LEADERSHIP | VISION | IMPACT

# ENTREPRENEURIAL ARABIA

October 2026



**BEYOND BILLION-DOLLAR DEALS**
US$7.5 BILLION IN LOAN NEGOTIATION

**FINANCE MEETS GLOBAL STRATEGY**
CROSS-BORDER EXPERTISE

**THE POWER OF JUDGMENT**
EXPERIENCE. RISK. INTEGRITY.

**4 DECADES OF**
DEALS, JUDGMENT & VISION

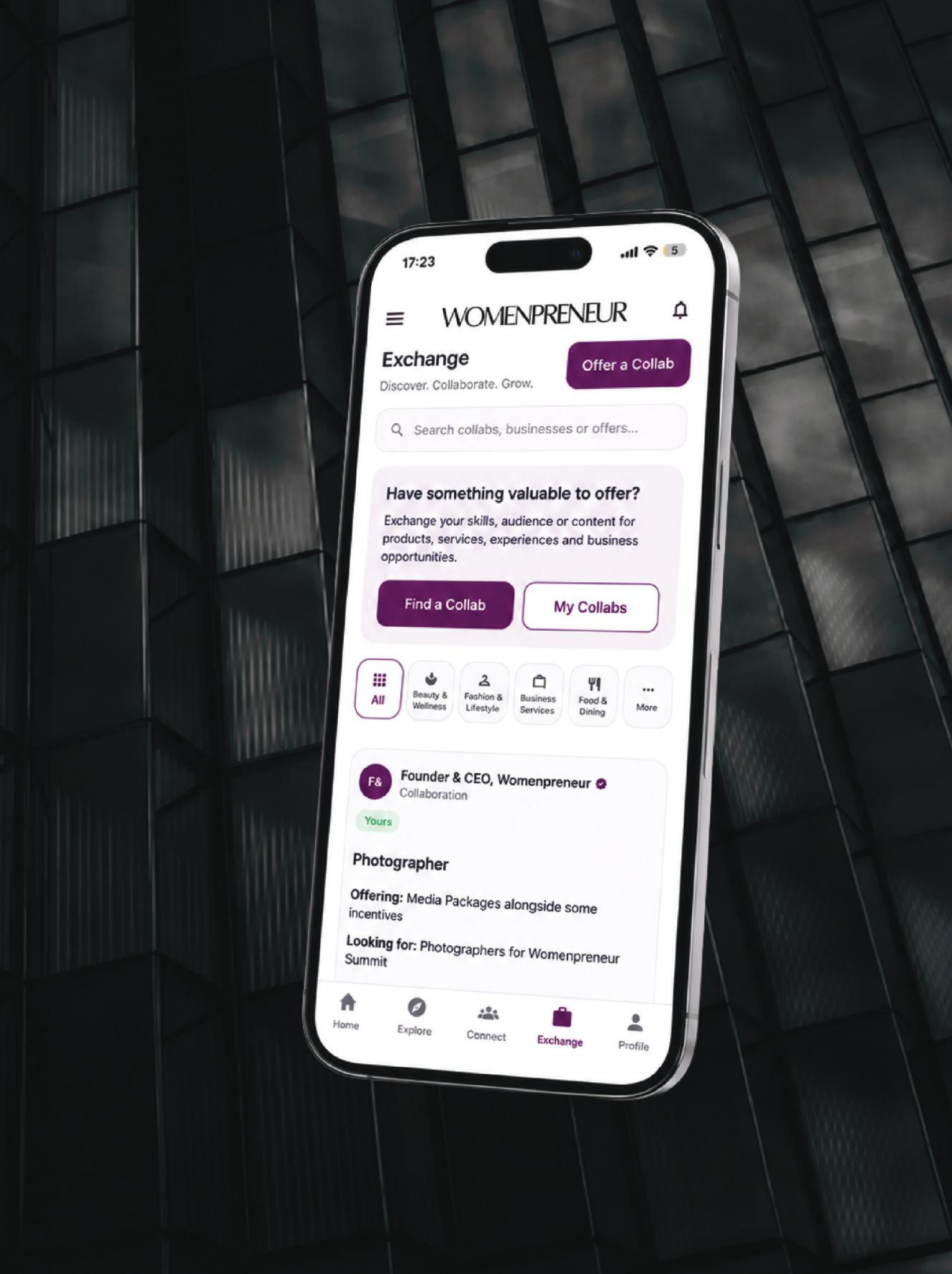
THE MAN BEHIND BILLION-DOLLAR TRANSACTIONS

# ROBERTO MASUD

FROM FINANCE AND INTERNATIONAL LAW TO CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY, ROBERTO MASUD REFLECTS ON FOUR DECADES OF DEALS, JUDGMENT AND THE NEXT CHAPTER OF MASUD INTERNATIONAL LIMITED.

STAY CONNECTED WITH OUR LATEST BUSINESS ISSUE


The
Womenpreneur
App
Download on the
App Store
GET IT ON
Google Play


17:23
WOMENPRENEUR
Exchange
Discover. Collaborate. Grow.
Offer a Collab
Search collabs, businesses or offers...
Have something valuable to offer?
Exchange your skills, audience or content for products, services, experiences and business opportunities.
Find a Collab
My Collabs
All
Beauty & Wellness
Fashion & Lifestyle
Business Services
Food & Dining
More
F&
Founder & CEO, Womenpreneur
Collaboration
Yours
Photographer
Offering: Media Packages alongside some incentives
Looking for: Photographers for Womenpreneur Summit
Home
Explore
Connect
Exchange
Profile


@ace.plus.club
ACE✦ CLUB
PRIVATE EXPERIENCES. EXCEPTIONAL ACCESS.


aceplusjets
JETS
Fly Beyond the Ordinary
JETS
ACEPLUSJETS.COM

Womenpreneur Legal

SERVICED BY PSP LEGAL CONSULTANCY

# Empowering women visionaries with legal clarity, confidence and structure.

Guided by a deep commitment to supporting and empowering women visionaries with legal services, training & mentorship designed to provide clarity, confidence, and structure across every stage of business leadership and growth.

**Expertise forged in** proven legal judgment, credibility, and practical insight you can trust.



# YOUR VISION.
# OUR LEGAL EXPERTISE.



**STARTUPS & VENTURES**
Legal foundations for early stage and growing businesses.

**HEALTH & CLINICAL PRACTICES**
Compliant legal support for healthcare professionals.

**FINANCIAL & REGULATORY**
Licensing, compliance and regulatory guidance.

**MENTORSHIP & TRAINING**
One-to-one mentorship and legal empowerment sessions.

> Let's build your legacy - legally and confidently.

**Womenpreneur Legal**

SERVICED BY PSP LEGAL CONSULTANCY


womenpreneurlegal.com
legal@womenpreneurme.com
+971 58 575 1048
UAE | Serving Women Entrepreneurs Globally


SCAN TO CONNECT

# ENTREPRENEURIAL ARABIA

## TEAM

**FOUNDER & CEO (Chief Executive Officer)**
VIVEK MALIK

**CEO, Womenpreneur Foundation**
FAHBIN ANWAR

**COO (Chief Operations Officer)**
DIVESH SINGH

**CCO (Chief Creative Officer)**
NIDHI KUNDU

**CTO (Chief Technology Officer)**
UTKARSH SINGH

**CLO (Chief Legal Officer)**
DEEPAK MALIK

**Creative Director**
SUMAYRA FAROOKI

**Partnering Agency**
BIG DATA MARKETERS

**Creative Executives**
AYESHA SEEDAT
SHARON MISSAH
AFSHAN HUSSAIN
NAHEED MALIK
AFREEN MAHABOOB

---

**Publisher**
FIRSTREAD MEDIA LLC

# CONTENTS



Page 28: The Man Behind Billion-Dollar Transactions

"A senior adviser should not only be defined by transactions completed. Sometimes the most valuable judgment is recognizing that a transaction should never happen"

## FEATURES


13 THE BRIEF
Seven things shaping business in the Gulf this month

18 IN FOCUS
The Creator Economy Goes Corporate

22 INVESTMENT SPOTLIGHT
AI Infrastructure: The New Investment Frontier

28 COVER STORY
Roberto Masud

34 SEHRISH KHANDIA
Redefining Food, Health & Wellness Through AI

36 DR. JOHN SACHTOURAS
The Multiplier Effect: Building Trust, Leadership

E






**38 Mohd Zia Hassan**
Building Across Industries, Creating Across Possibilities

**40 Tasnim Anwar**
Turning Global Experience Into Educational Opportunity

**42 Gaurav Gaikwad**
How 24-Year-Old Gaurav Gaikwad Built Ace Reputations Into a $30 Million AI Company

**48 BRAND SPOTLIGHT**
AceRank AI™ and the New Battle for Visibility Inside AI Search

**52 AI-Native Entrepreneurship:**
The New Way of Building a Business





**58 Pierre Luxe**
Luxury Property Adviser & Cross-Border Real Estate Specialist

**60 Dahlia Mahmood**
Interior Designer, Developer & Builder

**62 Dr. Sana Sajan**
Business Leader, Entrepreneur & Women's Empowerment Advocate

**64 Dame Ellen Mannaert**
Serial Entrepreneur, Investor & Founder

**66 Iman Essam Mostafa**
Founder, Maison Imma


Firstread Media LLC, headquartered in Dubai under the Sharjah Media Authority, is a global media house redefining how stories of leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship are told. With a portfolio that spans Womenpreneur Middle East, CEO Weekly UAE, Entrepreneurial Arabia, Skyline Middle East, and Insider Al Seha, we create platforms that celebrate visionaries, empower changemakers, and spotlight industries shaping tomorrow. As publishers, our mission is simple: to inform, inspire, and influence. From exclusive interviews with global leaders to in-depth industry reports, our magazines and digital platforms bridge regions, industries, and ideas. We believe media is not just about reporting the present - it is about shaping the future. Firstread Media also curates high-impact events, summits, and awards that bring leaders and entrepreneurs together under one vision: growth with purpose.

SWISSKERN+



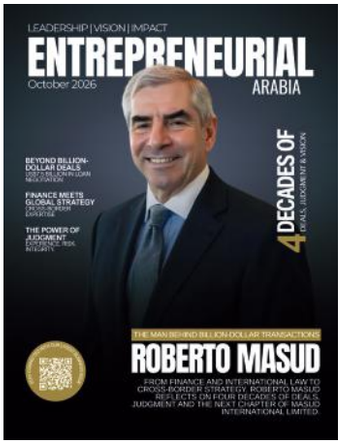

SWISS CELLULAR SCIENCE

Maximizing cellular rejuvenation with pioneering bioavailable neutraceuticals, setting new standards in scientific excellence

WWW.SWISSKERN.COM

EDITOR'S NOTE

# Top 10 Shaping The Future




There is a version of business writing that tells one story on repeat: someone has an idea, the idea works, everything after that is scale. Almost nobody in this issue fits it.

This month's issue of Entrepreneurial Arabia is centred on **Top 10 Shaping the Future** - ten individuals whose work, choices and ambitions offer a glimpse of where business, culture and professional life are heading next. They are not necessarily working in the same industries or following the same playbook. What connects them is their willingness to build, question and move before the outcome is obvious.

Four people share our cover - **Sehrish Khandia, Dr. John Sachtourus, Mohd. Zia Hassan and Tasnim Anwar.** They work in different fields and arrived by very different routes, and what connects them is harder to name than an industry. The closest I can get is a refusal to treat the first success as the finished one. Dr. Sachtourus, who has spent close to five decades and ninety-two countries building businesses, told us that he believes his greatest contribution is still ahead of him. Said by someone with that record, it is not modesty. It is a working method, and some version of it runs through all five.

Our Top 10 Shaping the Future widens that lens. Pierre Luxe, Dahlia Mahmood, Dr. Sana Sajan, Dame Ellen Mannaert, Samara Iqbal, Maitri Somaia and Simimol Raijo join two of our cover names on the list. Some are building companies, some are building institutions, and a few are quietly changing the terms their industries operate on. Reading their entries together, what stands out is how little any of them waited for permission.

That idea of shaping what comes next also runs through the rest of this issue. We turn to the forces reshaping business across the region: entrepreneurship, finance, artificial intelligence and development. We have tried to treat AI as a business question rather than a technology one, because that is how it actually arrives for most people reading this - not as a breakthrough to admire, but as a decision about what to change, what to keep, and how quickly. On finance and development, the same instinct applies. The interesting question is rarely what is possible. It is what is worth doing, and who is prepared to go first.

There is also a quieter lesson in this month's profiles. Shaping the future does not always mean predicting it. Sometimes it means building something that did not exist before, taking an established idea into a new market, changing how an industry approaches its work, or simply refusing to accept that the existing way is the only way.

That last part is the thread I keep pulling on. The Gulf has spent a decade being described as a place of opportunity, which is true and has become slightly meaningless through repetition. Opportunity on its own does nothing. It needs someone willing to act on it before the outcome is obvious, usually without a map, frequently while being told it is early. Everyone in these pages did that.

The future, ultimately, is not something that simply arrives. It is shaped by the people willing to make decisions before certainty catches up.

I hope you find something here that makes you reconsider a plan of your own.



**Afreen Mahaboob**
Editor,
Entrepreneurial Arabia

THE BRIEF

ENTREPRENEURIAL ARABIA - FRONT OF BOOK



**FULL SPEED AHEAD** Women entrepreneurs are reshaping industries, driving innovation, and expanding

# Seven Things Shaping Business In The Gulf This Month

| Market, H1 2026 | Raised | Rounds | Change y/y | Share of MENA |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UAE | $895m | 79 | +53% | 66% |
| Saudi Arabia | $219m | 72 | –74% | 16% |
| MENA total | $1.35bn | 214 | –22% | — |

## Less Money, And Far Fewer Deals

Startups across the Middle East and North Africa raised $1.35 billion in the first half of 2026, according to the venture data firm MAGNiTT. That is 22% less than a year earlier. The bigger drop is in how many companies got money at all: 214 deals, down 41%, the lowest in at least four years.

So the money did not disappear. It went to fewer companies. Two very large rounds alone accounted for

**$480**

million, and the ten biggest deals took 58% of everything raised.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia went in opposite directions. The UAE now takes two thirds of all the money invested in the region. Both countries did roughly the same number of deals, which means UAE cheques were much bigger. In Saudi Arabia, no company raised more than $100 million, and no established business raised at all - only young ones did. A year earlier, big rounds there were worth $414 million.

One more change matters. Investors based in the region put up about

**81%**

of the money, the highest share in more than five years.

Money from outside the region fell by roughly half. You can read that two ways. Either local investors are now strong enough to hold the market up on their own, or the region is losing foreign investors at exactly the moment prices are being reset.

## Small Firms Get Three More Tax-Free Years

The Ministry of Finance has extended Small Business Relief to the end of 2029. It had been due to run out at the end of this year.

Here is what it does. A business with revenue of AED 3 million or less in a tax period can choose to be treated as having no taxable income at all. In practice that means 0% corporate tax, and a simplified return instead of the full computation. The extension came through Ministerial Decision No. 131, issued in July.

A few details worth knowing. You still have to register and file, even if you owe nothing. Someone running a business in their own name only enters the corporate tax system once turnover passes AED 1 million in a calendar year. And a free zone company already using the 0% qualifying regime cannot claim this relief as well - it is one or the other.

The timing sits alongside the first real test of the system. For companies with a 31 December 2025 year-end, the corporate tax return was due on 30 September 2026, nine months after the period closed. Advisers spent the month repeating the same warning: owing no tax is not the same as having nothing to file.

Why it matters. The UAE brought in corporate tax in 2023 without wanting to lose what had made it



attractive to founders in the first place. Extending this relief by three years is the clearest signal yet of how it plans to hold both - collect from businesses large enough to pay, and leave small ones alone while they grow.

## The Government Is Betting Big On Ai

Most governments are still arguing about how to control AI. The UAE is putting it to work. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum has announced that half of federal government services and operations will run on "agentic" AI within two years. Agentic means the software does the work itself - it decides and acts, rather than just answering questions.

The UAE has also put one body in charge of all of it: the Artificial Intelligence and Data Authority, which reports straight to the Cabinet. It takes over the work of the Office of AI, the UAE Data Office and the digital government arm of the telecoms regulator. Until now it was not always clear who was responsible for what. Now it is.

Why this matters for business. Two reasons, and neither is about government services. First, a government rebuilding half its operations in two years has to buy a great deal - software, integration work, security checks - on a tight deadline. That is a very large customer. Second, the standards this new authority sets for itself will shape the rules private companies are held to later. Watch what it does in its first year, not what the strategy says.



There is a risk in moving this quickly. When software makes real decisions at this scale, something will go wrong somewhere. How openly that gets handled will matter more to the UAE's reputation than hitting the 50% target.

New rules for funds in both financial centres

ADGM and DIFC are both rewriting the rules for fund managers, within weeks of each other.

ADGM went first. New rules published on 16 September took effect the same day. The main change: a foreign fund manager must now accept ADGM law and ADGM courts. Before, they could pick from several other legal systems. They must also appoint a locally licensed firm to receive legal documents for them.

DIFC is not far behind. Its regulator closed a consultation on a full rewrite of its own fund rules on 7 September, and it is heading in a similar direction.

What it means. The rules are getting lighter in places, better matched to the size and risk of each manager. But they are also getting firmer about where you belong: fewer choices about which law applies to you, and more local presence required.

