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TOP WOMEN LEADERS IN OMAN

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Editor's note

This book was born out of a simple but urgent question: What does leadership in Oman truly look like today when shaped by women?

In an era of rapid transformation, ambition is often measured in scale, speed, and visibility. But as we listened to the voices in these pages, a quieter truth emerged. The most enduring leaders are not chasing momentum; they are building meaning. Across industries, sectors, and generations, the women featured here share a defining thread: a commitment to purpose over performance, substance over spectacle.

These are women who build institutions, not headlines. Who balance progress with identity. Who understand that growth untethered from values is fragile, and that real impact is measured by the people empowered and systems strengthened.

Oman's journey toward Vision 2040 is often discussed in terms of policy and economics. This book captures the human architecture behind that journey.

The Origin is not a celebration of titles. It is a record of intent, of women who chose courage over convention and contribution over credit.

Our hope is that these stories do more than inspire. That they offer permission. To lead differently. To build patiently. And to believe that lasting change begins not with noise, but with clarity.

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ALIZZ ISLAMIC BANK INVESTS IN WOMEN LEADERSHIP

The way forward towards a strategic imperative for sustainable growth

Continuing its dedicated efforts to empowering all segments in society, Alizz Islamic Bank recently launched a Women Empowerment & Leadership Programme that is dedicated to enhancing the leadership capabilities of Omani women across the public and private sectors. The programme is more than a talent development initiative, it is about equipping high potential women in leadership with executive capabilities, strategic exposure, mentorship, workshops, and live coaching. Overall, the programme is designed to focus on leadership attributes and skill including proficient in decision-making, innovation and strategic implementation to help build strong future leaders who can drive progress within Oman.



Through workshops, leadership seminar and interactive learning platforms, the participants are gaining access to a wealth of expertise from leaders of various industries. The bank has organised one on one internal sessions for the participants and also invited renowned industry leaders like Mr. Ali Al Mani, Chief Executive Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank, the Honourable Sana Al Khanjari, Chairperson of Al Rahma Association, Dr. Siham Al Sinani, Chief Executive Officer of the Medical University City and many more to share their personal experiences with the upcoming leaders.



“At Alizz Islamic Bank we believe in the importance of providing leadership programmes to develop more leaders and create more talents that will serve the generations to come. The reason we introduced this dedicated programme is to help women navigate through various corporate challenges they may be facing, balancing expectations, breaking stereotypes, building confidence and helping them advocate for themselves. We are proud to continue driving positive change and support Oman’s sustainable development goals across various programs driven by our Human Capital strategic direction. We take pride in focusing on knowledge sharing with our employees and partners who are willing to be part of the progress we are working towards for Oman”

Lina Al Abdulsalaam
Head of Marketing and Communications



Aisha Al Kharusi

Deputy Executive Chairperson, MCBS

With nearly three decades of leadership across aviation, banking, publishing, and higher education, Aisha Al Kharusi brings a rare ability to bridge industry and academia with clarity and purpose. As Deputy Executive Chairperson of MCBS, she has helped shape a globally recognised, research-active institution aligned with Oman Vision 2040. Her work centres on inclusion, lifelong learning, and enabling the next generation to lead with confidence and conscience.



What motivated you to take on a leadership role in the education sector, and how has that shaped your perspective on business and learning?

After 25 years in the corporate world, stepping into academia was both a challenge and an opportunity. What began as a personal transition soon evolved into a shared mission with the founder, the Executive Chair, and the larger MCBS community to transform the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) into a globally engaged institution at the forefront of knowledge and transformation. It felt like a natural step to bring corporate experience into higher education and contribute to shaping future leaders. Too often,

industry and academia operate in silos, but their partnership is essential. This transition set the stage for some of the contributions our community is most proud of today.

As Deputy Executive Chairperson, what has been your proudest contribution to the growth of Modern College of Business and Science?

When I joined MCBS just over two years ago, it was essential to adapt to the academic rhythm, which differs significantly from the corporate environment. Academia emphasizes depth and reflection, while the corporate sector is often driven by speed and results. Each has much to learn from the other, and bringing a corporate perspective has helped ac-

celerate change. Among our proudest achievements has been the collective effort to strengthen MCBS as a globally recognized center for excellence, investing in international rankings, accreditations, and memberships, while also advancing workplace certification, sustainability, innovation, and responsible management through the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), a United Nations initiative under the UN Global Compact. These efforts have reinforced MCBS's reputation as a research-active institution, and achieving a QS 5-Star rating — the first in Oman — stands as one of the milestones our community celebrates with pride.

None of this would have been

Defining Leadership Through Learning

possible without the rich and diverse team that makes up the MCBS community. Faculty, staff, and students from different backgrounds and disciplines have brought unique perspectives and talents, turning vision into reality. Their diversity has been our strength, driving creativity, resilience, and innovation. The greatest pride comes not only from accolades but also from seeing the tangible impact on students and alumni. Watching them grow into confident leaders, entrepreneurs, and changemakers reinforces that the transformation being driven collectively at MCBS is creating opportunities for the next generation to thrive. Enabling their success, alongside such a dynamic and diverse team, is truly the most rewarding aspect of this journey.

In your journey through academia and leadership, what unique challenges have you faced as a woman, and how have you turned them into strengths?

The path has not been without challenges. Gender bias was not expected early in my career, but over time, it became clear that unconscious bias exists. At times, it came from men themselves, some, though not all, who struggled to accept a woman in leadership, often shaped by societal norms and expectations. Like many women, I also had to balance these expectations with professional responsibilities. At times, it felt necessary to work twice as hard to earn credibility in boardrooms and leadership circles. These experiences, though difficult, were eventually reframed into strengths, reinforcing the value of empathy, resilience, and collaboration.

This conviction is rooted not only in personal experience but also in history. From the very beginning of Islam, women have held an honored place in leadership and enterprise.

Our Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) was married to Sayyida Khadija bint Khuwaylid, a successful and respected businesswoman. This makes it clear that women in leadership is nothing new to our faith and history. The world should also remember that the first university ever built was founded by a woman, Fatima al-Fihri, who established the University of al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco, in 859 — a symbol of women's enduring role in advancing knowledge and education.

"I once questioned whether I belonged in academia after a long corporate career. Now I realize the real question is not 'Do I belong?' but 'What difference can we make together?' True leadership is found in that collective purpose."

How do you see the role of women evolving in higher education and business leadership in Oman and beyond?

In Oman, this legacy has been further strengthened by the vision of our late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the continued leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, who have championed inclusion and empowerment as central to national development. Today, women occupy leadership roles across government entities, from ministers to CEOs, from director generals to the head of the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA). Several Omani women have also served as deans of higher education institutions, shaping the academic landscape. The role of women in higher education and business leadership is not only evolving but expanding. Omani women are making significant contributions at the highest levels of decision-making, leading reforms, driving innovation, and representing the country on global platforms. The

story of Omani women is also part of a larger global narrative — one where women everywhere are redefining leadership in boardrooms, universities, and communities.

"Since joining academia, people often call me 'Dr.' out of respect, even though I do not hold a doctorate. I take it as a reflection of the trust they place in my leadership, rather than my formal title. For me, leadership has never been defined by the letters before or after your name. It is defined by the impact you create, the opportunities you open for others, and the legacy you leave behind."

What advice would you offer young women aspiring to lead with impact in education, business, or both?

To the next generation of young women and men, the message is simple: never underestimate your voice or your potential. Leadership is not about waiting for permission, it is about stepping up with courage, preparation, and integrity. Surround yourself with mentors who challenge and inspire you, invest in continuous learning, and do not shy away from taking risks. Begin early, even in young adulthood, by learning the importance of financial literacy so that you can stand independently and make informed decisions. Embrace lifelong learning, as it will keep you relevant and open to growth no matter where life takes you. Remember too that life is like a chart or a forecast: there will be days when the line rises high into the sky, and others when it drops sharply against you. See those downward turns not as failures but as opportunities to think differently, to innovate, and to grow stronger.

Finally, treat people the way you wish to be treated, with respect and fairness, and never forget that authentic leadership is about service.



Alia Al Farsi
Omani Artist

The Fluid Beauty of Omani Identity

Alia Al Farsi is an Omani Artist whose work moves fluidly between poetry, textiles, and cultural symbolism, weaving inner memory with collective heritage. Shaped by early travel yet deeply rooted in Oman, her art reflects the emotional landscapes of womanhood, spirituality, and place. Each piece carries intention rather than ornament, inviting viewers into stories that feel intimate, timeless, and quietly powerful — where culture is not displayed, but lived.

Your art blends poetry, textiles, and symbols from many cultures. How do you decide when something truly “belongs” in your work?

I’ve always believed that art is a meeting point between the inner world and the outer world. When I come across an element be it a poem, a textile pattern, or a cultural symbol it only “belongs” in my work if it resonates with something already living within me. I don’t include anything for aesthetic value alone; it has to carry meaning or a memory that aligns with my artistic language.

You’ve travelled the world since you were a teenager, yet Oman remains the core of your artistic identity. How do you balance global influences while keeping that center intact?

Travel opened my heart, but Oman shaped my identity. Every place I’ve visited has gifted me textures, colors, and philosophies, yet my grounding always returns to my roots. Global influences help me add depth, nuance, and perspective, but the emotional core of my work is always born from the Omani woman’s experience, spirituality, and the landscapes that raised me.

For the Mandarin Oriental fan, you

chose to portray 11 Omani women. What story did you want these women to tell that a landscape or object couldn’t?

I chose to portray 11 Omani women because each one represents one of the 11 governorates of Oman. Women, to me, are living archives of culture; they carry heritage, strength, and transition within them. By painting them, I wanted to show that Oman’s identity isn’t only found in its



I believe long-term value comes from authenticity, the honesty of the artist’s intention and the story that continues to resonate across time.

landscapes or architecture, but in the women who shape its communities, traditions, and future. Their presence tells a richer, more emotional story one of unity, diversity, and the quiet power of Omani womanhood.

As more collectors treat art as an investment, what do you believe truly gives a piece long-term value... its financial worth, its story, or something else entirely?

Financial value may rise and fall, but the soul of a piece remains constant. I believe long-term value comes from authenticity, the honesty of the artist’s intention and the story that continues to resonate across time. When a piece carries truth, people connect with it beyond trends or market cycles. Ultimately, emotional impact is what keeps a work alive.

If colors were personalities, which color do you most identify with right now? And why does it match your mood or creativity today?

Lately, I feel most connected to Purple. It’s a color that speaks of intuition, depth, and quiet confidence. Purple carries both spirituality and boldness which reflect where I am creatively. Right now, it mirrors my mood perfectly: grounded, inspired, and open to transformation.

Areej Mohsin Haider Darwish

Chairperson, MHD ACERE

Areej Mohsin Haider Darwish has built a remarkable legacy through her leadership of MHD ACERE and her entrepreneurial ventures. Known for championing innovation, sustainability, and workforce diversity, she has shaped Oman's industrial and business landscape while empowering women and youth. Her dedication to sustainable growth, community engagement, and nurturing future leaders reflects a career that inspires others to combine purpose with impact in both business and society.

What has been your guiding philosophy as chairperson of MHD ACERE and how has that shaped the Group's transformation and growth?

My guiding philosophy as Chairperson of MHD ACERE has been centered on visionary leadership, sustainability, innovation, inclusivity and creating a legacy of excellence. From the beginning, my focus has been on building a culture that values excellence, agility, and collaboration. I have always believed that transformation begins with a clear purpose and the courage to innovate while staying aligned with our core values. True growth comes from empowering teams, embracing change, building strong partnerships, integrating digital



We've embraced innovation not just as a tool for competitiveness, but as a mindset on how we operate and make decisions.

Leading with Purpose, Building a Legacy

transformation across our operations and aligning business goals with social and environmental responsibility. This approach has guided our transformation journey, into a dynamic, diversified and resilient organization ready to embrace new opportunities and challenges and has strengthened MHD ACERE's position in the dynamic global landscape, ensuring that every step of our growth reflects both the legacy of MHD and the vision of Oman.

You lead a business deeply rooted in Oman's industrial and infrastructure development. What are the key milestones that define your leadership journey?

My leadership journey has been defined by milestones that reflect the evolution of MHD ACERE as a key player in Oman's industrial and infrastructure landscape. The key milestones that have defined our leadership journey has been strengthening our family business by upholding our core values while steering the organization to growth and transformation. Diversification is one of the pillars of 2040 and our organization's strategic diversification across sectors such as real estate, energy, mobility, and infrastructure has ensured that we are on the path of sustainable growth. Build-

ing strategic partnerships across different sectors has enhanced our market reach. Digital transformation initiatives have driven customer engagement across the group. Integrating sustainability in alignment with Oman vision 2040 has reflected vision of progress. Most importantly, nurturing local talent and fostering innovation has been central to building a resilient organization that continues to contribute to Oman's economic future. Each of these moments represents a step towards a broader vision — contributing to national development, and ensuring that MHD ACERE continues to grow with purpose, resilience, and impact.

How do you navigate the complexities of operating across diverse sectors from automobile to energy while maintaining a unified strategic vision?

Leading a multi-sector business requires a long-term vision, clarity of purpose and disciplined execution. At MHD ACERE, our unified strategic vision is built around three pillars: innovation, sustainability, and people. Our approach at MHD ACERE has been to follow a common strategic framework that connects all our ventures—automobile, energy, engineering, and beyond. While each business unit pursues its own goals, all are

aligned through shared governance structures, strategic priorities, and a collective commitment to excellence. Regular collaboration between teams, data-driven decision-making, and a commitment to excellence help us maintain coherence across all sectors. Ultimately, what unites our diverse portfolio is not just strategy — it's culture. Our family values are the foundation for a unified strategic direction—one that embraces innovation and diversification while staying true to the vision that has driven MHD's growth for generations.

What advice would you offer to women aspiring to lead family enterprises and make an impact in traditional male dominated industries?

My advice to women aspiring to lead family enterprises is to lead with confidence and clarity of vision. Leadership is about vision and commitment. Effectively managing the operations of a family business requires careful planning and strategic foresight. It's important to understand the business and the family legacy but innovate and bring fresh perspectives that help the organization. Prioritize collaboration, and continuous learning, strengthen your expertise, and do your best in every endeavor.

Engineering the Long Term

Atousa Bint Dawood Al Khan is redefining industrial leadership in Oman. As CEO of KHANCO LLC, a pioneering woman owned manufacturing company, she builds national infrastructure with precision, discipline, and purpose. In a sector driven by performance, she has let results speak louder than perception, advancing local capability, sustainability, and trust in alignment with Oman's Vision 2040.

Atousa Bint Dawood Al Khan

CEO, Khanco LLC



KHANCO is one of Oman's pioneering woman owned industrial companies. What has been the hardest barrier to break in a space that is still largely male dominated, and what helped you move past it?

The hardest barrier has not been technical capability, but perception. Heavy industry has long been viewed as a male dominated space, and early on I had to challenge preconceived notions before discussions even began. Credibility was often questioned simply because of gender, not performance. What ultimately helped move past this was consistency in delivery. In industry, results speak unequivocally. By meeting strict technical standards, delivering on time, and maintaining uncompromising quality, trust was built organically. Being a 100 percent Omani company also played an important role, as partners recognized our long term commitment to national development rather than short term gains. Over time, professionalism, resilience, and clear leadership replaced doubt with respect. Breaking the barrier required patience and stamina, but performance changed conversations more effectively than persuasion ever could.

Your work directly supports energy and utilities at a national level. How do you see Oman's industrial capability evolving under Vision 2040 and what role should companies like yours play in that transformation?

Vision 2040 marks a decisive shift toward ownership of capability rather than dependence on imports. Oman's industrial future lies in developing advanced local manufacturing that can meet international standards while supporting national infrastructure. I see the next phase as one where Omani companies lead in fabrication, system integration, and long term asset support across the energy and utilities sectors. Companies like KHANCO must act as enablers of this transformation. Our role is not only to supply equipment, but to build competence, transfer technical know how, and invest in people. As a 100 percent Omani industrial



Performance changed conversations more effectively than persuasion ever could.

company, we carry a responsibility to prove that local manufacturing can be reliable, competitive, and innovative. Vision 2040 will succeed when local companies are trusted partners in development, operating with global discipline and national purpose.

On a practical level, how do you balance precision engineering and sustainability, especially in sectors that traditionally prioritise cost and speed?

Precision engineering and sustainability are not opposing goals. In fact, precision is often the foundation of sustainability. When systems are designed correctly and fabricated to high standards, they last longer, perform more efficiently, and require fewer resources over time. In sectors that prioritize speed and cost, sustainability must be embedded at the engineering stage rather than added later. At KHANCO, we focus on optimized material use, durability, and lifecycle performance. Local fabrication also plays a role by reducing transportation emissions and improving response times for maintenance and support. Sustainability in industry should be practical and measurable, not theoretical. It is about building assets that serve national infrastructure reliably while respecting resources. Long term value is created when quality and responsibility guide decisions, even in fast paced operational environments.

You place a strong emphasis on building local capability. What does

Oman need to do next to attract more young people, especially women, into industrial and manufacturing careers?

Attracting young people into industry begins with reframing what manufacturing represents. Industrial careers today are rooted in engineering, technology, and problem solving, not outdated stereotypes. Oman needs earlier exposure through education, structured internships, and visible pathways from classroom to factory floor. Representation also matters greatly, especially for women. Seeing women lead industrial operations changes perceptions of what is possible. At KHANCO, we prioritize local talent development through hands on training, real responsibility, and mentorship within active national projects. Capability grows when young professionals are trusted and challenged. Industry must actively collaborate with educational institutions and commit to long term skill building. If Oman creates clear opportunities and showcases modern industrial leadership, more young people will view manufacturing not as a fallback, but as a respected and rewarding career choice.

What is your favorite way to unwind after a long day running a busy industrial company?

Unwinding for me is about grounding and balance rather than complete disengagement. After demanding days, I value traveling and quiet moments that bring perspective. Time with my children, meaningful conversations with close friends, and the simple enjoyment of good food help restore energy. I find comfort in creating welcoming spaces, whether through hosting or cooking, as it allows me to shift from decision making to connection. I also value reflection, taking moments of stillness to think without urgency. These rituals keep me centered and remind me why leadership matters beyond commercial outcomes. Running an industrial company requires strength and resilience, but renewal comes from staying connected to purpose, family, and the small moments that offer calm amidst responsibility.

Global Mindset, Human Leadership

Charm Majolica

Director, The Diplomatic Club

Charm Majolica leads with clarity, empathy, and a deep respect for culture. As Director of The Diplomatic Club, she has shaped it into a trusted platform for dialogue, diplomacy, and international exchange. Her leadership reflects Oman's values: dignity, inclusivity, and long-term thinking, quietly strengthening the country's global relationships through people-centred excellence.

Can you take us through your professional journey?

My professional journey has been shaped by curiosity, adaptability, and a deep respect for people and cultures. I began my career in Europe, working in business development, where I was exposed early on to structured operations, high service standards, and multicultural teams. Over time, my roles expanded across geographies and functions—operations, people leadership, stakeholder engagement, and strategic development.

However I always had a great passion and drive to ensure that the organization I work with is focused on serving the community it is embedded in.

Each chapter added a new layer to how I lead today: with clarity, empathy, and a strong belief that sustainable success is built through people. I don't see leadership as a title, but as a responsibility to create environments where others can grow, perform, and feel valued.

Your career spans multiple roles and responsibilities across geographies.

How has this multi-faceted experience shaped the leader you are today?

Working across different countries and sectors taught me that there is no single "right" way to lead—context matters. Exposure to diverse teams and cultures sharpened my ability to listen, adapt, and make balanced decisions.

It has also made me resilient. When you manage complexity daily—

different expectations, priorities, and perspectives—you learn to stay calm, focused, and solution-oriented. Today, I lead with a global mindset but a very human approach: clear standards, mutual respect, trust as well as emotional intelligence.

What drew you to work in Oman, and how has the country's cultural and professional environment influenced you?

Oman drew me in with its authenticity. From the beginning, I was struck by the country's sense of dignity, balance, and quiet confidence. Professionally, Oman offers something rare: ambition paired with strong values.

Living and working here for many years has influenced me deeply. Omani culture emphasizes respect, relationships, and long-term thinking — principles that align closely with my own leadership style. Oman has given me space to grow professionally while feeling personally grounded. It is, without question, challenging but for sure one of the most rewarding places I have worked.

How does your work at The Diplomatic Club align with Oman Vision 2040?

The Diplomatic Club aligns naturally with Oman Vision 2040 through its focus on excellence, international engagement, and human capital development. We represent Oman to the world on a daily basis—through service quality, professionalism, and the experiences we create for diplomats, leaders, and international partners.

Equally important is our commit-

ment to developing local talent, empowering Omani professionals, and fostering a culture of performance and accountability. This directly supports the Vision's objectives around diversification, leadership development, and global positioning.

In addition The Club has a strategic plan to develop young talented Omanis. We even engaged in a partnership with the Swiss Hotelschool Lucerne to support this development program.

How does The Diplomatic Club serve as a platform for diplomacy, dialogue, and international collaboration?

The Diplomatic Club is more than a venue — it is a meeting point as well as a concept. It provides a neutral, welcoming space where cultures connect, conversations happen naturally, and relationships are built beyond formal protocols in addition to a very high level of privacy.

Through official events, informal gatherings, and daily interactions, The Club facilitates dialogue and mutual understanding. In many ways, it reflects Oman's diplomatic philosophy: respectful, inclusive, and focused on building bridges rather than barriers.

As a woman leader in Oman, what insights or advice would you share with emerging women professionals aspiring to leadership roles?

