They must forge relationships with multiple stakeholders based on continuous communication, respect and transparency."

Edelman outlined a new model based on four guiding principles.

**First**, media outreach. The key to effective corporate reputation is trust, built by regular interaction with multiple stakeholders. The media is a critical link to all of these audiences. Edelman's vice-chairman Michael Deaver, former deputy chief of staff to president Ronald Reagan, has, in the past, insisted that effective communications relies on constant repetition of one or two messages in all kinds of media.

He said: "Edelman's Trust Barometer finds that 80 per cent of opinion leaders in Europe and the US are much more likely to believe something they hear, see or read in many different sources. Information 'pings' around a sphere of cross-influence, in which stakeholders consistently test the veracity of claims made in traditional media and now in newer forms such as weblogs or 'blogs'."

"This global echo chamber has forced all of us to establish individual webs of trust, reliable sources we can count on. In a world of continuous partial attention, a battery of spokespeople, from the chief executive to credible third parties such as academics or doctors, should be utilised to achieve frequency of message delivery."

Edelman's **second** underlying principle is to cast employees as central actors. He believes employees are the key audience for chief executives seeking to build effective corporate reputation, because great companies today are constructed from the inside out. He said that according to the Trust Barometer, the most credible information source is 'colleagues at the

company' (40 per cent), followed by 'friends and family' (35 per cent in US, 51 per cent in Europe). This is in stark contrast to the credibility of information conveyed by 'CEOs and CFOs' (11 per cent in US, 26 per cent in Europe).

"As the former director of flight operations of a major airline noted after the resignation of its CEO, once details of secret executive compensation and guaranteed pension plans were leaked, 'How can you restore employee morale when you jump into the lifeboat ahead of everybody else?'"

"The task of a CEO is to get employees on his side by creating a master narrative that coherently articulates the company's vision and ideals. Progress toward that goal is then reported regularly to the employees, who become allies in achieving the mission by propagating the message to a broader audience."

**Third**, apply the paradox of transparency to consumers. Consumers are now important participants in the global dialogue, not simply passive recipients of information. So, he said, smart companies will embrace the paradox of transparency as a basic business practice, speaking directly to consumers.

"In the past, business kept most important matters under a protective code of silence, until ready to launch a product or announce a policy change. A better way to proceed is to disclose what you know as soon as you can, then commit to further communication as more facts are known."

"For instance, British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) has changed its process for considering a new nuclear facility. In the past, it would find a site, announce its intention to build, defend the plan against opposition, then proceed or abandon the project."

"Now, BNFL describes the need for a facility, engages interested stakeholders, agrees on a plan after dialogue and amendment of a proposal, and then implements the project. Imagine what would have happened on genetically modified seeds had Monsanto followed a similar process of involving end-consumers early on in a dialogue on risk and benefit."

The **fourth** principle is to align CSR with business goals by forging partnerships with NGOs. "Chief executives should consider corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes as a critical part of business process," Edelman said. "NGOs such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International have truly become the 'fifth estate' in global governance."

"The Trust Barometer shows that NGOs are the most trusted brands in Europe for the third consecutive year. They are now super-brands with large memberships and important credentials as watchdogs on multinational business, perceived to be beyond the control of individual national governments."

He added: "CSR programmes are not a panacea, but they do hold special appeal to

**'The task of a CEO is to get employees on his side by creating a master narrative that coherently articulates the company's vision and ideals'**

employees, investors and younger consumers. A company cannot buy reputation simply with full-page advertisements in the business press." He suggested: "Top management should establish a set of behaviours that are consistent with the goal of good corporate citizenship and completely aligned and integrated with business goals. These objectives can be set in cooperation with NGOs, which can lend credibility to the effort by benchmarking against competitors and assisting in outreach to local communities."

**Fifth**, is to take the lead whenever there is crisis. He said: "Crisis is a crucible in which corporate reputation can be reinforced or ruined. It is critical that the CEO should be seen internally and externally as marshalling all corporate resources to manage the issue at hand."

"The CEO at this point becomes the face of the corporation, a rallying point for employees and a person to count on for consumers. His decisions must be seen as based on sound ethics and in the public interest, acting before government imposes a change in behaviour."

The modus operandi should see the company act quickly to establish a central source of information on the crisis, whether a website or a toll-free phone number, or both, and provide regular briefings by experts to feed the global 24-hour news cycle. "Managed correctly, crisis provides a unique opportunity to advance the firm's values and reputation, he said

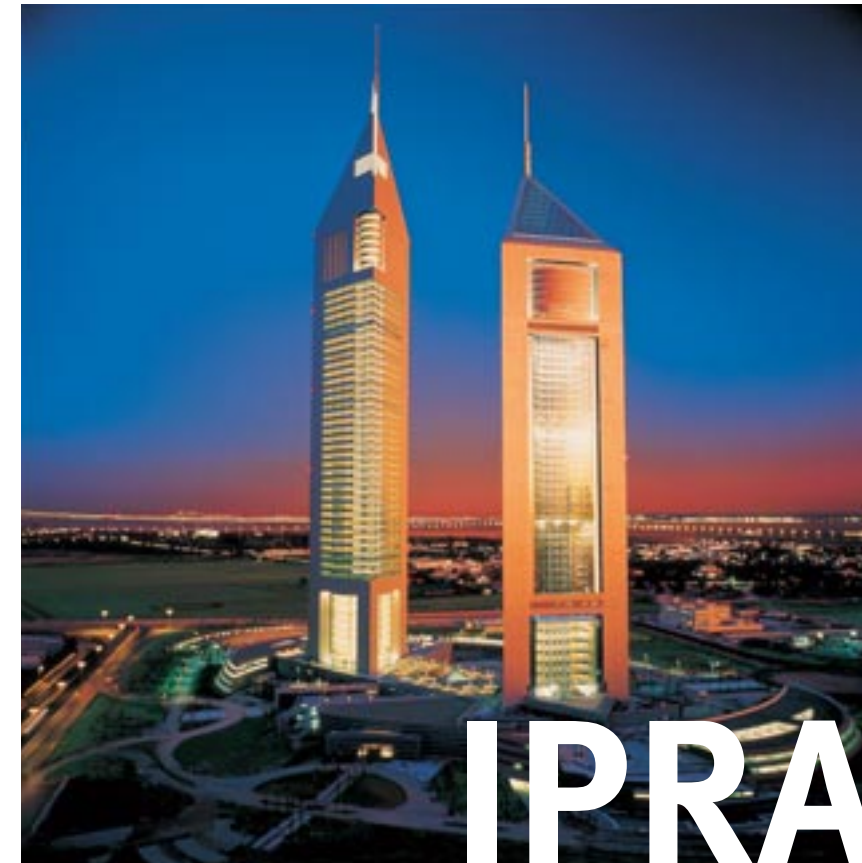
He believes a clear conclusion emerges from all this. "A strong fabric of corporate relationships is necessary in a multinational operating environment," he said. "Lord Browne, group chief executive of BP, observes that access to capital was the key differentiator in the 1990s, but that relationships will be the major source of strategic distinction in the 21st century."

"Strong corporate reputation is built through continuous communication with interdependent stakeholders, including employees, media, investors, consumers, regulators, academics and retailers."

"The single-thread approach of sole concentration on the demands of the financial community ignores the complexity of the business world. Some issues require personal leadership by the CEO, partnership with government or NGOs and a long-term time horizon."

"The real message for CEOs is that proper corporate risk management calls for true involvement in the issues of the day and a strong voice to assure the company's interests are served."

**Richard Edelman is President and Chief Executive Officer of Edelman, the world's largest independent public relations firm.**



# IPRA

**The IPRA Annual Conference promises to be a unique and unforgettable experience. It is singularly appropriate that Dubai, which has shown a scale and speed of development unprecedented in recent history and strongly believes in the power of public relations, should be chosen as the venue**



**The leading players in the global public relations industry are all set to descend on Dubai this coming December after it was announced that the 49th International Public Relations Association (IPRA) annual conference would be held in the emirate**

The prestigious IIR-organised and ASDA'A and Edelman-sponsored event, a magnet for the biggest names in the business, is being held in the Gulf for the first time. It is scheduled for December 12 to 15 and the organisers have secured the patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and UAE Defence Minister.

The announcement was made by Ceyda Aydede, IPRA 2003 President. She said: "Organising such a conference for the first time in the UAE reflects the continuous commitment towards bringing together pioneer experts in the PR field, locally, regionally and internationally in order to combine knowledge and experience. IPRA

President Professor Donald K Wright said he looked forward to welcoming the leaders of the industry to Dubai in December. He added: "It is singularly appropriate that Dubai, which has shown a scale and speed of development unprecedented in recent history, should be chosen as the venue for this year's event."

The eye-catching Emirates Towers, an established feature of the Dubai skyline, has been selected as the venue for the public relations industry's annual get-together. Wright added: "Dubai boasts some of the best conference facilities in the world, combined with its unique brand of hospitality, this vibrant city provides the perfect platform to host this world class international conference."

With more than 1,000 IPRA members spread throughout 80 different countries and with speakers from Europe, the US, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the meeting offers members a golden opportunity, not only to meet and share professional experience but also to exchange cultural views and grow together both personally and professionally.

