

Qais Al Khonji

Founder, Genesis International Director, AlKhonji Group



DOB: August 19, 1978

Marital status: Married

Education:
1998 - IB, Atlantic College, Wales, UK

2001 - Bachelor's degree, Business Information Systems, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK

Spoken Languages: English & Arabic

Interests & Hobbies: Traveling, Football

Sector: Oil & Gas

Ownership: Private

Established in: 2012

Having been involved in a variety of sectors throughout his career, Qais Al Khonji is well-known in Oman as a businessman and a supporter of innovation.

Coming from a family of entrepreneurs, he was always involved in the family business, Al Khonji Group, and he also spent time working for companies like ONEIC and Bank Sohar after finishing his college studies. But at one point, Mr. Al Khonji decided to take everything he had learned over the years and start his own business venture. Since making that decision, he has never looked back—even though success did not come immediately.

In 2012, he started Genesis International, a company designed to hold a number of different activities under one umbrella. One of them was focused on providing IT solutions and smart city technologies like electricity meters, and it also tried to bring attention to the solar power concept, but it faced a number of obstacles, mainly due to bureaucracy. Getting government approval for new technologies can be a real challenge, and in some circles, the local market's readiness for such advances remains in question. That's not something that Mr. Al Khonji believes, however.

Another activity of Genesis International that challenged its founder early on was building partnerships with international hospitals and universities to send Omani patients and students abroad, and getting a percentage of the profit for providing them with the service. Launching with a narrow scope with Indian hospitals and Australian universities limited the potential returns, but by adapting to customer requirements and broadening the company's offer, the services have turned into a success story for the company. Now, Omanis using its services have the opportunity to go to universities in Australia, Canada, and Malaysia, or to hospitals in India and Thailand.

Meanwhile, Genesis Projects and Investments was started in 2013 to conduct upstream and downstream oil analysis, as well as manufacturing the equipment

for the analysis which is sold to universities and colleges for educational use. Although the returns are high, the market for the core analysis in Oman is very small, so the company expanded to provide lubricant analysis as well. With its reports, Genesis can tell clients what elements a particular lubricant is lacking, in order to enhance the lifetime and the performance of the clients' machines. There is a variety of potential users of the service, including factories, navy ships, and refineries.

Since Oman is a country that's largely dependent on oil, the government has recognized the need for diversification by recently starting to focus on developing tourism, but Qais Al Khonji believes strongly that the oil and gas sector is still very powerful and offers many opportunities. Still, he believes other sectors have tremendous potential too, including healthcare, education, and manufacturing. Indeed, the potential for growth in those sectors would help tackle the current problem of unemployment in Oman, with new investment creating projects that ultimately result in new jobs.

One way to do so is to develop the SME space by providing training and incentives to young Omanis to start their own businesses. As a board member of an organization called Sharakah, which encourages and supports the development of entrepreneurs in Oman by funding interesting projects, Qais Al Khonji is very much involved in helping them overcome the associated challenges. Sharakah has already financed about 200 projects, and remains focused on helping entrepreneurs grow from nothing to becoming market-leading businesses in the future.

It's an issue that Mr. Al Khonji is passionate about. As part of another effort known as the Entrepreneurs' Organization, he works directly with the government to improve the country's key business sectors, and has played an instrumental role in introducing entrepreneurship as a subject in schools as part of the national curriculum. He has also been recognized widely for his efforts, winning the International Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2015, and making the 2018 list of Arabian Business's most influential young business leaders under 40.

Qais Al Khonji sold 60 percent of Genesis International in 2017 to interior fit-out firm Muscat Glow, and is using the investment to fund further projects and expansion in the GCC region. Mr. Al Khonji has remained a signifi-

My advice to youth:

Take care when starting a project. Don't rush, do plenty of research, and be sure that the timing and location are right. Sometimes, the excitement of a new project gets killed by reality, by the facts. Things might take more time than you think.

My message about Oman:

Oman holds a lot of opportunities, but it requires the right concept, with the right partner, at the right time those are the factors necessary for any project to succeed.

cant stakeholder in the company and he looks forward to its promising future. Looking ahead, the mission of Genesis International is to become a leading oil service company in Oman, employing more Omanis within the oil sector when the time comes to expand outside of the country.

From a personal standpoint, even though his journey has been filled with challenges, Qais Al Khonji is enjoying the experience. With the benefit of hindsight, it was those challenges that enabled him to eventually succeed. *"I think my current success has a lot to do with that first experience of failure,"* he has said. Over time, he has developed a passion for starting companies and then selling them in order to pursue something new. Mr. Al Khonji sees himself as a risk taker, but at the same time, he always puts his eggs in more than one basket when it comes to investments. He is already thinking about and planning his next venture as we speak, but he doesn't want to disclose what it is just yet. From the experienced, adaptable leader that he is, we can only expect great things to come.

Affiliations, Awards & Honors

Entrepreneur of the Year, Worldwide Business Magazine, 2015

Arabian Business's most influential young business leaders under 40, 2018

Credits John Marcus