My advice is simple but powerful: know that you belong at the table. Leadership is not about fitting a mold — it's about bringing your perspective, integrity, and competence into the room.

Oman is a country that genuinely supports women's advancement, and I have experienced this firsthand. To emerging women professionals, I would say: invest in your skills, speak with confidence, seek mentors, and don't be afraid to take on responsibility before you feel "ready." Growth happens through action.

Most importantly, lead in a way that feels authentic to you. Strength and empathy are not opposites—they are complementary, and together they make exceptional leaders.

Donatella Donatelli

Head of Marketing and Communication Mercedes-Benz in the Sultanate of Oman

Donatella Donatelli exemplifies stellar brand stewardship. Leading marketing and communications for Mercedes-Benz in Oman, she anchors innovation in trust, heritage, and precision. Her international career across Europe and the Gulf reflects a leadership style defined by restraint, cultural intelligence, and long-term thinking—proving that relevance is not created through noise, but through consistency, credibility, and enduring standards.

Leaning in to Adaptability



You've seen business evolve from the pre-digital era to the "always-on" world we live in now. In your experience, what has actually shifted in the way people connect with brands, and what part of that relationship do you think will never change?

The defining shift has been how quickly and openly customers now interact with brands. Today, customers expect brands to be accessible, responsive, and consistent across multiple touchpoints, with digital platforms enabling more immediate and two-way interaction than ever before. What has not changed is the importance of trust. Regardless of how technology evolves, people continue to gravitate towards brands that deliver on quality, reliability, and credibility. As Head of Marketing and Communication of Mercedes-Benz, my role is to ensure that every customer interaction reflects the brand's engineering excellence and premium standards. While digital channels accelerate connection, long-term relationships are still built through performance, transparency, and a strong customer experience. The platforms may change, but the fundamentals of brand trust remain constant.

Working across Europe and the Gulf means navigating very different ways of leading. Is there a specific instinct you had to let go of, or perhaps one you had to lean into more, as your work became more international?

Leading across different markets requires flexibility and context. Earlier in my career, I relied strongly on structured processes and direct communication. While those remain important, working in the Gulf highlighted the value of relationship-building and alignment before execution.

I learned to adjust my pace and approach, allowing more room for discussion, collaboration, and local insight. At the same time, I leaned more into adaptability, ensuring global brand standards are maintained while respecting regional expectations. This experience reinforced the importance of listening, understanding market dynamics, and balanc-

ing strategic direction with cultural awareness. Today, my focus is on creating clarity, supporting teams, and delivering consistent outcomes, regardless of geography.

The automotive landscape in Oman is becoming more crowded, with new players entering the market and redefining value and innovation. How do you keep a heritage brand like Mercedes-Benz feeling relevant and distinctive without losing its core identity?

Mercedes-Benz has always been rooted in engineering excellence, innovation, and uncompromising quality and my role is to support the evolution of the brand locally, while remaining anchored in Mercedes-Benz's global fundamentals.

At a local level, my responsibility is to bring the brand to life in a way that reflects both global values and local customer expectations. This means introducing advanced technologies, enhancing the ownership experience, and communicating clearly what sets Mercedes-Benz apart, while remaining true to its heritage. In a competitive market, distinction is achieved through consistency. By focusing on craftsmanship, performance, and innovation, I ensure the brand remains aspirational and meaningful, without compromising its identity.

Receiving the Ordine della Stella d'Italia is a huge honour for your contribution to preserving and promoting Italy's national prestige and strengthening bilateral relationships. Looking past the title and the ceremony, what did that recognition mean to you personally?

Receiving the Ordine della Stella d'Italia from the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, with the rank of Knighthood, was a deeply personal milestone for me. It marked a moment of reflection on my journey—the choices I made, the courage to build a life and career far from home, and the determination to remain true to my values.

As an Italian living and working in Oman, this recognition holds a special meaning. It reflects the

relationships I have been privileged to build between Italy and Oman—relationships grounded in trust, mutual respect, and long-term collaboration. Being named a Knight felt like an acknowledgment not only of my professional path, but of the human connections that have shaped it and given it purpose.

On a personal level, it was a moment of pride and gratitude. It reaffirmed my belief that meaningful bridges between cultures are built through consistency, integrity, and genuine engagement. This honor represents a defining chapter in my life, where personal identity and professional commitment came together to contribute, in a lasting way, to the bond between two countries I proudly call home.

Your career is built on long-term growth. As a woman, how do you define ambition today, and is that different from how you saw it when you were starting out?

Today, I define ambition as the ability to shape direction, not just pursue progress. It is about building long-term impact with intention—setting a vision, making deliberate choices, and taking responsibility for outcomes. Ambition, for me, has evolved into something quieter but far more powerful: the confidence to lead with clarity, values, and purpose.

When I was starting out, ambition was driven by momentum. I wanted to move forward quickly, gain experience, and prove my capabilities. That energy was necessary—it built resilience and opened doors. Over time, however, experience taught me that true leadership is not about speed, but about consistency, judgment, and the ability to think beyond the immediate horizon.

As a woman today, ambition means having the authority to choose what truly matters—impact over visibility, substance over recognition, and long-term growth over short-term success. It is about leading without compromise, growing without losing authenticity, and understanding that the most meaningful leadership is built steadily, with conviction, over time.

Fatma Al Nabhani

Omani Tennis and Padel Player

Fatma Al Nabhani is a pioneering Omani athlete who moved from national tennis champion to international padel title-holder, setting new benchmarks for women in sport. Her journey reflects resilience, reinvention, and deep national pride. This year, she is recognised for inspiring young Omani girls to aim higher, pursue sport fearlessly, and believe in new possibilities. Fatma continues to champion a future where ambition evolves, and never stops.

From Champion to Trailblazer: Redefining Women's Sports in Oman



1

You've gone from being Oman's top tennis player to leading the rise of padel in the country. What inspired that shift, and what has been the biggest lesson from starting over in a new sport?

Transitioning from tennis to padel wasn't just a career move — it was a personal evolution. After spending my entire life in tennis, representing Oman and breaking barriers, I reached a point where I wanted a new challenge, something that re-ignited that spark of learning again. Padel offered exactly that: a fresh arena where I could use my experience, yet push myself to grow in completely new ways.

The biggest lesson? Humility in reinvention. Starting over teaches you to embrace being a beginner again, to trust the process, and to enjoy every small improvement. It reminded me that passion has no age, and dreams don't expire — they simply evolve if we let them.

2

As one of the first Arab women to win a padel title internationally, how do you hope your journey inspires young Omani girls to dream bigger in sports and beyond?

Every time I step onto the court, I think of the next generation watching. I want Omani girls — and Arab girls everywhere — to see that their ambitions are valid, powerful, and limitless. You don't have to fit a mold or choose just one path. You can start late, start over, or start differently and still reach the top. What I hope they take from my journey is this: you can be both proud of your identity and bold in your dreams. Sports taught me resilience, confidence, and self-belief, and I want every young girl in Oman to feel that same sense of possibility.

3

You often represent Oman on global stages. How have your Omani values and upbringing shaped the way you compete and carry yourself as an athlete?

My identity as an Omani woman is at the core of everything I do. I was raised with values of humility, discipline, respect, and perseverance — values that I carry with me whether I'm playing in Muscat or competing thousands of miles away.

Oman teaches you to stay grounded and gracious, but also to be determined and work hard in silence. When I compete, I reflect my country, my family, and the belief that you can be competitive while still carrying yourself with dignity. That balance is very Omani — and it shaped me both as an athlete and a person.

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Can you share a moment, on or off the court, that you'll never forget... something that still makes you smile or keeps you motivated?

One moment that will always stay with me is winning the West Asian Tennis Championship. It wasn't just a title — it was a turning point in my life. I remember standing on the court, hearing Oman's name announced, and feeling this wave of pride wash over me. It was the moment I truly understood the power of representing your country and how much impact an athlete can have.

Even today, when I face challenges or feel tired, I think back to that championship. The hard work, the pressure, the emotion — and the realization that impossible things become possible with persistence. It still motivates me, reminds me where I started, and fuels me to keep pushing in every new chapter of my career.

A Strategist of Value, Trust, and Change

What sparked your personal interest in innovation and fintech, and how has your perspective evolved since you first entered the banking sector?

My interest in innovation was shaped very early in life. Growing up, my parents encouraged curiosity, creativity, and independent thinking, which helped embed an innovation-driven mindset from childhood. That foundation stayed with me as I grew older and became increasingly interested in how technology can challenge traditional models and create new forms of value. When I entered the banking sector, I was fascinated by the contrast between well-established financial systems and the rapid emergence of digital alternatives. This curiosity deepened in 2013, when I began studying cryptocurrencies at a time when the topic was still largely unexplored. I focused my academic thesis on Bitcoin economics and the evolving concept of money and value, which gave me early exposure to decentralized finance and digital assets.

Since then, my perspective has evolved not merely by my fascination with technology itself, but with a deeper question: how value is created, transferred, and trusted at scale.

The Central Bank sits at the intersection of caution and possibility. How do you personally balance enabling innovation while ensuring stability and trust in the system?



For me, the balance starts with mindset. I try to remain open to what innovation can unlock, while also being disciplined enough to draw clear lines when trust, resilience, or fairness might be at risk. Curiosity and caution are not opposites; they work best together.

In practical terms, this means creating safe, structured spaces for innovation through sandboxes, pilot initiatives, and ongoing dialogue with industry and the wider ecosystem. I believe innovation is best supported by clarity—clear expectations, transparent engagement, and proportionate safeguards. Approaches such as controlled testing allow us to learn alongside innovators without putting the system under strain. Listening, in my view, is just as important as rule-making. When done well, regulation does not hold innovation back; it helps channel it in ways that strengthen the financial system rather than stretch its limits.

If you could fast-track one emerging technology across Oman's financial system tomorrow, which would you choose and why?

I would start by saying that no single technology exists in isolation. Technologies are deeply interconnected, and their true value emerges when they are applied together in a purposeful way. What matters most is not adopting technology for its own

For young Omani talent entering finance today, technical skills will matter, but mindsets will matter even more. The next decade will reward those who lead with authenticity and strong values, because trust remains the foundation of any financial system. Knowing who you are, what you stand for, and why you do your work will guide better decisions in moments of uncertainty.

sake, but using it to solve real problem statements within the financial ecosystem and create measurable value for customers, institutions, and the economy.

For Oman, if I had to fast-track one technology across Oman's financial system, it would be digital identity as a foundational layer, tightly integrated with data analytics and AI-driven decisioning.

The reason is simple: digital identity is a force multiplier. On its own it enables secure onboarding, authentication, and compliance, but when combined with data analytics and AI, it unlocks faster credit decisions, stronger fraud prevention, seamless payments, and more inclusive access to financial services. Many advanced use cases fail not because the technology is unavailable, but because identity and data foundations are fragmented.

For young Omani talent entering finance today, what skills or mindsets will matter most in the next decade and how can they prepare for a future that is being shaped right now?

For young Omani talent entering finance today, technical skills will matter, but mindsets will matter even more. The next decade will reward those who lead with authenticity and strong values, because trust remains the foundation of any financial system. Knowing who you are, what you stand for, and why you do your work will guide better decisions in moments of uncertainty.

Curiosity is equally critical. Finance is being reshaped by technology, sustainability, and new business models, so the ability to ask good questions and explore beyond your job description is a real advantage. Active learning—constantly updating your skills, experimenting, and learning from failure—will set you apart far more than any single qualification.

So my advice is to build strong foundations, stay curious, and take ownership of your growth. Those who prepare with intention today will not just adapt to the future of finance in Oman, they will help define it.

Ghada Al Kharusi

Innovation Manager, Central Bank of Oman

Ghada Nasser Al Kharousi is shaping the future of Oman's financial system at the intersection of innovation, trust, and regulation. With over a decade of experience in fintech and financial sector oversight, she has been instrumental in advancing emerging technologies while safeguarding systemic stability. Known for her thoughtful, future-oriented approach, Ghada brings intellectual rigor, global perspective, and a strong ethical lens to how value, risk, and inclusion are reimagined in modern finance.

Ghadeer Al Dhuhli

Co-Founder and CXO, Madad

Ghadeer Al Dhuhli represents a new generation of Omani founders shaping the digital economy with empathy and intent. As co-founder of Madad, she is reimagining hospitality procurement through technology, experience-led design, and inclusive leadership, proving that meaningful innovation begins by solving real, local problems at scale.



Turning Complexity into Connection

What inspired you to co-found Madad, and how do you see it transforming the procurement landscape for Oman's hospitality industry?

Madad's story began with our first venture, BON, a B2C platform designed to connect consumers with local experiences and services. As we built and scaled BON, we gained a deeper understanding of the pain points within the supply chain and service ecosystem — especially in the hospitality sector, where procurement remained largely manual, fragmented, and inefficient.

Recognizing this gap, we pivoted and evolved into Madad — a B2B platform designed to bring structure, technology, and transparency to procurement. Today, Madad serves as a digital infrastructure for the hospitality industry, helping hotels, restaurants, and suppliers streamline operations, make data-driven decisions, and collaborate more efficiently. Our goal is not just to digitize processes, but to reshape how the industry connects and grows, supporting Oman's vision for a smarter, more sustainable economy.

As a Forbes 30 Under 30 honoree, how has this recognition influenced your perspective on leadership and innovation?

Being named among Forbes 30 Under 30 was both humbling and motivating. It reminded me that leadership is not about titles — it's about responsibility and impact.

The recognition reinforced my belief that innovation thrives where empathy meets strategy. It also encouraged me to look beyond growth metrics and focus on creating systems that serve people and communities,

not just businesses. It's a reminder that as leaders, we are responsible for shaping cultures of innovation that are inclusive, sustainable, and human-centered.

How do you balance technology, strategy, and sustainability when driving Madad's growth and impact?

For me, these three pillars are deeply interconnected — technology is the enabler, strategy is the compass, and sustainability is the foundation that ensures lasting impact.

At Madad, we look beyond functionality to design solutions that create value, efficiency, and inclusivity. Every initiative we build is guided by a simple principle: innovation must serve people and the planet, not just performance metrics.

Whether it's integrating digital tools that empower local businesses, fostering partnerships that strengthen industry collaboration, or embed-

ding sustainable practices into our growth model — our focus remains on creating meaningful, forward-thinking progress that benefits both the economy and society.

What role do you believe young entrepreneurs play in shaping Oman's digital and economic future?

Young entrepreneurs are the pulse of Oman's transformation. They bring fresh ideas, bold energy, and a willingness to question traditional systems — all essential for innovation. What makes this generation special is its dual mindset: they are digitally native yet deeply rooted in Omani values. This combination allows them to create solutions that are globally relevant but locally grounded. As Oman continues its Vision 2040 journey, young founders will be the ones translating national ambition into actionable impact through startups, technology, and creative industries.

What advice would you give to the next generation of women aspiring to lead and innovate in the business and tech sectors?

My advice is simple but powerful: trust your voice and build your table. Don't wait for permission or perfect timing — both are illusions. The tech and business worlds need more women who think differently, lead with empathy, and make decisions rooted in purpose.

Surround yourself with people who challenge and uplift you, and remember that leadership is not about being the loudest in the room, but the most authentic. Every small step you take toward your vision contributes to a larger movement of women redefining what leadership looks like in Oman and beyond.

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Haifa Al Lawati

Chief Human Resource Officer, Bank Nizwa

Haifa Al Lawati has shaped people strategy at the intersection of purpose, performance, and progress. As CHRO at Bank Nizwa, she has built future-ready HR systems, nurtured Omani leadership, and redefined how culture, talent, and Islamic values translate into sustainable organizational strength.

When Values Lead, Systems Align



What inspired your journey into the field of Human Resources?

My journey into Human Resources was shaped by a natural intersection between my early background in finance and my growing interest in people. Starting my career in financial and budgeting roles at Occidental of Oman and PDO, I developed a strong analytical foundation — but I quickly realized that the real heartbeat of any organization lies in its people. When I transitioned into HR at Occidental, I found purpose in designing fair compensation structures, nurturing talent, and ensuring that every employee felt valued and supported. Over time, this evolved into a passion for building entire HR ecosystems from the ground up — which I later applied when I joined Bank Nizwa, Oman's first Islamic bank. Establishing the HR function there from inception deepened my conviction that effective people strategies can directly drive business growth and culture transformation.

How has your role as CHRO evolved in response to the changing needs of the banking sector?

The banking landscape has undergone significant transformation — from traditional operations to digital and agile ecosystems — and so has the HR function. As CHRO and AGM of HR at Bank Nizwa, my role has shifted from being operationally focused to becoming a strategic business partner driving transformation.

Today, HR is not just about managing talent but also about shaping the workforce of the future. I lead initiatives that integrate HR analytics, AI-based decision-making, and data-driven workforce planning to ensure our strategies align with the bank's evolving vision. I've also strengthened employee engagement, performance culture, and leadership development frameworks, ensuring agility and resilience across the organization.

Our focus has expanded beyond policies — toward purpose, well-being, and innovation — ensuring Bank Nizwa remains not only compliant and efficient but also a people-centric institution ready for the future of Islamic banking.

What strategies have you found most effective in empowering and retaining Omani talent?

Empowering and retaining Omani talent has always been a cornerstone of my HR philosophy. At Bank Nizwa, we've adopted a three-tier strategy: development, recognition, and purpose.

First, through structured leadership development and career progression programs, we give employees a clear growth path — from technical expertise to managerial readiness. Second, we align our rewards and recognition framework with both business outcomes and personal contribution, ensuring fairness and transparency.

Finally, I strongly believe in nurturing purpose-driven engagement. By connecting employees to the values of Islamic finance and the bank's contribution to national growth, we foster a deep sense of pride and belonging. This holistic approach has resulted in exceptional retention levels and has positioned Bank Nizwa as a preferred employer brand in Oman — as reflected in multiple GCC and AI Mara awards.

Can you share a moment in your career that was particularly challenging, and how you navigated it?

One defining challenge was during the establishment phase of Bank Nizwa's HR department. As the first Islamic bank in Oman, there were no pre-existing HR systems, frameworks, or policies tailored to the Sharia-compliant banking environment. Building everything from the ground up from payroll and compensation systems to recruitment frameworks and HRMS automation required not just technical expertise, but resilience, collaboration, and long-term vision. I managed this challenge by combining my analytical background with people leadership engaging stakeholders, ensuring regulatory alignment with the Central Bank of Oman, and instilling confidence in new employees joining a completely new institution.

That experience reinforced my belief that leadership is tested not in comfort, but in complexity and that the ability to transform challenges

into structured, sustainable systems defines real HR leadership.

What does female leadership mean to you, and how do you foster it at Bank Nizwa?

For me, female leadership is not only about representation — it's about influence, inclusion, and impact. True leadership is genderless; it's defined by the ability to drive change with empathy, integrity, and courage.

At Bank Nizwa, I've been proud to foster an environment where women are encouraged to lead, innovate, and thrive. Through mentorship programs, flexible work initiatives, and leadership development tracks, we've seen more women take on strategic roles across departments. I also advocate for policies that support women's career continuity — including balanced performance frameworks and equitable succession planning.

Personally, I strive to lead by example, demonstrating that women in HR and finance can shape the direction of an organization while balancing strength with compassion. The repeated recognition through Womani and AI Mara awards is not just personal; it represents a collective achievement for women in Islamic finance.

What advice would you give to young women who aspire to leadership roles in HR or banking?

My advice would be simple yet profound: invest in your competence, confidence, and character.

Competence build your knowledge continuously; banking and HR are evolving fields where expertise defines credibility. Confidence - believe in your perspective, even when it's different, and don't shy away from taking strategic risks. And character — lead with authenticity, ethics, and resilience; these qualities will earn you trust long before titles do.

Finally, remember that leadership is not about perfection, but about purpose. Find meaning in what you do, seek mentors who challenge you, and lift others as you rise. Your journey will not only define your success but will also pave the way for others to follow.

Calm Hands in Complex Times

Hanaa Al Hinai

CEO, Liva Insurance Oman

Hanaa Al Hinai is a rare kind of leader, the one who navigates complexity without theatrics. With over two decades across banking and insurance, she has shaped Oman's insurance landscape at moments of real consequence, most notably steering one of the country's most intricate mergers with clarity, discipline, and deep respect for people. Her leadership blends strategic rigor with quiet empathy, proving that transformation is strongest when trust, culture, and long-term thinking lead the way.

You led one of Oman's most complex insurance mergers with remarkable success. What were the defining leadership principles that helped you navigate that transformation while keeping people and culture at the heart of it?

The merger was far more than a technical integration — it required bringing together two organisations with distinct histories, identities, and cultures. The principles that guided me were transparency, empathy, and disciplined execution.

Transparency ensured that our people understood the “why” behind every decision. Empathy allowed me to listen to their concerns and aspirations during a period of uncertainty. And disciplined execution kept us aligned with the long-term vision despite the complexity of the transition.

From day one, I made culture a strategic priority. We focused on building a shared identity, reinforcing common values, and creating clarity around our future direction. Ultimately, the merger succeeded because we united our people behind a collective purpose — and culture became the engine that powered the entire transformation.

Your career spans both banking and insurance, across Oman, UAE and Australia. Looking back, what pivotal moments or mentors shaped your approach to leadership and resilience?

My early career in Australia exposed me to meritocratic and highly diverse environments, which shaped my belief in inclusive, people-centred leadership.

Moving to the UAE marked a major turning point, as it was where I transitioned from banking into the insurance sector. Stepping into a new industry in a fast-paced, competitive market taught me agility, disciplined decision-making, and how to lead through complexity. It fundamentally reshaped how I approached change and growth.

