

# Maqbool Hammed Al Saleh



**DOB:** July 28, 1945

**Marital status:** Married

**Education:** Defense School

**Spoken Languages:** English, Arabic & Hindi

**Interests & Hobbies:** Field hockey, Squash, Boating

**Sector:** Conglomerate

**Ownership:** Private

**Established in:** 1976

## Chairman, Oman Holdings International (OHI)

One of the most prominent corporate leaders in Oman, Maqbool Al Saleh has played a monumental role in the development of Oman's biggest industrial sectors from the 1970s to the 2010s.

Prior to deciding to build his own business from the ground up, Mr. Al Saleh had served in the army, worked for the Ministry of Palace Affairs for more than a decade, and then briefly served for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. Having observed at the time that the Omani infrastructure was almost non-existent, he founded Oman Holdings International (OHI) to take advantage of what he saw as a great opportunity to start a business. Since then he has achieved many great business successes, having built Oman's first hotel resorts, modern hospitals, and the country's first radio station, which promoted Omani culture at a national level.

Although it started small, Mr. Al Saleh always had a big vision for his company, matched by an ambition that was big enough to make it happen. He couldn't do it on his own, however. Indeed, the secret to OHI's success, according to Mr. Al Saleh, was and is building partnerships, both locally and internationally. "The power of partnership" is OHI's slogan, and it's been at the center of all of its business plans since the beginning. By developing long term relationships with other companies, Mr. Al Saleh managed to bring large, well-known brands and services to Oman, which added value and helped the country's economy grow tremendously.

Successful partnering continues today. In 2018, the subsidiary OHI Petroleum and Energy Services built a partnership with MAN Energy Solutions in order to open a state-of-the-art service workshop in Oman, in light of the country's strategic location in the region. The new entity is called MAN PrimeServ and focuses on repairs and refurbishment of rotating equipment for the oil and gas industry and for the engines used in

energy generation.

Previously, companies in these sectors had to go abroad in order to get these kind of services, but now they will be able to cut costs and save time.

Mr. Al Saleh believes the new venture will contribute significantly to Oman's development in the service sector, as it will also provide specialized training for locals who want to work in the industry. Omanization of the workforce is one of OHI's goals, and Mr. Al Saleh hopes that one day the company can have 100% Omani employees. To make that possible across all companies, he believes the education system in Oman still has some work to do in terms of better preparing students for a wider variety of jobs in the future.

Mr. Al Saleh is also a big supporter of the SME sector in Oman, and he and his team have made it a habit to mentor young entrepreneurs as often as they can. In his view, increasing the number of small businesses will play a crucial role in the country's progress. Throughout his career, Mr. Al Saleh never shied away from doing any kind of work in order to move forward, and he advises young people to work hard and keep going in the face of obstacles, because nothing comes easy in business, or in life.

Oman Holdings International currently employs around 10,000 people, with one of the largest groups of long serving employees. The group is well diversified, focusing on a wide range of sectors, such as contracting, telecommunications, hospitality, real estate, and IT solutions, but also marine, petroleum, and energy services. While the company's main operations are in Oman, it also has subsidiaries in Qatar and the UAE.

As Mr. Al Saleh sees it, being a diversified group offers a great advantage, because it's less vulnerable to a decline in one sector or another. Indeed, it's "almost impossible for all the sectors to experience difficulties at the same time," he says, so there's always at least one of them where the business is flourishing.

Despite a competitive market, OHI has managed to remain one of the leading companies in the construction sector, as there is still a lot of untapped potential for infrastructure development in Oman in areas like Duqm and Salalah. In Mr. Al Saleh's opinion, once the momentum behind infrastructure development begins, other opportunities will begin to show up as a result, putting the economy on the right path towards

### My advice to youth:

Work, work, and work. Whatever work you do, do it professionally. Don't shy away from any work you have, because it is honorable.

### My message about Oman:

Come and invest in Oman, because it's still a virgin country that has a lot to offer.



diversification.

For Mr. Al Saleh, maintaining a good reputation for the group was always as important as having good financial results, and this played a huge role in its success. On the business side, that includes always looking for new technologies in order to keep up with changes in industry trends to ensure that OHI stays on top of its game and keeps growing. But the group also maintains its reputation through its contributions in the wider community, for example as sponsor of the OHI Oman Amateur Open golf championship, which offered a unique opportunity for elite golfers as well as juniors to compete.

It's no surprise an organization headed up by Maqbool Al Saleh would be behind this sort of event. He used to be a professional field hockey player himself, and has always enjoyed sports in general. An energetic person, he once stated that he cannot start work before exercising in the morning, because it's the thing that keeps him going every day.

Considering that he started from almost nothing, Mr. Al Saleh's achievements are even more remarkable. His ambition and resilience have helped him overcome many challenges in his career, and he is proud to have contributed so much to the progress of his home country. But after a lifelong journey, Maqbool Al Saleh is now ready to leave his legacy to his sons. Already actively involved in the business in leading positions, they will undoubtedly continue his work for many years to come.