If you run a fund in either centre, have the changes checked now. The ADGM rules are already in force.

## Dubai Is Building The Plumbing For Tokenised Assets

On 3 September, Dubai's Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority signed an agreement with Securitize, an American firm that turns ordinary financial assets - funds, bonds, shares - into tokens held on a blockchain. Tokenising an asset means issuing and moving it as a digital record rather than through the usual chain of paperwork and intermediaries.

Be clear about what was signed. It is a memorandum of understanding: a framework for working together on research, market education and future projects. No product has been approved and none is announced.

The context around it is more telling. VARA issued its 50th licence to a virtual asset service provider in July, to a tokenisation platform. Securitize manages roughly $5 billion in tokenised assets by its own count, against a global total of about

**$38.5**

billion - a real market, but still a small one.

Why it matters. Dubai is not trying to win the



trading volume. It is trying to own the rulebook: to be the place institutions choose when tokenisation does become normal, because the regulatory questions were settled here first. That is a slower position to build than a trading hub, and a harder one for a rival to take away.

## The Wealthy Keep Arriving, And They Want Different Things

About 10,000 millionaires moved to the UAE in 2025, according to HSBC, and more are expected. They come from South Asia, increasingly from East Asia, and from other Gulf countries. The reasons are the familiar ones: safety, stability, no personal income tax, good residency options.

One reason on that list is newer. DIFC and ADGM have built proper frameworks for family offices - the private firms that manage a wealthy family's money. That changes the kind of business this creates. Buying a villa is a one-off. Setting up a family office needs lawyers, accountants, fund administrators, trustees, tax advisers and private bankers, every year.

ADGM said in September that the money it oversees grew 54%, and that it now has around

**4,000**

active licences.

If you work in professional services, this is where the demand is building. For everyone else, the shift is worth noting: the UAE's wealth story has moved from attracting money to looking after it.

## What To Watch: October's Numbers

MAGNiTT publishes its July-to-September figures in October. They matter more than the half-year report did.

Here is why. Deals take six to nine months to close. So most of the money counted in the first half came from decisions made well before conditions changed. July to September is the first full quarter negotiated under the conditions we are in now, and the first honest look at what is really happening.

Three things to check when it lands. Does the UAE do more deals again, after its deal count fell 37%? Does any established Saudi company raise money, after six months in which none did? And do foreign investors return, or keep pulling back?

If deal numbers recover while cheques stay large, this was a healthy correction. If they keep falling, the worst of it is still ahead.

Figures: MAGNiTT (venture funding), UAE Ministry of Finance (corporate tax), HSBC (wealth migration), ADGM and the DFSA (fund rules).




LINA CAHILL
www.linacahill.com



## In Focus
## The Creator Economy Goes Corporate

**From followers to companies, creators are turning audiences into media businesses, consumer brands and commercial ecosystems.**

There was a time when becoming a creator meant building an audience and finding brands willing to pay for access to it.
That model is changing.

Across the Middle East and beyond, creators are increasingly moving from sponsored posts to something much more ambitious: building businesses around the communities they have created. Some are launching consumer products. Others are building production companies, podcasts, media platforms, events, agencies, education businesses and technology ventures. The creator is no longer simply the person appearing in the content. Increasingly, the creator is becoming the founder, publisher, marketer, distribution channel and brand.

The shift matters because an audience is no longer only an advertising asset. It can become a customer base, a distribution network, a research community and, potentially, the foundation of an entire company.

The numbers reflect how quickly the commercial model is developing. Redseer estimates that the MENA region has around 1.5 million active creators, with approximately $300 million in earnings across the GCC. It also reports that eight in ten small and medium-sized businesses in the region collaborate with creators monthly. Importantly, 80% of the creators identified in its research have fewer than 10,000 followers, suggesting that the creator economy extends far beyond the handful of personalities with enormous audiences.

The UAE is an especially interesting market within this transformation. Visa's 2025 creator research found that approximately one-third of UAE creators had launched new ventures following their content success, while many already had plans for further growth.

The creator economy is therefore beginning to look less like a

collection of individual social-media careers and more like an emerging layer of entrepreneurship.

## The Creator Is Becoming The Company

The most important change may be conceptual.

For years, the creator's primary asset was attention. A large following could translate into sponsored content, appearances, affiliate income or advertising revenue.

But attention alone is difficult to control.

Platforms can change algorithms. Reach can fluctuate. Advertising budgets can move elsewhere. A creator can be highly visible one year and struggle to maintain the same commercial momentum the next.

Building a business changes the equation.

A creator who launches a product owns something beyond an audience. A creator who develops a production company owns infrastructure. A creator who builds a newsletter, podcast network or media platform creates an intellectual property portfolio. A creator who launches a community or educational business creates a direct relationship with customers.

The audience becomes the starting point rather than the end product.

That distinction is at the heart of the creator-to-founder transition.

Instead of asking, "How much can I earn from my audience?", the entrepreneurial creator begins asking, "What can I build because I have this audience?"

## From Sponsored Content To Owned Assets

Brand partnerships are not disappearing. In fact, they are becoming more sophisticated.

IAB projected U.S. creator advertising spend at $37 billion in 2025, up 26% year on year, and estimated it could reach $44 billion in 2026. Nearly half of creator advertising buyers surveyed by IAB considered creators a "must buy," while brands increasingly use creators not only for awareness but across the purchase journey.

The important development is that creators are gaining more ways to participate in the commercial value they generate.

YouTube, for example, has increasingly connected content with commerce. In 2025, the platform said YouTube Shopping's gross merchandise value had grown fivefold year over year, with more than 500,000 creators enrolled globally as of July 2025.

The platform has also introduced tools designed to make sponsorships more measurable and reusable. One planned format allows creators to dynamically insert brand segments into long-form videos, potentially turning existing content into an asset that can be monetised across different campaigns and markets rather than being tied permanently to one sponsor.



This is an important evolution.

Content is becoming inventory.

A video is no longer necessarily a one-time post that disappears down a feed. It can remain searchable, generate affiliate sales, host sponsorships, promote a product and continue attracting an audience months or years after publication.

For creators who understand this, the content library itself can become part of the business.

## The Uae Creator Is Becoming An Entrepreneur

The UAE offers an unusually interesting environment for this transition because its creator economy is developing alongside a broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Visa's 2025 study, which surveyed more than 1,000 TikTok creators across five markets including the UAE, found that around one-third of UAE creators had launched new ventures after finding success with their content. The study also found that 35% used secondary personal accounts to separate business expenses, highlighting an interesting tension: creators are increasingly behaving like businesses while many still lack the financial infrastructure of established companies.

That gap is likely to become increasingly important.

Once a creator starts hiring editors, photographers, managers, designers, assistants or production teams, the operation changes.

- It needs accounting.
- It needs contracts.
- It needs cash-flow management.
- It needs intellectual-property protection.
- It needs payroll, budgeting and potentially investment.

In other words, the creator starts encountering the same operational questions as any other entrepreneur.

The creator may still

appear on camera, but behind the camera there can now be a small company.

## The Rise Of The Creator Team

The idea of the lone influencer is becoming increasingly outdated.

As audiences grow, content expectations grow with them. A creator may need a videographer to maintain production quality, an editor to manage volume, a social-media strategist to adapt content across platforms, a manager to negotiate commercial opportunities and an accountant or financial adviser to manage the business.

The creator becomes the visible face of an increasingly invisible operation.

This is already evident in the UAE, where creators have increasingly begun hiring production and management teams as brand partnerships and audience expectations expand.

That creates a secondary economic effect.

Creators are not only generating income for themselves. Successful creator businesses can create employment for editors, photographers, designers, stylists, producers, writers, publicists, community managers, event professionals and other specialists.

The creator economy therefore has the potential to become a small-business ecosystem in its own right.

And that is one reason the distinction between "creator" and "entrepreneur" is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

## The Audience Is The New Distribution Network

Traditional companies spend enormous amounts of money trying to build awareness.

Creators begin with something companies often struggle to manufacture: a relationship with an audience.

This relationship is particularly valuable when it is built around a clear area of expertise or identity.

A beauty creator can introduce a skincare line.

A fitness creator can develop training products.

A food creator can build a restaurant concept, cookbook or food brand.

A finance creator can create educational products or subscription communities.

A travel creator can develop experiences or travel services.

A parenting creator can build a consumer brand around products their audience already understands and trusts.

The important point is not that every creator should launch a product.

It is that the audience can provide a form of market intelligence.

Creators spend years watching what their communities respond to. They see questions repeatedly asked in comments. They understand which problems people struggle with. They can test ideas through content before committing significant capital to a product.

In that sense, content becomes a form of continuous market research.

## From Personal Brand To Consumer Brand

The natural next step for some creators is commerce.

The creator has already established a voice. The audience understands their taste. Trust has been built over time. The product becomes an extension of that relationship.

But this is also where the creator economy becomes more complicated.

A personal brand can survive on personality.

A company cannot rely on personality alone.

A consumer business requires product quality, supply chains, customer service, pricing, distribution, inventory management and repeat purchases.

The creator therefore has to learn a new skill: building something that can succeed without the creator personally selling it every day.

That is the difference between influence and enterprise.

Influence depends heavily on the individual.

Enterprise requires systems.

The most interesting creator businesses may ultimately be those that can make this transition successfully - preserving the trust and personality that created the audience while developing a business capable of operating beyond the individual.

## The Media Company Hiding Inside The Personal Brand

There is another direction that deserves attention: creators becoming media companies.

A creator with a large audience can eventually produce multiple formats - short-form video, long-form video, podcasts, newsletters, live events, documentaries, books and branded content.

The individual becomes the centre of a content ecosystem.



MED CARE

ROYAL
SPECIALITY
HOSPITAL





## Investment Spotlight
## AI Infrastructure: The New Investment Frontier

**Why investors are looking beyond the AI application**

Artificial intelligence may be most visible through chatbots, copilots and consumer applications, but some of the most significant investment opportunities are developing far beneath the interface.

Every AI model, application and automated workflow depends on infrastructure: computing power, data centres, cloud platforms, networking, semiconductors, energy, cooling systems and cybersecurity. As businesses move from experimenting with AI to deploying it at scale, this infrastructure is becoming an increasingly important part of the global technology economy.

For investors, that is creating a shift in focus - from asking which AI application will win? to asking what infrastructure will every AI company need?

The opportunity is particularly relevant to the Middle East, where sovereign capital, government-backed technology strategies and rapidly developing digital infrastructure are converging around artificial intelligence.

### The Capital Is Already Moving

The scale of the regional AI investment story is becoming increasingly visible.

According to MAGNiTT, AI and AI-enabled companies across MENA raised

**$678**

million in the first half of 2026

an 81% increase compared with H1 2025. AI represented half of all MENA venture funding during the period, despite accounting for only 25% of transactions. The UAE captured 93% of the region's AI funding, while FinTech attracted the largest share of AI capital at $269 million.

The figures also reveal an important characteristic of the current market: **capital is becoming concentrated in fewer, larger opportunities.**

For investors, that concentration can indicate growing conviction around AI, but it also means the market is becoming more selective.

The question is no longer simply whether AI will grow. It is increasingly about which parts of the AI value chain will capture the economic value created by that growth.

### From Models To The Infrastructure Behind Them

The AI economy requires a surprisingly broad physical and digital foundation.

At the centre are **data centres and computing capacity**, followed by cloud infrastructure, networking, semiconductors and specialised hardware. Around these sit supporting industries such as energy, cooling, cybersecurity, data management and infrastructure services.

This creates multiple investment layers.

- **Compute** is required to train and run increasingly sophisticated AI models.
- **Data centres** provide the physical environments in which that compute operates.
- **Semiconductors and specialised processors** provide the underlying computational capability.
- **Cloud platforms** allow businesses to access that capability without owning the infrastructure themselves.
- **Energy and cooling** become increasingly important as computing density rises.
- And **cybersecurity** becomes critical as more valuable data and business processes move into AI-enabled environments.

The investment opportunity therefore extends well beyond the companies developing the AI models themselves.

### Abu Dhabi's Ai Investment Strategy

The UAE has emerged as one of the region's most significant centres for AI capital.



Abu Dhabi-based MGX, an investment company focused on AI and advanced technology, announced the final close of **MGX Fund I at**

**$49**

billion in total commitments in July 2026,

above its initial $45 billion target. The fund invests across areas including semiconductors, AI infrastructure and AI-enabling technologies and platforms.

MGX's investment activity also illustrates the scale of the infrastructure opportunity. In July 2026, MGX, BlackRock's Global Infrastructure Partners and the Artificial Intelligence Infrastructure Partnership completed the acquisition of Aligned Data Centers at an enterprise valuation of approximately **$40 billion.** The transaction was described by the consortium as one of the largest private investments in digital infrastructure to date.

For the region, these investments signal something larger than participation in the AI boom.

They point towards an ambition to become part of the **infrastructure layer that enables the boom.**

## Saudi Arabia Is Building The Ai Stack

Saudi Arabia is pursuing a similarly broad approach.

In May 2025, the Public Investment Fund launched **HUMAIN**, a company designed to operate across the AI value chain. Its activities include next-generation data centres, AI infrastructure, cloud capabilities, advanced AI models and applications. HUMAIN is also developing Arabic-language AI capabilities, including the ALLAM large language model.

The investment opportunity extends into the supporting ecosystem.

PIF currently identifies opportunities linked to HUMAIN that include local manufacturing of **data-centre power equipment**, **server racks and cooling equipment.** One listed opportunity for data-centre power equipment has an indicative investment size of approximately SAR 50–80 million and an estimated addressable demand of SAR 3.3 billion through 2030.

This is a useful reminder that the AI investment story is not limited to technology companies.

It can create opportunities for manufacturers, infrastructure providers, engineering firms, energy companies, logistics businesses, cybersecurity providers and specialist service companies.

## The Energy Question

One of the less visible parts of the AI investment story is energy.

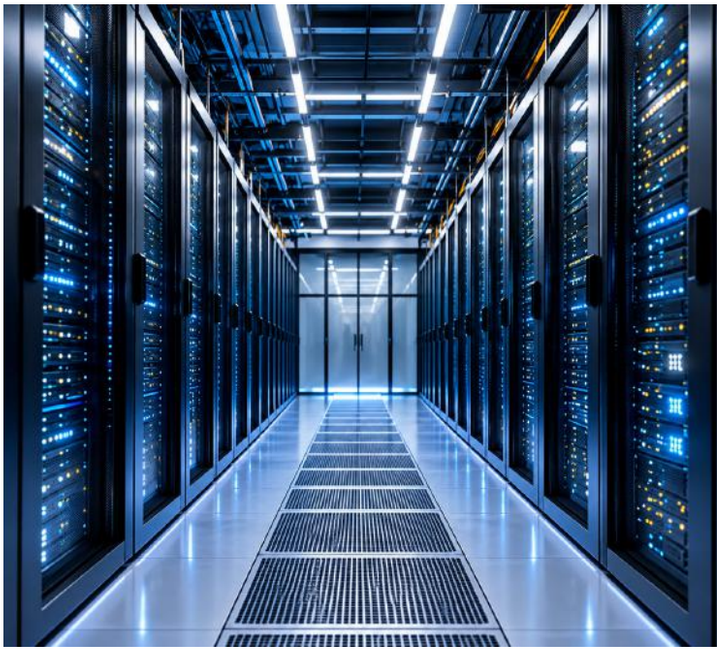
AI systems require substantial computing power, and computing requires electricity. As data-centre capacity grows, access to reliable and competitively priced energy becomes an increasingly important consideration.

This creates another layer of opportunity for the Middle East.

The region has significant energy resources, established infrastructure and growing ambitions around renewable energy. The intersection between **AI**, **data centres and energy** could therefore become an important investment theme in its own right.

Saudi Arabia's HUMAIN strategy explicitly identifies data-centre infrastructure as a core part of its AI ambitions, while PIF's private-sector opportunities include power systems required to support anticipated data-centre capacity.

The implication is straightforward: the AI economy may increasingly become an energy economy as well.



## What Investors Should Watch

**01 | Compute**
Demand for computing capacity is at the centre of the AI infrastructure boom. Investors are watching how quickly demand grows and which technologies can provide computing more efficiently.

**02 | Data centres**
The physical infrastructure supporting AI will require significant capital, land, energy and specialised engineering.

**03 | Semiconductors**
Advanced processors remain fundamental to AI development. Semiconductor manufacturing, packaging, networking and related technologies are therefore strategically important.

**04 | Energy & cooling**
High-density computing creates requirements for reliable power and sophisticated cooling systems, opening opportunities beyond traditional technology investing.

**05 | Cybersecurity**
As AI becomes embedded into critical business infrastructure, protecting models, data and systems becomes increasingly important.

**06 | Regional AI**
Arabic-language models and applications tailored to Middle Eastern markets could create a distinct regional layer within the global AI economy.

## The Entrepreneurial Opportunity

The infrastructure boom does not belong exclusively to billion-dollar investors.

For entrepreneurs, it creates a much wider ecosystem of opportunities.

A founder does not necessarily need to build a data centre to participate in the data-centre economy.

There are opportunities in cooling technology, energy efficiency, cybersecurity, data management, hardware maintenance, specialised software, infrastructure monitoring, cloud services and AI-specific professional services.

The same principle applies to AI models.

Entrepreneurs can build applications around regional languages, industries and regulatory environments without necessarily competing to develop a general-purpose foundation model.