Another defining moment came when I returned to Oman to take on the CEO role. Leading a national organisation through transformation, merger integration, and a shifting

regulatory landscape required clarity, resilience, and a deep sense of responsibility to the market and to our people. It challenged me to balance strategic ambition with operational discipline, and to lead with both strength and empathy.

These experiences collectively shaped a leadership philosophy built on strategic foresight, adaptability, and the ability to guide teams confidently through change.

Liva Insurance is known for being digitally forward and purpose-driven. How do you see technology and innovation redefining the insurance landscape in Oman and the region?

Technology has moved from being an enabler to being the core of the insurance value chain. In Oman and across the region, customers expect seamless, personalised, and immediate experiences — and technology is creating that shift.

But technology for the sake of technology is not the answer. What matters is deploying the right solutions for our market and our customers. At Liva, we prioritise tools that enhance underwriting accuracy, improve service quality, and enable faster, more transparent claims journeys.

With AI, automation, and ad-



Be willing to take risks, stay curious, and keep developing yourself. Every barrier you break becomes a pathway for someone else.

vanced analytics, we are moving from a reactive model to a predictive and preventive one, where insurers help customers avoid risks rather than only respond to them. For us, innovation is not about efficiency alone — it is about building solutions that genuinely improve people's lives.

As one of the few women leading a major financial institution in Oman, what message would you share with young Omani women aspiring to break barriers in traditionally male-dominated sectors?

My message is simple: believe in your capability and never let external expectations define your path. Leadership has no gender — it is built on competence, courage, and consistency.

I also believe that women don't just need mentors; they need sponsors — people who will advocate for them, open doors, and create opportunities in rooms where they are not present. Seek out those who recognise your potential and give you a platform to grow.

Be willing to take risks, stay curious, and keep developing yourself. Every barrier you break becomes a pathway for someone else. And as you rise, make sure you bring others with you — real leadership is measured not only by what you achieve, but by the opportunities you create for those around you.

Outside of titles and milestones, what does success personally mean to you today — and how do you stay grounded amid constant growth and change?

Success, to me, is about having clarity — clarity of purpose, clarity in decision-making, and clarity in how I want to show up as a leader and as a person. When I am aligned with my values, making decisions with conviction, and growing in ways that challenge me, that is success.

I stay grounded by reminding myself that leadership is a journey, not a destination. My family, my routine, and my commitment to continuous learning help me stay balanced, focused, and connected to what truly matters.

Hawraa Fidaa Hussain

Head of CX,
Al Mouj Muscat

Hawraa Fida Hussain is a leading force in customer experience and operational excellence, known for translating empathy into measurable impact. With nearly two decades across complex, high-touch industries, she has shaped CX strategies that elevate both people and performance. Her work reflects a rare balance of human insight and executional rigor, influencing service cultures, leadership practices, and customer trust across the region.

From Metrics to Meaning



As someone who has broken barriers in a competitive industry, what personal values have guided you throughout your journey?

Empathy and integrity have always been my compass – they shape how I lead, how I design experiences, and how I build trust. I listen first, seek to understand before acting, and prioritise decisions that serve both people and purpose.

Resilience helps me stay grounded through uncertainty, while curiosity pushes me to question assumptions and explore new angles. Purpose is what ties it all together: the belief that success is most meaningful when it uplifts others and leaves the organisation stronger than we found it. These values have guided every step of my journey not just in defining moments, but in the quiet, persistent work of leading with care, designing for people, and shaping a culture that reflects what we stand for.

What are some key initiatives or policies at Al Mouj Muscat that you believe have helped foster a more inclusive and empowering environment for women?

Inclusion starts with intention, and at Al Mouj Muscat, we've built structures to make growth achievable and sustainable. We define clear roles, articulate skill pathways, and set transparent criteria for advancement because clarity fuels confidence.

Mentoring is at the core of our talent development, especially for women navigating early and mid-career transitions. Flexible work options, cross-functional exposure, and mobility across departments provide the breadth of experience women need to lead effectively.

Importantly, we ensure that women have a seat and a voice in key decision-making forums. And we make achievements visible. Recognition isn't just a reward; it's a reinforcement of progress.

This same ethos carries through our customer programs. Our structured Voice of Customer framework and end-to-end journey mapping give people a real voice – internally and externally – and allow us to act on

what matters. These disciplines have not only elevated our CX practice but have also been recognised in regional awards for their impact.

Do you have any particular challenging moments which contributed in personal or professional growth?

Some of the most defining moments in my career came from managing high-value investors from diverse nationalities. I learned the importance of creating a sense of belonging – a home away from home, where they could truly see Al Mouj Muscat as their own.

Transitioning across industries taught me humility: to learn fast, listen harder, and acknowledge what I didn't yet know. Earlier in my career, I helped lead high-volume contact centre operations that were publicly measured. That experience taught me the link between service quality and business results, and the weight of accountability.

These moments sharpened my resilience, strengthened my voice, and gave me the confidence to step into more complex arenas, including

customer experience strategy at a national level.

What has been one of your proudest moments at Al Mouj Muscat so far?

For me, pride is not just in performance, it's in perception. I'm most proud when I see the way our customers begin to describe their experiences differently – when their words shift from satisfaction to feeling seen, valued, and truly cared for. That emotional shift is just as important as the metrics. As a team, being recognised at Customer Experience Live Middle East was a milestone – with awards for Best Voice of Customer in Real Estate and Hospitality and Best Customer Journey Mapping. These wins reflected not just what we do, but how deeply we listen and act.

Being invited to host and speak at Oman's CX Forum, alongside regional leaders, was another proud moment not just for me personally, but for what it signified about the maturity of our practice and the strength of Oman's growing influence in the CX landscape.

What advice would you give to young women aiming for leadership roles in Customer Experience?

Master both sides of the discipline: the human and the operational. Emotional agility will help you connect with people, lead with empathy, and navigate change. Business fluency ensures your insights turn into action so take time to learn the full CX ecosystem, from research and journey design to operational delivery, analytics, and enabling technologies.

Don't rush to have all the answers. Instead, learn to ask sharper questions – the kind that uncover root causes and drive meaningful progress. Protect your voice and your wellbeing, because sustainable leadership isn't about speed; it's about clarity, consistency, and care over time.

If you take away anything, stay curious about what makes experiences not just better, but more meaningful. The strongest CX leaders are those who never stop learning and who bring others along as they grow.



Resilience helps me stay grounded through uncertainty, while curiosity pushes me to question assumptions and explore new angles.

From Wall Street to Family Legacy

Jesal Asher

Executive Director, Al Ansari Group of Companies

Jesal Asher brings global rigor to generational legacy. After becoming the youngest female partner at KPMG in the US, she returned to Oman to lead the transformation of her family's 48-year-old enterprise. As Executive Director of Al Ansari Group, she has driven governance reform, international expansion, and AI-enabled operations; proving that legacy businesses can be agile, future-ready, and deeply human.

What inspired your transition from a global consulting career in New York to leading Al Ansari Group in Oman?

My journey has always been shaped by both ambition and heart. After over a decade in New York, where I led the Enterprise Risk Management practice at KPMG and became the youngest female partner in the U.S. advisory team, I had reached a point of professional fulfilment. But I was also witnessing my parents aging, and my father, who had built Al Ansari Group from the ground up, had no successor actively involved in the business. I realised that while New York had been an incredible chapter, my roots and responsibilities called me home. I didn't want to be a distant observer of my father's legacy. I wanted to build on it. Returning to Oman gave me the opportunity to bring my global perspective, governance background, and strategy skills into a company that has been part of my family's story for nearly five decades. It was not just a professional move, but a deeply personal one.

In your view, what are the key elements of successfully transforming traditional organizations into digitally enabled, forward-looking enterprises?

Transformation is not a one-time initiative. It is a mindset shift. Leaders may have the vision, but real success comes only when the entire organisation joins the journey. Traditional organisations must first invest in clarity of vision: understanding why change is needed and what future they want to build. At Al Ansari Group, transformation began with governance, structure, and people. Once those foundations were strong, digital enablement became the natural next step. This involved:

- Reassessing legacy systems and processes
- Creating agile, lean structures that could adopt new technologies
- Fostering a culture where employees see technology as an enabler, not a threat

But technology alone does not create transformation. Change management with existing teams is critical. Many of our people have been part

of the company's growth story, and bringing them along through upskilling and open communication has been essential. Resisting change is normal. Success happens when every member of the organisation gets on the train and sees the vision for themselves. For new recruits, we expect this mindset from day one. For existing teams, training, inclusion, and trust help make transformation part of our organisational DNA. Over time, it stops being a project and becomes the way we operate.

You have been an active advocate for the integration of Artificial Intelligence in business. How do you ensure that AI remains both practical and accessible for organizations?

For me, AI is not a nice-to-have. It is a must-have. At Al Ansari Group, we've approached AI not as a disruptive storm but as an enabler that fits seamlessly into our daily operations.

We began by embedding AI into everyday processes in a way that felt natural to teams. Our technology officer led the integration quietly and strategically. Most employees didn't even realise that the insights reaching them were AI-driven. This approach allowed us to increase efficiency without overwhelming anyone with complex jargon. It also freed up valuable time for teams to analyse data rather than spend hours creating it. We pair this with practical, hands-on training. Every quarter, we run workshops on simple AI tools that professionals can use to make their day-to-day work more efficient and their communication sharper. What makes these sessions powerful is that staff and technicians showcase how they are already applying AI in their roles. Hearing real stories from peers creates trust and drives adoption far more effectively than top-down instructions.

AI can seem vast and intimidating, but the key is to focus on what helps people do their jobs better. Behind the scenes, our IT team leverages more advanced AI systems to support operations at scale. For new recruits, we take this a step further. AI literacy is part of our interview process to ensure we're bringing in

talent that already embraces this way of working. In short, making AI practical and accessible is about quiet integration, focused training, and a culture where technology empowers people rather than intimidates them.

As a leader, educator, and mother, how do you manage to balance your professional responsibilities with your personal commitments?

I don't see balance as a strict division of time. I see it as an integration of all my buckets — work, home, community, and self. When each of these areas receives the attention it deserves, that's when I feel truly balanced. It doesn't mean I'm fully engaged in all of them at the same time, but over time I make sure each one gets its share of me.

I've also learned that if I neglect the self bucket, my energy weakens and I can't give my best to the others. That's the one I need to remind myself to prioritise. The other buckets come more naturally because they bring me joy and purpose.

What makes this integration work is a strong support system — my husband, my family, and the incredible teams I work with — clarity in priorities, and giving myself permission not to be perfect. There are days when work leads, and others when my children or community commitments take centre stage. What matters most is that I am fully present wherever I am. That presence, more than a rigid schedule, is what allows me to live a balanced life.

What message would you like to share with women aspiring to take on senior leadership and executive roles?

My biggest message is this: don't wait for permission to take your seat at the table. If it's not offered, bring your own chair. Leadership is not about titles. It's about voice, impact, and persistence. Being a woman often comes with assumptions and expectations about how we should behave, lead, or prioritise our lives. I've encountered those assumptions many times. Instead of letting them define you, challenge them with clarity and action, not anger. Show people who you are through what you do.



From Promise to Practice

What inspired your journey into youth development and leadership through your role at Injaz Oman?

My journey into youth development was inspired by my belief in the transformative power of education and entrepreneurship. As a leader, I have always felt a deep responsibility to contribute to the future of our nation, and the youth are the foundation of that future. When I took on the role at Injaz Oman, I recognized the immense potential of young people in our country. I was driven by the vision of creating an ecosystem where they could access the tools, mentorship, and opportunities they needed to thrive in an increasingly globalized world and empowering them to become the changemakers of Oman.

As CEO, what has been your proudest achievement in driving impact for young people in Oman?

One of my proudest achievements has been seeing the remarkable growth of Injaz Oman's programs, which have directly impacted thousands of students across the country. The success of our flagship initiatives, such as the Student Company Program, which has contributed to the establishment of hundreds of companies and the creation of thousands of jobs, has been truly rewarding. More than just the numbers, it's the stories of students who have gone on to create their ventures, fulfil their dreams, and actively contribute to Oman's economic development that truly inspire me.



Believe in your vision and take ownership of your journey, don't wait for the world to hand you opportunities; you have the power to create your own. Seek out challenges that excite you, invest in building your skills, and never stop learning.

What challenges have you faced in championing innovation and entrepreneurship among youth, and how have you overcome them?

One of the challenges in championing youth entrepreneurship has been helping young people see beyond the "safe path" and recognize their potential to innovate. Many lacked exposure to real opportunities and the confidence to take risks. To

overcome this, we focused on building an ecosystem connecting youth with mentors, industry leaders, and investors, and providing hands-on programs that turn ideas into tangible ventures. By showcasing success stories and celebrating bold initiatives, we've inspired a new generation to turn ideas into real impact and leave a lasting legacy in their communities.

How do you see the role of women leaders in empowering the next generation of changemakers?

Leadership is not just a title, it's action. Female leaders inspire by example, mentor with purpose, and open doors where none exist. At Injaz Oman, I've had the opportunity to guide young women to launch ventures, lead projects, and create real economic impact, proving that leadership is about courage and results.

What advice would you give to young Omanis, especially young women, who aspire to create lasting impact in their communities?

To young Omanis, especially young women, I say: believe in your vision and take ownership of your journey, don't wait for the world to hand you opportunities; you have the power to create your own. Seek out challenges that excite you, invest in building your skills, and never stop learning. Surround yourself with mentors who guide and inspire you. Your ideas, commitment, and determination can create a lasting impact and inspire others to follow in your footsteps.

Khaula Hamood Al Harthi

CEO, Injaz Oman

Khaula Hamoud Al Harthi is shaping Oman's future by investing in its youth. As CEO of Injaz Oman, she has built pathways for young people to turn ideas into enterprises, confidence into capability, and ambition into economic impact. A seasoned business leader and public-sector contributor, Khaula bridges education, entrepreneurship, and policy to ensure the next generation doesn't just participate in the economy — they lead it.

Bridging Culture & Capability

What guiding principles shape your leadership philosophy as Chief People Officer at Ooredoo Oman?

I believe people are the force for transformation. When activated strategically, it can shape culture and capability across every part of the business. That's why we make sure that our workforce is not just prepared for change but drives it. We do this by aligning our people strategy with Ooredoo's vision to be a digital enabler of national progress. It's about creating a culture where every individual feels seen, valued, and equipped to succeed.

Ooredoo is known for its innovation, how do you align HR strategies to support a fast-changing, tech-driven environment?

Innovation begins with mindset, how we approach change and respond to new challenges. As a tech-driven organisation, that mindset influences how we shape our teams and invest in our people. We embed agility and adaptability into every layer of our HR strategy; including future-focused training and upskilling in emerging technologies, and embracing a digital-first approach to talent development. Our role in HR, regardless of the platform we choose to use, is to anticipate what's next and prepare our people to lead it.

What initiatives have you led that have significantly impacted employee engagement and career growth at Ooredoo?

While we have many initiatives in place, four stand out for boosting engagement. First is individual development, guided by the 70-20-10 approach, which encourages blended learning and experience alongside our leadership programmes. Second is career development through our

Stay human. In an age of AI and automation, the heart of HR remains connection. My advice is to lead with purpose and never lose sight of the people behind the metrics. Understand the business, yes, but also understand your people's aspirations, fears and potential. Build bridges across departments, stay curious, and keep evolving.

Job Architecture Framework, which provides transparent career paths and progression opportunities. Third is succession planning, where we identify high-potential talent and ensure leadership continuity.

Finally, we drive accountability and recognition through a robust performance management framework, with clear KPIs and assessment. Together, these initiatives align growth, performance, and career aspirations with Ooredoo's wider strategic objectives.

How do you approach fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within the company?

DEI is central to our culture and an everyday practice. It's embedded in how we hire, promote and listen. As one of the region's pioneers in accessible telecom services, we're proud of initiatives like Oman's first Hearing Impaired Call Centre, tactile signage at our head office, and inclusive recruitment programmes.

But inclusion goes beyond access. It's also about ensuring that every employee has the support and opportunity to grow. In Oman, we've seen

firsthand the power of this approach, particularly in how Omani women have advanced across industries into leadership. These achievements reflect not just individual ambition, but a cultural and organisational commitment to building a more equitable future. I'm proud of the progress we've made, and remain committed to fostering an environment where everyone has a voice and a pathway to lead.

What advice would you give to aspiring HR leaders who want to create meaningful impact in their organisations?

Stay human. In an age of AI and automation, the heart of HR remains connection. My advice is to lead with purpose and never lose sight of the people behind the metrics. Understand the business, yes, but also understand your people's aspirations, fears and potential. Build bridges across departments, stay curious, and keep evolving. And remember: the most meaningful impact often comes from the consistent decisions that create a culture where people feel they belong and grow.

Khawla Al Amri

Acting Chief Corporate Service Officer, Ooredoo Oman

Khawla Al Amri has been a defining force in reshaping how organisations in Oman lead, grow, and care for their people. With a career spanning multiple sectors, she has consistently translated strategy into culture, and vision into measurable transformation. Her work champions inclusion, future-ready talent, and human-centred leadership, making her influence felt not only in boardrooms, but in the everyday experiences of employees across the nation.





Lina Al Abdulsalaam

Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications, Alizz Islamic Bank

Change Starts With Listening

You've been at the helm of some of Oman's most significant corporate transformations. From a change management perspective, how do you distinguish between the core values that define a brand and the outdated habits that are blocking its growth?

Over a decade of experience of driving marketing transformation and repositioning brands across diverse industries. I have witnessed that change is difficult and the majority will resist it at first, people are so used to doing business as usual and when an outsider steps in, they tend to block anything new. Also, changing both the attitude and mindset of people is considered a challenge. Throughout my journey, I always made sure to spend more time understanding the way people do things and why! Also, learning how can a new way of doing things be introduced while ensuring the outcome is efficient, impactful and accepted.

Branding in general is subjective, not everyone will have the buy in of the brand story, the colors, the logo or the launch campaign. However, working with a clear strategic plan, new corporate and brand values, key deliverables on how to transform the change, with the right team unblocking the resistance of change will be achievable.

The core values of what kept a specific industry going for so many years may require revamping, re-branding or simply a shift in corporate culture. How I see it, a doctor can not operate on a patient without going through several medical tests and checkups only then will the route cause be identified and treated.

It is common to come across people who will jump into the change train and hang on, no matter how fast the train is going and there are some who would rather step aside and watch the train pass by. Many times we come across the need to move people and assign them new roles, build new partnership and motivate them to be part of the transformation.

As leaders it is critical to set our emotions aside and focus on the purpose of change because old habits are known to block the willingness to progress and develop. Old ways of doing things tend to slow execution, create silos and diverts people to different direction, having old verses new.

There is a quote by Peter Drucker that keeps me in check whenever I am about to support a corporate transformation, he said "No matter how strong a strategy is, it will fail if the culture of the organization does not support it". This just explains

how culture can drive behavior and support long-term success.

Marketing today sits between creativity, data, and responsibility. How do you personally decide when to push for bold storytelling and when restraint and clarity matter more... especially in a sector built on trust like banking? What's one myth about building strong brands in Oman that your experience has completely disproved?

Clarity is key at any point of time no doubt but how we say things always matters. I have experienced transforming industries with the support of consultants and on the other hand, I had an internal workforce team driving it along with the CEO of the company.

I must say the outcome of both is very different in terms of timeline and impact on deliverables.

Building a strong brand does not happen overnight, it is not a short-term project, it is not only driven by the Marketing and Communications department in silo.

The brand is not about the logo or just the story behind it, it is about the overall experience we share with people. When I say people, it must cascade to company employees, shareholders, partners and the community.

Lina Al Abdulsalaam is one of the architects behind Oman's most consequential brand and institutional transformations. Over two decades, she has shaped how banks, financial institutions, and national developments understand themselves; not through surface rebrands, but by aligning culture, strategy, and purpose. Known for entering complex organisations at moments of resistance, she diagnoses before she prescribes, builds teams before symbols, and treats change as a human process, not a cosmetic one. Her leadership has quietly reset benchmarks for how trust, clarity, and long-term value are built in Oman's corporate and civic landscape.

Just like any project, branding also requires us to follow several steps such as brand audit, stakeholder and market insights, brand mapping, brand strategy, brand architecture, brand narrative, visual and verbal identity, internal alignment, change management, brand rollout and finally measurement. As you can see it is not one simple step, many tend to focus on the brand and nothing else.

When it is time for me to work on a rebranding journey, the first thing I ask the stakeholders why are we changing? The following are a few scenarios I have come across the years, there is no right or wrong, but the goal must be clear as to why are we doing it. Has the business shifted its mission or vision? In one of the companies, they decided to focus on expansion, this is where their logo seemed too traditional. Hence it was necessary for them to evolve and realign perception with the vision. There is a company that was transforming through change management and here we focused more on repositioning the brand identity without changing the name or brand. There are companies who shift their target segments, then they will need a refreshed logo that attracts that specific audience. What was common across all the different projects, I worked on ensuring that the logos are visible and clear on the digital platforms because today if the brand we design does not work on a screen, then we must consider the matter again.

In conclusion, I would say a strong brand is not just a cosmetic exercise, or just following what is the new trend in the market – it must be part of the overall strategy.

Many young women aspire to lead but hesitate to take up space or claim authority. What helped you find your voice early on, and what would you tell women who are capable but still waiting for permission?