IIR's Steve Jones confirmed: "PR Week has agreed to be a media partner for the conference as has Kogan Page, the UK publisher."

"More than a month ahead of the conference we can confirm delegate numbers are now over 100 and we are on schedule for 400 plus delegates. We have been encouraged by the response from the public relations industry the world over."

The speakers, drawn from around the globe, include Loula Zaklama, President Elect 2006 for IPRA, Egypt; Neel Chatterjee, Head Of Communications, Standard Chartered Bank, India; Ahmed Linjawy, External Relations Associate Director, Procter & Gamble, KSA.

From the UAE Sunil John, MD, ASDA'A PR; Hamad Malik, Senior Regional Manager Marketing & Corporate Communications, LG Electronics M.E. And Africa; Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Head of Dubai's Ports and Customs Authority, Sheikhha Lubna Al Qasimi, CEO, Tejari; Khalid bin Sulayem, Director General, Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) are expected to contribute.

There will be specialists from the UK - such as Mike Seymour, International Director, Crisis and Issues Management, Edelman PR Worldwide - and from the US Professor Wright, President, the IPRA's President.

The topics for discussion will range from PR Best Practice Techniques through to Corporate Social Responsibility; Crises and Issues Management; Industry Trends; PR Strategy; Driving Value Through PR Consultancies; all delivered by international industry experts. Professor Wright said: "It promises to be a unique and unforgettable experience."





David Brain, Edelman PR Worldwide's chief executive officer for Europe

**The good news is that perceptions can be altered. To announce the results of the survey, ASDA'A and Edelman convened an evening of debate, entitled Speak Up! which attracted 300 of Dubai's most influential figures**

The leaders of international non-Arab businesses continue to virtually write off the Middle East – despite recurring evidence of vibrant economic activity – according to the evidence of an ASDA'A and Edelman global CEO survey.

The evidence confirms that even the most enlightened business bosses rarely manage to sidestep the stereotypes when confronted by the Middle East. Perceptions are so engrained that the development of business activity in the region suffers under a severe handicap.

The good news is that perceptions can be altered. To announce the results of the survey, ASDA'A and Edelman convened an evening of debate, entitled Speak Up! which attracted 300 of Dubai's most influential figures. This jointly sponsored communications forum, given the theme Talking to the World: The Middle East Communications Challenge, will be held regularly in Dubai to help get across to global investors the positive aspects of regional development.

David Brain, Edelman PR Worldwide's chief executive officer for Europe, made the official announcement and presented them to the audience at the event. He explained: "The questions were put together by ASDA'A and circulated around Edelman's global network of offices.



FRONT ROW SEATS: Dr Kharbush, Saad Abdul Razak and Salah Mohammed were members of the VIP audience

We contacted our most senior clients. The questions were put to CEO and C-Level executives in the United States, Europe and Asia. They come from a variety of business: healthcare, hi-tech, engineering, and financial. A total of 37 companies were surveyed. That's not a large sample, so I hope that you will take their comments as indicative rather than a basis for long-term strategy.

"The survey comprised 12 questions. Firstly, how do you rate your awareness of the Arab world investment environment. Some 78 per cent said their awareness was average or weak. None said they had an excellent awareness. Despite growth and success in the past, awareness is low.

"The second question was: what most closely describes your perception of the Arab world? We were aware that the Arab world is a very disparate region and yet in the minds, particularly of many of business investors in the West, they tend to have a more confused image about it, so we asked: What most closely describes your perception?

A single location, a diverse region, or unfamiliar territory? Some 16 per cent said unfamiliar territory, 84 per cent said a diverse region.

"We next asked: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word 'Arab'? Six per cent said tourist destination, 9 per cent saw growing markets, 6 per cent a monotheistic religion, 36 per cent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 11 per cent the war in the Iraq, 9 per cent oil and sand, and 20 per cent saw extremism. The region's image unfortunately is still dominated by conflict, war and extremism. There is, however, positive recognition of the market potential.

"We then asked how many times have you visited the region? We wanted to look at results based on experience. Some 71 per cent of those surveyed have visited the region at least once but still maintained a negative perception. Think about what they said in the previous analysis, which is a worry: Have you ever conducted business in the Arab world? 50 per cent had. These were asked if their operations in the region had been worthwhile? Half of them said that their business had been worthwhile, and only a tenth said the opposite. This is a very encouraging statistic.

"When asked if they would do business in the region again, some 74 per cent said yes. That means the

region has good advocates in Western business who are very senior people. We need to harness the 'brand' ambassadors, people who have had good business and personal experiences here. We need to find these advocates and ensure we attack the 23 per cent of maybes considering investment.

"We then asked what are your concerns about doing business in the Arab world? The answer to this was the political, business, and security climate; all broadly similar. I don't think this result says anything special. If you ask the same question in any region or country, you would get similar results. This does invite us to think about promoting the region for investment. We need to look at the process holistically.

David Brain added: "I had the privilege of working in Singapore for a number of years for different parts of the government. They are adroit in the way they manage perceptions and image for investment purposes. They do three things that mark them out in addition to investing an awful lot of money on their image that they take very seriously.

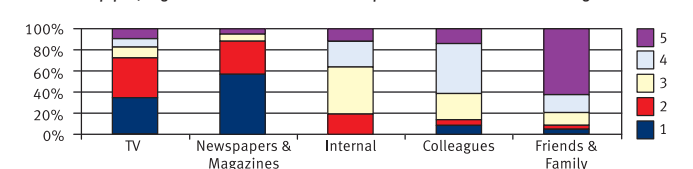
"The first thing they do is coordinate between state-owned companies and government departments. If you look at how their image has developed, it has been a combination of three things: Singapore Airlines, the national airline, which as you are aware is majority-owned by the government. They have invested into the brand that has meant a huge emotional connection with the state. Some fantastic advertising has developed around the Singapore girl concept.

"The second thing that they do is get rational internal investment through the Economic Development Board. The third thing they do is the campaigns they run through the Singapore Tourism Board giving people lifestyle reasons to visit Singapore. People make the mistake of thinking that investment decisions are purely economic; it's logical, rational, when in fact it's equally about heart as well as head. People think: "Do I want to live in this place? Do I want my family to live here? Do I want my employees to live here?" So I think that what we can take from this is that messaging and communications need to be holistic.

"We then asked what is it that you least understand about the region? The region needs to convey itself holistically. Which aspects of the business environment are you keen to know about - 20 per cent said legal and regulatory; 23 per cent said investment and fiscal incentives. None was concerned about cost implications. Infrastructure availability was 10 per cent; governance issues 34 per cent. I think what we took out was the notion that almost half of the respondents wanted to know more about the government's regulatory framework. It's the country and region they are investing in: they want to know more about the governance and regulatory framework so that their money is secure in the long term.

"What you see is the most positive aspects of the region in business terms. It's 12 per cent on people, 6 per cent on location, 61 per cent on natural resources oil and gas, and 21 per cent on size."

MEDIA: Newspapers, magazines and television are the most important source of information in the region



LISTENING IN: There was a huge audience for the Speak Up debate

# A SUMMARY

"As a communications person, the final summary is very interesting to me, but may be difficult to understand. I would like to rank the following in order of priority. One is most important and five least. Newspapers, TV and magazines (see table above) make up the premium form of information that potential investors into the region use. This is where they get information. It's no surprise that it is publications such as the *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist* and local newspaper that are forming opinions of the region. One of the observations that I had was that most of the journalists in the region are from those publications. But they are covering the things that turn people off, like security and war. They are covering the economy from an oil and gas perspective. They are not noticing developments in other areas. So there is a lesson again for the region.

"We need to look to some of the examples like Singapore and Malaysia, where they are actively going out into the market place and helping the media to form these opinions and giving them specifically packaged stories about other areas of their economy, and elements of their development story and nation."

# THE SURVEY

# THE PANEL

ASDA'A and Edelman brought together a panel of international business and communications leaders to discuss the survey results



IN THE HOT SEAT: Phil Garrison, President of the Dubai-based American Business Council

One conclusion to emerge was that more should be done by those parts of the Arab world that do not conform to the stereotypes to clarify the reality on the ground.

Drawing on his diplomatic experience, **Anthony Harris, Director of International Relations at the Link Group of Companies in Dubai and a former UK Ambassador to the UAE,**



called on Middle East governments to speak up. He said: "Many Arab governments have been invisible since 9/11 and have tended to be reactive to issues. It is not good enough. They need to enunciate their beliefs publicly. The key thing is addressing yourself to



the outside world." The event united a panel of speakers from varied nationalities and professions and also included **Joseph Ghossoub, Chairman and CEO of The Holding Group,** which owns ASDA'A and several other communications companies, **Kate Dourian, Editor Middle East of Platts,** **Phil Garrison, the President of the Dubai-based American Business Council** and **Boutros Boutros, Vice President, Media and Public Relations at Emirates airlines.**

Speakers were asked to tackle the issue of why adverse perceptions about the Middle East that exist globally given that the Middle East, and the Gulf region in particular has so much to offer. Several panelists conceded that while 9/11 had been

a grievous setback to "Brand Arabia" there was a need to adopt a more aggressive stance towards getting the message out on the region's positives, including vibrant Gulf economies and stock markets, the traditional values that Arab society holds dear, and the need to convey the possibility of success, an endeavour in which Dubai has been extremely successful.