This may be one of the most interesting characteristics of the Middle East's AI opportunity: **the ecosystem around AI could become as important as AI itself.**

## The Investor Lens

AI infrastructure is attractive because it sits upstream of many different applications.

If AI adoption continues across finance, healthcare, logistics, manufacturing, government and consumer services, those applications will require underlying infrastructure.

That creates a potentially different investment proposition from betting on a single consumer application.



But infrastructure also brings its own risks.

Capital requirements can be enormous. Technology can become obsolete. Data-centre projects depend on energy and connectivity. Semiconductor supply chains remain complex. AI demand could evolve faster or slower than infrastructure projects can be built.

Investors therefore need to look beyond headline AI growth and examine fundamentals: utilisation, customer demand, power availability, capital expenditure, technological durability, regulatory conditions and the economics of the underlying asset.

## The Bigger Picture

The most important shift in AI investing may ultimately be this:

**The AI opportunity is becoming an infrastructure story.**

The companies consumers see - the applications, platforms and AI assistants - represent only the visible layer.

Behind them sits a much larger ecosystem of chips, servers, data centres, cloud platforms, energy systems, cooling technologies, networks and security infrastructure.

For the Middle East, that ecosystem presents an opportunity to move beyond being a consumer of AI technology and become a participant in the infrastructure that enables it.

The UAE is attracting global AI capital and building investment platforms around the technology stack. Saudi Arabia is developing AI infrastructure, models and supporting industrial capabilities. Across the region, governments, institutional investors and entrepreneurs are increasingly positioning AI as part of a broader economic transformation.

For investors, the question is therefore becoming more nuanced than "Who will build the next big AI company?"

It is also:

**Who will build, finance and supply everything that the next thousand AI companies will need?**

That may be where the next chapter of the AI investment story begins.

## Investment Spotlight | The Numbers

**$678M**

AI and AI-enabled funding raised across MENA in H1 2026.

**93%**

Share of MENA AI funding captured by UAE companies in H1 2026.

**$49B**

Total commitments at the final close of MGX Fund I.

**$40B**

Enterprise valuation of Aligned Data Centers in the acquisition completed by AIP, MGX and GIP in July 2026.

**SAR 3.3B**

Indicative addressable demand through 2030 for data-centre power equipment identified by PIF.

## The Takeaway

**AI may be the technology story. But infrastructure could be the investment story.**

As artificial intelligence moves deeper into the global economy, the demand for computing, data centres, energy, networking and specialised infrastructure is likely to create opportunities far beyond the companies developing AI applications themselves.

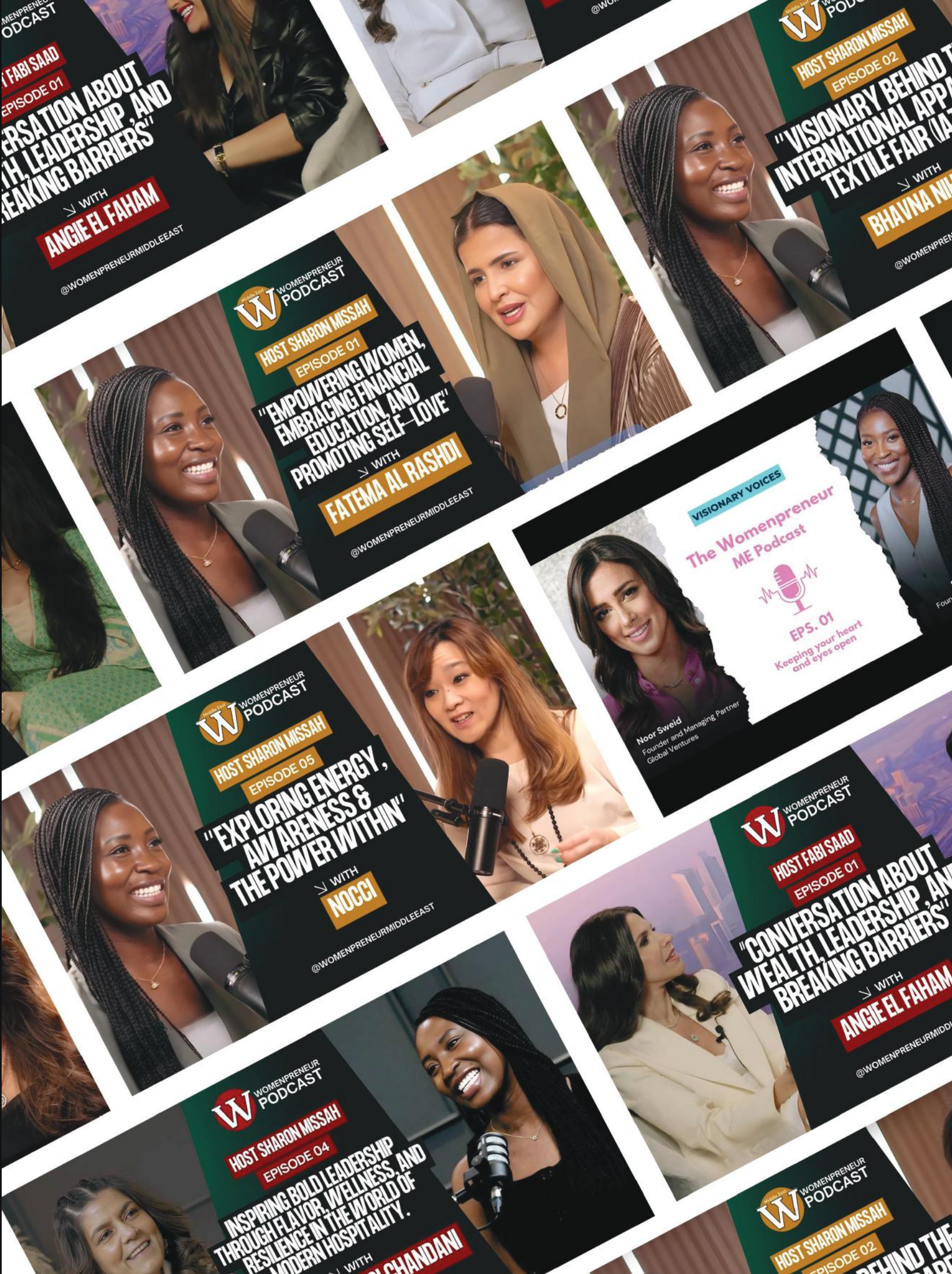


# The Womenpreneur

Middle East Podcast

Keeping your Heart and Eyes Open

wwwyoutube.com/@womenpreneurmiddleeast


WOMENPRENEUR PODCAST
HOST SHARON MISSAH
EPISODE 01
"EMPOWERING WOMEN, EMBRACING FINANCIAL EDUCATION, AND PROMOTING SELF-LOVE"
WITH
FATEMA AL RASHDI
@WOMENPRENEURMIDDLEEAST
HOST SHARON MISSAH
EPISODE 02
"VISIONARY BEHIND T
INTERNATIONAL APP
TEXTILE FAIR (IA
WITH
BHAVNA NI
@WOMENPREN
VISIONARY VOICES
The Womenpreneur ME Podcast
EPS. 01
Keeping your heart and eyes open
Noor Sweid
Founder and Managing Partner
Global Ventures
HOST SHARON MISSAH
EPISODE 05
"EXPLORING ENERGY, AWARENESS & THE POWER WITHIN"
WITH
NOCCI
@WOMENPRENEURMIDDLEEAST
HOST FABI SAAD
EPISODE 01
"CONVERSATION ABOUT WEALTH, LEADERSHIP, AN
BREAKING BARRIERS"
WITH
ANGIE EL FAHAM
@WOMENPRENEURMIDD
HOST SHARON MISSAH
EPISODE 04
INSPIRING BOLD LEADERSHIP THROUGH FLAVOR, WELLNESS, AND RESILIENCE IN THE WORLD OF MODERN HOSPITALITY.
WITH
HOST SHARON MISSAH
EPISODE 02

COVER STORY



# ROBERTO MASUD

## The Man Behind Billion-Dollar Transactions

From finance and international law to cross-border strategy, Roberto Masud reflects on four decades of deals, judgment and the next chapter of Masud International Limited

If numbers could sum up a life, Roberto Masud would have an impressive balance sheet. Loan negotiations totalling US$7.5 billion, a US$200 million university bond financing, a US$135 million Inter-American Development Bank loan, and decades of work across government advisory, private equity, banking, project finance and international business. Yet numbers alone make for an incomplete portrait. A fuller picture emerges through his character - grit, determination, judgment and values. Also known as Robert Masud, he is not yet done with his story, but his ability to turn possibilities into action has helped him execute some of the most challenging deals in international trade and finance.

What made it possible is an equally rich story of how someone with an interest in computers moved from studying finance to law, from domestic professional practice into international transactions, from representing corporations and financial institutions to working with sovereign governments, and eventually from a traditional professional-services model toward international strategic advisory. Across four decades of complicated international transactions, Masud has mastered the understanding of how capital, people, negotiations, risk and judgment intersect. His journey offers both a study in deal-making and a valuable template for the next generation of international advisers.

## The Boy Who Was Interested in What Came Next

Roberto Masud's interest in emerging ideas and new commercial structures did not begin with private equity or banking. One early example was technology. As personal computing developed in the 1980s, he became an early IBM PC user and keenly followed the software industry. By 1995, he had begun acquiring internet domain names, years before digital identities became conventional corporate assets.



"At that time, the internet was still something most businesses were trying to understand. Websites were relatively primitive, and very few people understood its commercial potential. What I understood was that a domain name was going to become the digital equivalent of real estate. I also recognized that, much like physical real estate, there was a finite supply of the best digital locations. I therefore started thinking about domain names in terms of location, scarcity, memorability and future commercial value. I wasn't predicting every aspect of how the Internet would evolve, but I understood that people were moving from physical addresses to digital addresses," he remembers.

Since then, he has been interested in not just technology, but also in its effect on human behaviour. It has taught Masud to see what hides in plain sight. Masud's early curiosity developed his instinct for understanding what is developing, determining where the opportunity sits, and then figuring out the structure required to turn an idea into something commercially viable.

## From Finance to Law and Eventually Beyond Both

Masud earned a B.B.A. in Finance in 1982 and later an M.B.A. in Finance in 1987 from the University of Miami. That same year, he earned his Juris Doctor from Boston University School of Law. He then pursued coursework in 'international negotiations' through the Program on Negotiation resident at Harvard Law School and began his professional career at Kelley, Drye & Warren, before establishing a succession of his own firms and eventually moving toward international strategic advisory.

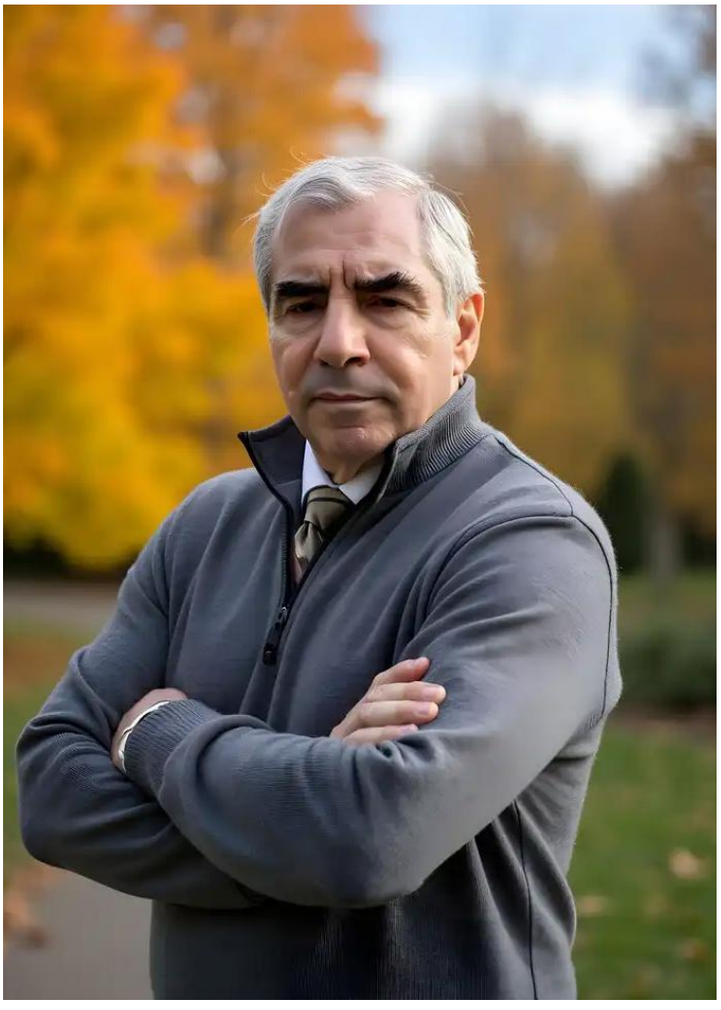
But Masud did not remain confined to finance or law. Instead, he began working in the space between them. A banker may understand capital. A lawyer may understand documentation and risk. An operator understands execution. An investor thinks about returns. But Masud's career gradually required him to understand enough of each discipline to see how they affect one another. What this interdisciplinary approach taught him was that money has a remarkable ability to reveal the character of people handling it.

"From bankers I learnt the importance of discipline and verification. Investors taught me how dramatically people can change when the potential gain or loss becomes significant. My legal background reinforced another lesson that you have to pay attention not only to what people say, but to what they actually do. Entrepreneurs taught me to respect the people who are willing to assume risk while accepting responsibility for the consequences. Over the years, I have learned that someone's conduct when a transaction encounters a problem tells you far more about that person than their behavior when everything is going well," he says.

Masud believes that money doesn't change people's character, but exposes it. When the stakes are small, almost everyone can appear reasonable, ethical and patient. When millions are at risk, you find out who can remain rational, who keeps their word, who accepts responsibility, who protects others, and who ultimately puts self-interest ahead of everything else, he reasons.

## When Deals Cross Borders, Everything Gets Harder

Masud's career has involved transactions and advisory work across the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Australia and offshore jurisdictions. He has worked with governments, multinational companies, private-equity firms, merchant banks, investment banks, commercial lenders, financial institutions, investment funds, high-net-worth individuals, and international professional advisers.



Masud says every country has its own way of doing business, its own institutions, personalities, expectations and challenges, which he finds intellectually stimulating because no two transactions are exactly alike. At 66 years of age, he is enjoying the challenge of international work more than when he was younger. "When I was starting, part of the motivation was proving myself. I wanted to build a career, establish relationships and demonstrate that I could solve difficult problems. Today, it is less about proving anything to anyone. I am much more interested in whether I can look at a complicated situation, understand the moving pieces, bring the right people together and find a way to make something work," he says.

## Ecuador: When Finance Meets Government

Roberto Masud served as Special Financial Envoy and represented the Republic of Ecuador in securities and international-banking matters involving the Office of the U.S. Vice President, U.S. Department of the Treasury and other domestic and international agencies.

"In the private sector, there is usually a clearly defined objective. A company wants to raise capital, complete an acquisition, enter a market, restructure its finances, or achieve a particular investment return. You can measure the success of the assignment against those objectives. When you are representing a country, the stakes are much broader. You are not simply dealing with a balance sheet or an investment thesis. You are dealing with people, institutions, national priorities, political realities, economic development, and the international reputation of an entire country. Every conversation can have implications well beyond the immediate transaction. What surprised me most was the degree to which relationships and trust matter at the sovereign level. Governments, banks, investors and international institutions are all evaluating not only the economics of an opportunity, but also the credibility of the people presenting it and the country they represent. Your personal reputation becomes part of the equation," he says.

Personally, he says, the experience gave him a much greater appreciation for the responsibility that comes with sitting across the table from someone on behalf of an entire nation. "That experience changed my perspective. It reinforced something I had learned throughout my career - that finance is about much more than money. Capital can influence companies, industries and markets, but at the sovereign level, financial decisions can influence the direction of a country. That is a responsibility I took very seriously, and one that gave me a different understanding of leadership, diplomacy and financial stewardship," he says.

## Inside the Billion-Dollar Deal

During the Dubai financial crisis, Roberto Masud served as the primary lawyer for a U.S. private-equity firm in negotiations involving Dubai World and Nakheel Properties, with loan agreements reaching up to US$7.5 billion. But he says the number is the least interesting thing he remembers about the billion-dollar transaction.

"The outside world sees only the headline, but when you have spent months or sometimes years working on a transaction, you don't remember the number nearly as much



as you remember the people and the moments that got you there. I remember the long conversations, the late nights, the unexpected problems that seemed almost impossible to resolve, and the moments when everyone in the room had to decide whether to keep going or walk away. I remember the personalities. I remember who remained calm when things became difficult and who became difficult when things became uncertain. I remember the small victories along the way, the document that finally came together, the phone call that resolved a critical issue, the person who finally said, 'Let's move forward.' Those moments can be far more satisfying than the closing itself," he says.

## Why Roberto Masud Says the Hardest Deals Are Not Always the Largest

Roberto Masud's broader experience includes a US$135 million Inter-American Development Bank private-sector A/B loan for an educational institution in Latin America, a US$200 million bond issue and placement for a Brazilian university, advisory work connected with the first public credit rating of a university in Latin America by a major institutional rating agency, and work on a master guarantee connected with debt-service obligations for a major building-development bond offering.

Scale alone did not determine the complexity of these assignments, says Masud. He feels there is something satisfying about taking up a transaction that initially appears almost impossible and breaking it down into manageable pieces. "Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes it is no, and sometimes the real answer is that the structure needs to change. I enjoy figuring out which one it is," he says.