We all have our individual journey in life where we learn, develop and grow throughout the path. If I reflect on where I was 20 years back, it is

not where I am now. I still remember how I started my first assigned position in one of the largest banks in the country, I had no team, no title just a job description but none of that mattered to me at that time, all I wanted to do was to create my own team across various units within the same department and together achieve common goals that were assigned to us as a department. To me it was never about the credit as much as getting the job done successfully. I do not believe in just doing your day-to-day tasks, you should always go beyond to deliver. How else would you stand out from the crowd if you are just doing what you are supposed to do.

I learned a lot from other women who were not supportive during the start of my career, I am sure they had their reasons but that opened my eyes towards how I should treat fresh graduates through coaching and guidance because I was in their shoes once and I know how it felt. I may be an introvert, but my strength comes from empathy, listening and putting my team first.

I am so proud to say that in Oman we are fortunate that women are free to work in various industries with no restrictions since the 70s, with pride I say my mom was part of the Air Force crew and many other women I grew up around held different leading positions. I am not saying it is an easy path but its possible, when there is a will there is a way as cliché this may sound but its true.

My advice to the women out there, we do not need to wait for a tap on the back saying well done or someone who will show you the way up the ladder. If you are in an organization that does not help you grow and develop then maybe its time to seek a new opportunity.

One of my favorite lessons was from Dr. John Maxwell, the global leadership expert who visited Oman last year, he focused on High Road Leaders who seek Significant Success in this world and that has become my mission since.

Every person wants to be valued, respected, appreciated and under-

stood. Therefore, we as women leaders need to add value by serving others! It is simply about giving more, putting others first, being generous and creating value in people's life. Taking a high road requires a positive mindset, where you place others ahead of yourself and your own personal agenda.

After the loss of my only brother, who dedicated his last years of his life to giving back to others, I realized I am no longer chasing my own career success, I must add value and create an impact on other people's lives because their success is simply my success.

With so many demands on your time, how do you stay intellectually curious? What inspires you, and how do you deliberately make space to stay informed and ahead in a fast-moving world?

It is hard to juggle around and time is essence, but I say this to my kids all the time, we are extremely lucky to have access to information on the palm of our hand. I still remember the days where we had to research by reading books, visiting libraries and trying to dial into the connection of the slowest PC ever! There is no excuse but to move forward, now with the amount of information available from around the globe and various applications.

When I am in town, I get distracted because all we do is go through a checklist of things to do and other obligations.

Therefore, I ensure to either step away from the noise, at times I walk at the beach, seeing sunrise, camping or any chance to connect with nature. I believe during the week we either gain energy or release energy and it could be positive or negative, we need to head somewhere we can energize!

It is important for me to keep up with the latest trends, innovative ideas, meet people to exchange knowledge, see what the world is doing differently, latest technology, exploring new opportunities, social media, digital marketing, competition, market trends and the list goes on.

RANGE ROVER VELAR



HE Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish

Chairperson, MHD - ITICS

HE Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish has played a defining role in shaping Oman's economic, social, and civic landscape through decades of principled leadership and public service. Her work bridges enterprise, policy, and community impact, while her steadfast advocacy for women's empowerment has inspired generations of Omani leaders. Grounded in integrity and national vision, her influence reflects a lifelong commitment to inclusive progress and sustainable development.

Purpose, People, Progress



What guides your leadership philosophy at MHD ITICS, and how has your vision influenced the Group's trajectory in innovation and infrastructure development?

My leadership philosophy is rooted in purpose, people, and progress. I believe that innovation must begin with a clear purpose, one that addresses real challenges, anticipates future needs, and creates meaningful value for society. At MHD - ITICS, this mindset has guided our shift toward future-ready infrastructure and technology-driven solutions. By empowering teams, fostering a culture of curiosity, and encouraging calculated risk-taking, we have expanded our innovation footprint and accelerated digital transformation across various sectors. My vision has always been to position the Group not only as a market leader, but as a catalyst that contributes to Oman's broader economic and technological advancement.

MHD ITICS operates at the intersection of technology, industry, and consumer solutions. How do you harmonize these diverse sectors under a unified strategy?

The key lies in recognizing that these sectors, while diverse, share a common objective: enhancing quality of life through smarter, more efficient solutions.

We unify our strategy by focusing on three pillars:

- **Integration:** Ensuring our businesses operate with cross-sector collaboration
- **Innovation:** Leveraging emerging technologies to elevate both industrial and consumer offerings.
- **Impact:** Aligning each venture with national priorities, global trends, and long-term value creation.

This cohesive approach allows us to remain agile, competitive, and purpose-driven across all verticals.

What have been some defining moments in your leadership journey within MHD and Oman's private sector?

Several key milestones have shaped my leadership journey at MHD and

within Oman's private sector, moments that reflect both our nation's evolving priorities and my commitment to aligning MHD-ITICS with Oman's long-term vision.

One defining chapter has been steering the Infrastructure and Building Systems Division toward sustainability. Guided by Oman's energy diversification agenda, we focused on delivering green, future-ready solutions for major national development projects. Ensuring our company evolve from traditional offerings to sustainable technologies was not only a professional achievement, but also a personal commitment to supporting Oman's environmental goals.

Another pivotal moment was the creation of our Healthcare Division. As Oman Vision 2040 emphasizes accessible, technology-driven healthcare for all, we recognized the rising demand for advanced medical equipment and solutions. Establishing this division confirmed our ability to anticipate national needs and position MHD-ITICS as a partner in building a stronger, more innovative healthcare ecosystem.

More recently, one of the proudest and most symbolic milestones was reinforcing our support for Oman's tourism ambitions. His Majesty Sultan Haitham's vision to elevate Oman as a world-class luxury destination inspired us to invest in unique, high-impact hospitality projects. This commitment was powerfully demonstrated when we signed

Equally important is courage — the courage to challenge norms, encourage innovation, and open doors for others, especially women and young professionals.

an agreement with Omran Group to develop a hyper-luxury cliff-top resort in Musandam, to be operated by VDBI under the Alië Nivas brand. This project embodies the fusion of natural beauty, cultural authenticity, and luxury that defines Oman's tourism promise.

Collectively, these moments reflect a journey rooted in innovation, national alignment, and a deep belief in Oman's potential. They represent not just strategic milestones for MHD, but defining experiences that have shaped me as a leader.

As a prominent woman leading within a diversified conglomerate, what leadership values do you hold essential for driving sustainable progress?

I value integrity, empathy, and vision above all. Integrity ensures that our decisions remain principled; empathy helps us build strong, motivated teams; and vision provides the clarity needed to navigate complexity.

Equally important is courage — the courage to challenge norms, encourage innovation, and open doors for others, especially women and young professionals. Sustainable progress depends on inclusive leadership that recognizes diversity as a source of strength and creativity.

What message would you give to young Omanis — especially women — who aspire to lead with innovation, resilience, and global vision?

Believe in the power of your ideas, and never underestimate your ability to shape the future. The world is changing rapidly, and Oman needs young leaders who are bold, curious, and globally minded.

To young women in particular: your voice, perspective, and ambition are invaluable. Lead with confidence, invest in your skills, and surround yourself with people who uplift and challenge you. Every step you take contributes not only to your own success, but to the progress of our nation. The future belongs to those who innovate, persevere, and dream beyond boundaries and I am confident that the next generation of Omanis will do exactly that.

Luluwa Al Ismaili

**Human Resource Director,
Zubair Investment Corporation**

Luluwa Al Ismaili has spent her career fixing what quietly slows organisations down: unclear purpose, rigid processes, and untapped talent. Across aviation, consulting, power, and investment, she has redesigned hiring systems, shortened decision cycles, and built leadership pipelines that give women room to step forward early. A certified change and Lean practitioner, she approaches culture as a lived practice, not a policy; one conversation, one system, and one brave rethink at a time.

You've led HR initiatives across sectors from aviation to consulting and investment. Looking back, what's one unexpected lesson you've learned about people, culture, or leadership that still guides you today?

Across aviation, consulting, power, and investment, one lesson continues to guide me: people don't resist change, they resist unclear purpose. I learned early on that when employees don't understand the objective, the vision, or the end result, their behaviour can look like resistance, when in reality it's uncertainty. Another principle that has stayed with me is that not succeeding the first time doesn't make you a failure. Often, the issue isn't the idea, it's the audience, timing, or support structure. Upskilling, revisiting, and trying again are signs of strength, not setbacks.

What also shaped my perspective is how deeply culture is a belief system, practiced consistently from the most senior leader to the newest employee. To make meaning-



Clarity, Empathy, and Resilience

ful cultural shifts, you must reach people's hearts before their minds. People evolve, just like technology. They come with different histories, nationalities, and ways of working, which means empathy is essential. HR cannot be just policy implementers; we must be translators of human experience. This blend of clarity, empathy, and resilience has become my compass in every organization I serve.

Talent development and succession planning are central to your work. How do you spot future leaders (especially women) and help them shine in industries that have traditionally been male-dominated?

When identifying future women leaders, I look for qualities that go beyond performance: agility, aptitude, curiosity, eagerness to learn, ownership, and the ability to receive constructive feedback. These traits reflect not only capability but also potential for long-term leadership. Many talented women hesitate to step forward, so I intentionally create small but strategic opportunities that allow them to shine early, giving them meaningful projects, providing the right tools, and encouraging them to "give it a go." These moments build confidence and shape self-belief long before a job title does.

Bias is still a reality in many organisations, whether linked to gender, tenure, or nationality. Having witnessed these dynamics closely, I work actively to address and balance them where possible. I rely on structured competency frameworks, transparent assessments, and equal-access development paths to ensure fairness. Most importantly, I encourage women to stay committed to excellence; effort does pay off. My goal is to ensure that potential is recognised objectively, opportunities are distributed equitably, and women are supported to lead without hesitation.

You're a certified Change Management practitioner and Lean Green Belt. Can you share a project that pushed you out of your comfort zone but ended up being a game-changer for the organization?

One project that truly stretched me, and became transformational, was redesigning a full recruitment process using Lean principles. In one organisation, the hiring timeline had ballooned to 3-4 months, creating frustration for candidates, managers, and HR teams. By analysing every step, identifying waste, and simplifying approvals, I reduced the process to 45 days. I communicated the "why" clearly to management, linking the delays to loss of talent, reduced competitiveness, and an inconsistent candidate experience. The new process was perceived positively and remains in practice today.

Another defining initiative was establishing a Change Management Committee after employees voiced the need for greater transpar-

Mental and emotional health matter just as much as physical health, and different generations perceive wellbeing differently. It's okay not to be okay, and organisations must create room for that reality. Under pressure, I turn to collaboration, delegating, inviting ideas, especially from Gen Z, and allowing creativity to emerge through diverse perspectives.

ency, fairness, and involvement. The committee became a safe platform where employees felt heard and where brilliant ideas emerged, some now implemented, others in progress. Resistance was natural, but setting clear expectations and visible goals helped shift mindsets. These initiatives accelerated decision-making, improved creativity, reduced delays, and encouraged people to see challenges from new perspectives. For me, it reinforced that meaningful transformation is built through clarity, collaboration, and courage to challenge "how things have always been done."

Leading HR at a top Omani conglomerate must be intense at times. How do you stay grounded, energized, and maybe even have a little fun while navigating complex people and business challenges?

What grounds me most is knowing that no matter how intense the day is, my children and family are waiting for me at home. That reminder of purpose and balance keeps me centred. I also stay grounded by remembering why I am in this role: every employee matters, and sometimes a simple conversation can change someone's day. Whenever possible, I try to make the work environment enjoyable, a space where people feel energised, not drained.

My approach to wellbeing mirrors my personal philosophy. Mental and emotional health matter just as much as physical health, and different generations perceive wellbeing differently. It's okay not to be okay, and organisations must create room for that reality. Under pressure, I turn to collaboration, delegating, inviting ideas, especially from Gen Z, and allowing creativity to emerge through diverse perspectives.

What keeps the work human for me is empathy. I constantly remind myself that I am a person first, just like the employees I support. and as challenging as HR can be, I genuinely enjoy the "drama" and the problem-solving; obstacles motivate me. Finding a solution that balances employee needs with business priorities is where the real fulfilment lies.

On Her Own Altitude

Maha Al Balushi

The First Omani Female Pilot

Maha Al Balushi stands as a defining symbol of possibility in Oman's aviation story. As the country's first Omani female captain, she has expanded the horizon for young women by pairing technical excellence with humility, discipline, and calm authority. Beyond breaking barriers, Maha reshapes perception through consistency and quiet confidence, showing that the sky is not a limit but a responsibility carried with grace, focus, and purpose.

You've become a role model for young women entering STEM fields. What do you think would make more girls in Oman see science and aviation not as exceptions, but as exciting possibilities? For girls in Oman to see science and aviation as natural paths—and not rare exceptions—we must make these fields visible, relatable, and reachable. Young women need to see someone who looks like them, speaks like them, and comes from the same culture achieving things they once thought were out of reach. Representation isn't a luxury; it's a catalyst.

I believe the shift begins early. When girls are encouraged to ask questions, to build, to explore the sky instead of being told it's too big for them—confidence grows naturally. Schools and families play a huge role. When a young girl hears, 'You can be a pilot, an engineer, or a scientist,' and sees real examples living that story, her imagination changes.

As a country, Oman is full of potential. If we continue creating programs, mentorships, and hands-on experiences that let girls touch the science they usually only read about — visit fields, meet women in leadership — they will start to see these worlds as exciting possibilities, not intimidating exceptions.

My hope is that every Omani girl understands this: the sky isn't a limit; it's simply the beginning.

Was there a specific day, story or experience that made young Maha



Policies and opportunities create pathways, but it's the consistent work, dedication, and excellence in that role that truly shifts the narrative. Over time, what once seemed unusual becomes normal, and that is how change takes hold.

then, and there were no female captains that I knew and I could look up to, but that moment made me think: one day, I want to be in that seat.

When you're thousands of feet above, with the landscape beneath you, what thought or feeling still surprises you... even after all these years of flying?

Even after all these years, the feeling that still surprises me is the same one I had on my first flight — a quiet sense of gratitude. When I'm above the clouds, looking down at the world, I'm reminded how small our worries become from that height. It's a perspective that resets me every time. No matter how routine a flight may be, that moment of calm and clarity never loses its magic.

You've challenged both gender and regional stereotypes by becoming The first Omani Female Captain. In your view, what actually breaks stereotypes? Is it visibility, policy change, or simply doing the work until the narrative shifts?

Stereotypes are broken not by one single act, but by a combination of effort, visibility, and persistence. Being seen — as the first Omani female captain, for example — shows what's possible and expands imagination. Policies and opportunities create pathways, but it's the consistent work, dedication, and excellence in that role that truly shifts the narrative. Over time, what once seemed unusual becomes normal, and that is how change takes hold.

say, "one day, I'll be in that cockpit"?

There wasn't a single dramatic moment, but there was one day that stayed with me. I was traveling with my family, and as I watched the crew prepare the aircraft for departure, I felt an instant pull toward the cockpit. The precision, the discipline, the atmosphere — it fascinated me. I didn't know anyone in aviation back

Mahira Saleh Al Raisi

Chief People Officer, Sohar International

Mahira Saleh Al Raisi represents a rare continuity of leadership shaped from within an institution. Her journey reflects resilience, integrity, and a deep understanding of how people and purpose intersect during change. With clarity, steadiness, and empathy, she has guided teams through transformation while preserving trust and culture. Her leadership demonstrates that lasting impact is built quietly, through consistency, accountability, and an unwavering commitment to people.

What Endures Through Change



I place strong emphasis on open communication and ensuring that people understand both the direction we are taking and the reasons behind it. When people feel informed and involved, they are more willing to adapt. The mindset that supports success is one of flexibility and accountability.

You've grown within Sohar International from senior HR roles to now leading the entire people function. What has that journey taught you about leadership & and about yourself?

My journey at Sohar International has been one of steady learning and growth. Growing through different roles within the bank helped me to see the bank from multiple perspectives through the growth stages, which has shaped how I approach leadership today. I have experienced that effective leadership is built on trust, consistency, and a genuine understanding of people. On a personal level, the journey has reinforced the importance of resilience and self-awareness. There were moments that required difficult decisions and others that demanded patience and reflection. Each experience helped me better understand my strengths and areas for growth, and reminded me that leadership is a responsibility that evolves with experience.

The banking industry has undergone tremendous transformation, from digital disruption to changing customer expectations. How have you guided your teams through this constant change, and what mindset do you think helps people thrive in such an environment?

Change has become the everyday reality in the banking sector, and guiding teams through it requires clarity and reassurance. I place strong

emphasis on open communication and ensuring that people understand both the direction we are taking and the reasons behind it. When people feel informed and involved, they are more willing to adapt. The mindset that supports success is one of flexibility and accountability. Encouraging people to remain open to learning, while also taking ownership of their roles, helps build confidence during periods of change. Creating an environment where people feel supported makes a meaningful difference in how change is experienced.

As one of Oman's leading women in HR and banking, how do you view the evolving role of women in the corporate world today? What advice would you give young women aspiring to leadership positions?

The role of women leaders in the corporate world has progressed significantly, and we are seeing greater representation and influence at senior levels. Women today are contributing not only through technical expertise, but also by bringing diverse perspectives that strengthen decision-making and organizational culture. For young women professionals aspiring to leadership, my advice is to invest in continuous learning and have confidence in one's abilities. Seek out mentors, build strong professional relationships, and be prepared to step forward when opportunities arise. Leadership does not require fitting into a particular

design. It requires credibility, integrity, and commitment.

You often speak about aligning people strategies with business goals, but on a personal level, what keeps you motivated? How do you find purpose in what you do every day?

What motivates me is the opportunity to create a positive and lasting impact on people and Sohar International as a whole. I find purpose in ensuring that our people strategies genuinely support both employee development and business objectives. Seeing individuals grow in confidence and capability, and knowing that the right environment can enable that growth, is deeply rewarding. When people and the organization succeed together, it reinforces the value of the work we do every day.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received from a mentor, and do you still find yourself passing it on?

One of the most valuable pieces of advice I received was to lead with integrity at all times, particularly when faced with difficult decisions. That guidance has stayed with me throughout my career. I continue to pass it on, as integrity remains the foundation of effective leadership. Decisions made with honesty and fairness build trust, and trust is essential for long-term success and meaningful leadership.



Marwa Al Kharusi

Chief People Officer, National Finance

With more than two decades of experience across diverse sectors, Marwa Al Kharusi has shaped a people philosophy rooted in empathy, adaptability, and purpose. As Chief People Officer at National Finance Company, she brings deep strategic insight to culture-building, leadership development, and organizational transformation. Known as a trusted advisor to executive leadership, her work consistently centers on unlocking human potential and creating environments where people and performance grow together.

Anchor of Trust and Transformation

You've worked across various sectors before taking on the Chief People Officer role at National Finance. How have these diverse environments shaped your philosophy on people and culture?

Working across a range of industries before joining National Finance has

shaped my leadership philosophy in meaningful ways. Each sector came with its own rhythm—unique challenges, leadership expectations, and cultural nuances—which taught me early on that people are never a “one-size-fits-all” equation. These experiences strengthened my belief

that successful organizations are built on empathy, adaptability, and a genuine commitment to valuing people as individuals.

They also reinforced that culture is not created by policies alone; it emerges through trust, open dialogue, and understanding every-

day behaviors. At National Finance, this philosophy guides how I shape our people agenda. My focus is on cultivating an environment where employees feel heard, supported, and encouraged to grow. I firmly believe that when employees feel genuinely empowered, they are able to contribute to their highest potential and deliver their most meaningful impact.

Ultimately, the diversity of my career journey taught me that strong corporate cultures are intentional. They thrive when leaders champion inclusion, nurture collaboration, and invest meaningfully in their people.

HR in Oman is evolving quickly, especially with nationalization, skills transformation, and changing employee expectations. What shifts do you believe will define the next decade of the people agenda in the country?

HR in Oman is entering one of its most transformative periods, shaped by the country's economic ambitions, a modernizing workforce, and the accelerating influence of technology. In the years ahead, the people agenda will increasingly focus on developing talent that is agile, purpose-driven, and globally competitive. Continuous learning will become a cultural expectation as organizations prepare employees for emerging roles in digital finance, sustainability, data sciences, fintech, and other fast-evolving fields.

At the same time, the employee experience will shift significantly. People will seek workplaces that reflect their values—prioritizing well-being, flexibility, psychological safety,

and a sense of contribution to national progress. This will require HR to act as a strategic partner, using insights to anticipate workforce needs, strengthen leadership pipelines, and build cultures that attract and retain high-performing talent, recognizing that meaningful engagement drives both performance and retention.

We will also see increased emphasis on workforce mobility and experiential development, enabling Omanis to broaden their exposure through cross-sector opportunities. Leadership development will advance in parallel, preparing Omani leaders to navigate complexity and guide transformation with confidence and empathy.

As technology reshapes work, HR will play a crucial role in embedding AI responsibly and enhancing human potential. The decade ahead will redefine HR as a key driver of national growth.

You've led major change efforts, from organizational redesign to large-scale engagement and talent initiatives. What is one change-management lesson you believe every leader in Oman should understand today?

If there is one principle I believe every leader must embrace, it is that successful change begins with people, not processes. We often invest heavily in systems, structures, and strategies, but the real catalyst for transformation lies in how effectively we engage and inspire individuals.

Leaders must prioritize transparent communication and create safe spaces for feedback, questions, and collaboration. When employees

understand why change is happening and feel included in shaping the journey, they respond with commitment rather than compliance. That sense of shared ownership is what truly sustains transformation.

Transformation succeeds not because processes are perfect, but because people are aligned, empowered, and motivated to move forward together.

You've invested heavily in leadership development, coaching, and employee wellbeing. What advice would you give to young Omani professionals who want to build meaningful, future-proof careers?