**"If money talks, why is the region so silent"**



CLEAR MESSAGE: Kate Dourian demanded an end to the silence



TALKING POINT: Dr Mohammed Khalifa Bin Kharbush, the UAE Minister of State for Finance and Industry gets his message across at the Forum



FRONT ROW SEATS: Dr Kharbush and other members of the specially invited VIP audience listen intently to the debate



SPEAKING OUT: Boutros Boutros, Vice President for Media and Public Relations at Emirates airlines



PANEL MEMBERS: Anthony Harris, a director at the Link Group, Kate Dourian Middle East Editor at Platts, Joe Ghossoub, chairman and CEO of The Holding Group



TABLE TALK: Rashid Ahmed Bin Rashid, Deputy General Manager at Emirates Management Services and Abdulah Al Eter, Undersecretary at the UAE Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries



FORWARD LOOKING: Mohammad Khalifa Bin Fahad Al Mehairi, General Manager of the Federal Customs Authority, with Salah Mohammed of Dubai Islamic Bank and Sunil John



HOT TOPIC: Saad Abdul Razak of Dubai Islamic Bank and Sunil John exchange views



A RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE: The guests were caught up in the debate

# THE GALLERY



FROM THE FLOOR: The invited audience, aware of the importance of the issues, were keen to participate fully in the exchanges



STANDING UP FOR THE REGION: The debate swayed back and forth between those who wanted a more positive approach and others who are prepared to wait for change



BOLD OUTLOOK: Despite its seriousness, the event was also a social occasion for many members of the audience



SERIOUS NOTE: Those expecting to hear a range of views during the debate were not disappointed by the diversity of the opinions that were presented



HUMOUR TOO: There were plenty of laughs after the event as those who had participated mulled over the issues raised



OUTSTANDING: The level of the debate was high, serious and immensely interesting for members of the audience and panel alike



POINTS OF VIEW: Guests at the Speak Up! event were happy to continue the debate after the formal part of the evening was over



STANDING TOGETHER: The consensus was that the best way to create the change of perception that is so needed is to present a united approach

In a question and answer session, a member of the audience drew loud applause when he questioned why the panel assumed that addressing a "global audience" meant addressing America. **Boutros** responded by saying that America's power meant it was inevitably the primary destination for Arab messaging. However businesses need to target markets based on their target audience.

"Talk to them. If you don't talk to them, don't expect them to carry your views," said **Boutros**. "You cannot blame Americans if they don't know us. You have to go there and tell them who you are. That's not very difficult."

"If we look deep inside, we find many positive values: family, ethics, hospitality, pride and history," said **Ghossoub**. "Let's light a candle. Let's stop talking at the mirror, and remind ourselves of our credentials. Let's show the Arab world in its true light." **Dourian** said

that OPEC was a particularly good example of an organization that is very effective at leveraging the media to get its message across but noted that despite the wealth of the GCC, its communication remains muted. "If money talks, why is the region so silent?" she asked.

Commenting on the need for a cohesive message, **Ian Garrison, President of the Dubai-based American Business Council**, pointed out that some individual Arab states have succeeded in effectively articulating their message. However, he called on the region to unify its voice. "You must know your message, you can't allow confusion." However, he pointed out that putting out the Middle East message as opposed to a country-specific one is a very difficult but necessary task.

"I travel throughout this area quite a bit and the message on an individual basis is really very clear. Yet getting the Middle East and this group of countries together to

communicate a unified message is a very difficult task," he said.

Delegates veered between hope and pessimism on the future of the Middle East. One member of the audience said that no matter how good the PR, it wouldn't make a difference. "In western countries, policies are made by the elite, who are not influenced by media or public relations," he said. "They are influenced only by the public once every few years when they go up for election."

"Even if we do a brilliant PR job and make Western people and Eastern people love the Arabs - I am Egyptian - intellectually, it won't change the decisions that are coming from the West."

Another chose to look on the bright side, if somewhat introspectively. "Look at the Arab world as if it were a good football team," he said. "Then people would come to watch it. It has to start with

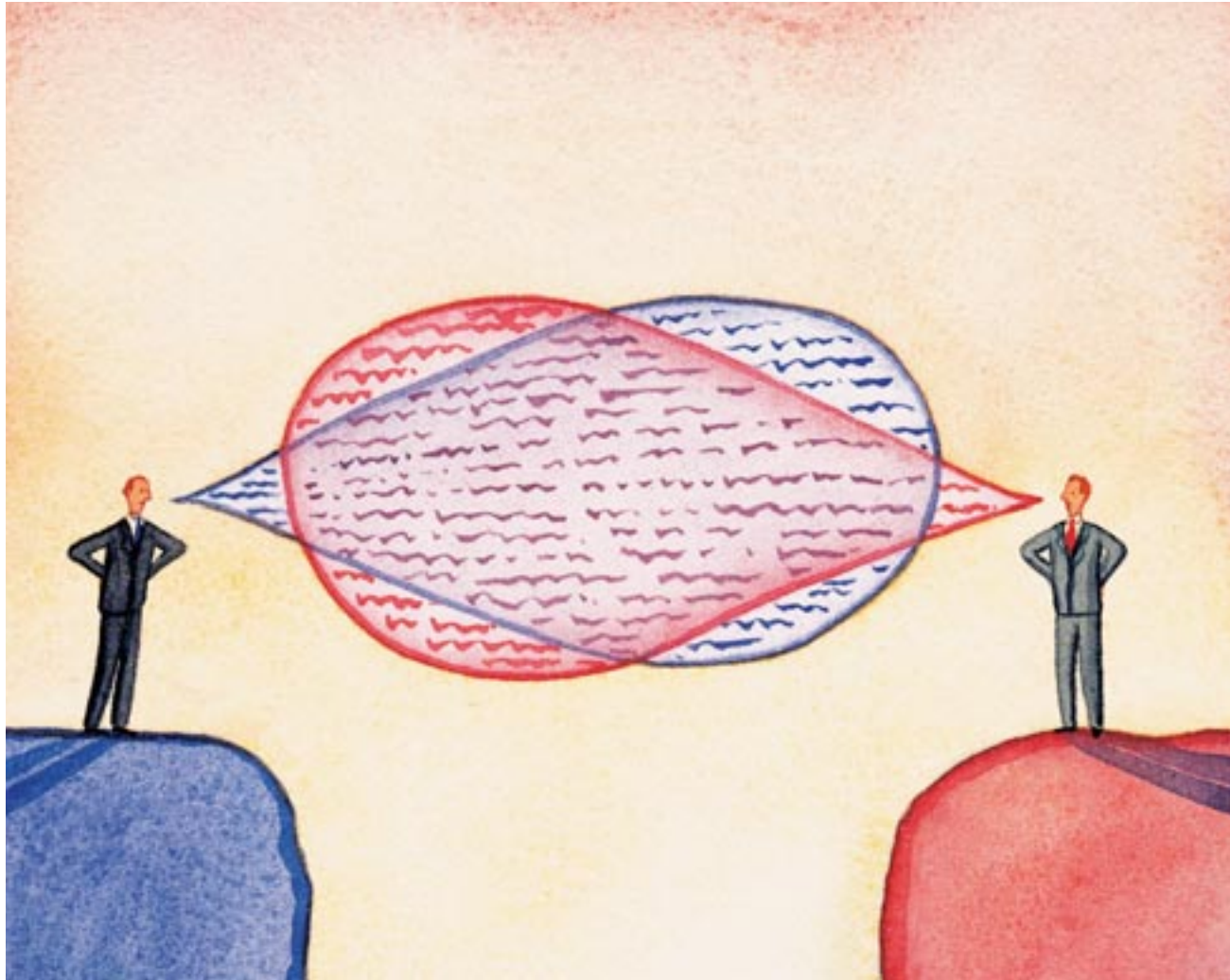
us. It has to change - and it has to start with us.

"Before 1998, when I came to Dubai, I was very depressed. I am in the aviation business and have traveled all around the Arab world. Look around you. Look around you in Dubai. Things have changed. Some 185 nationalities live in harmony. This is a great experience and shows that it can be done."

**The Speak Up! event will be a regular platform organized by ASDA'A and Edelman to encourage the regional communications industry, media, governments and the private sector to actively address the issue of the Middle East communications challenge and how the region can more effectively articulate positive messages about its potential. After all, with so much good news going on behind the headlines, why should the Middle East be silent?**



# THE GALLERY



## An emerging market, a PR alliance and the dynamism of a city

Edelman PR Worldwide is constantly looking for beneficial alliances, says David Brain. The latest, with ASDA'A PR, gives it a partner in one of the most exciting markets in the world. Mature markets with their poorly performing economies and static growth rates have become saturated and offer few real growth opportunities. The Middle East, and the Arabian Gulf in particular, stands in marked contrast to the rest of the world. It has a rapidly growing population, a new commitment to liberalisation and a wealth of opportunities for global corporates

International PR consultants are increasingly eyeing the huge opportunities that are emerging from a market that was once media shy and very conservative in its communications. As the global spotlight turns to unveil the region, its massive potential is being acknowledged by global PR consultants who see the need for their clients to communicate effectively with the region. David Brain, President and CEO for Europe of Edelman PR Worldwide, talks to Speak Up! about the value of the regional market to the world's largest independent PR consultancy, explains why international firms now consider it important to speak to the region and its recent tie up with ASDA'A Public Relations, the largest regional PR consultancy.