More selective about choosing transactions now, Masud says he no longer takes up a deal simply because it is large, as size does not guarantee substance. "I want to work with serious people. I want the economics to make sense. I want a legitimate objective and a meaningful reason for bringing the parties together. And I want to be involved in something where my experience can actually make a difference," he says. Masud thinks a smaller transaction involving the wrong governance structure, difficult counterparties or several jurisdictions can require more judgment than one carrying a much larger headline value.

## Roberto Masud on What Makes a Deal Hold Together

Masud says that the first thing to get a deal done is to ask, "Why should this deal be done, what could go wrong, and what would make me walk away?"

"I pay greater attention to the character and track record of the people involved, the quality of the underlying information, the alignment of interests, the downside risk and the practical ability to execute what has been promised," he says.

The Dubai deal taught him that the larger the transaction, the more important the human element becomes. "You can structure a transaction perfectly on paper, but ultimately you still have to sit across the table from another human being and decide whether you trust that person to do what they have committed to do," he says. Those are the things that don't appear in a transaction summary or a financial statement, but they are often the moments that determine whether a major deal actually gets done.

Roberto believes that the agreement that gets a transaction signed is not necessarily the structure that makes the business work afterwards. If the financing structure determines where capital comes from, governance determines how the business functions after that capital arrives, he says. "So if you can't agree on how you're going to govern the relationship before you put the money in, you probably shouldn't be putting the money in," he adds.

Perhaps the most important lesson he has is that a successful deal is not simply one where everyone walks away satisfied at closing, but one that still looks like a good transaction months or years later.

## The Move Toward Masud International Limited

Roberto Masud's career has evolved from Masud & Associates to Masud & Company, Masud & Co., PC, and finally Masud International Limited, where he has served as Managing Director since 2022. Founded as an international strategic advisory firm headquartered in London, the company represents the current phase of Roberto Masud's career. Currently dealing in international strategic advisory, cross-border financing, private equity, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, strategic alliances, international banking, project finance, corporate structuring and complex international business matters, he now wants the next stage to look different. He wants to build Masud International into an institution with strong relationships, systems, partnerships and a reputation that extends beyond his personal involvement.

"What I am intentionally doing less is chasing every opportunity simply because it looks interesting or lucrative. I have learned that not every opportunity deserves your time. I am much more comfortable saying no to poorly prepared counterparties, unrealistic expectations and transactions where the fundamentals don't make sense. I'm also no longer trying to prove that I can do difficult things. I've already spent decades doing that. Now, I want to be deliberate about choosing which difficult things are worth doing. I'm not looking to do more simply for the sake of doing more. I'm looking to do more of what matters, and much less of what doesn't," he says.

## The Value of Saying No

Roberto has spent decades helping clients pursue opportunities. But experience has also taught him when not to transact. These are the deals he declined, structures he advised against, counterparties that made him uncomfortable or moments where walking away was ultimately the better decision.

"A senior adviser should not only be defined by transactions completed. Sometimes the most valuable judgment is recognizing that a transaction should never happen," he says.

Asked about the most important deal he advised a client not to pursue, Masud recalls one opportunity that appeared attractive on paper but raised too many unanswered questions. "Honestly, the most important deal I advised a client not to do was one where, on paper, the economics looked very attractive. The opportunity was there, the numbers looked good, and there were people around the table who were very persuasive. But the more I looked at it, the more I realized that the fundamentals weren't right. There were too many unanswered questions, too many assumptions, and too much reliance on things that had not been independently verified. I remember thinking that the client wasn't really asking me whether the deal could be done. They were asking me whether they should do it. And my answer was no," he remembers.

He now claims to have learned that a good dealmaker isn't the person who gets every deal done. It's the person who knows which deals are worth doing in the first place.

## What Four Decades Changed

Roberto Masud began his professional career in 1987. Nearly four decades later, the questions he asks at the beginning of a transaction are different. Early in a career, success can mean proving that you can close the deal, but later it may mean understanding which deals deserve to be closed, he admits. Looking back, Roberto says one of the most significant mistakes he made earlier in his career was allowing a relationship and a person's reputation to carry too much weight in his assessment of a transaction.

"Early in my career, I believed that if you had worked with someone for a certain period of time, understood their background, and had confidence in their character, that provided a meaningful degree of protection. Experience taught me otherwise. I learned, sometimes painfully, that trust and verification are not substitutes for one another. Someone can be intelligent, experienced, well-connected and completely credible in appearance, and a transaction can still contain risks that haven't been properly identified," he says.

"There was a transaction earlier in my career where, in retrospect, I should have challenged certain assumptions much more aggressively. I was sufficiently comfortable with the people involved that I focused more heavily on making the transaction work than on asking whether every underlying premise had been independently established. Nothing about the experience diminished my belief in the importance of relationships, but it fundamentally changed how I define trust," he adds.

Today, he approaches a transaction differently. He still values relationships enormously, but separates the person from the transaction. "I can trust someone personally and still require independent verification of what they are representing. I want to see the documents. I want to understand the source of the information. I want to know who is actually responsible for each obligation. I want assumptions tested rather than accepted. And when something doesn't make sense, I am much more willing to stop the process and ask difficult questions," he says. For Masud, one of the clearest lessons has been that asking uncomfortable questions early is far less expensive than discovering uncomfortable answers later.

Roberto has also changed his views about speed. He used to think that momentum was extremely important in dealmaking, but now believes that urgency can be both an opportunity and a warning sign. "When someone tells you that you have to act immediately, I have become much more inclined to slow the process down and understand why. I have learned that knowing when not to do a deal is just as important as knowing how to structure one," he says.

## The Next Chapter

Roberto Masud is now based in Miami, while Masud International Limited is headquartered in London, and his long-term professional vision centers on connecting U.S. and other international markets, particularly Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. He wants to focus on the transactions and relationships where his experience can make the greatest difference. "I want to work on significant international transactions that require an understanding of finance, law, investment and international relationships at the same time," he says.

He does not want Masud International Limited to simply be remembered as a company that participated in large international transactions, but as a trusted international platform that brought together capital, opportunity and people across borders and did so with integrity.

"After almost four decades in business and finance, I have learned that relationships are ultimately more valuable than individual transactions. A transaction comes and goes. A reputation stays. So I want Masud International to have a reputation for being a company that people could come to when a transaction was complicated, international, and required experience, creativity and persistence to bring the right parties together. I would also like to build an organization that can continue without me being involved in every decision. That is an important measure of whether you have really built something. If everything depends upon one person, you haven't necessarily built an institution; you have built a job around yourself," he says.



His ambition for Masud International is to develop it into an institution with its own relationships, intellectual capital, systems and reputation. "I want the next generation of people working with the company to inherit the lessons I have learned over my career, but also to take the organization further than I could have taken it myself," he says.

So if someone writes about Roberto Masud ten years from now, he says, it should not be that he worked on billion-dollar transactions or knew important people, but that he built a company people trusted, opened doors between people and markets that otherwise might never have connected.

Masud also sees the next phase of international business as increasingly shaped by geopolitics, regulation, private capital, local partnerships and the need for structures that can withstand change. For him, the opportunity is less about being present in every market and more about identifying where capital, businesses and credible local relationships can be brought together intelligently.

His vision for Masud International is bigger than simply completing transactions. "I want Masud International to become the bridge between capital, opportunity and people, particularly across borders and markets where those connections are difficult to make. The company should be known for finding opportunities others may overlook, bringing credible parties together, structuring transactions intelligently and, just as importantly, knowing when a transaction should not be done," he says.



# Sehrish Khandia

## Redefining Food, Health & Wellness Through AI

Sehrish Khandia is an entrepreneur, certified nutritionist, and Founder of Byondbites, a Saudi-based AI-powered food and health-tech platform available globally. With over 18 years of corporate experience spanning marketing, supply chain, brand strategy, sourcing, and business development, she brings a broad understanding of consumer behaviour, brand development, and business execution to her entrepreneurial ventures.

Throughout her professional journey, Sehrish has developed an understanding of how consumers behave, how brands grow, and how businesses move from ideas to execution. Her experience across different business functions has shaped her approach to building ventures that connect strategic thinking with practical solutions. Today, she is channeling this experience into her work at the intersection of food, nutrition, health, technology, and entrepreneurship.

### Building a Personalized Food and Wellness Ecosystem

Sehrish's primary focus is building Byondbites into more than a food app. Her vision is to create an intelligent, personalized food, nutrition, and wellness ecosystem that helps people make better everyday decisions. The platform is designed around the relationship between what people eat, how they cook, and how they manage their health, bringing these everyday activities into a more connected experience.

Byondbites combines AI-powered food discovery, personalized nutrition, health goals, and practical everyday guidance. By bringing these elements together, the platform aims to make healthier living simpler and more accessible. Its approach reflects Sehrish's interest in connecting technology with everyday human needs, helping people navigate their food and wellness decisions through a more personalized experience.

For Sehrish, the opportunity lies in developing a platform that brings different aspects of food and health together. Rather than focusing solely on food discovery, Byondbites aims to connect food choices, nutrition, and wellness within a broader ecosystem. This vision places personalization and practical guidance at the centre of the platform's purpose, with the goal of making everyday decisions more manageable for its users.

Based in Saudi Arabia and available globally, Byondbites reflects her ambition to build a platform that can serve a wider audience. Her focus on culturally relevant and practical solutions is central to her approach, ensuring that the ideas behind her ventures remain connected to the needs and experiences of real people.

### Connecting Strategy, Branding and Experiences

Alongside Byondbites, Sehrish is the Co-Founder of Allign Marketing KSA, a strategy-led branding and experiences agency. The agency helps businesses build stronger brands through marketing, creative strategy, activations, and memorable event experiences. Her involvement in this venture reflects another dimension of her professional experience, bringing together brand strategy, consumer understanding, and business development.

Her background across marketing, sourcing, supply chain, and brand strategy provides a broad perspective on how businesses develop and grow. These areas of experience have contributed to her understanding of how brands position themselves, how consumers engage with them, and how ideas can be translated into execution. Through Allign Marketing KSA, this experience connects with the agency's focus on helping businesses strengthen their identities and create meaningful experiences for their audiences.

Although Byondbites and Allign Marketing KSA operate in different areas, both ventures reflect Sehrish's interest in understanding people and building solutions around their needs. One focuses on connecting food, nutrition, health, and technology, while the other supports businesses through branding, marketing, creative strategy, and experiences.

**"Creating solutions that are practical, culturally relevant, and built around real human needs."**

### Building for a Global Audience

Sehrish is passionate about the intersection of AI, food, health, consumer behaviour, and entrepreneurship. Her professional interests bring together her experience in business and branding with her focus on nutrition and technology. She is particularly interested in creating solutions that are practical, culturally relevant, and built around real human needs.

# Dr. John Sachtouras

## The Multiplier Effect: Building Trust, Leadership and Global Impact

In 1979, a young Greek man travelled from Athens to Paris with curiosity, ambition, and no clear sense of where life would take him. For Dr. John Sachtouras, that journey became a turning point, introducing him to different cultures, new people, and opportunities beyond the boundaries of his upbringing. Nearly five decades later, his journey spans 92 countries, more than a billion dollars in global sales, and a community of over a million people across 65 countries. Alongside entrepreneurship, his work has extended into mentoring, education, strategy, and film production.

Despite these achievements, Dr. Sachtouras describes himself not through titles alone, but as an entrepreneur, strategist, mentor, educator, and student of people. His journey reflects a philosophy shaped by relationships, cultural understanding, and the belief that success becomes meaningful when it creates value for others.

### Relationships Before Transactions

His entrepreneurial journey began with a small travel agency. Although he had limited understanding of business risk, he had the courage to begin and discovered his passion for serving people. As his businesses expanded into different markets, he learned that understanding people was essential to understanding business. Numbers and spreadsheets could not replace an appreciation of local cultures, expectations, and relationships.

Across borders, he believes that trust, respect, integrity, and keeping one's word remain fundamental. His first major breakthrough was significant not simply because of the revenue involved, but because it demonstrated that a business model could be replicated and scaled. For him, growth begins when businesses focus on the value they create rather than becoming distracted by the size of individual deals.

### Why Dubai

Having worked across cultures, Dr. Sachtouras chose Dubai for its ability to create opportunities. He credits the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the leadership's willingness to think decades ahead. The UAE's diverse population, with more than 200 nationalities living and working together, offers an extraordinary exchange of ideas and perspectives.

He believes Dubai provides entrepreneurs with leadership, stability, infrastructure, market access, and talent, alongside a sense of momentum. While entrepreneurship always involves challenges, he sees the UAE as an environment where ambitious people can develop ideas into something significant.

### Trust Doesn't Scale. People Do.

Building a community of more than a million people across 65 countries has reinforced his belief that trust develops through individual relationships. Technology can expand reach, but meaningful influence depends on the principles behind those connections. For Dr. Sachtouras, a person's title may establish their position, but their actions reveal their character.

This philosophy also shapes his understanding of leadership. People judge leaders by the distance between what they say and what they do. Consistency, integrity, and the ability to honour commitments create the foundation for lasting trust.

**"Success is not simply about how far you travel personally; it is about the impact you leave behind as you travel."**

### Rethinking Leadership

Earlier in his career, Dr. Sachtouras measured leadership through growth, performance, targets, and revenue. While he continues to value results, his understanding of leadership has evolved. He now believes that developing people's ability to think independently is one of a leader's greatest responsibilities.

He measures progress by whether people become more capable, confident, and willing to make decisions without constantly seeking approval. His mentoring approach begins with mindset and character, particularly how individuals respond when circumstances do not go according to plan. He also believes that continued learning requires stepping outside one's comfort zone and avoiding the assumption that yesterday's success guarantees tomorrow's progress.





# Mohd Zia Hassan

## Building Across Industries, Creating Across Possibilities

Mohd Zia Hassan is a Canadian entrepreneur and business leader who has built a diverse portfolio across real estate, hospitality, retail, professional services, beauty, fragrances, entertainment and media. Born in Canada and raised in Dubai, his understanding of both global perspectives and the UAE's rapidly evolving business environment has shaped an entrepreneurial journey defined by diversification and expansion.

As Chairman of Infinity Group UAE and Infinix Infinity Real Estate, Zia approaches business with a strong emphasis on customer relationships, opportunity identification and practical execution. His portfolio now spans multiple sectors, reflecting a philosophy that entrepreneurship does not have to be confined to one industry.

From beginning his career in sales to building a growing group of businesses, Zia's journey offers insight into what it takes to recognise opportunities, adapt to changing markets and build ventures around different aspects of modern consumer and business life.

### From Sales To Entrepreneurship

***Q: Your career began in sales. How did that experience influence the entrepreneur you became?***

Sales gave me an understanding of people before it gave me an understanding of business. When you work directly with customers, you learn very quickly that every person has different motivations, expectations and concerns. You learn to listen, understand what someone actually needs and then create value around that need.

That experience became an important foundation for everything I did afterwards. Whether you are selling a product, a property, a service or an experience, the fundamentals remain similar. You need to understand your customer, build trust and deliver on your promise.

Sales also taught me resilience. Not every opportunity converts, and not every idea works exactly as planned. You learn to keep moving, learn from the experience and become better at recognising the right opportunities.

***Q: You entered the electronics industry in 2010. What did that period teach you about business and the market?***

The electronics industry was an important stage in my entrepreneurial journey because it was a highly competitive and constantly changing environment. Technology evolves quickly, consumer expectations change quickly, and businesses have to respond quickly.

It taught me the importance of understanding market behaviour rather than simply following trends. You need to know what customers want today, but you also need to think about what they are likely to want tomorrow.

That experience gave me the confidence to explore other industries. I realised that the principles of business, customer experience, operational discipline, sales, relationships and execution, can be transferred across sectors.

**"Success is not about building one business and stopping there. It is about recognising opportunities, understanding people and creating something that continues to grow with the market."**

### Why Diversification?

***Q: Today, your portfolio spans real estate, hospitality, gold and diamonds, beauty, fragrances, consultancy, immigration, events and media. What drives such diversification?***

For me, diversification comes from identifying opportunities and understanding where our capabilities can create value. I don't believe an entrepreneur should be restricted to one industry simply because that is where they started.

Different businesses also allow you to understand different parts of the market. Real estate gives you exposure to investment and long-term assets. Hospitality is about experience. Consultancy is about solving problems. Beauty and fragrances are closely connected to lifestyle and consumer behaviour. Media and entertainment are about storytelling and connecting people.

There are different dynamics in each sector, but there are also common principles. If you have the right team, understand the customer and remain focused on execution, you can build businesses across different categories.

***Q: Does operating across so many sectors create challenges?***

Absolutely. Diversification can create opportunities, but it also requires discipline. You cannot assume that what works in one industry will automatically work in another.

Every business needs its own strategy, people, systems and understanding of the market.

# Tasnim Anwar

## Turning Global Experience Into Educational Opportunity

### A Career Shaped by Diverse Experiences

Tasnim Anwar's professional journey reflects the value of exploring different industries, learning from new environments, and recognising opportunities where experience can create meaningful change. Educated at the University of Auckland, she developed a broad perspective that has continued to influence her approach to business, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

Her career has taken her across sports, real estate, family business, and education. Rather than following a single, predictable path, Tasnim has embraced the lessons each chapter offered, using them to build a versatile professional foundation. These varied experiences have helped shape her understanding of people, business operations, and the importance of identifying needs that can be transformed into practical opportunities.