My advice to young Omani professionals is to embrace lifelong learning and stay adaptable. The world of work is evolving rapidly, and the ability to grow with it, both technically and personally, will define long-term success. Building strong technical capabilities is essential, but equally important are communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence, as these are the qualities that accelerate professional maturity and open meaningful opportunities.

It is also valuable to build a network of mentors who can provide perspective and guidance, and to remain consistently receptive to feedback. Treating feedback as a catalyst rather than a critique enables individuals to refine their approach and enhance their impact. Likewise, I encourage professionals to pursue assignments that challenge them and broaden their capabilities; stepping beyond familiar roles is often where the most substantial development occurs.

Maryam Al Shabibi

Founder and Managing Director, Green Umbrella

Maryam Al Shabibi has reshaped recruitment in Oman by placing people, ethics, and long-term impact at the centre of workforce development. Through Green Umbrella, she bridges the gap between national talent and organisational need, championing sustainable hiring, Gen Z engagement, and future-ready skills. Her work strengthens human capital as a strategic asset, contributing meaningfully to Oman's evolving labour landscape and economic resilience.



Homegrown talent ensures long-term national capability, cultural alignment, and resilience.



International expertise accelerates innovation, brings global best practices, and supports knowledge transfer.

Cultivating Oman's Human Capital

Take us back to the beginning, what led you to establish Green Umbrella, and what gap did you see in Oman's recruitment landscape at the time?

When I founded Green Umbrella, I had a clear mission: to create a recruitment service that put people, purpose, and long-term development at the heart of every decision. Early in my journey, I saw a disconnect — talented individuals who were eager to contribute, and employers searching for sustainable solutions, yet the two were not aligned.

I believed then — and still believe today — that Oman's greatest asset is its human resources wealth. Green Umbrella was created to unlock that wealth by bridging the gap between opportunity and potential. I wanted to move beyond transactional hiring and build a more ethical, personalised, and strategic approach that supported both individuals and organisations in a meaningful way.

Over time, that vision expanded, and Green Umbrella has grown into a partner for recruitment, workforce development, and national talent empowerment.

The world of work is changing fast. How do you see workforce trends evolving in Oman and the wider GCC, particularly around nationalisation, hybrid work and increased automation?

We are witnessing one of the most significant shifts in the modern

workforce. In Oman and across the GCC, nationalisation efforts are opening new doors for local talent, while organisations are rethinking how they structure work, develop skills, and plan for the future.

Hybrid work models are changing expectations around flexibility and productivity, and technological advancement is pushing every sector to rethink the skills they need to stay competitive.

Across the region, governments and businesses are increasingly recognizing that building human resources wealth — through skills, adaptability, and long-term development — is becoming the most powerful competitive advantage. The organisations that succeed will be those that integrate strong national talent strategies, technology, and agile work cultures into their DNA

You work closely with Gen Z professionals. What defines this new generation of employees, and how are companies learning to engage and retain them?

Gen Z is redefining the workplace. They are ambitious, purpose-driven, and unafraid to challenge outdated norms.

Through Green Umbrella's training initiatives and graduate development programs, I've seen firsthand that this generation values continuous learning, transparent leadership, and workplaces that encourage innovation and expression.

Companies that engage Gen Z effectively do so by creating environments where growth is intentional and ideas are valued. It's not about perks — it's about culture. Those who understand this are not only retaining their young talent but are also cultivating the region's future leaders.

When it comes to tech talent, how do you view the balance between

developing homegrown expertise and attracting global professionals to the GCC? Is there a skill-shortage?

We are entering an era where digital capability is essential, not optional. While Oman and the GCC have made impressive strides in developing local talent in AI, data science, cybersecurity, and digital transformation, demand continues to grow.

The smartest approach is a strategic balance:

Homegrown talent ensures long-term national capability, cultural alignment, and resilience.

International expertise accelerates innovation, brings global best practices, and supports knowledge transfer.

Although certain skill gaps remain, they are narrowing. Enhanced university programs, upskilling initiatives, and skills-based hiring strategies are strengthening the region's human resources wealth and moving us steadily towards a robust, future-ready tech workforce.

As a leader and entrepreneur, what have been some of your key learnings about building trust among clients and staying relevant in a fast-changing talent market?

Trust is built through ethics, consistency, and transparency. Recruitment influences people's futures, and that responsibility requires integrity. Over the years, I've learned that listening — truly listening — to both clients and candidates is essential for delivering meaningful solutions.

To stay relevant, you must embrace change early. That means continuous learning, staying ahead of workforce trends, and leveraging technology to deliver greater insight. But at the heart of it all is human connection. No matter how advanced our tools become, people remain the core of every thriving organisation.

The Architect of Lasting Social Impact

What inspired you to establish Dar Al Atta'a, and what vision has guided its growth over the years?

I learned the value of giving from my mother, who often gave *adaqa* (charitable giving) to those around her. As I grew older, I noticed she would sometimes give to the same people repeatedly, even when their circumstances had already improved. That made me pause and think: how can we reach those who truly need help, and how can their voices reach us? Dar Al Atta'a began from that realization. It wasn't planned as an NGO at first; it was simply a group of friends who wanted to give. Giving is something inherent in us as human beings, and it is also deeply rooted in our Islamic faith. Our purpose was to help families and to improve lives for the better, while asking ourselves: are these improvements temporary, or can they become sustainable? In many ways, it wasn't a single moment of inspiration; it was a real need that became our inspiration.

How do you prioritize and identify the causes and communities that need support the most?

Of course, we have clear criteria for receiving requests for support. We look at factors such as the family's income, the number of dependents, and the type of need, whether it's medical treatment, housing, or urgent repairs. Based on our experience at Dar Al Atta'a, we investigate each case carefully to understand the real problem, and priority always goes to the most urgent situations. And in our 2024 audit, Dar Al Atta'a spent 4,095,000 Omani rials on relief and support for those in need.

What achievement are you most proud of in Dar Al Atta'a's journey, and why?

Dar Al Atta'a runs eight core pro-

My message to young people is: go ahead, take that leap of faith, take that step, and always believe in what your heart tells you.

grams: Families, Education, Islamic Values, Empowerment, Housing, Innovation, Debt Relief (Fak Al Kurba), Let's Read, and Disaster Relief. While each of these has a profound impact, I will highlight two that are especially meaningful to me. The first is building a dedicated team that works with efficiency, passion, integrity, and sincerity — qualities that are essential for any charitable organization. Alongside this team is the strong governance system within the organization, whose efficiency enables us to work in a systematic and organized way, achieving the desired results. This commitment to excellence has earned us three ISO certifications in quality management, governance, and volunteer management.

The second is through our housing initiatives, particularly the 'My Home, My Security' program, which I deeply believe in because it provides families with stability and safety. This initia-

tive was designed as a sustainable project, creating a lasting impact on families' lives. One of our greatest achievements is the construction of 'Hay Al Atta'a,' a neighborhood of 36 homes built with green energy using solar power and water recycling. To my knowledge, we are the first charitable organization in Oman to undertake a project of this kind.

What challenges have you faced in sustaining and expanding charitable initiatives, and how have you overcome them?

One of the biggest challenges we face is covering administrative and operational expenses. At Dar Al Atta'a, we believe that all donations from individuals should go directly to the charitable programs they were intended for. However, very few choose to donate toward operational costs. We do have some investments, including two buildings, but unfortunately the rental income does not fully cover our expenses, especially as we have more than fifty staff members. To address this, we organize many events throughout the year to cover operational needs. Even so, operational expenses remain one of our most significant challenges.

What message would you share with young people aspiring to lead social impact initiatives?

My message to young people is: go ahead, take that leap of faith, take that step, and always believe in what your heart tells you. Especially in social impact initiatives, this belief in giving back is one of the core values of humanity; it provides, it uplifts, and it helps others. And for anyone looking to work on this path, I want them to know that at Dar Al Atta'a, our doors are always open to guide and support them."

Maryam Issa Al Zadjali

Founder and Chairperson, Dar Al Atta'a

Maryam Issa Al Zadjali has dedicated her life to service, community upliftment, and sustainable social impact. As the founder and chairperson of Dar Al Atta'a, established in 2002, she has helped build one of Oman's most respected charitable institutions, creating long-term programs that strengthen families and communities. Her contributions extend to national service through two terms on the State Council, and have been recognised with the Sultan's Medal for Excellence. Alongside her humanitarian work, she is also an entrepreneur, balancing social purpose with business leadership.



Mayan Al Asfoor

Entrepreneur

Mayan Al Asfoor has spent over two decades building systems that last, from banking and fintech to hospitality. When she stepped away from structure to build her own business, she discovered resilience, conviction, and a taste for discomfort. Mayan leads with clarity, grit, and the belief that when there's no safety net, you either panic or build wings.



Start messy. Start imperfect. Just start.

You spent many years in banking, working inside systems that value structure, rules, and predictability. Then you went and opened a seafood bucket restaurant. Looking back, what did stepping away from that “safe path” teach you about yourself that staying inside it never could?

Banking taught me structure, discipline, and how to operate inside well-designed systems. But entrepreneurship?

That taught me who I really am.

When I opened a seafood bucket restaurant, I went from analyzing balance sheets to analyzing shrimp supply chains. There was no compliance department to lean on, no committee to approve decisions, just me, my instincts, and a lot of very honest customers.

What I learned is that I am far more resilient than I thought. When you step away from the “safe path,” you stop hiding behind structure. Every mistake is yours. Every win is yours. And every sleepless night is also yours.

It also reignited something in me. I realized I actually like the discomfort. It pushes me. And perhaps because I'm slightly stubborn, I prefer to say determined, I don't accept failure easily. When there's no safety net, you either panic... or you build wings on the way down.

Turns out, I build wings.

In Oman, many women want to start businesses but don't know where to turn for real advice or funding. From your experience on both sides, banking and entrepreneurship, what practical steps should women take to get the right guidance, earn credibility, and access capital without waiting for permission?

First: ask everyone. And I mean everyone.

Talk to bankers. Talk to suppliers.

You don't need someone to declare you 'ready'. Start messy. Start imperfect. Just start.

Talk to competitors. Talk to people who failed. Talk to people who succeeded. Collect perspectives. Then filter them through your own reality.

Second: passion is important, but numbers are oxygen. You cannot breathe without them. Take risks, but take calculated ones. Don't bet what you can't afford to lose. A business should challenge you, not financially suffocate you.

The good news is that access to capital in Oman has improved tremendously. There are SME programs, government initiatives, fintech platforms, the ecosystem is evolving. But credibility still matters. Walk into any funding discussion prepared. Know your numbers better than anyone in the room. Confidence backed by preparation changes how people treat you.

And most importantly, don't wait for permission. You don't need someone to declare you “ready.” Start messy. Start imperfect. Just start.

After long days filled with numbers, negotiations, and decisions, how do you usually switch off? And what does your choice say

about the kind of day you've had?
After long days of numbers, negotiations, and serious conversations, I switch off in the most unglamorous way possible, I play games on my phone.

It sounds ridiculous for someone who negotiates loan restructurings, but it works. It quiets my brain. It's my mental reset button.

But the real switch-off is my daughter. The moment I'm with her, the world shrinks to what truly matters. We build memories, laugh, plan little adventures. She reminds me that I am not just building businesses, I'm building a life.

If I'm playing games, it's been a very intense day. If I'm making plans with her, it's been a good one.

Looking ahead, after everything you've built so far, what still feels unfinished? As an Omani woman, mother, and entrepreneur, what kind of impact do you still hope to leave, not just in business, but in the community and future you're helping shape?

What feels unfinished is legacy.

Not in a dramatic way, I'm not trying to build monuments. But I want to leave something behind that says, “She showed up. She built. She didn't quit.”

I've experienced both achievement and setbacks. I've navigated boardrooms and kitchens. I've rebuilt organizations and reinvented myself. And I know how lonely leadership can feel sometimes.

If I can share my experiences, the wins, the failures, the doubts, and help even one woman feel less alone in her ambition, then that matters.

As an Omani woman, a mother, and an entrepreneur, I want to prove that you can be structured and bold, disciplined and creative, serious and joyful, all at once.

And honestly? I think I'm just getting started.

Dr. Mona Ismail

Dean, Scientific
College of Design

Dr. Mona Ismail is shaping the future of design in Oman by bridging technology, culture, and human-centered thinking. As an educator and leader, she champions empathy, social impact, and sustainability—ensuring design remains deeply human, even in an AI-driven world.

Keeping it Real, in the Age of AI



AI is changing the design disciplines and generation of design solutions. As a design educator, how do you imagine AI shaping the future of design in Oman... and what skills will remain uniquely human?

AI is undoubtedly redefining the design generation of solutions offering tools that enhance efficiency and creativity in the design process. In Oman, I envision AI supporting topics such as sustainable design practices that respect our cultural heritage while facilitating innovative solutions for modern challenges. AI will redefine the Omani design workflow across all disciplines—from architecture to graphic design by automating the tedious. It will allow for rapid generative conceptualization, enhanced realistic visualization, and more effective client engagement.

However, while AI provides valuable support, certain skills will remain uniquely human and essential in the design field. Empathy will be crucial and critical thinking will enable designers to navigate complex problems and make informed decisions. Additionally, creativity will continue to thrive as a uniquely human trait, allowing designers to conceptualize innovative ideas that resonate with diverse human experiences. AI will enhance our capabilities, but it is our human-centered approaches that will ensure meaningful and impactful designs in Oman.

Women in Oman have made remarkable progress in the creative and academic worlds. As the Dean of the Scientific College of Design, what does meaningful female leadership look like in the design field, and how do we nurture more women to lead with confidence rather than conformity?

Omani women are truly excelling in the creative world. As Dean, I believe great female leadership in design isn't about fitting into an old box; it's about innovation. It thrives on the unique strengths women bring: using empathy to build powerful teams and harnessing their deep cultural understanding to make designs that truly resonate here in Oman. These

“
Empathy will be crucial and critical thinking will enable designers to navigate complex problems and make informed decisions.”

leaders aren't afraid to challenge old rules they're focused on pioneering sustainable and accessible solutions.

To cultivate more women leaders, we must create enriching environments where their contributions are celebrated. This involves establishing mentoring programs, leadership training tailored for women, and platforms to showcase their talents and stories, ultimately empowering them to lead with confidence rather than merely conforming to established norms. We teach practical skills that build professional strength like negotiation and clear assertion.

You've always emphasized that design has a social impact. In practice, how do you ensure students leave the college with not just technical knowledge, but also the social sensitivity to design for real communities and diverse human needs?

To ensure our students graduate not only with technical expertise but also with social sensitivity, we integrate interdisciplinary approaches into our curriculum. We emphasize community engagement through projects that allow students to collaborate with diverse populations, helping them understand real-world challenges and needs. This holistic education fosters graduates who are not only proficient in design principles but are also

advocates for inclusivity and social responsibility in their work.

You've spent an impressive career shaping how people experience spaces... what is one place in Oman that still brings you peace, and why does it speak to you?

One location that resonates deeply with me is Wadi Shab. The breathtaking natural beauty, tranquil water pools, and stunning cliffs create a serene escape. This place symbolizes the harmony between nature and human experience, inviting exploration. It speaks to me as a reminder of the deep connection we share with our environment and the importance of fostering peace through design.

How do you envision the future of design in the Sultanate? What are the international trends emerging that Omani designers need to address?

The future of design in Oman, driven by the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040, will see a profound shift from a supporting service to a primary engine of economic diversification and cultural identity. I see design becoming an integrated discipline where national heritage meets global innovation, led by three key pillars: Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, and Digitalization. The future Omani designer is an "Innovator-Entrepreneur." Our focus must be on transforming creative talent into viable businesses that contribute to the GDP. Oman has already set strategies and government programs to support entrepreneurship in the creative industries. Sustainability is not an option; it is a design constraint dictated by the Omani environment and global necessity. The future of design here must focus on the circular economy and the sultanate has already set initiatives and projects for the SDGs. Finally, digitalization is the foundational enabler, transforming both the design process and the resulting product. I believe that Omani designers will not only contribute to national goals but firmly establish the Sultanate as a regional leader in innovative, responsible, and culturally significant design.

Muna Al Badi

Head of ICT,
CC Energy Development

Muna Al Badi has grown alongside Oman's energy transformation, shaping how technology enables performance, safety, and sustainability. With nearly two decades at CCED, she has led critical digital initiatives while fostering collaboration, cultural change, and people-first leadership. Her work bridges innovation and environmental responsibility, and her mentorship continues to inspire a new generation of Omani talent in one of the country's most complex and evolving sectors.



Wired for Change

Your career has evolved alongside Oman's transformation in energy and technology. With nearly two decades of experience, how do you see your own growth reflecting the industry today?

I began my career at a time when digitalisation in Oman's energy sector was still in its early stages. Over the years, I've grown alongside that transformation, moving from hands-on technical roles into shaping how technology supports the wider business.

I've witnessed ICT evolve from a support function into a strategic driver of performance, safety, and sustainability. That mirrors Oman's own journey towards a more diversified, technology-enabled economy. At CCED, working on initiatives such as the 4G connectivity rollout and the Gas-to-Power project showed me how innovation can directly improve operations while contributing to national energy efficiency.

Today, the industry is more data-driven, interconnected, and sustainability-focused. My own growth has followed that same path, learning to link technology decisions with environmental and operational outcomes. What has remained constant is curiosity and adaptability. Each phase of transformation has brought new expectations, and staying open to change has been essential. I see my journey as part of a wider story where Omani talent and leadership are shaping a more resilient energy sector for the future.

CCED has undergone significant transforma-

tion in recent years. What has that period meant for you personally as a leader?

CCED's transformation has been about building a more connected, efficient, and collaborative organisation. For me, it has been as much a personal journey as a professional one. It challenged me to look beyond systems and processes and focus on how people experience change.

Technology is only part of the equation. What truly drives progress is mindset. Leading through this period strengthened my belief in listening, clear communication, and shared accountability. As part of the Extended Leadership Team, I've seen how aligning digital tools with cultural goals can unlock real collaboration and trust. It reinforced for me that leadership isn't about directing change, but about enabling people to move forward together.

How do you balance introducing new technologies with ensuring they create lasting operational and environmental value?

For me, balance always begins with purpose. Every technology we introduce must deliver real and lasting value, both operationally and environmentally. At CCED, digital innovation is never about adopting tools for their own sake. It's about solving meaningful challenges.

By embedding data analytics, automation, and remote monitoring into our operations, we make smarter, more efficient decisions every day. Projects like Gas-to-Power demonstrate how innovation can reduce flaring, improve energy efficiency, and strengthen reliability at the same time. Technology only truly delivers value when it improves how we work and supports long-term sustainability.

As a woman leading in energy and technology, what challenges have you faced, and how have you navigated them?

When I started my career, there were

very few women in either energy or technology. I never saw that as a limitation. I saw it as an opportunity to grow and, hopefully, make the path easier for others.

I focused on doing my work with excellence, staying curious, and building trust through consistency and collaboration. Over time, I learned that leadership isn't about having all the answers. It's about creating space for others to find their voice. Today, I try to pass that on by mentoring young women and encouraging them to lead with confidence. Representation matters. Seeing someone like you succeed makes the path feel possible.

When mentoring younger professionals, what qualities do you hope they develop?

Curiosity is essential. I encourage people to ask questions and understand the 'why' behind their work. A willingness to learn is just as important, especially in fast-moving fields like energy and technology.

I also value ownership. The strongest professionals understand the impact of their actions and take responsibility for outcomes. Collaboration matters deeply too. In an environment where operations, safety, and technology are so interconnected, no one succeeds alone. I encourage younger colleagues to see challenges as opportunities, every obstacle as a chance to learn or innovate.

Looking ahead, what excites you most about the future of energy and technology?

The pace of change is what excites me most. The next phase will be driven by data intelligence, automation, and sustainability. At CCED, we're laying the groundwork today by strengthening digital integration, cybersecurity, and alignment between technology and business value. Our ambition is to become a model for smart, responsible energy operations in Oman and the wider region.

Designing Human Potential in the Age of AI



Nadine Zureikat

Chief Revenue Officer, Elevatus HR

Nadine Zureikat, Chief Revenue Officer at Elevatus HR, sits at the intersection of technology and human insight, quietly reshaping how organisations across the region think about talent. With an architect's eye for structure and an entrepreneur's instinct for possibility, she has helped governments and enterprises reimagine recruitment not as a process, but as a strategic lever for long-term growth.

What inspired your journey into the intersection of technology and human capital?

My path into this field actually started with architecture — back when I was studying and practicing it. Architecture taught me how to imagine spaces that don't yet exist and design them into reality. But over time, I realized something deeper: buildings don't truly come alive without the people who move within them.

It wasn't the structures that fascinated me most — it was the people, their stories, and how design could influence the way they live, connect, and grow. That realization slowly redirected my curiosity — from shaping spaces to shaping experiences. And then came a moment that changed everything. Two brilliant visionaries, Yacoub and Yara — the founders of Elevatus — came to me with an idea that immediately resonated. They had seen the future long before it arrived. Their vision wasn't just about technology; it was about transformation — about empowering organizations to discover and elevate human potential in ways never done before. The idea of Elevatus felt like the natural next chapter of that same purpose. I could see the blueprint in my mind — not of walls and foundations, but of a living ecosystem built around people. In architecture, every line serves a purpose. In technology, every code does too.

Elevatus became the bridge between both worlds — where design thinking meets human potential. What inspired me was the realization that I could still build — just differently this time. Not structures made of stone and steel, but systems built on intelligence, empathy, and purpose.