### Why have you decided to embark on a business alliance with a Middle East-based partner?

Edelman PR Worldwide is constantly looking for new partnerships that will help grow our business globally. In the wake of poorly performing economies and static growth rates worldwide in the past few years, mature markets have become saturated with few real growth opportunities of late. The Middle East, and the Arabian Gulf in particular, stands in marked contrast to the rest of the world with a rapidly growing population, a new commitment to liberalization and a wealth of opportunities for global corporates.

This is an important and rapidly developing region and one where we want to be able to provide clients with comprehensive coverage. We are extremely excited to be partnering with the most comprehensive and accomplished network in the Middle East and are convinced that this affiliation will allow us to provide tangible value to our clients by being able to address global issues locally.

### What is the value to international firms of expanding into the Middle East?

It is clear that there is great scope for business in the Middle East. Quite apart from owning around two-thirds of the world's oil and gas, Middle East countries have



David Brain, Joseph Ghossoub and Sunil John

tremendous resources and human potential waiting to be tapped. With a population of over 300 million and one of the fastest growing ones in the world, and economies that are still reporting strong growth despite the global downturn, many of our clients are very keen to look at new opportunities and expansion in this market.

Perhaps more importantly, the region itself is increasingly opening up through a process of liberalisation that is slowly but surely removing barriers to entry. Inevitably this means that the Arab world is increasingly on the global radar screen as a new growth market and one that due to previous protected markets has remained relatively untapped. Our global clients very much see the potential of this market and almost on a daily basis we are now being asked to support their operations in the region.

### Why do you think the Middle East is attracting so much attention and is it all positive?

There is an untold story here. Headlines from Fallujah do a disservice to the silent majority in the Middle East. The real story is about the 300 million people who seek to peacefully better their standard of living and create greater prospects for the next generation. Away from the conflict and the uncertainty there are pockets of stability in the region that very much reflect the huge potential that it enjoys. Cities such as Dubai, which regularly announces new mega-

projects aimed at promoting development, knowledge based economies and generally a vibrant and progressive business culture, clearly set an example for others.

Also across the region governments are increasingly committed to the importance of diversifying away from oil. Important reports by the United Nations Development Programme have cast light on the development challenges that the region faces but speaking to the people of the region, we understand that increasingly these challenges are being actively addressed. We believe that it is our role to support such initiatives by helping our global clients to access these markets and by supporting regional efforts to leverage communicate to secure prosperity.

### What are the opportunities international companies seek to capitalise on in the region?

Huge trade, real estate, stock and capital markets, tourism, event-management and services opportunities exist. International businesses which ignore the potential for FDI because of adverse headlines 1,000 kms away are, in my opinion, missing a huge opportunity.

It's very clear from all that I've seen and heard at home and here that awareness is very low in the rest of the world about the extent of the opportunities that exist here. Too many businesses have yet to really look into the possibilities of going into partnership here, of setting up in the region. It's clear that in the GCC, we have a dynamic

young economy with larger than average growth potential. GCC countries enjoy above-average GDP per capita rates and the region has witnessed above-normal annual growth rates in the past few years at a time when the global economy has been in the doldrums. Western business and indeed international business as a whole can come in and help the Middle East realise its potential.

### What can Middle Eastern cities such as Dubai learn from the rest of the world about PR?

I had the privilege of working in Singapore for a number of years. I worked for different parts of the government. They were very aware and adroit in the way they managed their perception and image for investment purposes. They invested in their image which they took very seriously. That has not always been hugely flattering. They took a long-term view. They really did provide for the long-term; the people concerned, the people involved in managing their perceptions have been there for a long time.

### Are you optimistic that your new business association with the Middle East will bear fruit?

The dynamism of Dubai has been a real eye-opener. The strength of ASDA'A's regional network bodes well for the future. As the world's

**We want to see Dubai capitalising on the strength of its hub status and we hope that we can contribute to this effort by spreading the message about Dubai and the Middle East to our international audience**

biggest independent PR firm, we feel both organisations bring important synergies to the table. We want to see Dubai capitalising on the strength of its hub status and we hope that we can contribute to this effort by spreading the message about Dubai and the Middle East to our international audience. Given the good news that Dubai is creating, we feel that this goal is achievable.

# SISIM upon CRISIS

**Enron, 9/11, Tyco, WorldCom, Ahold, Andersen, the war in Iraq, SARS, Parmalat... Prepare to avoid the worst**

Since September 11 2001, the world has been turned on its head following a breathtaking array of fast-moving, high-profile events that have affected political, commercial and personal agendas and activities. In quick succession, the terrorist attacks in the US were followed by a raft of corporate scandals, which will forever be recalled by reference to names such as Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, Ahold and Andersen.

Crisis has followed upon crisis. A sense of unease and suspicion has been replaced by widespread cynicism, which extends to commercial organisations and business leaders, particularly those under suspicion or perceived to be in trouble.

In terms of crisis management, these serious issues or problems particularly impact upon companies and corporate management whenever they are called upon to defend or save company and management reputations. This has served to radically increase the challenges of crisis management and communications — disciplines that have to be capable of covering the range of tasks from timely anticipation and problem pick-up to effective resolution of problems, issues and emergencies, all played out in the public domain.

At the end of April, Michael Seymour, International Director for Crisis and Issues Management, Edelman PR Worldwide, came to Dubai to conduct one of the region's first seminars on crisis management. He held an audience at Dubai's Mövenpick Hotel spell-bound as he discussed Crisis Management Issues in a Rapidly Changing World, the first in a series of ASDA'A Crisis Management Workshops in the region. He told them: "A crisis

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**A CEO who does not have ready access to trained crisis managers and robust, sophisticated plans puts at risk corporate reputation, management trust and ultimately company survival**

can happen anywhere and at anytime. Lack of preparedness is a failure of corporate responsibility. Increased crisis incidence has an adverse impact on economies and businesses around the world. Businesses and governments have to be seen to be effectively resolving emergencies under the glare of the 24-hour global news machine. Facts and truth are supplanted by perceptions and speculation. It is critical that management have all the facts to hand to prevent the rumour mill from taking over."

**In terms of crisis management, these serious issues or problems particularly impact upon companies and corporate management whenever they are called upon to defend or save company and management reputations**

In recommending strategies for effective crisis management, he said global messaging and delivery can easily be misinterpreted in the local context and alert corporations need to be regionally sensitive. "In times of crisis, the ability to convey messages rapidly, transparently and effectively is a key goal. Crisis preparedness planning allows companies to manage and mitigate damage during such situations.

"But whatever the nature of any crisis it is clear that corporate

management will quickly be thrust into the public domain, where it will be forced to operate in a blizzard of rumour speculation, allegations and accusations. From the outset, facts and 'truth' will have been supplanted by perceptions. At this critical start point, the most pressing need becomes the collection and collation of information, against which strategic decisions and plans can be laid."

He said that since risks and threats are in a state of constant flux, risk assessment processes now

involve rolling reviews linked to planning updates. At the same time, the demands of speed and global spread necessitate the use of computer-based crisis information and control networks. More and more companies are managing their issues and crisis plans across the Internet, working behind electronic walls, providing defensive firewall protection.

Seymour says that it is often tempting to suggest that the media causes crises. This theory is offered,

since in any crisis the media becomes one of the most vocal and critical groups demanding the attention of corporate management. But today, print and electronic media have become but one segment of the web of interconnecting groups of audiences and influencers, with whom the company must communicate.

When seeking information and answers in a crisis, the CEO's office or the press team are no longer the automatic first port of call. The company website has become the corporate front door. At the same time, discussion and debate is conducted across borders in chat rooms and bulletin boards.

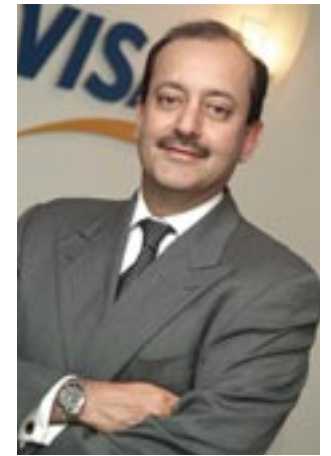
Today, the challenge for crisis communications has become the need to integrate conventional verbal and written channels within web-based information conduits, Seymour said. As a crisis blossoms, and in the first critical hours, the CEO and corporate team must quickly establish a central source of information. This focal point can be variously based upon websites, toll-free numbers or customer and consumer hot lines. At the same time, the company must be able to field a portfolio of experts, equipped and trained to feed the 24-hour news cycle.

He said: "Napoleon is believed to have advised his generals that plans are nothing, but planning is everything. Even in the aftermath of September 11 2001 less than 40 per cent of companies have comprehensive plans that are regularly tested and validated. Against the speed with which problems and issues escalate to crisis proportions, such failures of readiness leave corporate teams seriously exposed.

"Preparedness planning and readiness training have become the essential weapons of corporate self-defence. A CEO who does not have ready access to trained crisis managers and robust, sophisticated plans puts at risk corporate reputation, management trust and ultimately company survival. Today, not being ready to face up to and handle crises has become an act of corporate irresponsibility."