**"Every chapter of my career has given me something different - experience, perspective and, most importantly, the ability to recognise where an opportunity can create value for others."**

### Building Experience Across Industries

One of the defining chapters of Tasnim's career was her 11 years in Dubai's real estate sector. Working in a dynamic international environment gave her valuable professional exposure and broadened her understanding of business and customer relationships. Her experience across different industries also allowed her to develop a flexible outlook, adapting to changing circumstances while remaining focused on long-term possibilities.

Alongside her work in real estate, Tasnim's involvement in family business added another dimension to her professional development. It offered opportunities to understand business from different perspectives and reinforced the importance of responsibility, adaptability, and sustained effort. Her connection with the sports industry further reflects the breadth of her interests, including her ownership of a tennis company.

Each experience contributed to a wider vision of entrepreneurship-one that goes beyond building a business and focuses on recognising where skills, resources, and ideas can make a difference.

### GoGee8: Expanding Access to Education

As Founder and CEO of GoGee8, Tasnim has channelled her accumulated experience into an education-focused venture. The company is driven by the aim of expanding access to learning and creating opportunities for communities that may face barriers to education.

GoGee8's reach extends to Myanmar, India, Palestine, and other communities, reflecting a vision that looks beyond geographical boundaries. For Tasnim, education represents an important area where opportunity can have a lasting impact. By focusing on access to learning, her work seeks to connect people with possibilities that can support their development and future aspirations.

The initiative also represents a natural progression in her professional journey. Her experience across multiple industries has given her different ways of understanding challenges, while her entrepreneurial outlook enables her to explore how those insights can be applied to a purpose-driven business.

### Turning Experience Into Opportunity

Tasnim's journey highlights how professional growth can emerge from varied experiences rather than a single specialisation. Moving between industries has allowed her to develop a broader understanding of business, while her work in education demonstrates how entrepreneurial thinking can be directed towards a wider purpose.

Her leadership approach is rooted in recognising value across different experiences and using those lessons to identify new possibilities. Whether through real estate, family business, sports, or education, each chapter has contributed to the perspective she brings to her ventures today.

Through GoGee8, Tasnim continues to focus on making learning more accessible and creating pathways for communities to benefit from educational opportunities. Her work reflects the belief that experience becomes especially valuable when it is used to address real needs and help others move forward.





# Gaurav Gaikwad

## How 24-Year-Old Gaurav Gaikwad Built Ace Reputations Into a $30 Million AI Company

At 24, Gaurav Gaikwad has already lived through several versions of himself: engineering student, researcher, graduate student far from home, technologist, and now founder and CEO of Ace Reputations, an AI company valued at approximately $30 million following its latest investment commitment.

It happened quickly from the outside.

But Gaikwad doesn't see the last few years as a straight line from India to Silicon Valley, or from student to CEO. He remembers the uncertainty, the people who stayed, the relationships that changed, the decisions that went wrong, and the things he had to unlearn before Ace began becoming the company he imagined.

"People see the company after something works," he says. "They don't always see how many times you had to change yourself to get there."

For him, building Ace Reputations has become as much a story about growing up as building a company.

### Leaving home changes you

Gaikwad came to California to pursue his Master's in Computer Science at Santa Clara University.




Moving from India to Silicon Valley meant leaving behind more than family and familiarity. For the first time, many of the decisions that would shape his life were entirely his own.

"When you leave your home country, you suddenly realize how many things around you used to make life comfortable," he says. "Your family, your friends, even small routines. Then you come somewhere new and have to build everything again."

Silicon Valley accelerated that adjustment. Gaikwad had come from an engineering environment where he was accustomed to spending considerable time thinking through a problem before putting something into the world. California introduced him to founders and engineers who often worked differently: build, test, listen, change, repeat.

"I had to unlearn a lot," he says. "I used to think being prepared meant having every answer. Here I learned that sometimes the only way to find the answer is to start." That shift eventually shaped the way he built Ace.

### Before Ace, there was a pattern

Long before reputation became his focus, Gaikwad was building technology around problems that interested him.

His research included medVR, an interactive virtual-reality system for anatomy and surgical education; chemVR, a virtual-reality chemistry laboratory; metaAR, an augmented-reality commerce application; and work on an electrooculogram-based system that used multidirectional eye movements to support computer interaction for people with ALS.

The industries were different, but the habit was the same: find a problem and see whether technology could make something easier, safer or more accessible.

That habit followed him to Silicon Valley. As artificial intelligence became part of everyday search and discovery, Gaikwad began noticing a change in the way reputation worked online.

For years, companies worried about what appeared when someone searched their name on Google. Now people could simply ask ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude or Perplexity about a person or business and receive a summarized answer.

That raised a different question for him: What happens when AI starts forming the first impression? That question became an important part of Ace Reputations.




## Building the technology behind Ace

Ace began with an online reputation, but Gaikwad gradually pushed the company toward building its own technology around digital identity, monitoring and AI visibility.

Today, that work sits within the Ace Intelligence Suite.

AceEye is focused on monitoring online environments for emerging reputation and identity risks. AceTrack tracks search positioning, keyword visibility and changes in online discoverability. AceGuard focuses on privacy, personal-information exposure and unauthorized content. AceTruth is being developed around the analysis of potentially manipulated or misleading digital content.

The company has also been developing AceRank AI, focused specifically on visibility inside AI search and answer engines looking at how brands and people appear in AI-generated responses, the sources being referenced, how visibility changes and where information may be missing.

For Gaikwad, these are pieces of the same problem.

"Ten years ago, you wanted to know what Google showed when somebody searched your name," he says. "Now someone can ask an AI who you are, whether your company is credible, or who they should work with. You need to understand that layer too."

His bet is that reputation will eventually be monitored much like companies already monitor cybersecurity, search performance or financial risk.

"Reputation is becoming measurable," he says. "That's the direction we're building toward."

## From getting into the room to earning trust

As Ace grew, so did the people and companies Gaikwad found himself working around.

The company's engagements have included former Fortune 500 executives, publicly traded companies, technology founders and other senior business leaders. For someone in his early twenties, those rooms could initially be intimidating.

"When you're sitting across from someone who has spent decades running companies, you realize very quickly that your age isn't going to win you the meeting," he says. "You have to understand their problem. You have to listen. And then you have to deliver."

Those experiences changed his idea of what it meant to be a founder.

It wasn't enough to be technically good. He had to learn how to make decisions with incomplete information, communicate with people far more experienced than him, take responsibility when things went wrong, and stay composed when the answer wasn't obvious.

"You learn that confidence doesn't mean pretending you know everything," he says. "Sometimes it's being calm enough to say, 'I don't know yet, but I'll figure it out.'"

## A bigger bet on Ace

Institutional backing became another marker of Ace's progress.

An earlier seed investment from Spectrum Business Ventures, led by Amit Raizada, valued Ace Reputations at approximately $15 million.

The company later entered an extended seed financing involving Phoenix Holding Incorporated, with a $300,000 investment commitment at an approximately $30 million post-money valuation.

For Gaikwad, seeing the valuation move was meaningful. But he says the larger weight came from knowing that other people were now putting their own capital and reputation behind his decisions.

"A valuation is exciting, of course," he says. "But the part I think about more is trust. When somebody backs you, there's a responsibility that comes with that. You have to earn that trust after the investment too."

## The people behind the journey

When Gaikwad talks about what helped him get here, he repeatedly comes back to people.

His parents and sister were there before there was a company to talk about. Friends stayed close through periods when work occupied most of his attention. Mentors challenged decisions and offered perspective when he was too close to a problem to see it clearly.

"I've learned something different from almost everyone who has genuinely been part of this journey," he says. "Some people taught me how to make better decisions. Some taught me how to stay calm when things aren't going your way. Some taught me resilience. And some people just reminded me to stay grounded."

He credits his mother, father and sister in particular with providing something that business success cannot replace: a place where he doesn't have to be the CEO.

"My family knew me before any of this," he says. "That's important. When things are going really well, they keep you grounded. When things aren't going well, they're still there. I'm very grateful for that."

He feels similarly about the friends and mentors who stayed through the uncertain periods.

"It's easy to celebrate someone when things are working," he says. "I remember the people who were around when

there was nothing to celebrate yet."

Their influence also made its way into the business.

Gaikwad says he became a better decision-maker by watching how experienced people handled pressure. He became more patient by seeing that not every problem needed an immediate emotional response. And he learned that resilience often looked less dramatic than people made it sound it was simply getting up the next morning and continuing.

## Growth also means losing things

Not every relationship survived the same period. As Ace demanded more of his time, some friendships changed. Personal relationships changed too. There were people Gaikwad wanted to keep in his life even after he began realizing that those relationships were taking more from him than they were giving.

He doesn't describe that as the heroic sacrifice of entrepreneurship.

"I don't think you should be proud of losing people because you're building a company," he says. "But your life changes. Your priorities change. Sometimes you grow in different directions."

That was one of the harder lessons. For someone trained as an engineer, there was always an instinct to fix things.

Eventually, he learned that not everything needed to be fixed. "I had to understand that you can't take every person, every habit and every old version of yourself into the next stage of your life," he says. "Sometimes holding on is what keeps you stuck."

## Going home, and letting go

A recent trip back to India gave Gaikwad time away from the pace of Silicon Valley.

During the trip, he visited the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain.

He had arrived carrying decisions he had postponed and relationships he knew, privately, he needed to reconsider. The visit gave him quiet.




"There were things I was holding onto because they had once meant a lot to me," he says. "But something being important in your past doesn't automatically mean it belongs in your future."

"I think I finally gave myself permission to let a few things and a few people go," he says. "When I came back, I felt lighter. There was more positivity, but also more focus. I wasn't spending the same energy fighting things I already knew weren't right for me."

The effect showed up in small ways first: clearer decisions, less noise and a greater willingness to say no. "Sometimes you don't need another opportunity," he says. "You need space."

## Rewiring yourself

Looking back, Gaikwad sees a common thread running from leaving India to building Ace.

He had to unlearn. He had to unlearn the idea that every decision could be perfected before it was made. That working longer always meant progressing faster. That being a leader meant always having the answer.

"You can change software quickly," he says. "Changing the way you've trained your own mind to work is much harder."

Silicon Valley helped with part of that rewiring. His family, friends and mentors helped with another part. Difficult relationships taught him something else. Going home gave him perspective he couldn't find while moving at full speed in California.

Each left something behind. At 24, Gaikwad doesn't pretend to have figured everything out.

"I've made good decisions and bad ones," he says. "I've trusted the right people and the wrong people. I've built things that worked and things that didn't. But every version teaches you something if you're willing to look at it properly."

## What comes after $30 million

Ace Reputations is now moving into its next phase.

Gaikwad wants to expand the company's technology further into AI visibility, digital identity, intellectual-property protection and enterprise reputation intelligence. The larger idea is to build infrastructure that helps people and companies understand how they are being represented not only across the open internet, but inside the AI systems increasingly shaping discovery and trust.

There is plenty left to prove. Gaikwad seems comfortable with that.

Two years in Silicon Valley have made him less interested in appearing as though he has all the answers.

"The company is still being built, and so am I," he says. "I think that's probably the most important thing I've learned. You can't expect your business to keep growing if you're unwilling to grow with it."

The $30 million valuation gives Ace Reputations a number people can point to.

For Gaikwad, the more important story is everything that number doesn't show: leaving home, learning from people more experienced than him, making mistakes, losing relationships, returning to where he came from, letting go, and coming back ready to build again.

# AUDEMARS PIGUET

*Le Brassus*



ROYAL OAK

***CALIBRE 7136 Ø38mm***

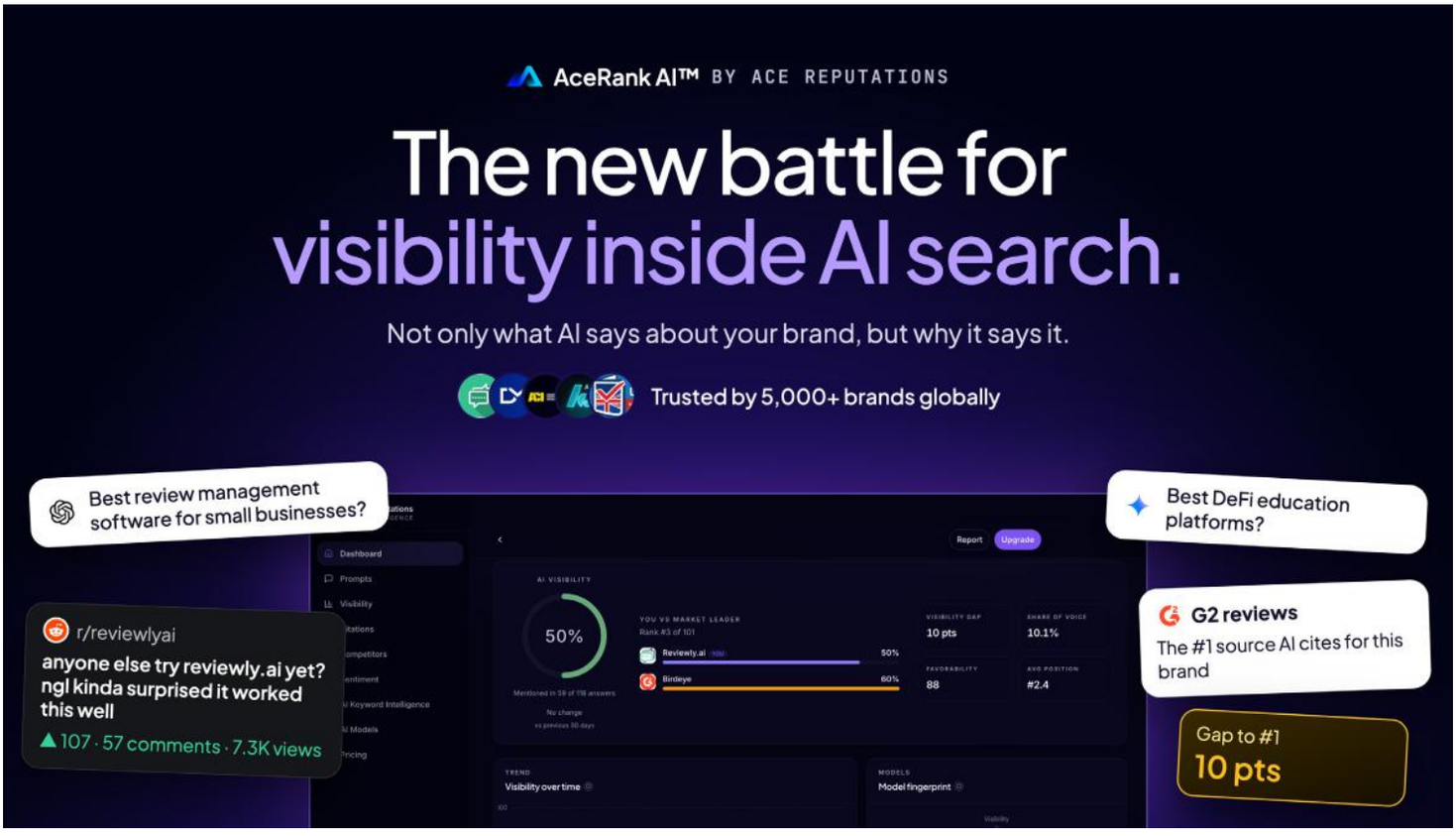


ROYAL OAK CONCEPT

***CALIBRE 4407 Ø43mm***

**BRAND SPOTLIGHT**

## AceRank AI™ and the New Battle for Visibility Inside AI Search




**Ace Reputations is betting that the next phase of online reputation management will be less about monitoring what artificial intelligence says about a brand and more about understanding why it says it.**

For years, managing a company's digital presence followed a relatively familiar playbook. Search Google. Look at the first page. Track reviews, news coverage and social conversations. Understand what people were likely to find before they formed an opinion. That model is beginning to change.