In your view, what role will artificial intelligence play in shaping the future of talent management?

Artificial intelligence will completely redefine the DNA of talent management. It's not here to replace people — it's here to reveal their full potential. The question isn't if AI is coming. The question is: Are we ready for it? At Elevatus, we're seeing this trans-

formation unfold every day. Our AI doesn't just automate tasks — it thinks with recruiters. It shortlists top talent in seconds, predicts success through data-driven insights, and personalizes every hiring experience to match both skills and potential. It can analyze thousands of profiles, conduct assessments, and even forecast how well someone will thrive in a job role better than another — all in one unified ecosystem. The real value of AI lies in what it unlocks. It shifts talent management from a process into a living strategy — one that's faster, fairer, and far more human. By removing manual work, it gives leaders the freedom to focus on what no machine can replicate: vision, creativity, and connection. The future of work will belong to those who know how to blend both — human intuition and artificial intelligence — into one powerful force.

What are some of the key challenges organizations face when adopting AI-driven recruitment



The real value of AI lies in what it unlocks. It shifts talent management from a process into a living strategy — one that's faster, fairer, and far more human. By removing manual work, it gives leaders the freedom to focus on what no machine can replicate: vision, creativity, and connection.

models, and how can leaders overcome them?

The first challenge? Money — always haha. Everyone loves talking about innovation until someone brings up the quotation. Suddenly, "AI transformation" turns into "maybe next quarter." But the funny thing is, AI doesn't cost nearly as much as the hours companies lose to manual work. Staying outdated is actually the most expensive strategy of all. The second challenge is fear — the classic "is the robot coming for my job?" moment. People worry that AI will replace them, when in reality, it's just replacing the repetitive tasks no one enjoys doing anyway. It's not taking your job; it's taking your least favorite part of it. The key for leaders is to shift that mindset. Technology can't transform an organization without the people behind it. Because at the end of the day, what good are all these advancements if we don't have the right people to drive them forward?

As a leader who has paved the way for women in tech and innovation, what advice would you share with young women aspiring to lead in fast-evolving industries like AI and digital transformation?

I'd tell them — don't wait for permission to take up space. The world of technology can feel intimidating at first, especially when you're one of the few women in the room. But progress rarely happens by invitation — it happens when you show up, speak up, and own your place with confidence and grace. As Shirley Chisholm once said, "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." That line has always stayed with me — not as defiance, but as a reminder that opportunity is something you can create. You don't need to wait for the perfect setting; you can build it yourself. And if there's one truth that has guided me most, it's this: "Growth and comfort do not coexist." You can't evolve by staying where it feels safe. Every bold step, every uncomfortable moment, is where transformation begins. So lean into it. Because that's where your real power .. begins.

Nutaila Al Kharusi

Managing Director, Al Harub Medical Centre

Nutaila Al Kharusi has quietly reshaped how mental health is understood and delivered in Oman. As Managing Director of Al Harub Medical Centre, she introduced psychological care to the private sector at a time when stigma outweighed awareness, and youth was mistaken for inexperience. A psychotherapist and researcher, she combines clinical rigor with deep compassion, building systems of care, training, and trust that place human connection at the heart of healing.

Bringing the Unspoken Into Light

You introduced mental health services to Oman's private sector at just 24, what inspired you to take that pioneering step, and what were the main challenges you faced at the time?

I was actually working at PDO in Corporate HSE at the time, trying to understand the psychology behind safe practices — why people choose to act safely or not. I was under the mentorship of an industrial psychologist from Shell, and it was fascinating, but not what I was trained to do. I had studied in California to be a clinician, not a corporate psychologist. When Cyclone Gonu hit, I was called to the PDO Medical Center to offer psychological support to



employees and their families. That experience didn't change my path — it reignited it. It reminded me of what I had always wanted: to be a clinician and work directly with people, offering psychological help and care. Soon after, I made the decision to leave my job at PDO and opened the Department of Mental Health at Al Harub Medical Centre (AHMC). I knew, deep down, that this was my purpose and I never looked back.

But it wasn't easy. Business was slow, and many people thought I was too young to be taken seriously. Some clients looked down on me, and I quickly realized how much I missed working within a team — something I had been trained to value in California, where supervision and peer collaboration were integral to clinical work. At the time, I had only been back in Oman for a year and didn't know many professionals in my field. Most were working in the government sector.

Still, with patience, perseverance, and the unwavering support of my family, I began reaching out to peers, slowly building a network and eventually a team that believed in the same vision. That's how AHMC began to take shape — from a single idea into a collective mission to bring quality mental health care to Oman.

Through Al Harub Medical Centre and Tamaken, you've shaped both service delivery and professional training in mental health. How do you balance these two missions of care and capacity-building?

I don't really see them as two separate missions — they're deeply interconnected. You can't deliver quality care without continuously investing in your own growth and in the growth of others.

My vision has always extended beyond AHMC itself. I want every Omani mental health professional to have access to high-quality, evidence-based training so that the overall standard of care in the country continues to rise. Tamaken was created from that belief — to build a generation of skilled, confident practitioners who can serve their communities with both competence

The next step is to move beyond awareness into sustainability — building systems and structures that make mental health care accessible, consistent, and part of everyday life in Oman

and compassion. In the end, capacity building is care, because the people we train will touch countless lives beyond our walls.

As awareness of mental health continues to grow in Oman, what changes have you witnessed in public perception and access to care?

When I started in 2007, most of our clients were expatriates. Omanis were hesitant — mental health carried stigma and silence. Today, around 99% of our clients are Omani, and many actively prefer to see Omani therapists. That shift alone says so much about trust, awareness, and cultural acceptance.

Over the years, I've seen tremendous growth in how people talk about and seek help for mental health. Younger generations, social media awareness, and open conversations in schools and workplaces have all played a big role. Organizations are now willing to invest in mental health policies and programs, something that was unheard of when we first began.

We've come a long way, but the work isn't done. The next step is to

move beyond awareness into sustainability — building systems and structures that make mental health care accessible, consistent, and part of everyday life in Oman.

How does your research on Hikikomori and social withdrawal in Oman contribute to understanding mental health from a local, cultural perspective?

My research explores Hikikomori, or prolonged social withdrawal, a condition first identified in Japan and now emerging in Oman. In Oman, social identity and belonging are deeply intertwined with family and community life. When someone withdraws, it isn't seen as just an individual behavior — it carries social meaning, often tied to family expectations, stigma, or even generational misunderstanding. By studying both clinical and general populations, I aim to understand how it presents locally and how cultural factors shape the experience. In a society where identity is closely tied to family and community, withdrawal carries deep social meaning. This work seeks to develop culturally sensitive approaches to early intervention and open more honest conversations around isolation, belonging, and mental health in our region.

What message or advice would you share with young Omanis women pursuing careers in psychology, healthcare, or research?

Be patient, be compassionate — but above all, believe in your own potential. The work we do touches the most human parts of people's lives, so you have to keep investing in yourself — in your knowledge, your emotional growth, and your integrity.

When I began, there was no path to follow. But today, you have a foundation — and a community — that believes in your voice. My generation opened the door; now it's your turn to walk through it with courage. Keep pushing boundaries, keep learning, and carry forward a legacy of care that is rooted in both science and compassion, because Oman needs your voice in this field more than ever.



Intuition, Purpose and Clarity

Prabha Seethapathy

MD & CEO, Petrostar Corporation

Prabha Seethapathy represents a rare kind of leadership, one shaped as much by inner clarity as by outward achievement. Drawn to Oman by its balance of heritage and progress, she chose to build here not merely as an entrepreneur, but as a contributor to a national vision grounded in values and long-term thinking. Her work reflects a deep belief in sustainable growth, conscious decision-making, and leadership that aligns ambition with purpose. Through resilience, insight, and quiet conviction, Prabha exemplifies how meaningful impact is created—by building steadily, thoughtfully, and in harmony with the world around us.

What drew you to Oman originally, and at what moment did you feel “this is where I’m meant to build something”?

Oman’s attraction was never loud or flashy ...Oman drew me with its quiet strength—a land where heritage and progress coexist in harmony. I came to Oman drawn by its serenity but what I found was purpose. A seed was planted in me — a dream to be an entrepreneur and to align my ambitions with the unfolding course of this remarkable country. Oman nourished that seed, offering fertile soil and steady care that let it take root and grow.

The pivotal moment came not in a single dramatic event but in a sequence of small events and confirmations. The defining moment was when I realized that building here was not just about business; it was about contributing to a vision that respects values & traditions while embracing transformation. That alignment of values made me feel, “This is where roots can deepen and dreams can flourish.” ...and thus began my Business Journey!

As Oman moves deeper into Vision 2040, what is one technology or sector shift you’re most confident Oman is ready for, even if others are hesitant?

Oman is poised for a decisive leap into renewable energy and water sustainability. While some may hesitate, fearing cost or complexity, I see readiness in the nation’s intent and resilience. Vision 2040 is not just a roadmap—it’s a declaration that Oman is prepared to lead in clean

technologies, ensuring prosperity that is both enduring and ethical.

What would you tell women in Oman who want to establish and lead companies rather than just work in them?

Leadership begins with courage—the courage to imagine, to act, and to persist. To women aspiring to lead, I would say: don’t wait for the perfect moment or permission. Equip yourself with knowledge, seek mentors who challenge and uplift you, and embrace setbacks as lessons. Keep moving forward! True leadership is not about occupying a title; it’s about creating impact that reflects your values and inspires others!

Many people know you as a results-driven business leader, but few know about your deep engagement with meditation and self-aware-



Don’t wait for the perfect moment or permission. Equip yourself with knowledge, seek mentors who challenge and uplift you

ness. How do those practices shape your decision-making, especially in high-pressure environments?

Meditation is not a practice for me—it’s a portal to the Silence within, it’s my life purpose! Our Body gains strength by exercise, moving it ... whereas our mind gains strength by stilling it! In silence, where mind is stilled, a space where decisions are not just reactions but Revelations, rooted in awareness. The couple of hours I sit each day in meditation, don’t merely calm me; they ground me in a field of clear, watchful presence. From that inner center I move through my duties and responsibilities with a quieter heart and a steadier mind.

In any demanding situation I return to the space between stimulus and response, and in that space a subtle knowing arises. Decisions stop feeling like frantic choices and become more like offerings: guided by intuition, aligned with a deeper purpose, and informed by a clarity that is not merely intellectual. Mindfulness dissolves the clamor of fear and habit so that conscious, whole-hearted action flows naturally — less about asserting the separate self and more about answering the call of what wants to emerge.

High-pressure environments often demand speed, but wisdom requires stillness. Self-awareness reminds me that every choice ripples outward, shaping lives and futures. When I sit in stillness, I am not escaping the world; I am entering its essence—where intuition and reason converge, and leadership becomes an act of consciousness rather than control!



From Earth to Expression (and Access)

Radhika Hamlai

Founder, INMA Arts

Radhika Hamlai has played a quiet yet transformative role in shaping Oman's contemporary art landscape. Through the Affordable Art Show and her ceramic studio, Inma Arts, she has consistently worked to make art accessible, participatory, and rooted in cultural heritage. Her commitment to supporting emerging artists, reviving traditional ceramic practices, and inviting the wider community into creative spaces has helped democratize art in Oman. Radhika's work reminds us that creativity thrives when it is shared, inclusive, and deeply connected to place.

The Affordable Art Show has become a much-loved platform in Oman's creative scene. What impact are you most proud of seeing over the years?

Over the past nine years, the Affordable Art Show has grown into something much bigger than an exhibition. What I'm most proud of is how it has helped change the way people relate to art in Oman. The show brings together between 25 and 45 local and international artists every year, but more importantly, it welcomes people who may never have stepped into a traditional gallery before.

From the beginning, the idea was simple: art should be accessible. You don't need to be a collector or an expert to own and enjoy it. At the show, people can discover original work that is affordable, diverse, and deeply personal.

We also place a strong emphasis on participation. Alongside the exhibition, we host pottery wheel sessions, painting workshops, ceramic painting, and art activities for children. These hands-on experiences allow people of all ages to connect with creativity in a relaxed and joyful way.

One of the most meaningful aspects for me is supporting young and emerging artists who often struggle to find platforms to show their work. By giving them visibility, we help them become part of Oman's cultural conversation. Over time, the Affordable Art Show has become a space that nurtures talent, builds confidence, and strengthens the creative fabric of the community.

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Choose pieces that speak to you. Let your collection grow naturally, guided by curiosity and feeling. When art is chosen with care and love, it becomes a bridge between people, cultures, and experiences

What draws you to ceramics, and how do you see Omani ceramic traditions finding wider recognition today?

Oman has a deep and beautiful history with clay. Long before modern conveniences, handmade terracotta vessels were essential for daily life, especially for storing and cooling water. Ceramics here are not just functional objects; they are part of cultural memory.

Living in Oman inspired me to reconnect with this heritage and explore it in a contemporary way. I was drawn to the simplicity, honesty, and grounding nature of clay, and to the idea of keeping traditional knowl-

edge alive through modern practice.

That journey eventually led to the creation of Inma Arts, a studio dedicated to pottery and ceramic painting. Our aim is to help people understand the cultural significance of clay while giving them the freedom to experiment, learn, and create. At Inma Arts, visitors can experience traditional techniques in a welcoming, modern environment.

Through both the Affordable Art Show and Inma Arts, I hope to encourage people to reconnect with this heritage, not just by observing it, but by shaping it with their own hands.

With art increasingly seen as an investment, what advice would you give someone starting a collection in Oman?

I always remind people that art doesn't begin with investment value. It begins with connection. Art is for everyone, and it deserves to be lived with, not locked away or treated only as an asset.

When you collect art, you're bringing someone's story into your home. You're connecting with the artist's process, emotions, and inspiration. That relationship gives art its real value. It adds warmth, identity, and meaning to a space in a way that nothing mass-produced ever can.

My advice is simple: choose pieces that speak to you. Let your collection grow naturally, guided by curiosity and feeling. When art is chosen with care and love, it becomes a bridge between people, cultures, and experiences — and that is where its true worth lies.



Building Bridges Where Others See Borders

Rebecca Olson

CEO, AmCham Oman

Rebecca Olson brings together worlds that rarely meet and makes them work better for everyone involved. Shaped by years spent across nonprofits, global communications, and leadership roles in places as varied as Boston, Palestine, and Kenya, she approaches opportunity with both global perspective and local commitment. In Oman, she has become a connector across sectors, cultures, and communities—linking business leaders, entrepreneurs, and families through initiatives that strengthen trade, collaboration, and access to knowledge. Her work reflects a belief that real impact happens when silos are broken and people are given space to learn, connect, and thrive together.

You've worked across nonprofits, global communications, and business leadership in multiple countries. How do these experiences help you spot opportunities or create connections that others might miss?

My years working in very different environments, including places like Boston, Palestine and Kenya, have deeply shaped how I see the world and the opportunities in it. Those experiences make me especially grateful for the infrastructure, stability, and long-term vision we have here in Oman. When you understand both constraint and possibility, you begin to recognize opportunities that others might overlook.

Being part of an international community in the capital, Muscat, has shown me just how powerful cross-sector business networking can be. One of the biggest barriers to opportunity—especially in business—is the silo effect, and it happens even within the same sector, sometimes. What I see at AmCham Oman, and what I value most about it, is that we deliberately break those silos by bringing every sector into the same room. Energy, logistics, healthcare, education, manufacturing, tech—people are pushed out of their normal groupings, and that's where unexpected connections and partnerships are formed. It's also good for those from the SME ecosystem to meet larger companies, for the multinational CEO's to meet Oman's incredible SME's. I'm proud to be a part of helping to facilitate these introductions.

Oman's Vision 2040 is driving economic diversification. How is AmCham helping make that vision a reality, and what role do Oman-U.S. trade connections play in this journey?

Oman holds a unique global advantage as one of only 20 countries worldwide—and just four in the MENA region—enjoying a Free Trade Agreement with the United States. It also benefits from some of the lowest tariff access available globally today. At AmCham, we actively translate that advantage into real commercial outcomes by supporting exporters, facilitating U.S. market entry for Omani companies, and helping U.S. firms establish operations here. This is especially impactful in traditionally high-tariff sectors such as medical manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, and food processing. Our work directly supports Vision 2040 by attracting high-value investment, enabling technology transfer, and creating sustainable private-sector jobs.

You founded Oman's only public lending library, which is such a unique initiative. How does this passion project tie into your broader approach to community impact and engagement?

At its core, I believe that everyone—especially children—deserves access not only to free books, but to safe, welcoming community spaces centered on learning and connection. In my professional role, I bring CEOs and business leaders together to create economic impact. Through

the library, which is entirely volunteer-run, we focus on children and families from all backgrounds who are living in Oman, giving them access to books and community-based learning events. I grew up benefiting from libraries myself in the U.S., and this is simply my way of paying that forward. The vibes at free reading, craft, LEGO or storytelling events are truly something to behold. We often have events with 60+ people from India, Oman, USA, Gaza, Germany, you name it. Everybody, no matter their background or age, deserves a chance to meet others and thrive in community.

Leading in male-dominated spaces while raising three boys must give you a unique perspective. What advice or mindset do you think is most important for women to hold their own and thrive in leadership?

I often joke that youth was my training ground—I went to a tech university (RIT) in the early 2000s with an eight-to-one male-to-female ratio in most of my classes, and I grew up with four brothers! Executive presence is everything. Women must communicate calmly, clearly, and creatively, stay anchored to their values, and never dilute their convictions to fit a room. Strength and perseverance matter—but so do warmth and kindness. Those qualities are not weaknesses; when paired with confidence and professionalism, they become real leadership advantages. And above all, it's important to lead in a way you're proud of—strong, principled, and grounded.

Rumaitha Al Busaidi

Business Development Manager at Hydrom; Vice President of the Board, Environmental Society of Oman

Rumaitha Al Busaidi stands at the unique intersection of science, policy, heritage, and global advocacy. An environmental researcher and advisor working with governments and international bodies, she brings clarity and conviction to some of the most urgent climate conversations of our time. Deeply rooted in Oman's landscapes and cultural memory, her work connects groundwater systems, aflaj traditions, and environmental stewardship to questions of identity, resilience, and long-term security. Whether in policy forums or remote ecosystems, Rumaitha has the rare ability to translate complex data into trust, urgency into shared purpose, and sustainability into a lived responsibility. Her leadership reflects a powerful balance of intellect and stewardship.



Balancing Data and Diplomacy

Many young women look up to you as a multi-hyphenate achiever. What have you discovered about time management and making the most of your day that helps you balance such a diverse range of roles?

I no longer treat time as something to control. I treat it as something to honor. My days are filled with research, policy work, writing, and mentoring, yet I have learned that not every task deserves the same space or the same emotional weight. Each morning begins with a quiet decision about what will actually move me forward and what will simply keep me occupied. My mornings belong to deep thinking and writing because that is when my mind feels most open and imaginative, while my afternoons belong to conversations and decisions because that is when ideas begin to take shape. What matters is the alignment with purpose and not the volume of work, and over the years I have realized that rest is not an interruption to productivity but a necessary part of clarity. Stillness refines intention, and intent shapes everything that follows.

As someone advising global bodies and governments, how do you navigate the tension between urgent climate realities and the slow pace of political systems?

It's one of the hardest spaces to hold. Science makes the urgency impossible to ignore, while politics often moves with the rhythm of committees, procedures, and negotiations that require immense patience. I sit frequently at the point where both worlds meet, translating the language of data into the language of governance. Policy only progresses when trust is present. Facts can shift understanding, yet trust shapes willingness. My approach is to frame

climate action through shared interests, such as stability, economic resilience, and long-term security. When sustainability stops being seen as a separate environmental agenda and becomes recognized as the foundation of a stable and competitive future, leaders engage more readily. The pace may feel slow, but once change takes root through shared conviction, it becomes more durable and far-reaching.

Oman's environmental challenges are not always the same as those in other regions. What local issue do you wish received more attention, not just from policymakers, but from the community?

People often speak of Oman's coasts because they are the most visible part of our natural beauty, yet the crisis lies in the ground that carries our history. Groundwater is disappearing. The ancient aflaj systems, which once brought life to entire communities, are drying at an alarming rate, and many do not realize that their decline represents more than an environmental concern. These waterways shaped the way people lived, the way communities were built, and the way generosity became a cultural instinct. Every drop that flows through an aflaj carries a story of survival and cooperation. Reviving these systems is an act of resilience and cultural preservation. Communities have a central role to play, because meaningful policy always grows stronger when it reflects a shared understanding of identity and stewardship.

Few people have seen the planet as intimately as you have... from all the continents to oceans to the South Pole. What's the most unexpected lesson travel has taught you about life?

Antarctica removed every illusion of control. During the expedition an avalanche shook our camp, and in that moment I understood how small we truly are. Nature is neither cruel nor kind; it simply exists in its truth. Every journey since then has carried a similar lesson. I found belonging not through places but through awareness of how the world holds many forms of life in balance. I have witnessed moments where ecosystems collapse and moments where they recover, and these experiences continue to shape my sense of responsibility. Travel made me realize that the planet does not revolve around our expectations. It invites us to pay attention, to understand, and to care in a way that honors the places we encounter.

You've lived many identities... scientist, adventurer, radio presenter, policy advisor. Which identity challenges you the most today (it could be something that we haven't listed), and why do you continue to choose it?

The part of my identity that stretches me the most is the one that stands at the intersection of different worlds. I move between science and policy, between heritage and innovation, and between Oman and global arenas.

