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Local partners share GEW's passion for supporting entrepreneurship → 78

Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) is the world's largest celebration of innovators. On the anvil of this year's GEW, Elaine Gold, director, Organisation and Strategy, Silatech talks about the event partners and what they hope to achieve in November this year.



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In an exclusive conversation with *The Edge*, Amr Belal, managing partner of the green division, Innovations Unlimited ME (IUME) and Markus Jordan, managing partner of the events division, IUME talk about the business divisions of

the multidisciplinary company, and the future of the renewable energy business in Qatar.



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Innovations Unlimited ME is one of the only few companies here in Doha with a fireworks licence and together with partners they have produced some of the most impressive fireworks displays in the region, including the Qatar National Day fireworks display 2013 (pictured here) and Dubai's new year 2013 fireworks celebration, which set a new world record as the largest fireworks display ever.

MENTORSHIP

GEW Qatar privileged to have a network of local partners sharing passion for supporting entrepreneurship

Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) is the world's largest celebration of the innovators and job creators who launch startups that bring ideas to life, drive economic growth and expand human welfare. On the anvil of this year's GEW, Elaine Gold, director, Organisation and Strategy, Silatech talks about the event partners and what they hope to achieve this year.

Tell us about GEW Qatar.

During one week each November, GEW inspires people everywhere through local, national and global activities designed to help them explore their potential as self-starters and innovators. These activities, from large-scale competitions and events to intimate networking gatherings, connect participants to potential collaborators, mentors and even investors – introducing them to new possibilities and exciting opportunities.

In 2013 November, GEW Qatar ran a programme for a week with 33 participating organisations, 62 events and 3600 participants involved in activities over the week.

We were privileged to have the support of a network of local partners who share our passion for supporting entrepreneurship, and to bring attention to the vital role that entrepreneurship plays in the region's economic development. The founding members of the 'GEW Board', chaired by Silatech, includes: Bedaya Center, Enterprise Qatar, Shell Qatar, Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO), ICT Qatar, Qatar Chamber, Qatar Development Bank, Qatar Science and Technology Park, How Women Work and The Youth Company.

How, in your view, can the spirit of entrepreneurship be learnt from global peers, in the context of the fact that each country and its cultural contexts are different?

The Global Community of GEW countries is a very close community even though there are now 150 countries participating. As GEW Qatar, we regularly connect and share ideas with other host organisations from the MENA region, and we can learn much from countries who have similar cultural values. What we find when we share experiences

is that the issues facing entrepreneurs are more similar than we first might think: finding funds for start-ups, finding an effective mentor, and finding support to scale-up.

What role do the partners play in GEW?

There are two main categories, the first is the membership of our advisory board the Board meets regularly throughout the year in order to review the success of the week, and plan for improvements. We divide



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into two sub-groups, one to take care of the marketing and public relations and the other to focus on the programme of activities and ensure that there is no duplication as well as ensure that the workshops will meet the needs of the diverse audience in Qatar for GEW. This can range from youth interested in knowing more about entrepreneurship, to entrepreneurs at the idea or start-up phase, to larger organisations and small and medium enterprises and policy makers. The second category is a wider group of organisations and individuals who give their services and expertise for free in order to deliver a workshop or organise an event.

Given the fact that career choices are still influenced by what elders think, how do you think events such as GEW can make a difference?

GEW does much to raise awareness about entrepreneurship and establish it as a career option for the youth. The Bedaya and Shell Business Challenge, which has run each year leading up to GEW, has successfully taken the excitement of entrepreneurship to all the local universities in Qatar and many of the high schools. GEW also gives an opportunity for successful local entrepreneurs to be given prominence, who can inspire and act as role models, reassuring parents about entrepreneurship as a valid option for younger family members.

Many entrepreneurs may not like routine functions such as accounting. How do you help such entrepreneurs?

Many individuals are not comfortable with dealing with the financial aspects of starting up a business, but it is an essential element and although this can be delegated to a member of the team, every business owner has to understand the basics. There are many programmes, which can help to take the fear out of accounting, again, organisations such as Bedaya, 7AyakHub, and Qatar Business Incubation Centre (QBIC) can help. These organisations will also help you find a mentor who can give one to one support as needed.

What role do you think crowdfunding can play in the growth of an entrepreneurship culture?

Over the past few years, crowdfunding has been a global phenomenon and has had a tremendous impact on fostering and democratising entrepreneurship at all levels of society. Within the

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Middle East and North Africa region, the Silatech sponsored Kiva Arab Youth initiative has raised close to USD6 million (QAR21.84 million) in a little over two years that has been crowdfunded from over 120,000 users across to globe to support micro-entrepreneurs. This initiative has helped finance 3900 businesses across the region and supported the creation of more than 3000 new jobs. The sheer amount of support and success of this initiative has prompted Silatech to develop the Narwi platform, the first online micro-giving platform created by Arabs for Arabs. With Narwi's impending launch, there is positive momentum in expanding and scaling entrepreneurship activity in this region

Tell us some achievements that GEW has met in the past years.

2012 was the first year that Qatar was involved in GEW. We held 30 events and had over 1000 participants; last year we held 62 events and had over 3600 attendees. Qatar was recognised internationally for its contribution to GEW by being nominated in four categories out of a total of six GEW Awards. In 2013 we held an event where new startups could present their business to a panel of potential investors. As well as those who were awarded funds from the panel, a number of businesses who pitched their ideas have gone on to get funding through the contacts they made at the event.

What are you looking forward to achieving this year?

We are delighted to announce that we have our first patron for GEW this year, HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani, Minister of Economy and Trade. We are extremely grateful to EQ and Shell Qatar for their continued sponsorship of GEW Qatar, however we need more corporate sponsors who can help us to fund more events, and a gala dinner this year, so that we can raise the profile even higher of the work GEW can do to enhance the entrepreneurship ecosystem. We have an increased number of activities planned, and some high quality speakers.

Also, this year sees the launch of International Women's Entrepreneurship Day on November 19, and we will be profiling a number of Qatar's Women Entrepreneurs in the lead up to this day, Qatar Chamber will be hosting an evening event which will include a link to the International celebrations in New York, where Qatar will be represented by Aysa Al Mudahka, CEO of QBIC. So, lots to look forward to. **e**