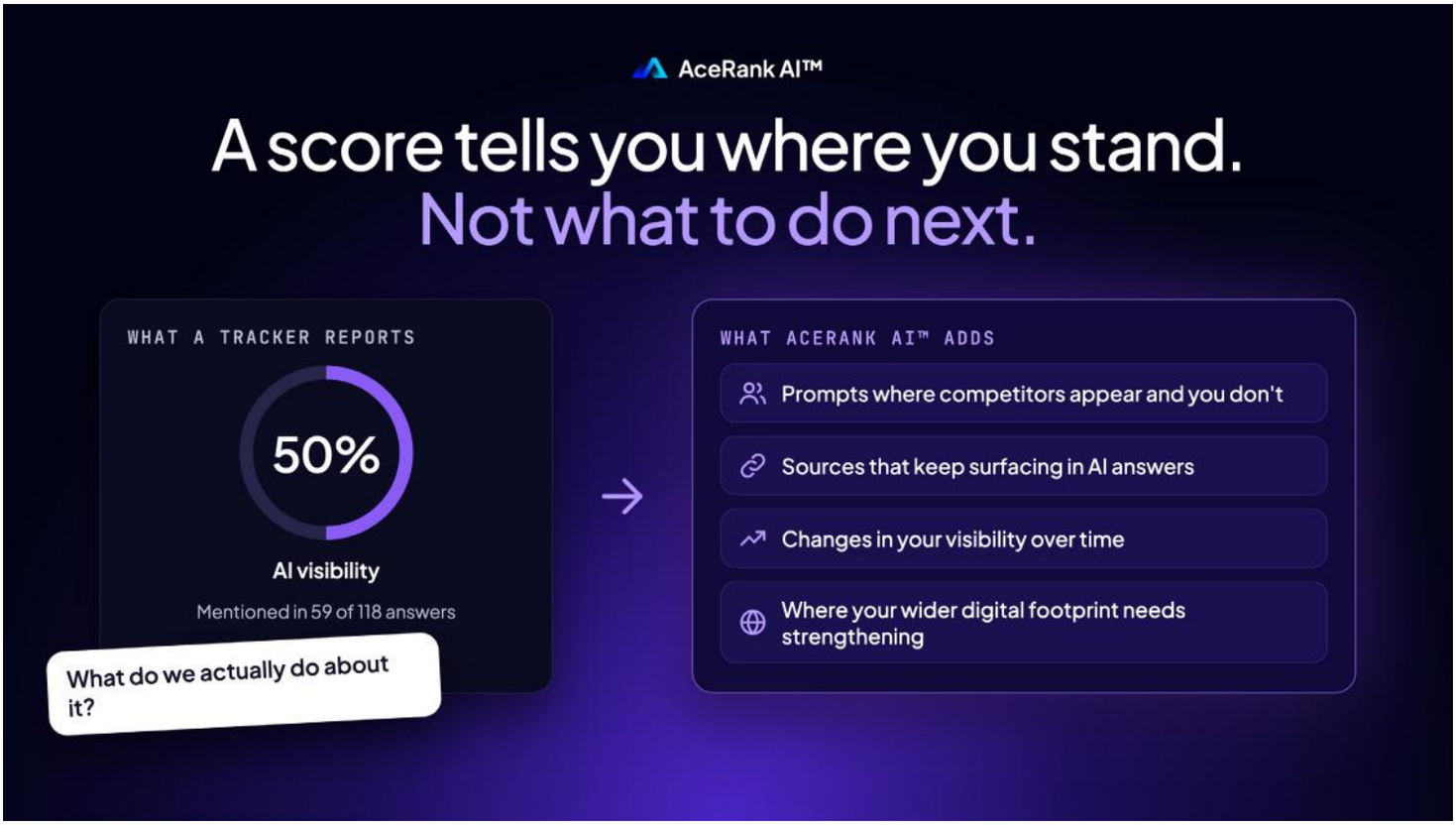
A growing number of searches no longer end with a list of blue links. People are asking ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity and other AI systems direct questions: Which company should I use? Who are the leading firms in this category? Is this business credible? What are the alternatives? Who is best known for a particular service? The answer arrives already assembled.

For brands, that creates an unusual problem. A company can have a polished website, respectable search rankings and years of conventional SEO work behind it, yet still be largely absent from an AI-generated answer. A competitor with a stronger footprint across the sources AI systems encounter may appear instead.

And unlike traditional search, simply knowing that you are missing does not explain why. That gap is what **AceRank AI™**, a proprietary technology developed by **Ace Reputations**, has been built to examine.

### The Problem With Knowing Your Score

AI visibility has quickly become its own software category. A number of platforms can now monitor prompts across generative engines and report whether




a company was mentioned, where it appeared and how its visibility compares with competitors.

That information is useful. But it can also leave a marketing or reputation team with essentially the same question it started with:

**What do we actually do about it?**

AceRank was developed around that distinction. Rather than treating AI visibility as another analytics dashboard, the system is designed to connect monitoring with the underlying signals that may be contributing to an AI system's answer.

It tracks brand prompts across major AI platforms, records mentions and positioning, compares competitors, examines sentiment and identifies the citations and sources appearing around relevant answers. The more consequential layer comes afterward.

AceRank is designed to identify **visibility opportunities**: prompts where competitors are appearing and a brand is not, sources repeatedly surfacing in answers, changes in visibility over time, and areas where the wider digital footprint may need strengthening.

The objective is not to claim control over an AI model. No outside company can legitimately guarantee what an independent generative model will say. Instead, AceRank approaches the problem from the other direction: **understand the information environment from which AI visibility emerges, then give brands a clearer basis for improving their presence within it.**

## From AI Tracking to AI Search Strategy

Consider a company that asks a conventional visibility platform to monitor the prompt:

**"What are the leading companies for [service]?"**

The resulting report might show that the company does not appear, while three competitors do. That establishes the visibility gap.

AceRank is intended to push the analysis further. Which competitors are repeatedly appearing? What sources are associated with those answers? Which relevant prompts represent missed opportunities? Is the company gaining or losing visibility? How does its sentiment differ from competitors? And where does demand around those subjects exist beyond the individual prompt?

The platform brings together prompt tracking, competitor intelligence, citation analysis, sentiment, keyword intelligence and visibility changes so those questions can be examined in context rather than as isolated metrics.

It also incorporates **Reddit Intelligence & Discovery**, reflecting another change in the way brands are discovered online. Forums, editorial coverage, third-party references and other independent sources can form part of the broader information landscape surrounding a company.

The premise is straightforward: AI visibility cannot be treated solely as a technical ranking exercise.

## Why AI Search Changes Reputation Management

Traditional SEO largely taught companies to think about a destination: a search-results page. Generative search is more fragmented.

A brand may be described differently depending on the question, the model, the available sources and the context of the conversation. Visibility is therefore not simply a matter of being "number one." It can mean being cited for one subject, omitted from another, recommended alongside a competitor in one model and barely recognised by another.

This creates a different kind of reputation problem. The question is no longer only, "**What appears when somebody searches our name?**"

It is increasingly: "**What does AI understand our company to be relevant for?**"

That is a much larger question because it reaches beyond branded searches.

A prospective customer may never type the company's name at all. They may ask for a recommendation based on an industry, problem, location or use case. If a brand is absent at that point, the traditional search funnel may never begin.

Ace Reputations sees this as the convergence of **reputation management, search intelligence and AI discovery.**

## Building the Evidence Layer

AceRank sits within a broader technology strategy at Ace Reputations, a reputation-management company based in Santa Clara, California.

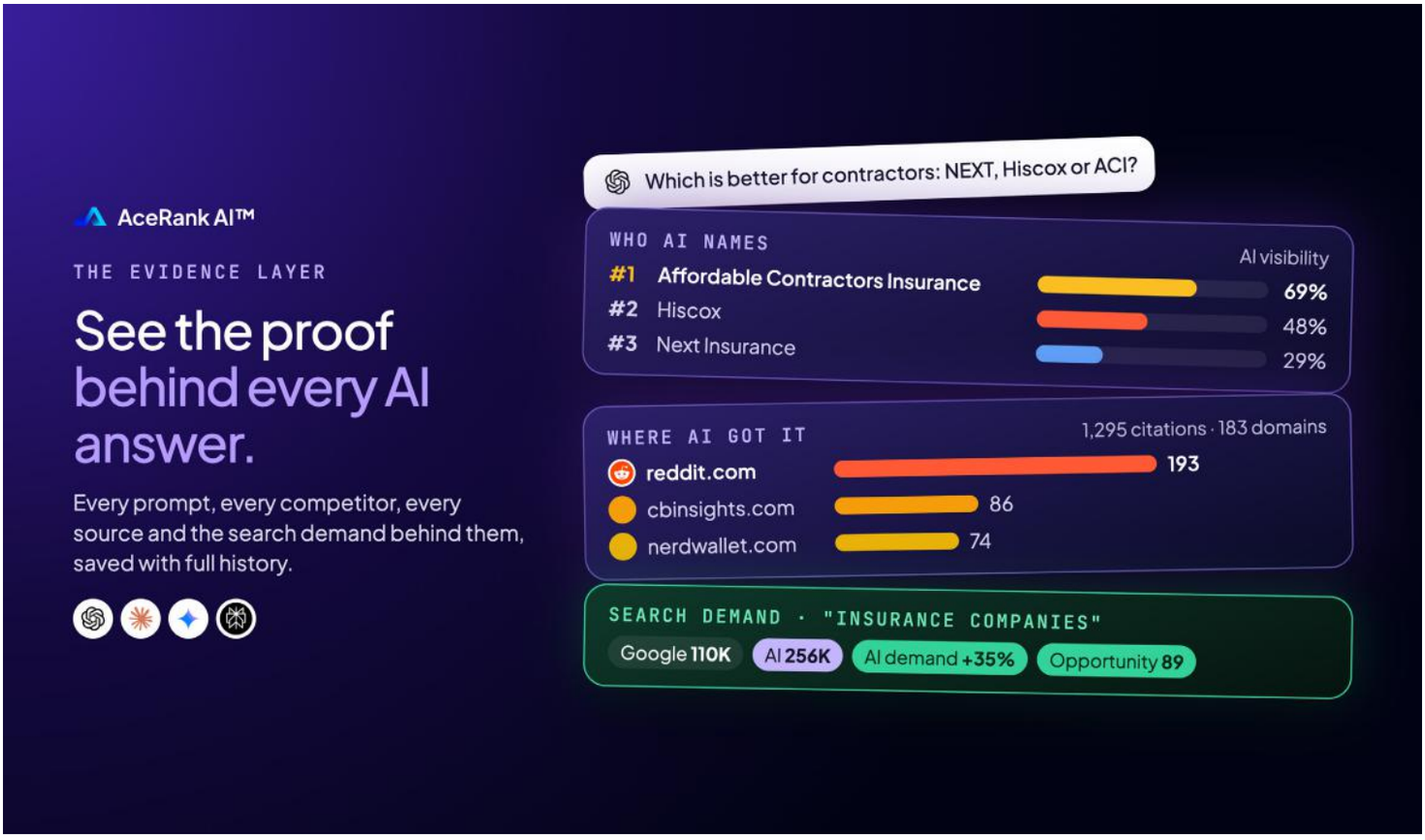
The company has increasingly built proprietary systems around a part of reputation management that historically depended heavily on manual searches, spreadsheets and periodic reporting.

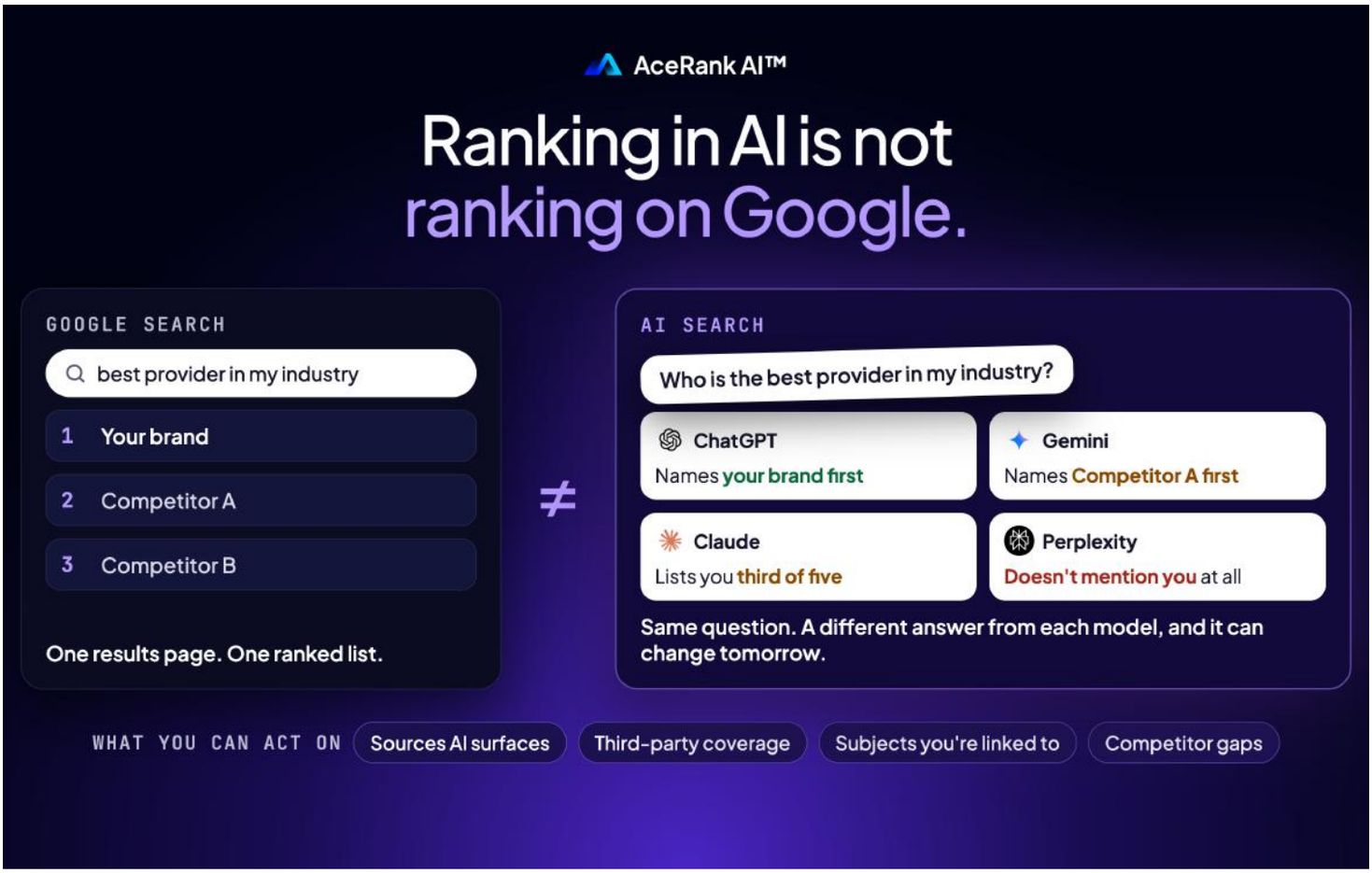
Its technology stack includes systems for scanning and monitoring online reputation signals, tracking search positions and sentiment, and now examining how brands surface across generative AI. AceRank extends that approach into AI search.

The platform can monitor prompts across systems including ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity, preserve historical executions, track brand and competitor appearances and examine citations associated with responses.

Its keyword-intelligence layer is intended to provide another piece of context: not merely whether a prompt produced a mention, but where wider search demand may exist and which subjects warrant attention.

That makes the platform less a single "AI score" than an evidence layer for teams trying to understand a rapidly changing discovery environment.






## Ranking in AI Is Not the Same as Ranking on Google

There is an important caveat to the growing industry around AI optimisation.

Generative systems are not conventional search engines with a publicly defined ranking formula. Their answers can change. Different models use different systems and information sources. The same question can produce different results at different times.

For that reason, the idea of simply "optimising for ChatGPT" can be misleading.

AceRank's approach is instead based on strengthening the signals that can be observed and acted upon: how clearly a company is represented online, where it has credible third-party coverage, which sources are being surfaced, what subjects it is associated with, where competitors have stronger visibility, and where relevant gaps remain.

In practice, improving AI visibility may involve work far beyond the company website-from authoritative editorial references and accurate company information to relevant third-party discussions and a stronger body of material connecting a brand with the subjects for which it wants to be known.

The technology measures the result and identifies the gaps. The reputation strategy addresses the underlying footprint.

## A Shift From Monitoring Reputation to Engineering Visibility

That may ultimately be the more interesting development behind AceRank.

The first generation of digital reputation tools helped companies see what the internet was saying about them. The emerging challenge is understanding how machines interpret that same information and how those interpretations influence human decisions.

AI answers are becoming another surface on which reputation exists.

Ace Reputations' wager is that businesses will eventually expect more than a dashboard telling them whether they appeared there.

They will want to know **why they appeared, why a competitor appeared instead, where the answer came from, and what they can realistically do next.** That is the territory AceRank has been built to explore.



# AI-Native Entrepreneurship:
## The New Way of Building a Business

For decades, the conventional path to building a company followed a familiar formula: identify an opportunity, raise capital, hire a team, develop a product, acquire customers and gradually scale operations.

Artificial intelligence is beginning to rewrite that formula.

A founder can now research a market, analyse competitors, build an early product, generate marketing assets, automate customer support, analyse financial information and test different business ideas with a fraction of the resources traditionally required.

But the real change is bigger than productivity.

Artificial intelligence is creating a new category of company — one in which AI is embedded into the business from the beginning rather than introduced later as a technology upgrade.

This emerging model is increasingly described as the **AI-native or AI-driven enterprise.**

MIT Sloan defines an AI-driven enterprise as an entrepreneurial venture that embeds AI into strategy, operations and talent to create scalable capabilities beyond the limitations of traditional startups. Its researchers describe it as a third model of entrepreneurship alongside conventional small and medium-sized enterprises and innovation-driven enterprises.

The distinction is important.

A traditional company may use AI.

An AI-native company is built around what becomes possible because AI exists.

And that difference could have profound implications for the next generation of entrepreneurs.

### From using AI to building with AI

The first wave of business AI was largely about efficiency.

Businesses introduced chatbots, automated emails, AI-generated content and productivity tools. Employees used AI to write, summarise, research, analyse and communicate faster.

The next phase is more fundamental.

AI is beginning to influence how companies are designed from day one.

An entrepreneur launching an AI-native business might not begin by asking how many employees are needed for each department. Instead, they may map the company's functions — research, sales, customer service, marketing, finance, operations and product development — and determine which activities require human judgement and which can be augmented or automated by AI.

This creates a different organisational structure.