This position asks for patience and clarity. Some days involve explaining international frameworks in ways that resonate with local realities, while other days involve showing international partners how the Gulf shapes its own path. It is a responsibility that asks for listening as much as speaking. It continues to challenge me because the work carries many expectations, yet it also offers opportunities to build understanding and create pathways that did not exist before.



Samira Hilal Al-Naamani

Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC)

Beyond the Balance Sheet

Having built a remarkable career in finance and corporate services across the hospitality and tourism sector, what initially drew you to this field, and what has kept you passionate about it over the years?

From the beginning, I was fascinated by the role finance plays in shaping decisions that go far beyond numbers. It is the foundation that allows ideas, projects, and visions to materialize. The hospitality and tourism sector, in particular, inspired me because it is dynamic and people-focused. It combines service, culture, and business, and I saw an opportunity to create real impact through financial leadership. What keeps me passionate is the continuous challenge of balancing financial discipline with creativity and innovation, ensuring that organizations remain sustainable while contributing to Oman's growing global presence as a destination.

Finance often sits at the heart of every organization's growth. From your perspective, how can strong financial leadership contribute to building resilience and sustainability in Oman's hospitality and events sector?

Strong financial leadership provides the clarity and foresight needed to manage risks, allocate resources efficiently, and adapt to changing market conditions. In the hospitality and events sector, this is particularly important because of external factors such as seasonality, global

travel trends, and economic shifts. A resilient financial strategy not only safeguards the organization but also allows it to invest in people, technology, and sustainable practices. By embedding financial sustainability into operations, we strengthen Oman's



do not limit yourself. Finance and hospitality may seem like very different worlds, but they intersect beautifully to create opportunities for growth, innovation, and leadership. Build a strong foundation of knowledge, seek mentors, and always be curious to learn.

position as a competitive, attractive, and responsible destination for business and leisure.

As a woman leader in a demanding industry, what challenges have you faced, and how have you navigated them while continuing to inspire others around you?

Early in my career, there were fewer women in leadership positions, which meant there were limited role models to look up to. I navigated many challenges by focusing on excellence, professionalism, and persistence. I mentor and support other women, so that together we create a more inclusive environment. My goal has always been to demonstrate that leadership is not defined by gender, but by vision, integrity, and results.

What advice would you give aspiring young girls who are aiming to work in finance, hospitality, or both?

My advice would be: do not limit yourself. Finance and hospitality may seem like very different worlds, but they intersect beautifully to create opportunities for growth, innovation, and leadership. Build a strong foundation of knowledge, seek mentors, and always be curious to learn. Most importantly, trust your abilities and remain resilient. Challenges will come, but each challenge is an opportunity to grow. The future of these industries in Oman is bright, and there is space for young women to play leading roles in shaping it.

Samira Al Namani has spent over two decades strengthening the financial foundations of Oman's hospitality and events sector. From establishing early finance operations in landmark hospitality projects to supporting the growth of a world-class convention and exhibition destination, her work reflects strategic clarity, resilience, and long-term vision. She views finance not as a back-office function, but as an enabler of people, innovation, and sustainable growth—playing a quiet yet critical role in positioning Oman as a trusted destination for global business and events.

The Courage to Care

You are often described as a pioneer in the field of mental health in Oman and the region. What inspired you to dedicate your life to this cause?

Mental health is not just a field to me. It is life itself. Your mental health is your being. It is what allows you to move forward or brings everything to a stop. I understood this very early on. As a teenager, from around Class Eight, I found myself deeply drawn to psychology and to understanding the human mind. I was not only interested in learning about mental health, but also in supporting people who were struggling.

That awareness grew into a life-long commitment. I knew I wanted to work as a practitioner, but also as an advocate and activist for mental health. This is something I intend to dedicate my life to, until the very last day.

Founding Whispers of Serenity was a breakthrough moment for mental health in the Sultanate. What has been the most transformative impact of the clinic so far?

What matters most to me is that people now know there is a place they can go to. A place that offers different approaches to healing, not just one traditional model. Mental health support can take many forms. It can be through art, music, movement, mindfulness, conversation, or awareness.

Whispers of Serenity was created to reflect that belief. It was important for people to feel comfortable, safe, and welcomed in an environment that does not feel intimidating. The fact that we are now entering our fifteenth year is something we are celebrating with great gratitude. I am deeply thankful to everyone who supported us along the way, and most of all, to our clients who trusted us with their journeys.

You have led initiatives both locally and internationally, from

youth-focused campaigns to global humanitarian support. How do you see Oman's role in shaping mental health awareness on a wider scale?

From the beginning, my vision was for our work to extend beyond borders. While Whispers of Serenity is rooted in Oman, it was always meant to speak to the world. Oman is a country known for peace, compassion, and humanitarian values. Mental health belongs naturally within that identity.

Our campaigns are international, reaching people across cultures and communities. This is not limited to the Arab world. It is global. In that sense, Oman continues to play its role as a country that leads with humanity, offering support not only materially, but emotionally and psychologically as well.

Throughout your journey, what challenges have you faced in breaking the stigma around mental health, and how have you worked to overcome them?

Stigma exists, but it is far less than it once was. What I never believed in was the idea that something would not work simply because of culture, society, or tradition. Too often, we stop ourselves before we even try. I chose a different approach. I believed in trying first, learning from the experience, and then improving.

If something does not work, we look for another solution. But we do not assume failure. The real challenge has not been stigma as much as the

responsibility to keep evolving. Every success raises the bar. You must constantly challenge yourself and your team to do better than before.

Momentum matters. It is easy to become comfortable and stop pushing forward, but that was never the goal. The goal has always been to keep the conversation alive, to keep finding new ways to support mental health, and to stay committed even when not everyone is on board.

What message would you share with the next generation about the importance of mental health and well-being?

This generation is very aware of mental health, which is a positive shift. However, awareness must be matched with understanding. Words matter. Feeling upset does not always mean being depressed. Feeling anxious does not always indicate a disorder. Knowing the definitions and symptoms is essential.

At the same time, information should not come solely from social media. Education matters. Professional guidance matters. Communication matters most of all. We need to learn how to speak openly, clearly, and responsibly about mental health.

I have great hope for the next generation. They are creative, expressive, and open.

These qualities are exactly what we need to continue evolving the mental health conversation and making it accessible in ways people truly understand.

Every success raises the bar. You must constantly challenge yourself and your team to do better than before.

**HH Sayyida
Basma Bint
Fakhri Al Said**

Founder, Whispers of Serenity Clinic

Her Highness Sayyida Basma Bint Fakhri Al Said is a pioneering force in advancing mental health awareness in Oman and beyond. As the first woman to establish a mental health clinic in the Sultanate, she has combined clinical practice with advocacy, education, and humanitarian outreach. Her work has helped normalise conversations around mental well-being while expanding access to compassionate, culturally grounded care across communities.

HH Sayyida Wisam Jaifar Al Said

**Chief Marketing, Corporate
Communication & Sustainability
Officer at National Finance**

With two decades of leadership across global institutions and Oman's corporate landscape, Her Highness Sayyida Wisam Jaifar Al Said brings rare depth to the intersection of brand, communication, and sustainability. Her work reflects a long-term view of value creation, where ESG is embedded into strategy, trust is built through clarity, and leadership is measured by impact on people, institutions, and the nation's progress.

Sustainability is becoming central to business strategy globally. How have you seen ESG practices evolve in Oman, and what opportunities do you see for the next generation of leaders?

Sustainability in Oman has matured from being a voluntary commitment to becoming a central pillar of corporate strategy and national progress. Over the past decade, we have seen a clear shift toward structured ESG integration, deeper alignment with Oman Vision 2040, and a stronger regulatory emphasis on transparency, governance, and long-term value creation. Organizations increasingly understand that ESG is not a compliance exercise but a catalyst for competitiveness, resilience, and stakeholder trust. This shift is especially evident in sectors embracing responsible finance, low-carbon innovation, and more holistic environmental and social stewardship.

For the next generation of leaders, this evolution presents unprecedented opportunity. They stand at the intersection of purpose and innovation, equipped



Grace Under Pressure, Impact with Meaning

with technological fluency, global awareness, and a growing desire to create meaningful impact. Their role will be to reimagine business models, advance sustainability-linked solutions, and embed ESG into strategic decision-making. Whether through green finance, digital transformation, or inclusive community development, they have the ability to shape a more sustainable and equitable economic landscape.

Ultimately, Oman's ESG journey will be propelled forward by leaders who combine strategic insight with a deep sense of responsibility, ensuring that progress, people, and the planet advance together.

Your career spans international experience with UNESCO and the ICC in Paris, as well as leadership positions in Oman. How has this global exposure influenced the way you approach strategy and communication at National Finance?

My early exposure to international institutions like UNESCO and the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris played a powerful role in shaping the leader I am today. These experiences were my first real window into how global organizations think, collaborate, and communicate across cultures.

It brought forward an important insight: that operating on a global stage requires far more than alignment with international best practices. It underscores the need for cultural intelligence, diplomatic communication, and the ability to build consensus across diverse perspectives.

Such exposure also reveals the importance of systemic thinking—understanding how policy, culture, and business dynamics intersect, and how communication shapes trust in complex stakeholder ecosystems. Effective communication, in

this context, moves beyond messaging; it becomes a disciplined practice of articulating intent, purpose, and shared value with clarity and nuance.

Growing up as a third-culture child, having lived most of my life abroad, added another important dimension to that foundation. You learn to navigate unfamiliar environments, read between the lines, understand people beyond their words, and adapt with sensitivity. It cultivates resilience, empathy, and the ability to view situations from multiple perspectives, qualities that are essential to effective leadership.

These principles remain foundational to my approach at National Finance. They have shaped a more integrated and forward-looking strategy for branding, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement, grounded in transparency, strong governance, and values-led storytelling. By combining global insight with a deep understanding of the Omani context, we are able to craft strategies that remain purpose-driven, internationally attuned, and authentically anchored in our national identity.

As a recognized thought leader and mentor, what advice would you give young Omani women aspiring to build careers at the intersection of marketing, corporate communications, and sustainability?

Young Omani women are standing at a remarkable moment in our nation's history. They are more educated, more confident, and more globally exposed than any generation before them. They carry the natural ability to blend tradition with innovation in a way that is uniquely Omani. At the same time, the fields they are entering carry their own distinct demands and strengths, each shaping leadership in a different way.

Marketing teaches you how to

understand people. It's about human behavior, creativity, and building brands that resonate. It requires curiosity, agility, and a willingness to keep learning as consumer expectations evolve.

Communications teaches you how to move people and build trust. It's about clarity, transparency, and ensuring organizations communicate with responsibility and credibility. Strong communicators listen deeply and understand context, culture, and timing.

Sustainability, on the other hand, is all about discipline grounded in governance, impact, and long-term thinking. And yes, many people worry about greenwashing, which is why this field needs principled young women who are committed to truth, data, and real progress. Sustainability is about measurable action first, and communication second.

For anyone entering these fields, my strongest advice is:

Lead with integrity: Credibility is your currency. Never communicate what you can't stand behind.

Stay curious: These fields evolve quickly. Follow global trends, understand new technologies, and pay attention to how the world is reshaping consumer expectations and sustainability standards.

Use your voice: Young women sometimes hesitate to speak up, but your perspective is often exactly what organizations need. Don't wait for permission. Contribute, question, and bring your ideas forward. Your perspective matters.

The fields of Marketing, Communications, and Sustainability are each separate careers in their own right but if you do choose to or get a chance to combine them, you become a powerful storyteller with the ability to shape mindsets, influence behavior, and build brands that stand for something.

Shatha Al Maskiry

Managing Director, Protiviti Oman

Shatha Salim Al Maskiry works at the intersection of people, culture, and systems, shaping transformation through trust. With over two decades of global experience across Arthur Andersen, PwC, Shell, and Protiviti, she bridges global frameworks with local realities to make change practical and human. Through platforms such as Lahunna, SIDRAH, Rialy, and Wijdan, she equips women and young professionals with clarity, confidence, and purpose, reflecting a future of work rooted in values and inclusion.

Soft Skills Running Hard Systems

Your career has spanned global organizations and diverse markets. What experiences most shaped your leadership approach and perspective on transformation?

Every market and environment taught me something unique about human interactions, adaptability, collaboration, resourcefulness, as well as the power of cultural integration. This reminds us that any transformation isn't just about strategies or systems as much as it is about people. I discovered that different cultures respond to change very differently but all of us require humility to listen and courage to challenge the status quo. My international experience enlightened me with new perspectives but also reinforced that transformation isn't one-size-fits-all. It has to be human-centered, culturally relevant, and anchored in our values. The beauty of it all is recognizing that people are people and they all aspire to progress with purpose and dignity. Our role as leaders is to create healthy environments to enable those aspirations to thrive.

Having worked across continents, how do you adapt strategies to balance global best practices with the unique needs of local markets such as Oman?

When it comes to policies, processes and systems, the key is always to align with the organizational maturity the client aspires to reach, their risk appetite, and their compliance with both local regulations and international standards. What tends to differ across markets is not so much what we do, but how we do it.

In all markets, transformation and change initiatives succeed only when we recognize that people are the true connective tissue between systems and controls; they are the lifeblood of any organization. This means best practices alone aren't

enough. What really matters is building trust and winning hearts before minds. This requires cultural sensitivity, strong awareness of social dynamics, and mastery of the art of communication, choosing the right language, tone, timing, and methods to ensure that change is not just implemented on the surface, but embraced and embedded in the very DNA of the organization.

At Protiviti, you focus on building trust through transformational projects. Can you share an example of a project that had a particularly meaningful impact on people and organizations?

In our transformational projects, we always prioritize trust as the cornerstone of sustainable change. One initiative, in particular, had a profound impact on both the organization and its people because of the way we approached communication. We designed a comprehensive communication framework that detailed the channels, tools, methods, cadence, and tone of engagement, ensuring clarity, consistency, and momentum over a two-year period. We had a very detailed plan and took the lead to handle it ourselves on behalf of the client because we knew the issues and had to communicate differently for them to regain trust in the upcoming changes.

Equally critical was creating space for authentic two-way dialogue, moving beyond top-down messaging to genuine engagement. We also understood the importance of constructively engaging the most vocal skeptics, and transforming them into some of the strongest advocates for change. This deliberate investment in trust and dialogue not only accelerated adoption but also fostered a culture of transparency, inclusivity, and shared ownership. The outcome was not just organizational success,

but a genuine sense of collective pride and celebration.

Leading cultural and organizational shifts often requires courage and resilience. What has been one of the most significant challenges you've faced, and how did you navigate it?

One of the greatest challenges is when a client is not ready to face itself with humility and the courage to change. As consultants, our role is to bring objectivity and independence to the table, that part is straightforward. The real test lies in whether the client is prepared to confront uncomfortable truths and take ownership of the transformation. For me, courage begins with honesty. We cannot enable meaningful change if we are simply telling people what they want to hear. That's why we choose to work with clients and partners who value candor and are committed to progress, even when it's difficult. In many ways, courage is the first requirement of our profession; we're expected and trusted to bring it into every engagement.

What advice would you give to the next generation of women leaders in Oman who aspire to create meaningful change in their fields?

Just love what you do and approach it with both excellence and integrity. Lead with class and grounded in ethics, because credibility will always be your strongest currency. Also, master the art of communication, not by being the loudest voice in the room, but by being clear, influential, and persuasive. Build allies early on because meaningful change is never achieved in isolation. And rather than dwelling on problems, consistently position yourself as someone who brings solutions. That mindset not only earns respect but also creates opportunities to shape the future.



Sheikha Ambuali

General Manager,
Yango Oman

Sheikha Ambuali has grown alongside Oman's mobility revolution, helping shape Yango from its early operational days into a national platform with real social impact. Rising from the youngest voice in the room to General Manager, she has led with clarity, trust, and pace. Her work on the Female Taxi initiative proved a simple truth: representation unlocks participation. Sheikha's leadership reflects a new generation building progress from the inside out.

Driving What Comes Next

From studying political science and spending time abroad in Turkey to helping build one of Oman's most dynamic startup success stories, what sparked the shift toward tech, operations and the mobility sector?

I've always been interested in fast-moving environments where you can see the impact of your work immediately. Tech and mobility offered that, a space where ideas turn into real change, every single day.

Having been central to the Female Taxi project from its earliest days, what moment made it clear that this initiative could genuinely change lives? What do you believe holds more women back from entering mobility jobs, and what insights have the fearless early adopters taught you?

It became clear the moment women started applying simply because they saw someone like them already doing the job. The biggest barrier was never ability — it was seeing a real example. Once that existed, everything changed.

Rising through the organisation from early operations to GM comes with its own challenges. How has the approach to leading a team evolved, especially with colleagues who first knew you as the youngest member in the room?

It hasn't been easy. Stepping into a leadership role among colleagues you've grown alongside requires clarity, consistency, and trust. I believe strongly in teamwork, and my focus has been on aligning the team around a clear vision and moving together toward shared success.

After witnessing the rapid scaling of a national mobility platform so

Stepping into a leadership role among colleagues you've grown alongside requires clarity, consistency, and trust. I believe strongly in teamwork, and my focus has been on aligning the team around a clear vision and moving together toward shared success.

early in your career, what guidance would you share with young Omanis who want to create meaningful impact inside startups but feel unsure where to begin? Everything you do has value. Don't be afraid to stand out, and don't wait to feel ready. Focus on what you're good at, learn fast, and take responsibility early.



Dr. Siham Al Harthy

Founder and Chairwoman of Siham Real Estate Development & Investment, Board Member Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Siham Al Harthy operates at the intersection of policy, investment, and nation-building. From public service to private development, she has helped shape tourism, real estate, and emerging digital ecosystems with a values-first lens. Her work insists that true progress integrates technology with culture, and that lasting development builds capacity, not just visibility.

Legacy is Capacity

As Oman experiences rapid transformation, many developments race to meet global benchmarks. How do you decide what meaningful progress looks like without compromising cultural identity?

Meaningful progress, in my view, is not measured by how quickly we build, but by how wisely we design. In real estate development and tourism, I believe every project must reflect Oman's geography, heritage, and social rhythm. A destination should feel Omani before it feels international.

As we work on smart urban developments, integrated tourism destinations, and AI-driven economic initiatives — including our AI Zone platform — the focus is not imitation of global models, but thoughtful adaptation. Oman's strengths lie in its stability, strategic location, human capital, and cultural depth. These are competitive advantages.

True progress integrates technology with tradition. A tourism development should empower local communities. A technology zone should build Omani capabilities, not merely attract capital. Global benchmarks are useful references, but identity is the anchor that ensures sustainability. Development disconnected from culture may grow quickly — but development rooted in identity endures.

Women in Oman are increasingly shaping both policy and enterprise. Having operated at the intersection of public service and private investment, how do you approach leadership differently in each space, and what lessons should the next generation carry forward?

Public service taught me institutional responsibility and long-term alignment with national frameworks. Private investment — particularly in real estate, tourism, and technology — demands agility, financial discipline, and decisive execution.

Working between both spaces revealed that transformation happens when policy vision translates

Build competence. Understand economics, governance, land development, and digital transformation.

into viable projects. Vision 2040 sets the national direction; our role in the private sector is to convert that direction into sustainable tourism assets, intelligent urban communities, and AI-enabled economic platforms that create meaningful employment.

As a woman leader, I believe participation must evolve into influence. Representation alone is not enough; we must strengthen governance, financial literacy, and technical expertise among women so that leadership becomes institutional, not symbolic.

To the next generation, especially young women: build competence. Understand economics, governance, land development, and digital transformation. Confidence gains authority when supported by knowledge — and knowledge creates lasting impact.

Wearing many hats often means constant interruption. What practices or perspectives help you remain centred and intentional in how you lead?

Clarity of mission is essential when leading across multiple sectors. Not every opportunity aligns with long-term value creation. I evaluate decisions based on whether they contribute to ecosystem building

rather than isolated outcomes.

For example, a tourism project is not simply hospitality — it connects to infrastructure, SMEs, employment, and cultural preservation. Likewise, the AI Zone initiative is not just about technology; it is about positioning Oman within the future digital economy and developing national capability.

I dedicate time to strategic thinking beyond daily operations. Leadership requires reflection as much as action. I also believe strongly in empowering capable teams; institutions must function independently of individuals.

Remaining centered comes from understanding that this phase of work is part of a broader national transformation. When purpose is larger than personal ambition, focus becomes clearer and distractions less significant.

When future generations look back at this phase of Oman's transformation, what do you hope they will say you helped make possible?

I hope they will say that we helped shift Oman toward a value-based, knowledge-driven economy.

Through real estate development, I hope we contributed to building smarter and more sustainable urban environments. Through tourism, I hope we strengthened Oman's global positioning while preserving authenticity. Through AI and digital ecosystem initiatives, I hope we laid foundational platforms for long-term competitiveness.

Most importantly, I hope it is remembered that women were active architects of this transformation — not observers. If future generations inherit stronger institutions, globally competitive sectors, and leadership spaces where women participate naturally and confidently, then our efforts will have mattered.

Legacy, for me, is not visibility. It is capacity — building structures that allow others to grow further.

Protecting the Invisible Majority

Suaad Al Harthi

Executive Director, Environmental Society of Oman

Suaad Al Harthi has spent nearly two decades turning science into stewardship. As Executive Director of the Environment Society of Oman, she leads conservation efforts that protect some of the world's most endangered marine species while building environmental awareness from classrooms to coastlines. From coral reefs to humpback whales, her work blends research, community action, and quiet persistence shaping a future where conservation is practical, inclusive, and deeply rooted in Oman's natural heritage.

What first sparked your passion for environmental work, and what achievement are you most proud of so far?