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**'Visa greatly values the contribution that ASDA'A brings to all communication issues in this highly demanding region' said Kamran Siddiqi, general manager for Visa International Middle East**



## PR can be a public issue

**The trend in financial institutions seeking PR consultancy in the Middle East is growing. Regional PR companies are looking to support the increasing number of Initial Public Offerings and other aspects of the regional development process. Deregulation of the telecoms sector is another area where the expertise of local communications consultants is likely to prove beneficial**

When Amlak finance, the UAE's first mortgage finance company, launched an initial public offering (IPO) in January to raise Dhs 412.5 million on the Dubai Financial Market, it sent shockwaves through the regional financial community. The offering was 33 times oversubscribed, indicating the existence of a vast untapped source of investment capital in the UAE.

Amlak's public offering was followed by IPOs from Finance House then Arabian Technical Construction Company (Arabtec), the latter oversubscribed 78 and 64 times, respectively. *The Middle East Economic Digest* has estimated that in the wake of these successes IPOs currently under preparation across the GCC are looking to raise about \$9,000 million by the end of next year. In the coming months the likes of Omantel and Abu Dhabi's General Holding Company will be offering shares to the market.

One relatively unheralded aspect of the success of the IPO was Amlak's appointment of a public relations consultancy to manage the media roll-out of the offering. Needless to say, this proved crucial in generating that

overwhelming response. ASDA'A helped the company communicate with its investing public by managing a local press, advertising and below the line campaign, advising company officials on how to proceed with the cash injection in terms of timings and media awareness, and by keeping potential investors fully informed throughout the process which took over a month. Terms and conditions of the issue were explained in local newspapers and would-be shareholders were kept up to date.

Middle East business has not traditionally been the preserve of the public relations industry. Large corporations have tended to be family-run, with decision-making opaque and not given to transparency. But the success of the Amlak issue has set the local market buzzing, and investors wondering where the next opportunity will come from.

"A number of factors inhibited the growth of the GCC stock markets," said Arif Naqvi, Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of private equity firm Abraaj. "Apart from the lack of proper laws that govern issues regarding disclosures and corporate

governance, the smaller size of the local stock markets and the illiquid nature of most of the stocks have kept back people from trading in shares.

"Besides, share market investing in itself is a very new concept in the GCC since most of the bourses have come up only recently. Even during the '80s and '90s, stocks in many markets in the GCC were traded over the counter. Insider trading was rampant and small investors mostly stayed away.

"This is all beginning to change as markets are adding depth, new issues are being launched, privatization carried out and foreign investors increasingly allowed to invest in local shares. Going forward I see a great opportunity, especially with Dubai International Financial Centre in place, for the investing culture to mature and make its impact on the everyday life of all regional investors, both big and small."

Essa Kazim, director-general of Dubai Financial Market, said several companies have enquired about launching public issues on the market. "I am sure a couple of them will certainly materialise into IPOs in the coming months," he said. Several of these companies are aware of the benefits of good branding and public relations and are taking steps to avail themselves of the benefits of good public relations consulting.

ASDA'A Public Relations has also helped Visa International, Dubai Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank, Aman (Insurance), Abraaj Capital and Traveler, get their message across in local markets. VISA awarded its Consultancy of the Year 2003 Award to ASDA'A ahead of competing firms from 92 countries in recognition of the contribution to its corporate communications.

"Visa greatly values the contribution that ASDA'A brings to all communication issues in this highly demanding region," said Kamran Siddiqi, general manager for Visa International Middle East. "We view them as an integral component within our team and an important member of the corporate and marketing structure."

Some \$350 billion in project financing for infrastructure is expected to be required in the Gulf region alone in the next decade or so, involving schemes as diverse as power and water, railways, upgrades in oil and gas infrastructure and manufacturing. "Companies in the region can realise their great potential," says Sunil John, ASDA'A's managing director. "International business needs to be informed so that it can participate. We view our job as communicating the positives about the Middle East to investors. The message is getting out and investors are coming in droves."

# Sending the right message

**Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat) is rapidly becoming the single most vivid corporate success story of the region. Its rise to become the leading communications group in the Middle East is a home-grown success story**

Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat) is rapidly becoming the single most vivid corporate success story of the region, leveraging its reach - after winning the licence to operate Saudi Arabia's second mobile service - and continually expanding the range of its offerings through business strands such as eCompany, eMarine and eVision.

Its rise to become the leading communications group in the Middle East is a home-grown success story. Yet it is far more than a local industry and is generally regarded as a symbol of how far and how fast the UAE has developed, not only grasping the latest technology but embracing and reinventing it.

Etisalat's hold on the local market - courtesy of its emphasis on offering both quality service and value - is likely to remain undiminished, despite the deregulation of the telecom industry announced recently. While it is as true as it was inevitable that its development would run in tandem with the emergence of the UAE as a regional hub for commerce and industry, the Corporation has never been afraid to push back the boundaries and look farther afield. Yes, it dominates telecommunications services in the UAE and it remains by far the biggest company on local exchanges but its success owes nothing to being inward looking.

The Corporation has been expansionist in inclination, outlook and action. This was reflected in chairman Dr. Mohammed Khalfan Bin Kharbush's promise on taking



**ASDA'A has looked to play its role in enhancing Etisalat's image as a multi-service provider and umbrella brand**

the helm earlier this year that: "We will leverage our technology heritage and first-class human capital to be the brand of choice for our customers and drive an ambitious expansion plan to reach new markets across the region."

He added then that: "Etisalat will soon embark on the next phase of the corporation's development including adopting a new style of conducting business, marketing innovation and cutting-edge customer service. The focus will be on the customer - the engine of our future growth."

"Etisalat has been the catalyst of change and a key driver of progress and its development of the UAE economy. Our vision is to position the company as the most successful brand in the Middle East." He has certainly been true to his word as the Corporation has aggressively pursued an expansion

reaching more than 80 per cent penetration. At the end of June it served more than 3.3 million mobile phone and 1.163 million fixed line users and 332,000 Internet subscribers.

This success story is one that will run and run and run. Dr. Kharbush said: "Etisalat is among the UAE's most successful companies and a Fortune 500 member, putting it on par with the world's leading telecom companies." Yet it is not prepared to rest on its laurels. Dr. Kharbush said: "As a technology pioneer, Etisalat will roll out a fully converged voice, video and data network in 2005. We have put in place the necessary strategies that enable us to play a role as a prime driver in digital convergence, which will revolutionize the way our customers live and work."

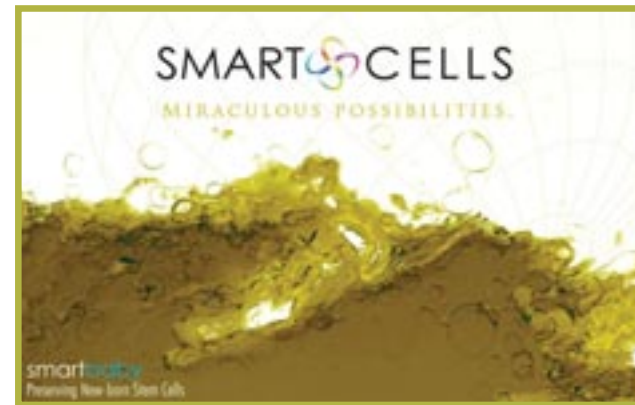
"As is the trend across the world, mobile services will play a dominant role in the telecommunications scenario. With penetration at over 75 per cent, the UAE mobile market is amongst the most wired in the world. Etisalat has continued to break new ground in this sector with the launch of MMS, GPRS, WAP services and most recently Mubashir, the first 3G network in the Middle East. Another pillar of our future strategy is looking towards the huge potential in the corporate sector."

The Chairman is getting his message across. ASDA'A is playing its role in making sure it reaches the right audience and is listened to.



Dr Kharbush, Chairman of Etisalat

This is obviously a winning formula and in its home market, Etisalat boasts one of the world's highest customer bases in mobile phones,



## Smarter way to master disease

**Research into stem cells, or 'master cells', is opening a window on to some of the most astonishing developments in healthcare and medicine. The breakthroughs have been so exciting researchers have come to regard stem cells as offering the greatest potential for the alleviation of human suffering since the development of antibiotics**

In April, the ASDA'A Public Relations Healthcare Team began working with Smart Cells International, a UK-based company, to develop, organise and manage their introduction to the Middle East market. ASDA'A focused on educating consumers on the

potentially life-saving benefits of stem cell technology.

Needless to say, this potential is virtually unlimited. Stem cells are the original basic building blocks of human life. These cells are capable of adapting themselves into the many different types of cells

needed to make up a person, from skin tissue to major organs such as the heart and lungs.

Stem cells are generally found in the bone marrow and in very large quantities within the umbilical cord where they are known as cord stem cells. In the case of a baby, it is the stem cells that develop into a fully-grown baby in just nine months. Storing your baby's stem cells might provide a previously unavailable lifeline if he/she falls seriously ill in the future.

The process of collecting stem cells is quick, easy and painless. Collection can be carried out in a matter of minutes and in no way interferes with the birth process. The stem cells are separated from the blood and stored in liquid nitrogen and frozen. In this state, the cells remain viable for at least 25 years.