The company becomes less dependent on large numbers of people performing repetitive tasks and more dependent on a combination of **human specialists, software, data and AI agents.**

MIT Sloan describes emerging AI-driven organisations as networks containing both human and AI nodes, with some AI agents already being used to perform functions within real businesses.

That does not mean humans disappear.

Quite the opposite.

The entrepreneur's role may become more strategic.

Human beings remain responsible for vision, relationships, ethics, judgement, creativity, leadership and understanding customers. AI becomes the force multiplier that helps those people execute at greater speed and scale.

The founder is no longer simply building a team.

They are building a **system of intelligence.**

### The economics of a smaller company

One of the most significant implications of AI-native entrepreneurship is economics.

Historically, rapid growth usually required rapid hiring.

A company that gained more customers needed more salespeople. More customers meant more support staff. More transactions meant more operations staff. More markets meant more management and administrative infrastructure.

AI can change the relationship between revenue and headcount.

If software can perform portions of customer service, research, accounting, marketing, coding or sales development, a company can potentially grow without increasing its workforce at the same rate.

This is already changing how some investors and entrepreneurs think about business performance.

MIT Sloan notes that annual recurring revenue per full-time employee is becoming a useful metric for evaluating AI-driven companies because it highlights how efficiently businesses can convert a relatively small workforce into revenue.

The implication for founders is significant. A company does not necessarily need to become large in headcount to become large in revenue.

That could make entrepreneurship more accessible to individuals and small teams that previously would have needed substantial capital simply to build an organisation capable of competing.

It may also change venture capital itself. If startups can achieve more with less capital, founders may need to raise less money in the earliest stages. Smaller initial rounds could allow entrepreneurs to retain more ownership while proving the business before seeking significant external investment.

In other words, AI may not only change how companies operate. It could change who gets to own them.

## The rise of the one-person or small-team company

The idea of the extremely lean company is not new.

Entrepreneurs have always built businesses with small teams.

What is changing is the capability available to those teams. Consider a founder launching a digital business today.

Market research that once required consultants can be accelerated with AI-assisted research. Initial product concepts can be prototyped rapidly. Software development can be supported by AI coding systems. Marketing campaigns can be drafted and tested faster. Customer enquiries can be partially automated. Financial information can be analysed continuously.

The founder still has to make decisions.

But the cost and time required to reach those decisions can fall dramatically. MIT Sloan's recent research on entrepreneurship in the age of AI argues that AI is shrinking the cost and time required to research markets, build products and test hypotheses, allowing founders to concentrate more heavily on paying customers, judgement, relationships and experimentation.

This creates an intriguing possibility:

**The company of the future may be smaller on the inside but larger in its reach.**

A team of ten could potentially serve a global customer base that would once have required dozens or hundreds of employees.

That changes the traditional relationship between scale and size.

## Why the Middle East matters

For the Arab world, this transition comes at an interesting moment.

The region is already investing heavily in AI infrastructure, digital transformation and technology entrepreneurship.

The UAE's National AI Strategy 2031 aims to position the country as a global leader in artificial intelligence and includes objectives around AI investment, talent, research, infrastructure and governance.

Dubai has also established an AI-focused economic agenda designed to accelerate adoption across strategic sectors, attract AI companies and talent, develop AI incubators and support the city's positioning as a global centre for AI governance and innovation.

The investment environment is moving in the same direction.

According to MAGNiTT, AI and AI-enabled companies across MENA raised

**$678M**

in H1 2026, an 81% increase from H1 2025. AI accounted for 50% of all MENA venture funding during the period despite representing only 25% of transactions. The UAE captured 93% of MENA's AI funding, while FinTech was the leading sector by AI funding with $269 million.

These figures tell an important story.

The region's AI ecosystem is not simply expanding through a growing number of startups. Capital is becoming concentrated around companies that investors believe can scale.

MAGNiTT's 2025 review similarly found that AI funding and deal activity reached record levels, with AI accounting for 22% of MENA's total venture funding and 29% of deal volume. Enterprise software, FinTech and IT solutions emerged as major AI investment areas.

For entrepreneurs, that means the opportunity is growing — but so are expectations.

## From AI tools to AI-native businesses

There is an important distinction between an **AI-enabled company** and an **AI-native company.**

An AI-enabled company may take an existing business and add AI to selected processes.

A real estate company might use AI to write property descriptions.

A retailer might use AI for customer service.

A marketing agency might use AI to produce content.

A bank might use AI to detect unusual transactions.

All of these businesses can benefit from AI.

But an AI-native company starts with a different question:

**What business becomes possible if AI is at the centre of the model?**

That might mean an accounting company where

much of the analysis and reporting is automated.

A financial platform that continuously interprets financial information for customers.

A healthcare company that uses AI to organise and personalise information around a patient's journey.

An education platform that adapts learning to each student.

A logistics company that continuously optimises routes, inventory and delivery.

The technology is not simply an additional feature.

It is part of the company's operating DNA.

## The new role of the founder

This transition also changes leadership.

The founder of an AI-native company does not necessarily need to be the person who knows everything about AI.

But they do need to understand what AI changes.

They need to know which problems are worth solving, which processes can be automated, where human judgement remains essential and how technology affects the economics of their business.

That requires a different kind of technological literacy.

Entrepreneurs do not necessarily need to become machine-learning engineers. But they increasingly need to understand data, models, AI agents, automation, cybersecurity, intellectual property and responsible deployment.

More importantly, they need to understand **where AI creates actual value.**

The danger is building a business simply because something can be automated.

The strongest AI-native companies will not start with the technology.

They will start with a meaningful problem.

## The end of the traditional department?

One of the more interesting questions raised by AI-native entrepreneurship is whether the traditional corporate structure will remain as relevant.

Consider a conventional startup.

It might have a marketing department, sales department, finance team, operations team, customer support team and technology team.

An AI-native organisation could instead operate through interconnected workflows.

A customer interaction could trigger an AI system to update a CRM, prepare a follow-up, notify a salesperson and generate an internal summary.

A financial transaction could automatically update forecasts and flag unusual activity.

A marketing campaign could continuously analyse performance and adjust targeting.

A software system could identify a technical issue, generate a proposed solution and send it to an engineer for approval.

Instead of departments operating in silos, information can move between systems.

The result could be a company that behaves more like a **network than a hierarchy.**

Human employees become responsible for the decisions where context, accountability and judgement matter most.

AI systems handle increasing amounts of information processing and execution.

This does not eliminate management.

It changes management.

## AI agents: the next organisational layer

The emergence of AI agents could accelerate this transformation.

Generative AI initially became popular because it could produce content in response to prompts.

Agents go a step further.

They can potentially plan a sequence of actions, interact with software and complete tasks with less continuous human instruction.

For an entrepreneur, this opens the possibility of having specialised AI systems perform different business functions.

A research agent could monitor competitors.

A sales agent could identify prospects.

A finance agent could analyse cash flow.

An operations agent could monitor inventory.

A customer service agent could manage routine enquiries.

Humans would remain responsible for oversight, strategy and decisions that require accountability.

This is still an evolving field, and the practical capabilities and reliability of agents vary considerably. But the direction is clear enough to force entrepreneurs to rethink what an organisation actually is.

If software can perform work traditionally associated with an employee, the question becomes:

**What should a company hire people for?**

The answer may increasingly be creativity, judgement, trust, relationships, leadership and the ability to navigate ambiguity.

## What happens to investment?

AI-native entrepreneurship could also change the venture capital model.

Traditional venture capital often rewards companies capable of achieving rapid growth through hiring, geographic expansion and capital-intensive scaling.

AI may allow some companies to demonstrate significant traction before requiring comparable levels of investment.

That could shift investor attention toward different indicators.

Revenue per employee.

Speed of product development.

Customer acquisition efficiency.

Cost of serving each customer.

Proprietary data.

Model performance.

Automation levels.

And perhaps most importantly, **how difficult the company is to replicate.**

Because access to AI models is becoming

increasingly widespread, simply using AI may not create a competitive advantage.

A startup that relies on the same publicly available model as thousands of competitors needs another source of defensibility.

That could be proprietary data, specialised expertise, unique distribution, regulatory approvals, customer relationships, workflow integration or technology that is difficult to reproduce.

The AI-native entrepreneur therefore faces a paradox:

**AI makes it easier to build — but potentially harder to differentiate.**

## The danger of the AI wrapper

This is one of the biggest challenges facing the current startup ecosystem.

When new technology becomes widely available, entrepreneurs naturally look for ways to build businesses around it.

But attaching an AI interface to an existing product does not automatically create a durable company.

If a competitor can reproduce the same functionality in a weekend, the business may have limited long-term value.

The question founders should ask is not:

"Can AI do this?"

It is:

"Why will customers continue choosing us when everyone has access to AI?"

The answer needs to be deeper than the model itself.

A strong company might own unique data, understand a specialised industry better than its competitors, possess a powerful distribution network or embed itself deeply into a customer's workflow. AI may be the engine. But the business still needs a moat.

## Trust will become part of the product

As AI moves deeper into finance, healthcare, education and other sensitive industries, trust becomes increasingly important.

A customer may be comfortable allowing AI to draft an email.

They may be less comfortable allowing an AI system to make a financial decision, interpret medical information or determine access to a service without human oversight. That is why responsible AI will become an increasingly important part of entrepreneurship.

The UAE's financial sector, for example, is already developing frameworks around responsible AI adoption, including considerations such as transparency, accountability, explainability, bias and data privacy.

For founders, this means governance cannot be treated as something that happens after a product becomes successful.

It needs to be considered during product design.

The companies that can demonstrate that their AI systems are reliable, secure and appropriately governed may find it easier to win the trust of large enterprises and regulated industries.

## Building for the Arab market

AI-native entrepreneurship also creates a particularly interesting opportunity for regional founders.

Global technology companies can build general-purpose AI models.

But regional entrepreneurs understand problems that global companies may overlook.

Arabic-language applications are one example.

The region has enormous linguistic and cultural diversity, and many business processes are deeply connected to local regulations, customs and consumer behaviour.

This creates space for entrepreneurs to develop AI applications specifically for the Arab market.

The opportunity extends far beyond language.

AI-native companies could emerge around:

**Real estate** — intelligent property discovery, valuation and transaction management.

**Healthcare** — personalised health platforms, clinical workflow tools and preventative health systems.

**Finance** — AI-powered financial planning, compliance, fraud prevention and wealth management.

**Education** — adaptive learning and personalised tutoring.

**Logistics** — predictive supply chains and autonomous operations.

**Hospitality** — intelligent guest experiences and operational optimisation.

**Media** — automated research, production and personalised content.

The advantage of regional entrepreneurs may therefore not be competing with Silicon Valley on general-purpose AI.

It may be understanding **where global AI meets regional problems.**

## Five principles for the AI-native entrepreneur

**1. Start with the problem, not the technology**
AI is not a business model by itself.
Find a problem people are willing to pay to solve.

**2. Design the company around AI from day one**
Don't simply add AI to an existing workflow. Ask how the workflow would look if it were designed today.

**3. Keep humans where judgement matters**
Automation should not remove accountability. The most effective systems will combine machine speed with human judgement.

**4. Build a real moat**
Access to an AI model is not a competitive advantage. Proprietary data, specialised expertise, distribution, trust and customer relationships can be.

**5. Measure efficiency differently**
Headcount is no longer the only indicator of scale. Revenue per employee, customer acquisition efficiency, automation and capital efficiency may become increasingly important measures of business quality.

# Regulated. Reliable. Ready.

Trust begins with transparency. We are a **CATEGORY 1 SCA**-licensed company committed to secure access and compliant execution.



Disclaimer: Trading carries financial risk.
Regulatory Note- Anax Capital Financial Markets L.L.C, licensed and regulated by the UAE Securities and Commodities Authority (License No. 20200000258).


ANAX
CAPITAL FINANCIAL MARKETS LLC
No high minimums
No pressure
Just secure access
REGISTER NOW
www.anaxcapital.ae



# PIERRE LUXE

## Luxury Property Adviser & Cross-Border Real Estate Specialist

Pierre Luxe is a luxury property adviser operating across the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates, working with internationally mobile entrepreneurs, professional athletes, entertainers, and technology founders. His work brings together prime real estate, wealth preservation, and the evolving needs of clients whose professional success and lifestyles increasingly extend across borders.

Based in Northwest London, Pierre has more than a decade of experience in the property market. His interest in real estate began when he purchased his first home at the age of 23, an experience that introduced him to property as a pathway to financial independence. That early milestone became the foundation for a career built on understanding property values, investment opportunities, and the importance of making informed decisions.

Over the years, Pierre has developed expertise across Northwest and West London, Hertfordshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire. His work encompasses residential and commercial properties, appraisals, and investment opportunities, giving him experience across different aspects of the property market. Today, he advises clients whose requirements often extend beyond finding a suitable property to considering how real estate fits into their broader financial and personal plans.

His clientele includes Premier League footballers, professional athletes, technology founders, entertainers, and first-generation entrepreneurs. For these individuals, property can serve several purposes: a family home, an investment, a second residence, or a component of a wider wealth strategy. Understanding these different priorities is central to Pierre's approach. He considers each client's goals, career trajectory, lifestyle, and long-term plans before helping them navigate property decisions.

Discretion and precision remain central to his work. With experience handling properties valued between £1 million and £7 million, Pierre combines local market knowledge with data-led valuations and considered negotiation. His objective is to provide clients with a realistic understanding of property value while helping them make decisions that remain relevant beyond the immediate transaction.

For Pierre, luxury property advisory involves more than presenting properties or negotiating prices. It requires understanding the person behind each decision and recognising that a property purchase can have implications for a client's future plans, lifestyle, and financial priorities. This perspective shapes his emphasis on relationships, careful advice, and an approach tailored to individual circumstances.

Pierre has also embraced a modern approach to luxury property marketing. Through cinematic video, lifestyle-led photography, digital campaigns, and property tours, he presents each home as a story designed to reach the right audience. Rather than relying solely on traditional property presentation, he uses visual content and digital platforms to help potential buyers discover, evaluate, and engage with prime real estate.

**"I don't see myself as simply selling property. I see myself as protecting the futures my clients have worked to build - wherever those futures take them."**

His growing presence in digital content reflects the changing expectations of property buyers. As audiences increasingly discover properties through online channels, the way a home is presented becomes an important part of connecting it with suitable buyers. Pierre's approach combines property expertise with contemporary marketing methods to communicate the appeal of each listing.

His expansion into the United Arab Emirates has developed naturally from his existing client relationships. As UK-based athletes, founders, and entrepreneurs establish connections with the Emirates, Pierre has extended his ability to advise clients across both markets. His international network supports buyers and sellers whose property interests are no longer limited to one city or country.



# DAHLIA MAHMOOD

## Interior Designer, Developer & Builder

Dahlia Mahmood is a globally recognised interior designer, developer, and builder whose career reflects more than two decades of creative entrepreneurship, ambitious design, and purpose-driven leadership. An Iraqi-American entrepreneur with over 25 years of experience, she has built an international design firm known for transforming ambitious visions into highly personalised spaces that combine creativity, craftsmanship, and individual expression.

Her entrepreneurial journey began at just 17, when she founded Dahlia Design in Washington, D.C. Driven by her talent, determination, and instinct for design, she turned her creative vision into the foundation of what would become a multi-award-winning, full-service design and construction firm. From the beginning, her approach focused on bringing different aspects of a project together, allowing creative direction, design expertise, and construction capabilities to operate under one roof.

Today, Dahlia leads projects across continents, working with an international clientele that includes royalty, elite athletes, and influential families. Her work reflects a belief that exceptional interiors should be more than visually appealing. They should be deeply personal, capturing the character, preferences, and aspirations of the people who inhabit them. Rather than simply following prevailing trends, she focuses on creating spaces that feel individual and meaningful to those who call them home.

**"I work to bring beauty into people's lives, and there is nothing more personal than a home."**

Her achievements have earned recognition across the global design industry. Dahlia has been recognised by Fixr.com as one of the industry's exciting leaders and has been consistently featured among leading design experts. Most recently, she represented the United States at the iDogi® International Design Awards in Venice, Italy, where she won in the Residential Project Over 1,000 sqm category. This recognition reflects her work in residential design and her continued contribution to the field.

Beyond awards, Dahlia's influence extends through media coverage and the international reach of her designs. Her work has been featured in The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, HGTV, Bravo TV, and Haute Residence, among other leading platforms. These features have introduced her creative approach to a broad audience, highlighting the different ways design can combine imagination, functionality, and personal expression.

Her imaginative children's bedroom designs, in particular, have attracted an extensive global audience, becoming some of the most widely shared interiors on Pinterest. These projects demonstrate her ability to bring storytelling and creativity into interior spaces while maintaining an emphasis on craftsmanship. Through these designs, she has shown how a room can become more than a functional environment, offering an opportunity to create an imaginative and personal experience.

At the centre of Dahlia's design philosophy is the understanding that a home is deeply personal. Her work seeks to bring beauty into people's lives through thoughtful design that reflects individual needs and identities. For her, the relationship between a space and the people who inhabit it is central to the creative process. This perspective also informs her leadership, which is shaped by empathy, integrity, and a commitment to excellence.

Her entrepreneurial journey reflects the importance of trusting a vision and developing the capabilities needed to bring it to life. Building Dahlia Design from its early beginnings into an international design and construction firm demonstrates her long-standing commitment to creative entrepreneurship. Her experience also highlights the value of bringing design and construction expertise together to execute complex projects through an integrated approach.