From a young age, I always enjoyed spending time outdoors, curious about rocks and shells and how nature functions. Biology was my favorite subject and I pursued a degree that would provide me the right mix of adventure and outdoor field work alongside biology and natural sciences. My first job as a marine researcher allowed me to dive deeper into understanding the significance of coastal and marine habitats and learn more about endangered species, and the threats that they face – and gave me a drive to want to do the best that we can to minimize impacts to endangered species and support healthy ecosystems.

I do not have a single achievement that I am most proud of, but I can say that I'm proud of the fact that I have dedicated 20 years towards commitment to nature conservation.

How has being a National Geographic Explorer and Wayfinder Award winner influenced your mission?

The National Geographic Society Wayfinder Award recognizes individuals who are redefining leadership in science, conservation, education, technology and storytelling. Receiving this Award and becoming a National Geographic Explorer has made me realize that my work is not only locally significant but is acknowledged and appreciated at a global level, it has motivated me to

keep pursuing what I am passionate about and has also allowed me to amplify the important work that the Environment Society of Oman has been dedicated to.

The award was further supported by a grant which I have utilized to develop a coral reef conservation and capacity building project to support our knowledge and understanding of the resilience and recovery of Oman's coral reefs in the face of climate change and human disturbances, to develop the skill sets required for teams to conduct surveys following regional monitoring protocols, and to develop educational materials targeted to school aged children so that they can understand the significance of marine ecosystems.

A main component of project implementation is to encourage female leadership and participation in field science.

What's one major challenge you've faced in your work, and how did you overcome it?

The ongoing challenge in conservation work is finding the right balance between the interests for human activities and development and the preservation of endangered habitats and ecosystems. I do my best to take a pragmatic approach and provide practical information on how we can work together as a collective society towards a more sustainable future keeping in mind that we need all players on board from school students, the youth, private sectors as well as government entities to all work collectively and these positive

steps can ensure a more sustainable future. The other challenge which is always ongoing working for a charity organization such as the Environment Society of Oman - is fundraising to support our initiatives and programs. We do our best to encourage donations from the public, schools, hotels and the private sector – as no amount is too small to contribute towards making a difference and supporting us at conserving Oman's natural heritage.

How do you see the role of women in environmental leadership growing in Oman and the region?

The role of women in environmental leadership is certainly increasing in Oman and across the region. When I first started work, women were not necessarily encouraged to join the environmental sector particularly because of the outdoor and sometimes remote field work involved. However, today women are much better supported and I see a growing number of women taking on environmental careers and joining field science.

What advice would you give to young people, especially women, who want to pursue a career in conservation?

For young women, I would advise them to find what they are passionate about and wholeheartedly pursue it. It's important for them to dictate their own narrative and not allow other people's skepticism to drive their ambitions. At the end of the day it's their actions and achievements that will shine through.

Sumaira Chowdhury

UNICEF Representative to the Sultanate of Oman

Sumaira brings a rare blend of strategic clarity and deep empathy to her work at UNICEF Oman, where she plays a pivotal role in advancing partnerships that deliver real, measurable outcomes for children and communities. With a strong focus on collaboration across government, private sector, and civil society, she has helped translate global UNICEF priorities into locally relevant action. Her leadership reflects a consistent commitment to impact, sustainability, and building systems that protect and empower the most vulnerable

A Steady Hand behind Lasting Change



You've worked with UNICEF across multiple countries and contexts. How has your global experience shaped the way you approach programmes and partnerships in Oman, especially given the region's broader social and geopolitical challenges?

Indeed, Muscat is my sixth duty station with UNICEF and as always, my approach is a "glocal" one. That is to say, that as much as I try to share relevant global experiences with partners in Oman, I am very conscious that there is a lot of rich expertise, culture and history domestically that is our first stop in developing programmes and partnerships.

Your question hints at the challenges that many countries in the Middle East and North Africa region face in terms of instability, conflict and sadly even war; but equally, there are also many that are moving up in terms of global rankings of income and human development. Oman is well-placed to help both, given Omani values of peace and generosity, but also in terms of all the knowledge that the country can contribute to others as they also seek to further their development.

Children today are growing up in a digital world very different from the one we grew up in. How do you see technology changing the way they learn, connect, and access opportunities in Oman?

The digital world offers so many positives and can be a game-changer for children in various ways.

Across the world, we see that digital learning can be a lifeline: reaching children in conflict zones, supporting teachers in remote areas, and opening new pathways for girls, children with disabilities, and those out of school. By bridging digital divides and leveraging innovations like AI and adaptive learning tools, as UNICEF, we aim to empower teachers, accelerate foundational learning, build critical 21st-century skills, and strengthen entire education systems. Here in Oman – which has impressively high internet penetration rates – we see there are huge

opportunities to learn, connect and tap into no matter where a child is in the country, and we know that the Ministry of Education is already working on this. It can, however, be daunting as a parent.

The speed at which technology is progressing and changing can be hard to keep up with. We have a responsibility to equip our children with the knowledge and skills to make the right choices, especially vis-à-vis national values.

Technology after all is a tool like any other, what comes of it depends on how you use it. Around the world, researchers are still exploring whether the increased dependence on technology and the use of smartphones might have a negative impact on learning outcomes for children.

As a leader who has navigated diverse roles worldwide, what advice would you give to young women in Oman who aspire to take on ambitious, impactful careers?

My biggest piece of advice is to take anyone else's advice with a pinch of salt! Or to put it a bit more seriously,



We have a responsibility to equip our children with the knowledge and skills to make the right choices, especially vis-à-vis national values.

don't be afraid to make decisions that are the right decision for you (/ and your family), and once you have made those tough choices, don't second-guess yourself. Other people (friends, family, colleagues) are always going to have opinions about what you should do and as much as you should consider and indeed solicit such perspectives, ultimately you will have to live with whatever it is you do.

From personal experience, I once had an opportunity for a promotion that would have had personal consequences, so I chose not to take it up. Does it mean that I progressed more slowly in my career than if I had done? Most likely yes; but do I regret that it meant that I remained with my husband and child? Not at all! And perhaps someone else would have made a different choice, and that's ok too – as long as it's what you want. I've been lucky to have role models and mentors – both women and men – who have tried to balance their personal and professional lives, so using them as a sounding board has been particularly helpful.

Looking back at your journey with UNICEF, is there a moment or experience that continues to inspire you personally and professionally?

This is a tough one! I have been so fortunate in my line of work to come across incredibly dedicated and hard-working people in so many different countries (special shout-out to my UNICEF colleagues around the world – and of course my amazing team here!) that it's hard to pick just one.

But let me go back to a very formative experience: I started my career with UNICEF in Kenya, working in one of the poorest and most remote districts of the country, sitting under mango trees with citizens and local officials – men and women, young and old, brainstorming with them on ways to develop their communities to improve the rights of children to education, water, sanitation, health, nutrition, protection – you name it. People want to do good things for kids – and it's our job as UNICEF to help them, how lucky am I?!



Tamima Al Shanfari

Project Director, Shanfari Trading & Furnishing

Tamima Al Shanfari represents a new generation of leadership shaped by discipline, curiosity, and quiet determination.

Trained in Nutrition and Dietetics in the UK, with hands-on experience in the NHS, she brings analytical rigor and accountability into a very different arena: interior projects and business expansion. Since joining Shanfari Trading & Furnishing, she has grown into her role by learning the business from the ground up, contributing to regional expansion, and helping position the company for its next phase of growth—rooted in heritage, but looking outward.

A New Generation, Rooted in Heritage

You started out in Nutrition & Dietetics and now lead interior projects. How has that mix of experiences shaped the way you approach challenges today?

Starting in Nutrition & Dietetics taught me to approach problems with a strong analytical mindset and a deep respect for planning, precision, and accountability. In that field, small decisions can have significant consequences, so I learned early on to assess risks carefully, rely on data, and think holistically about

outcomes. Those fundamentals have stayed with me and now form the backbone of how I manage interior fit-out projects, whether it is evaluating design feasibility, managing budgets, or sequencing works to avoid downstream issues. Transitioning into interior project leadership expanded that foundation by adding complexity, pace, and collaboration at scale. Leading fit-out projects requires coordinating multiple disciplines, aligning creative vision with technical and commercial constraints, and making timely decisions under pressure. My diverse background allows me to remain structured and disciplined while adapting quickly to changing site conditions and client needs. In my opinion, this blend has made me a more effective project director, as it enables me to deliver spaces that are not only visually compelling, but also practical, efficient, and executed with a high level of professional rigor.

Looking ahead, what's the impact you hope to make in your field over the next few years, and what drives that vision?

Over the next few years, I aim to expand the business strategically into regional and international markets while strengthening our core operations at home. My focus is on building a scalable organization that can deliver the same level of quality, reliability, and professionalism across borders, whether through flagship projects, strategic partnerships, or selective market entry. At the same time, I want to ensure that growth is sustainable, supported by strong project controls, disciplined financial management, and a reputation for delivering complex interior fit-out projects to international standards. This vision is driven by two main factors: the responsibility of carrying forward our family business legacy and the broader growth trajectory of Oman itself. Having seen the business evolve over generations, I am motivated to modernize and expand it without losing its values or identity. In parallel, Oman's continuous economic development inspires me to position the company

as a representative of Omani capability and craftsmanship on a global stage. In my opinion, growth that is rooted in heritage and aligned with national progress is the most meaningful and durable form of impact.

Fast-paced industries can be intense. How do you stay motivated and keep learning while juggling leadership responsibilities?

In a fast-paced environment, I stay motivated by maintaining a clear sense of direction and long-term goals. Having defined objectives for both the business and my own development helps me remain focused, even during high-pressure periods. Equally important is the team I work with; seeing their commitment, growth, and shared ambition creates a strong sense of responsibility and motivates me to lead by example, turning challenges into opportunities rather than obstacles. Continuous learning is also supported by the people around me. I am deeply inspired by my mentor, my father, Sheikh Adil Bin Said Alshanfari, whose leadership role, experience, and values have shaped my understanding of responsibility,



I want to ensure that growth is sustainable, supported by strong project controls, disciplined financial management, and a reputation for delivering complex interior fit-out projects to international standards

resilience, and decision-making. His approach to leadership, combined with guidance from other mentors, challenges my thinking and helps me maintain perspective beyond day-to-day demands. Alongside this, my family provides stability, while regular feedback, reflection, and learning through real projects ensure steady personal and professional growth.

For young women aiming to break into leadership roles in sectors like construction and interior fit-outs, what's your advice?

My advice would be to really learn the industry and get involved as much as possible. Take the time to understand how things work from start to finish, be present, ask questions, and don't shy away from the details. The more exposure you have, the more confident and capable you become. It can be challenging at times, but those challenges are valuable lessons that help you grow and strengthen your leadership skills. Just as important is leading with confidence, trust your knowledge, speak up, and take ownership when opportunities come your way. You don't need to know everything from day one, but you do need to believe in your ability to grow into leadership. In my opinion, confidence built through real experience and learning from challenges is what helps young women succeed in this industry.

When you need to unwind or recharge, what's your go-to way to step back and refresh your mind?

I've built a routine that helps me keep a healthy work-life balance. I enjoy spending time outdoors, especially at the beach, as it helps me switch off and clear my head. I also stick to a structured gym routine to de-stress and stay balanced, and I make time for reading, which helps me slow down, reflect, and keep learning outside of work. Spending time with loved ones is just as important to me. It keeps me grounded and gives me a strong foundation outside of work, which helps me stay focused, present, and balanced overall.



Speaking When Silence Was Easier

Honorable Yuthar Al Rawahy

Founder & Honorary Life President, Oman Cancer Association

Yuthar Al Rawahy's impact on Oman cannot be measured in campaigns or years, but in systems that now exist because she insisted they must. Following multiple cancer diagnoses, she helped shape a national framework for awareness, prevention, and patient advocacy at a time when silence prevailed. Through the Oman Cancer Association, she transformed stigma into policy, care into structure, and personal resolve into lasting public infrastructure.

You've said your work began simply with wanting to help others going through what you experienced, what was the turning point when you realised this needed to become a national initiative?

I basically took my pain and turned it into purpose. When you speak to Muslims faced with trials many invariably conclude that those trials were blessings in disguise. It took the cancer diagnosis to change my life and, essentially, give it meaning above and beyond what I thought of as the epitome of my own existence. Each diagnosis, 4 to date, taught me something new.

We are incredibly fortunate in Oman that the government makes it possible, I would not say easy, but certainly possible, for people to achieve their goals. You need to educate yourself on the channels that are available to realise your defined aims, or in my case: figure out what channels are missing and seek the government's help to create the pathways to realize your objectives, so that's what we did. It takes commitment, perseverance, resilience and a belief in the value and importance of what you've set out to do. If you yourself aren't convinced, you will not be successful in galvanising others to your cause. A national movement requires two main elements I believe: self-belief with conviction, and critical support at the opportune times. It's not a solo endeavour but the champion driving the effort needs to be clear, focused and unrelenting.

For me there wasn't one turning point - there were many flashes of disease during my journey with the disease. People's reaction to the diagnosis, people's opinions on my

decisions regarding the treatment plan, the lack of local primary care services and facilities (for example, I was diagnosed with my first cancer at a later stage that likely would've been caught earlier if we had the right tools and more aware health care workers), let alone support outside the clinical realm, such as awareness campaigns, diet and exercise guidelines, and psychological support spaces etc. We only introduced oncology care formally in Oman in 2004 and in Muscat first, later Salalah. So we still have a way to go.

Ultimately, it was a multitude of things that kept pointing to the same truth: we need an Omani cancer group. What that would look like and what it would entail was totally unclear to me - all I knew is the status quo was unacceptable and it needed to change. I realized: If I have to be the one to change it then so be it. I didn't set out to revolutionise patient advocacy in Oman, it came to pass that I embraced that mission as it became unavoidably clear the urgency of the cause - I decided to be the change I wanted to see.

My husband's and family's support, the government's endorsement and counsel, the private sector's sponsorship, and the bravery of a few like-minded members of the public (both national and resident) made it possible, and took it from a small group of volunteers out of my living room to a national initiative that marked this year its silver jubilee with the GCC's first World Cancer Congress and authorship of the Oman Cancer Prevention and Control Declaration signed by 43 countries alhumdlillah.

When you began speaking openly

about cancer, the subject was almost taboo in Oman. How did you build trust and change public attitudes at a time when information and awareness were so limited?

Frankly, this is an ongoing process; people's health is always a sensitive topic and the stereotypes, misinformation and fear surrounding cancer was a massive challenge to overcome. In some cases we are still overcoming elements of fear that linger in people's minds about a cancer diagnosis, but, thankfully, we've done much to remove the "taboo" status of the disease alhumdlillah, which we are very grateful for.

I found what had been highly effective in the early stages was putting myself up as a live example in contrast to the misinformation. So I used my own case, my own lived experience, my own body, as the content by which to reach people. It was difficult to deny something right in front of their eyes. We had to understand what the misinformation was in order to craft messages to combat it, as the misconceptions that are bred as a result of ignorance need to be eradicated before people accept facts. It's a re-learning process that needed to occur. Hence our efforts with schools, to ensure the next generation don't inherit these fears and uninformed attitudes around cancer, and take the life saving steps of regular examination needed for early diagnosis.

Again, it's a huge responsibility when you set out to change people's attitudes and it should never be taken lightly. I remember when I went on the television and the newspaper, people would actually call my husband and tell him that



he was negligent in his duties as a man to safeguard the عورة ('awra) of the family by allowing me to go out publicly - that my awareness work and activities were shameful to the tribe and to the nation as a whole. We knew when such incidents were done out of genuine care, concern and basically ignorance, and when it was motivated by more sinister suppressive instincts. That's an example of something we didn't know was a problem until it happened and we found ourselves having to confront it. We realised we struck a nerve, culturally, and we had to navigate more strategically in some spaces. So there were things that we knew we had to tackle head on and we were prepared for, but then other things emerged during our attempts to demystify and destigmatise the subject of cancer that we figured out how to overcome along the way.

I would put myself out there first and deal with the backlash, also recognise what was working and amplify those messages. Secondly, we would ensure that we had the

approvals of the government to engender trust because I agree, and believe strongly, that not just anyone should be allowed a microphone unchecked to broadcast messages or slogans to the public, especially in this age of AI - social engineering is a genuine national security concern. We were dealing in the early 2000s with a much different climate of information dissemination; I do believe strongly that it was the government's stamp of support and the provision of an umbrella of legitimacy that allowed not only our voice to be heard but to be impactful. Furthermore, platforms of information dissemination were limited - we had the traditional news platforms such as the radio and newspaper but we also had physical printouts at facilities such as health centres, such as women's associations and also had the support of the commercial malls during what we instituted as 'cancer awareness month' in October, in line with international campaigns, to reach the public.

The Ministry of Health allowing

distribution of our pamphlets in all their facilities was an important element of our success. Their support, alongside the Ministry of Social Development's support, helped us reach people and change mindsets. Connecting these entities and aligning them towards a common objective as well as galvanising support to finance our initiatives such as the Mobile Mammography Unit for national cancer screening and, later, Dar AlHanan as a home away from home for young cancer patients, and still later the Palliative Care Strategy, and so much more was how I spent my time. Alhumdlillah we were able to establish a strong reliable network and institute events on the annual calendar nationally.

Interestingly, when we started there was no formal Corporate Social Responsibility - despite other associations in existence such as the Oman Handicapped Association, which incidentally was founded by my late brother, Mukhtar AlRawahy - they were gathering support on an ad hoc basis...we came along and

insisted on companies being held to a CSR standard that had already gained traction abroad. We really learnt as we grew - none of us were experts in grassroots work or social movements. People came together, donated their time, donated their expertise and we were able to get the message out effectively and sustainably.

Much of your work has directly empowered women through early detection and awareness... what impact have you seen among Omani women over the years, and what still needs to change culturally or systemically?

We identify as a patient empowerment movement. I do not like the word "empower" when it comes to women; women do not need empowering, it implies permission and it distorts the reality we know and experience every day where women have their own agency. The strongest human beings I have known throughout my life have been women and I think, universally, history points to powerful courageous women altering societies, nations and entire histories. Omani women in particular have been the Association's greatest supporters. Leadership is not something women need to learn, it is in-fact an inherent trait. Women are themselves tools of empowerment. That has always been our approach.

Women do tend to be the primary caregivers at home to both the elderly and to the young, so it is natural that our communication strategy will focus towards more female centric messaging, however it is not with the objective to "empower" women rather to inform and support her in her own leadership of her health and her family's wellbeing. It is true, the room to manoeuvre afforded women can be, and is, curtailed by restrictive or regressive societal expectations, but we are in a nation where His Majesty the Sultan has lent his voice to ensure those sentiments do not gain traction or prevail and are not enshrined against women.

I've always believed we all have the skills we need to succeed - what is required is to, first, identify and remove any obstacles in the way of

“*If you keep staring at the closed doors you'll miss the open windows that open up and potentially hold the solution to your problem. Our youth need to have a mindset that shifts from “we can't do this” to “we'll figure this out”. Turning an idea into an actionable reality requires hard work whether it's public, private or civil service. Hard work is the main ingredient for any success.*

realising growth, and, second, create the space to harness our individual abilities and strengths. That is what we set out to do with the Oman Cancer Association. This is not a gender specific effort. My references are my religion and my government's regulatory frameworks; the first is unchanging, the second is forever open to reform. Omani women have always been, and inshaAllah will continue to be, equal partners active in contributing to the country's growth, its health and its prosperity.

For young people in Oman, who want to build something meaning-

ful but feel intimidated by the scale of the problem, what perspective or lesson from your journey would you want them to carry forward?

If you keep staring at the closed doors you'll miss the open windows that open up and potentially hold the solution to your problem. Our youth need to have a mindset that shifts from “we can't do this” to “we'll figure this out”. Turning an idea into an actionable reality requires hard work whether it's public, private or civil service. Hard work is the main ingredient for any success. I was never afraid of hard work - I grew up with a mother, Allah yerhamha, who worked multiple jobs in an alien country after fleeing the revolution in Zanzibar with seven young children in tow. She instilled a work ethic and sense of service in me that I see echoed in many of my fellow citizens. Even if our youth today do not come from a similar background of struggle that informs their tenacity and resilience, those qualities can be nurtured within them, for after all, they have their own modern day challenges.

We have many emerging change agents with valid and important ideas to make Oman, and the world, a better place. I would urge them that once you set your mind to achieving your goals, trust yourself, believe in the people who extend helping hands, irrespective if their assistance was anticipated or not, and when you need to take a break do so - burning out and exhausting yourself is not heroic nor is it helpful to you or your cause. We need patience, endurance and love as we are not islands, we must connect and network and actively seek out bridges of cooperation. Don't hesitate to be more coordinated, and more ambitious when building stable partnerships. It is natural to feel overwhelmed at times - it is important to constantly fill your well so it becomes a reservoir of support first for yourself then others. And use the naysayers' skepticism and/or pessimism to fuel your efforts rather than deter them. Working together, with tolerance and empathy and a big dose of conviction will allow you to overcome any challenges that present themselves - believe in yourself and each other.

the origin

SHE GROWS SHE LEADS.



THE ORIGIN: SHE GROWS, SHE LEADS

A Transformative Women in Business Forum & Awards

The Origin: She Grows, She Leads - Third Edition is a women-in-business forum and awards platform that celebrates leadership, innovation and impact. Bringing together inspiring women from across industries, the event features meaningful conversations and awards recognizing those driving change and progress. It is a space for leaders, entrepreneurs and changemakers to connect, share ideas and shape the future together.



August 2026

Muscat, Oman

What we have in store



Keynote Speeches



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Dynamic Panel Discussions

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