Collecting stem cells is not a one-off opportunity at birth. It is possible to harvest the cells from the bone marrow of adults. The sample is taken under local anaesthetic, usually from the hip, which is particularly rich in stem

**Stem cells are the original basic building blocks of human life.**

cells. There is no real risk in the procedure and a short recovery period of an hour or so. Sham Ahmed, CEO of Smart Cells said: "With the high prevalence in the Gulf Region of genetic

disorders such as Thalassaemia, storing stem cells holds out huge promise for the future." Bone marrow transplants are already used to treat diseases such as leukaemia as they provide a rich source of stem cells. Until recently the major factor slowing the rate of transplant success has been the difficulty of finding exact matches or compatible donors. By using your own stem cells, there is no chance of rejection.

The science is only now at a stage where the practical applications for stem cells use in fighting life-threatening diseases are beginning to emerge. At present, stem cells are being employed in treating dozens of illnesses, including heart-related disorders, certain types of leukaemias and anaemia as well as Hodgkin's Disease.

**Image is often the most valuable asset a company owns** **It's in the**



A brand is often the most valuable asset a company owns. It represents not only the company's face to the world but also conveys what the company really stands for. ASDA'A uses academic and consumer research and insights along with empirical experience to leverage clients' brands and enhance their value. Client business involves brand building as much as reputation building. The same goes for the company's own perceptions.

Two powerful images lie at the centre of the new ASDA'A corporate identity launched in association with Edelman, the new international partner for the consultancy. The first

is an empty thought bubble, to spark the creativity of the company's messaging experts. Second, is a blue and red progress bar, which signifies ASDA'A's ingenuity in conception and impact on product delivery.

"ASDA'A has grown beyond the founders' vision of a decade ago," said Managing Director Sunil John. "We realised that our earlier brand's look did not clearly convey what we are today. The industry itself has undergone a dramatic change. We decided to look from the outside in to revitalise our brand. We realised that the strong, relevant, unique proposition that ASDA'A offers to its clients is that we speak the language of ideas. That is what our clients value in us."

ASDA'A, Arabic for echoes, is normally spelled with an apostrophe. Team/Y&R's Creative Director Sam Ahmed says: "Our Design Group Head Jojo Bihag was



inspired by the energy of the company and wanted a simple, clean design to convey the power of the ASDA'A message."

Bihag came up with an intriguing blend of brand identity and new templates for all internal and external communication touch points. New corporate identity

designs were released. "The ASDA'A thought bubble is a symbol of our relentless search for creativity and the thought bubble is a motivational tool to ensure that everyone speaks up," said John.

Corporate materials have now been rebranded across the board.

# \$3,300 billion

That's a lot of money. It's the combined annual revenue of some of our key clients. And you can well imagine how important it is for them to manage their reputation in the eyes of the public.

And that's where we come in. ASDA'A is the Middle East's premier public relations consultancy for many of the world's largest blue chip companies. Our clients include VISA International, General Electric, Microsoft, EMAAR, Dubai Islamic Bank, Samsung Electronics, MTC Vodafone, Johnson & Johnson, Eli Lilly, World Economic Forum and many more corporates, Government Institutions and Non-Government Organisations. We've also recently joined hands with Edelman PR Worldwide – the world's largest independent PR firm – as our business partner. Building reputation capital is what we do best. Please feel free to call us on +971 4 3344550 or visit [www.asdaa.com](http://www.asdaa.com)



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## History rising



TALLSTOREY: An artist's impression of the Burj Dubai tower in Downtown Dubai

**Burj Dubai:** This quarter witnessed a milestone in the development of Emaar's iconic Burj Dubai tower at Downtown Dubai as the second phase of construction began.

Gracing the hugely symbolic cement pouring ceremony, which marks the beginning of the above ground work on the landmark tower, was HH General Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and UAE Minister

of Defence. Following hard on the heels of the high profile Burj event was the launch of **The Old Town**, Emaar's traditionally designed community in the Burj Dubai District. A pedestrianised lifestyle development, The Old Town offers spectacular views of Burj Dubai and The Dubai Mall, and is in close proximity to the colour and vibrancy of Dubai's downtown area. Construction has already begun and



TRADITIONAL OUTLOOK: The planned Old Town development at Burj Dubai

the first apartments will be ready for handover by the end of 2006.

ASDA'A's specialist corporate affairs team, which includes an Emaar division, was central to the planning and execution of these events, aimed at consolidating the brand and publicising the developments.

ASDA'A was prominent again as Emaar lived up to its promise to deliver more homes. The unveiling of Emaar's range of new properties - including the Al Thayal at the Greens, The Gazelle and Al Mahra communities at the Arabian Ranches, Al Anbar tower at the Dubai Marina and the Golf Towers at the Emirate Golf Club – was accompanied by huge press coverage as the publicity campaign stepped up a gear.

Adding to the line-up of new releases at the Dubai Marina was Marina Quays, a three-tower complex cantilevered over the waters and designed as Middle East's answer to waterfront living. Emaar also embarked on its first Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, aimed at ensuring a positive impact of its business on the environment and community, and ASDA'A was again able to ensure the message and strategic communications goals were achieved.

The CSR programme features a series of health, environment and community initiatives in association with local government and private institutions like Dubai Health Department, Emirates Environment Group (EEG), Red Crescent, Al Noor and Rashid Paediatric Centre, many of which are already in the initial

stages of implementation. Marking its CSR drive, the company became a signatory of the World Economic Forum's Global Corporate Initiative (GCC) and the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF).

Emaar continues to look to the future and its hugely significant Design Competition, to identify the region's design trendsetters of the future was launched to a gratifying response. The award offers architecture students from the UAE and across the region a unique opportunity to use their design abilities with the incentive of winning cash prizes of as much as Dhs30,000.

HH General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum graced the cement pouring ceremony



## Winning streak



**In the driving seat:** DHL, the euros 42 billion global logistics group, has launched a series of initiatives to consolidate its position as the industry's market leader in the region, with ASDA'A on board to help leverage its position.

That said, the region has and continues to gain from its positioning as a redistribution hub attracting considerable inbound traffic.

Phil Couchman, the group's regional Director, said: "Perhaps the most accurate way of painting a picture of what has been happening in the regional marketplace is to trace our own recent history, performance and development. There are, inevitably, factors and circumstances unique to our own business but many more we share in common with others in the industry.

"We noticed, as we reported results for this year's first half that all the financial indicators were up and doing well. We continue to grow our core business at 20 per cent year on year.

"We have seen growth of more than 118 per cent in the weight of outbound traffic from Abu Dhabi alone in the past year and half. There has been tremendous growth too in the heavyweight deliveries end of the business. Our outbound heavyweight business from Jebel Ali free zone alone increased by 235 per cent last year, compared to the previous year."

DHL's response to this buoyant business has been to go for expansion, upgrading its trucks and planes, developing its Bahrain hub and airport operations in Beirut and Amman and even opening a new head office in Abu Dhabi. Mr Couchman said: "We are opening a new Dhs3.5 million head office in Abu Dhabi this autumn, part of our Dhs7 million investment in the UAE capital in the past three years aimed at boosting our presence there fivefold.

"This has become necessary as a result of the tremendous

progress we have made in the region as we have moved beyond a product-based portfolio consisting mainly of documents and packages – which make up less than half of DHL's business in the region - to become a provider of complete supply chain management solutions.

ASDA'A's range of consultancy services to DHL involves it in building awareness of the brand, creating an understanding of its products and services and developing its position as the market leader in the region.

## French flair



Balzac Hotel, Paris

MBI International, a \$3 billion multinational with strong interests in the Middle East and Europe, has finalised a \$102 million luxury hotel acquisition in France through its JJW Hotels & Resorts group, which includes two boutique hotels in the heart of Paris.

MBI International and Partners is the global group that combines the companies owned by Arab entrepreneur Sheikh Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber, well known for his charitable and educational activities and for his promotion of the business and cultural interests of the Arab world.

"We are very proud to have both the De Vigny and Balzac join JJW's portfolio," said the Sheikh, who is Chairman and CEO of MBI International. "These are unique properties that offer the highest standards of excellence to a sophisticated clientele. As boutique

hotels, they form part of a growing, high value-added sector of the travel industry and one in which we intend to further expand our investments."

JJW is consolidating its European holdings and targeting the higher end of the business and leisure travel market. This latest acquisition, negotiated and concluded by Freddie Shaibi, Managing Director and member of the executive board of JJW, was acquired from London based Pacific PLC. ASDA'A started work for MBI earlier this year.

## Executive floor

Korn/Ferry, the \$5billion NYSE listed executive search company, recently opened the 71st office in its worldwide network – in Dubai. The move marks a bid by the world's leading CEO and director level search firm to consolidate its presence in the increasingly important GCC market.

ASDA'A was recruited to the cause to sharpen the marketing focus, leverage the group's presence and guide its positioning as it targets the GCC boom markets of telecomms, aviation, finance, education as well as oil and gas, and responds to the growing management and leadership needs of these sectors. Metin Mitchell, Managing Director, Korn/Ferry International, Middle East, said: "The region's rapid economic growth, increased privatisation, and educational innovation have convinced us of the need to open a dedicated Middle East office that will focus on human capital solutions particular to this region."



Metin Mitchell, Managing Director, Korn/Ferry International, ME

Mitchell recognises that due to the rapid economic growth of the region, the GCC is now well poised to attract the so-called Arab diaspora, as nationals seek to return to their roots.