For aspiring women entrepreneurs, Dahlia's journey carries a message of courage, initiative, and continued growth. She encourages women to begin before they feel completely ready, trust their vision, and grow into the leaders their ambitions demand. Through her design practice and entrepreneurial leadership, she continues to create opportunities, challenge expectations, and encourage the next generation of women to build boldly while leading with purpose and heart.



# DR. SANA SAJAN

## Business Leader, Entrepreneur & Women's Empowerment Advocate

Dr. Sana Sajan is a business leader, entrepreneur, TEDx speaker, and advocate for women's empowerment whose career spans healthcare, aesthetics, real estate, philanthropy, and community building. Currently serving as Director of Agency Relationships at Danube Properties, she plays an important role in strengthening broker partnerships, driving strategic engagement, and supporting the company's regional and international growth.

Coming from a strong medical family, Dr. Sana initially pursued dentistry, an experience that shaped her detail-oriented and people-centric approach to leadership. Her understanding of healthcare and patient needs later became the foundation for her entrepreneurial journey. In 2019, she founded the American Aesthetic Medical Centre in Dubai, a premium healthcare establishment offering advanced surgical and non-surgical aesthetic treatments. Under her leadership, the centre developed a reputation for combining clinical excellence, innovation, and a strong focus on patient confidence.

Her career has since expanded beyond healthcare into business leadership, real estate, and professional engagement. At Danube Properties, her role involves strengthening relationships with brokers and supporting strategic engagement across markets. Her professional journey reflects an ability to bring together different industries while maintaining a focus on relationships, collaboration, and business development.

**"Leadership is not only about what you achieve for yourself; it is about the opportunities you create for others to grow, lead and make a difference."**

As a frequent speaker, Dr. Sana shares her perspectives on leadership, entrepreneurship, and the advancement of women across professional and academic platforms. Her contributions have received recognition through several honours, including Most Influential Woman at the Global Women's Conference 2023, Most Powerful Women 2025 by Womenpreneur Middle East, and recognition among the Super 100 Women Achievers in MENA. These acknowledgements reflect the breadth of her professional involvement and her engagement with women's leadership.

Her commitment to empowerment also extends into advocacy and community initiatives. Dr. Sana previously served as a Brand Ambassador for the Dubai Women's Run and the Global Goals World Cup, supporting causes connected to education and women's empowerment. Through these roles, she has contributed to initiatives that bring attention to important social causes and encourage broader participation in community activities.

Beyond her corporate and advocacy work, Dr. Sana is the Founder of ALIF (Art Lovers' International Festival), a philanthropic initiative supporting thalassemia awareness and other community causes. This initiative reflects another dimension of her work, bringing together her entrepreneurial outlook and commitment to supporting causes that affect people's lives.

Literature and intellectual exchange are also important parts of her journey. As the founder of Bookwarm Book Club, Dr. Sana has created a community where readers come together to discuss books, exchange ideas, explore different perspectives, and engage in personal growth. Her involvement reflects a commitment to learning and dialogue that extends beyond her professional responsibilities, creating opportunities for people to connect through shared interests and conversations.

She also serves as President of the EVFI Ladies Wing, a Board Member of SNF, and a panel member across academic and professional platforms. Through these positions, she contributes to spaces that encourage collaboration, mentorship, and meaningful discussions. Her involvement across these different organisations demonstrates the varied ways she engages with professional networks and community initiatives.

What distinguishes Dr. Sana's journey is the range of fields she has brought together, from dentistry and aesthetic healthcare to entrepreneurship, real estate, public speaking, literature, and philanthropy.



# DAME ELLEN MANNAERT

## Serial Entrepreneur, Investor & Founder

Dame Ellen Mannaert is a serial entrepreneur, investor, and keynote speaker with more than 25 years of experience building companies across the Netherlands, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. Her career reflects an international approach to entrepreneurship, shaped by experience across different markets, industries, and business environments. Through her ventures, she brings together business development, investment, leadership, and personal growth, with a focus on creating opportunities that extend beyond individual achievements.

At the centre of Ellen's work is The Architecture of Who You Are, a personal and professional framework built around identity, purpose, and the foundations that influence how individuals lead and build. Her approach explores the connection between personal development and professional success, emphasising that the way people understand themselves can shape their decisions, leadership, and long-term impact.

For Ellen, entrepreneurship is not limited to establishing companies or pursuing commercial growth. It also involves understanding the person behind the business, recognising the values that guide decisions, and developing the qualities required to lead effectively. Through her framework, she brings attention to the relationship between individual identity, purpose, and the work people choose to create.

Her commitment to bringing people together is also reflected in Era Of You, the invitation-only community she founded for women entrepreneurs. The platform is designed to connect ambitious women founders who are building businesses and shaping their own professional paths. By creating space for meaningful connections, conversations, and opportunities, Ellen encourages women to engage with one another and become part of a community that supports their entrepreneurial journeys.

Her business portfolio extends into hospitality, travel, investment, and communication. Ellen is the Co-Founder and Chief Advisory Board Member of Boat Trips Club and Best of Places, while also serving as Director of Mannaert Investment and Communication. These roles reflect the breadth of her professional interests and her involvement in ventures that bring together strategic thinking, business development, communication, and investment.

Across these different areas, her experience demonstrates an approach to entrepreneurship that extends across industries and geographical boundaries. Her work combines the practical demands of building and developing businesses with an interest in leadership, relationships, and the broader impact of professional decisions.

As a keynote speaker, Ellen has shared her perspectives on entrepreneurship, leadership, and personal transformation at internationally recognised institutions and platforms, including Davos, Oxford, Cambridge, the Palace of Westminster, Harvard, and the Burj CEO Summit. Through these speaking engagements, she brings her experience across markets and ventures into conversations about how individuals develop as leaders and approach the process of building something meaningful.

**"Your greatest asset is not what you build, but the person you become while building it."**

Her achievements have also received international recognition. She was shortlisted for Inc. Arabia's 30 Women of Influence 2026 and was invested as a Dame of the Order of Saint James. These distinctions form part of a professional journey spanning more than two decades of entrepreneurship, investment, leadership, and engagement with communities across different regions.

An important part of Ellen's work is the belief that professional development and personal growth are closely connected. Building businesses requires strategic thinking and the ability to navigate different environments, but it also calls for an understanding of identity, purpose, and the responsibilities that accompany leadership. Her work brings these elements together through entrepreneurship, speaking, and the communities she creates.



# IMAN ESSAM MOSTAFA

## Founder, Maison Imma

Iman Essam Mostafa is the founder of Maison Imma, an Egyptian fashion house built around contemporary elegance, thoughtful design, and a distinctive brand identity. Her journey into fashion began with curiosity and a natural interest in discovering new things, learning different skills, and exploring different fields. This openness to experience gradually shaped her entrepreneurial mindset and inspired her to transform a personal vision into a fashion business of her own.

For Iman, the ambition was never limited to working within the fashion industry. She wanted to create something that reflected her perspective, translated her ideas into collections, and developed a recognisable identity. Building Maison Imma meant turning that ambition into a tangible reality, requiring creativity alongside an understanding of fabrics, silhouettes, production, branding, presentation, and customer experience.

What began as an idea gradually developed into a fashion house with its own collections, physical showroom, and growing community. For Iman, watching her vision move from imagination into reality has been one of the most meaningful achievements of her entrepreneurial journey. It represents the process of taking an initial concept and developing it through the many decisions involved in establishing a business.

Maison Imma's collections reflect Iman's preference for modern elegance, clean silhouettes, refined styling, and quality. Through its ready-to-wear and mid-couture offerings, the brand aims to appeal to women seeking clothing that combines sophistication with contemporary wearability. The emphasis is on creating pieces that reflect a clear aesthetic while remaining connected to how women want to express themselves through fashion.

**"Fashion is not only about what people wear. It is about creativity, confidence, identity, and the courage to turn an idea into something tangible."**

However, Iman's vision extends beyond designing beautiful clothing. She understands that building a fashion house also means creating a recognisable identity that can remain consistent as the business evolves. Each aspect of the brand, from its collections to its presentation and customer experience, contributes to the wider impression Maison Imma seeks to establish. Developing this identity is an important part of turning a creative idea into a lasting business.

Curiosity has remained a defining part of Iman's approach to entrepreneurship. Rather than waiting until she had every answer before beginning, she allowed experience to become part of the learning process. Each stage of building the brand offered opportunities to develop her understanding of business, navigate challenges, and make decisions that moved the original vision forward.

This willingness to learn has been particularly relevant in fashion, where creative ambitions must work alongside commercial realities. Establishing a brand requires experimentation, responsiveness to challenges, an understanding of customers, and commitment to a clear direction. For Iman, the process reinforces the importance of taking action rather than allowing the pursuit of perfection to delay progress. Sometimes, having the courage to begin is the most important step towards making an idea real.

Her ambitions for Maison Imma extend beyond establishing a successful local label. Iman hopes to develop the brand into a recognised Egyptian fashion house with a global presence. International growth, in her vision, does not require the brand to move away from its Egyptian identity. Instead, it creates an opportunity to introduce that identity to wider audiences through contemporary design and a distinctive fashion perspective.

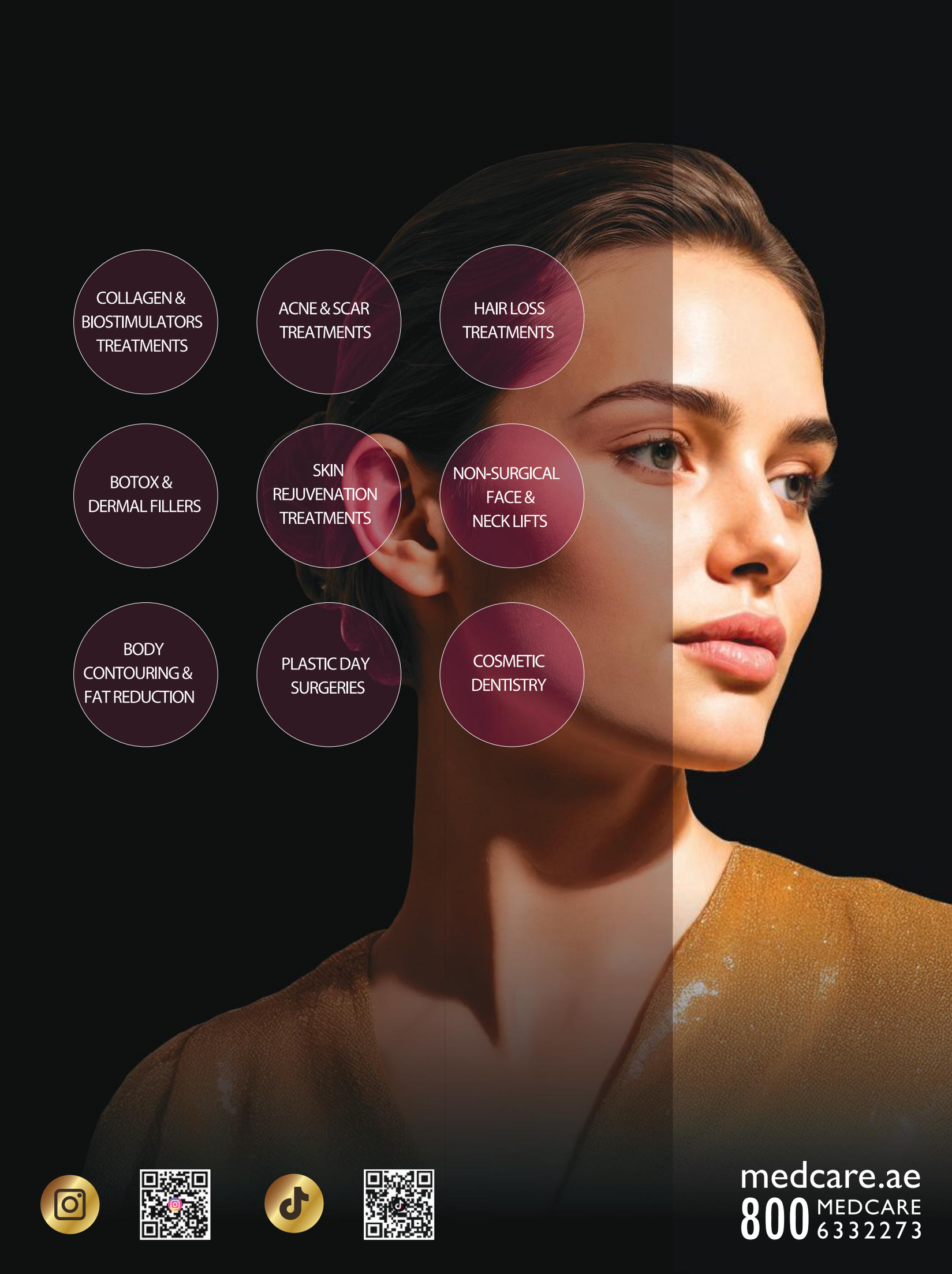
As Maison Imma continues to develop its collections and strengthen its presence, the focus remains on consistency, quality, customer trust, and a recognisable brand language. These elements form part of her ambition to take the fashion house from a promising concept towards an enduring name. Maintaining a clear identity while allowing the business to evolve remains central to this direction.

AESTHETICS

BY MEDCARE

# ENHANCING BEAUTY, BOOSTING CONFIDENCE




COLLAGEN & BIOSTIMULATORS TREATMENTS
ACNE & SCAR TREATMENTS
HAIR LOSS TREATMENTS
BOTOX & DERMAL FILLERS
SKIN REJUVENATION TREATMENTS
NON-SURGICAL FACE & NECK LIFTS
BODY CONTOURING & FAT REDUCTION
PLASTIC DAY SURGERIES
COSMETIC DENTISTRY
medcare.ae
800 MEDCARE 6332273

# Fly Private w

Membership-led access to privat



Already in motion

# with Ace Jets

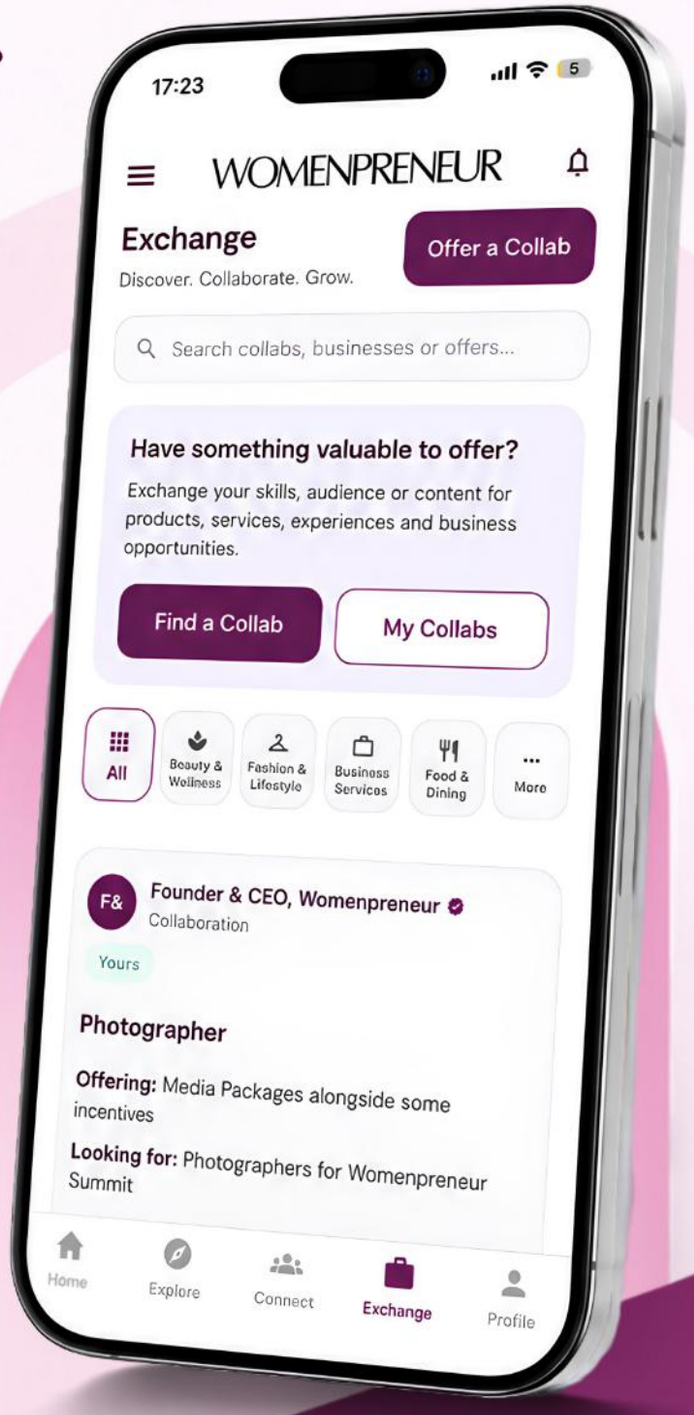
te aviation and reputation control.



www.womenpreneurapp.com

WOMENPRENEUR

# Your Community.
# Your Opportunities.
# Your Next Move.




## The All-in-One App for Women

### Exchange
Discover. Collaborate. Grow. Opportunities that move you and your business forward.

### Connect
Scale your network. Build meaningful relationships and partnerships.

### Explore
Find or Create Events, Activities and Groups relevant to your interests.

### Learn
Know What's Happening in your community and Business World.

**Join. Connect. Grow.**
**With Womenpreneur.**

**Download Now**

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play