"In the past many Arab nationals went abroad to pursue higher education, and professional opportunity. Now all this is changed; many GCC companies struggle to keep pace with the growth of jobs and development. This provides ideal opportunities for Arabic speakers to accept directorships and key executive positions in countries closer to home," Mitchell said. Founded in 1969 by Lester Korn and Richard Ferry, and headquartered in Los Angeles, California, Korn/Ferry International has been a world leader in executive recruitment for many years. The Dubai office will, initially, service the GCC, although Korn/Ferry International, Middle East has plans to roll out satellite offices throughout the region.

## Ladies and gentlemen

Qatar Ladies Investment Company was recently transformed into Amwal, as the Qatari based investment services group spread its wings to expand its offering. Uniquely, it will offer opportunities to invest in Qatar's booming economy, which is underpinned by vast energy resources.

ASDA'A has been given a crucial role in the rebranding, hailed by Sheikh Hanadi Nasser Bin Khalid Al Thani, Amwal's Vice Chairperson and Managing Director, as "a new chapter in the history of investment services in the region".

Sheikha Hanadi added: "The company has evolved from its original focus as a leading family oriented investment company. This name change signals our strong commitment to expanding our offerings and to add new facets to the financial services community. We are, in effect, recreating the business and the perception of Qatar's financial services industry."

Sheikha Hanadi said the process had begun before the name change. Although QLIC was primarily set up to provide dedicated,

professional and reliable investment advice for ladies, by the end of last year more than 70 per cent of the client base were men. She said: "More importantly, the company's evolution to incorporate a wider range of investment services, including financial planning, asset management and investment banking, played a major role in launching a new identity that is open to all types of clients across the world."

## Great Move

Computer Associates International (CAI), the leading global provider of IT management solutions, recently announced the launch of direct operations in the Middle East.

CAI's direct presence in the region - rather than through intermediaries - was a positive indication of that it is pushing out its strategy of ambitious expansion into emerging markets, with ASDA'A offering a variety of consultancy services through its specialist IT team.

The company has set up its regional headquarters in Dubai Internet City and signaled its intentions by announcing plans to open further offices in the Levant, GCC and North Africa by the end of this year.

Gilbert Lacroix, the newly appointed Vice President and General Manager for Computer Associates operations in the Levant, North Africa and the Gulf Countries, said: "While Computer Associate is not new to the region, a direct investment in the Arab world brings its wealth of resources to every customer, partner as well as the community as a whole."

For the past 10 years, CAI has worked through its partners in the region to build a reputation for the company and its technologies. Some of the most complex technology infrastructures in the Middle East now rely on CAI's storage, security and IT management solutions. The group has also invested in community related programmes aimed at expanding ICT knowledge among the region's youth.



Hussain Ali Lootah, chief executive of Dubai Media Incorporated

## Take 1

**Lights, camera, action:** Who ever said life in the ASDA'A office in Dubai is a rollercoaster drama of a soap opera must have had an intuition of what the consultancy was in for. The ASDA'A consumer marketing division - well used to the Hollywood red carpet treatment - confirmed its star status with a dazzling performance after the agency was awarded the public relations contract to relaunch Dubai TV, as the station reinvented itself. Fakher Daghestani, Rola Daher and Abeer Al Qadi played more than a supporting role as the channel returned to the smaller screen slicker, bigger and far better on June 1 with a 10pm news bulletin. Given the task of putting the media in the picture it soon became clear that the ASDA'A team had discovered the perfect stage for their talents.

Abeer says: "We had to create and deliver a fully integrated public relations strategy and plan. The aim was to reposition Dubai TV as the entertainment pan-Arab channel but one that unlike some of its peers was respectful of the Arab perspective and tradition. We wanted to distinguish it from other channels which have taken foreign content and adapted it so we tried to present it as a station does most of its production in-house."

Given the huge number of channels available to local viewers through satellite they had to come up with something different - not only in terms of content but also for the look and image of the channel. "It is a fabulous look, very modern, cosmopolitan, reflecting and synonymous with everything Dubai is about," says Rola "Everything we

tried to achieve was reflected in the launch itself, which was held in the state-of-the-art high-tech news centre. We didn't want it to be in a hotel lounge - that would have been so tame and not really what the station is about. We flew in journalists from around the region and they were able to see the set-up at first hand."

**Commercial break:** The next step was to show off the content and the ASDA'A team were able to stage a series of major announcements, such as the tie-up with American movie giant Warner Bros to deliver "great" movies. A second agreement, with Egypt's Media Production City (EMPC) - signed by Hussain Ali Lootah, chief executive of Dubai Media Incorporated, Dubai TV's parent company - and EMPC's chairman Abdel Rahman Hafez, soon followed and added the best of Arab drama to the programme mix.

## Take 2

Rola says: "Following those announcements the strategy has been to reinforce the message with ongoing stories and corporate announcements to keep the channel visible and viewers interested in the programmes."

The campaign has opened a few more eyes to the capabilities of ASDA'A, the largest public relations consultancy in the Middle East by revenue, number of clients and employee strength. It has been in business for more than a decade, runs 11 offices and 7 affiliate relationships and has more than 130 employees region-wide.

## News bulletin



CNN, the Atlanta-based media giant, also found itself in the curious position of being both the medium and the message in regard to its coverage of the US handover of sovereignty in Iraq at the end of June. Faced with the complex task of maintaining its image as an unbiased international broadcaster capable of speaking to all parts of the world, including the Middle East, enterprisingly, the news channel decided to make its coverage not only a media occasion but also a global event linking opinion and reactions from different parts of the world.

The lead-up to the handover was crucial to defining the way audiences would react to its broadcast. So the weeks preceding the event were used to roll out a series of core activities to reconfirm CNN's qualities and image as a truly international broadcaster offering a platform to the world. At the centre of these activities was a three-way town-hall discussion of the handover from Dubai, London and Atlanta. The Dubai leg, a 40 minute special of The Arab Pulse, was absolutely pivotal to the integrity of the broadcast, representing as it did CNN's bid to activate and convey the Arab perspective on an issue so crucial and sensitive to the region.

The ASDA'A Public Affairs team was given the critical task of assembling the component parts of the Dubai broadcast into a powerfully coherent voice for the region while generating interest in the event and raising awareness of the issues.

CNN drew up a list of top regional commentators and media leaders - including the likes of Mohammad Al Dhouri, the former Iraqi ambassador, to join CNN's Jim Clancy and Rena Golden, its senior vice president, for filming at Dubai's Media City.

## A change for the better

The UAE Ministry of State for Finance and Industry (MOFI), under Dr Mohammed Khalfan bin Kharbash, is beginning to see the fruits of many years hard work and a series of far-reaching initiatives. The Minister told the 58th Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group, held in the UAE for the first time: "Over the past four years, MOFI has undertaken a series of initiatives aimed at achieving high performance government across the totality of our operations and those of our affiliates. We believe that the presence of the global financial community here in the UAE stands testimony to this drive."

Executive training is one of four MOFI initiatives to boost efficiency and effectiveness in government operations. The others are total quality management, performance-based budgeting and e-Government, each one part of the government's high performance programme.

Earlier in the year the full glare of the media spotlight was turned on MOFI as the e-Government executive committee, chaired by Dr Kharbash, approved a number of priority projects from the transition plan of the ambitious e-Government initiative.

Then, in May, the MOFI-led UAE delegation to the Beirut Fiscal Reforms in the Arab and Near East Conference, presented the UAE experience in implementing Performance Based Budgeting. The Public Affairs practice team has worked closely with MOFI in its drive towards better performance and increased value for money through the creation of new corporate entities within the public sector.

ASDA'A has supported the business objectives of five of these entities, including the General Pension and Social Security Authority, the Emirates Real Estate Corporation, the Emirates Management Services Corporation, the Emirates Standardization and Metrology Authority and the Federal Customs Authority.



## Growth industry

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) is planting the seeds for the future development of the sector in the UAE along the most technologically advanced lines. Which partly explains why one of the most significant of its recent activities is all about information technology and only indirectly about farming.

The aim continues to be to boost productivity in agriculture, fisheries and animal health but MAF realises that this will only be achieved through the application of technology. As a result it has undertaken a series of re-engineering activities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in its service provision and introduced information technology solutions to its day-to-day operations. The ASDA'A Public Affairs team has designed a PR strategy for MAF to sharpen its communication tools, reconstruct its in-house capacity and enhance the quality of content. ASDA'A has also added strategic communication consultancy to the management of some of the core functions of the Ministry.

## Super Sukuk

The Government of Dubai, acting through the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA), recently completed its roadshow for a record \$750 million Islamic Sukuk Al Ijara issue – the largest in the world - to part fund the \$4.1 billion development of the emirate's international airport. The bank, fast becoming the leading

Islamic finance institution in the region, now has billions on its books with this latest, highly prestigious, deal for the Government of Dubai. Significantly, DIB was appointed lead manager on the issue and joint bookrunner with Citigroup and HSBC. The issue is fully underwritten by a six-member group of banks including the three bookrunners, Gulf International Bank, Kuwait Finance House and Standard Chartered Bank, bringing on board some of the best institutions around.



Saad Abdul Razak, DIB's Deputy Chairman

It was a real feather in DIB's cap and Saad Abdul Razak, DIB's Deputy Chairman, said: "The bank can provide the look and feel of a professional bank, be it in something as basic as the décor of our branches, right up to the quality of our people, range of delivery channels and the flexibility of our products. And, all of this is achieved within the Shariah principles that guide the working of the bank."

## Spreading the message

Following a joint pitch presentation with Team Y&R, ASDA'A won its first account in Qatar – investment company Amwal.

It is run under the under the patronage of HH Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Misnad, Consort of the Emir of Qatar, and under the management of Sheikha Hanadi Nasser Bin Khalid Al Thani, its Vice Chairperson and Managing Director. Previously the Qatar Ladies

Investment Company (QLIC), the four-year old business plans to relaunch as Amwal this month with a comprehensive rebranding campaign.

ASDA'A has planned a series of activities including corporate partner events in London, Switzerland and Dubai, a VIP Gala dinner and an investor roadshow by boat round the region.

## Stock answer

Abraaj Capital has been doing great things on the back of a track record of returns that has few equals in the region. ASDA'A is now helping the firm to position itself as the preeminent private equity firm in the region, an industry leader and a think tank for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

ASDA'A has been responsible for managing all external communications and activities. This has included the development of corporate literature, management of media training, and organising the Abraaj Capital Investor Conference and gala dinner at which moonwalker Buzz Aldrin was the guest speaker.

An exclusive media roundtable was organised to launch the Abraaj management team to the Dubai media. This was followed by the unveiling of a MENA Private Equity Report at the World Economic Forum.



Arif Naqvi, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive of Abraaj

## Art in Ajmal

Ajmal Eternal reaffirmed its commitment to art by organising the first ever Ajmal Eternal Art Exhibition in late June at the Ajmal Eternal Boutique, Emirates Boulevard. A unique fusion of Arabic Calligraphy, Murano Glass from Italy

and exotic fragrances from the Middle East, this exhibition was a pioneering effort to fuse cultures and borders.

Presided over by Nazir Ajmal, Marketing Director, Ajmal Perfumes, the exhibition was inaugurated by the participating artistes – Mr. Mohammed Mandi and Dr. Salah Sherazad. The high point of the exhibition was the unveiling of Mr. Mandi and Dr. Sherazad's personalised interpretation of Murano art pieces in the form of calligraphic paintings. Set against the backdrop of Arabian fragrances, the two artists demonstrated the intricacies of this extinct art form to art lovers and shoppers alike. A lucky few even walked away with a personal memento from Ajmal Eternal and Mr. Mandi.

## Key player

Amlak Finance is rapidly becoming one of the region's major success stories. After pioneering mortgage financing in the UAE when it was founded in 2000, it made headlines at the beginning of the year when its initial public offering (IPO) was 33 times oversubscribed. While the company raised Dhs412.5 million (\$122 million) through the IPO, it received Dhs13.7 billion (\$3.7 billion) in potential subscriptions, proving that, with the help of ASDA'A, it is getting its message across to investors and customers alike.

Mohammed Ali Al Hashimi, Amlak's CEO, called Amlak's latest progress "a huge success". With good reason too. In the second quarter of 2004, Amlak's portfolio

of mortgage and auto financing crossed the Dhs2 billion (\$545 million) mark. In July, the company announced an increase in net profits of 447 per cent to Dhs19.6 million (\$5.3 million) for the second quarter of 2004, up from Dhs3.5 million (\$950,000) for the same period in 2003. Meanwhile, profits for the first half of 2004 were 40 per cent higher than the entire profits for 2003. Having moved to brand new headquarters in Emaar Business Park on Sheikh Zayed Road, the future, from Mr. Al Hashimi's point of view, must look very rosy.

## In the news



**Mirand Coetzer:** A seasoned professional with ten years of experience in the Kuwait market, was recently appointed Country Manager of the ASDA'A operation in this fast growing market. She is responsible for all regional accounts and communications programmes for ASDA'A clients.

With wide-ranging experience in various sectors like automobiles, event management, publishing, training and recruitment, she brings immense depth and understanding while providing innovative communications solutions to ASDA'A clients.

She earlier managed prestigious events in Kuwait such as the annual Britain in Kuwait, Made in South Africa, That's Italia 2001 and the Swiss Luxury Watch Exhibition in 2002. Her other special events range from The Iraqi Child Foundation Day for the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to the visits of Margaret Thatcher, HRH The Duke of York to Britain in Kuwait and Lord Hurd to the launch of Burberry. She has been

instrumental in compiling and publishing the third consecutive edition of the Gulf Cooperation Council Summit Annual Book.



**Mohammed Saqqa:** A former radio and television newscaster in Saudi Arabia, has been appointed country manager for ASDA'A in the Kingdom. Riyadh-born Jordanian Saqqa worked with Cable and Wireless and Boeing Middle East until the mid-nineties when the beginning of the technology boom saw him leading a 60-member IT team for Gulf Stars Technology Group.

He moved on in 1997 to the US Embassy as Cultural Affairs Assistant where he focused on promoting relations between the Kingdom and the US before moving back into the media as a reporter and presenter for Orbit ESPN.

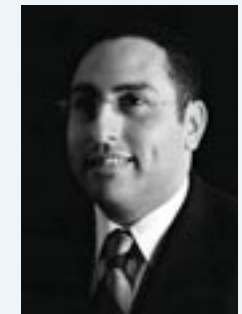
His last assignment was a two-year stint with Microsoft Arabia as PR and Marketing Communications Manager.



**Jane Woolliscroft:** Has been appointed Country Manager for ASDA'A's Jordan operations. With over 15 years in consultancy and in-house public relations and public affairs, she has covered a broad spectrum of disciplines in the public sector, property, retail and

telecommunications service industries in the Middle East and the UK. In Jordan, Jane is responsible for all regional accounts with special focus on the new entrant to the telecoms sector – Xpress – offering 'push to talk' services.

Prior to her move to Jordan, Jane managed the ASDA'A Kuwait operation, focusing on expanding the MTC Group interests and its partnership with Vodafone, in Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. The successful launch of MTC-Vodafone's EDGE and 3G services, a first for the Middle East and delivered in record time, gives a reflect of the high calibre of work and service achieved by the Bahrain and Kuwait agency teams under Jane's leadership.



**Ahmed Adel:** Runs the ASDA'A Qatar office in Doha with primary focus on financial services company – Amwal, Microsoft and the regional accounts of the agency.

Prior to joining ASDA'A, Ahmed worked for Promoseven Weber Shandwick in Bahrain, where he was an Account Manager responsible for the Orbit, Nivea, Qatar e-Government, Alba, Seef Properties, Blue Elephant and Addax accounts.

He broadened his international experience as a Project Manager at the Portuguese-Middle East Trade Mission, ICEP, by organising promotions and market research. He came to Dubai to work as a Customer Liaison Executive for the UK-based RMC Group, where he maintained and developed their customer base.

**Health cares:** ASDA'A PR's healthcare team in Lebanon has seen a flurry of campaigning activities around serious medical conditions such as diabetes and irritable bowel syndrome. First was a press conference at the Metropolitan Palace Hotel to launch Lantus in Lebanon. Professor Philippe Passa, Endocrinologist – Diabetologist at the Paris VII University, and Dr. Sami Azar, Associate Professor of Medicine, AUBMC, President-elect Lebanese Society of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Lipids, took the lead. "Awareness campaigns are crucial in Lebanon because diabetes should not be taken lightly, and should not remain taboo," Dr. Azar said. Some 30 public activities are planned for the six-month campaign, launched with the support of Novartis and carrying the slogan **Don't Hide Your Gut Feeling.**



**ASDA'A PR Lebanon events:** Press day for BLC Bank's 2004 mid-year results (2,3,4); launch of the Land Rover Discovery 3 for MANA Automotive at Eddé Sands in Byblos, entertainment by Guy Manoukian (7,8); announcing MTC Group's takeover of LibanCell, the Government of Lebanon, represented by Minister of Telecom HE Jean Louis Qordahi and Dr Saad Al Barrak, Director General of MTC Group (5,6); Ford Motor Company Representative Agent Auto Levant's opening of its Galerie Semaan showroom (1)

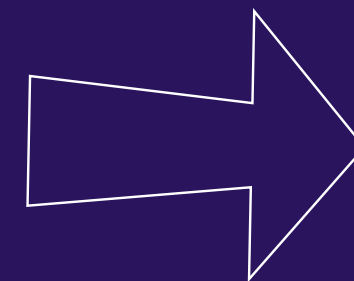


How do you build a positive and profitable customer experience? It all starts with what we call insight – understanding your customer, your industry and your competitors, and the unique relationship between this external environment and your own company. Add to this the clarity of vision to know when to stop analysing and take action. This is where imagination comes in: the application of creative talent, intuition and daring that can make your message relevant and memorable in today's cluttered marketplace. So far, so good. But that's only half of the picture.

## Not just memorable but measurable

How do you measure both your customer's experience and their value to you? Measuring the impact of all of your communications, not just on your customer, but on your own brand, marketing processes and ultimate profitability, is key to wunderman's approach. And this in turn generates more insights – insights you can feed back into your business and marketing strategies to continually refine and enhance the experience for your customer and for you.

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