

Ghada Mohamed Al Youssef



DOB: May 22, 1979

Marital status: Divorced, has two children

Education:
2001 - Bachelor of Science, Management,
Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

2016 - National CEO Program, IMD Business School

2019 - EMBA, Business Administration and Management, London Business School

Spoken Languages: English, Arabic, French & Hindi

Interests & Hobbies: Music Production, Running, Rooking

Sector: Diversified

Ownership: Private

Established in: 1977

Director of Business Development, Al Youssef Group

Recognized as one of the most successful businesswomen in the Arab world, Ghada Al Youssef is truly an inspiring presence in the Omani SME sector. It has something to do with how many different roles she has taken on, and how effective she has been in them.

While she first started her career in the banking and finance sector, at the National Bank of Oman, Ms. Al Youssef was soon recruited by HSBC to set up and run their communications department. From there, she quickly worked her way up to become the manager of sales and services for the bank's Omani branches.

Ms. Al Youssef is a master at planning her time, and she believes that the key to having more time on your hands is to delegate most of your tasks to the right people. While working at her full time job in banking, she was also an active board member in the family business, Al Youssef Group, and she also managed to start her own business, a restaurant called Ubhar.

Ubhar was the first Omani fusion restaurant, and even though it was an entirely new concept, it was very well received by the public when it opened in 2009. Ms. Al Youssef's passion for food and cooking allowed her to create unique recipes—in collaboration with a chef—combining Omani cuisine with international dishes in order to bring the dining experience to a new level. Winning the Best SME Award in Muscat in 2013, Ubhar was also rated the Best Restaurant in Muscat by Trip Advisor in 2014.

Al Youssef Group was established in 1977 as a family business, and today the seats on its board are distributed between Ghada Al Youssef and her siblings according to their interests and industry experience. Her focus is on business development and seeking new opportunities for expansion. The group already invests in a wide range of industries, from oil and gas to real estate, consumer electronics, telecommunications, and hospitality. Real estate is the largest area of investment, according to Ms. Al Youssef, who points out that Oman is still developing its

infrastructure.

One of the current projects of Al Youssef Group is Wardat Riyam, a luxury residential project located next to Riyam Park in Muscat, which will cover 6,700 square meters. All the apartments will have a panoramic view of the sea, the Muttrah Bay, and the park. The construction has already started its first phase, with the timeline for phase two still undisclosed. The most exciting thing for Ms. Al Youssef is that the building will have a rooftop with restaurants, one of which will be Ubhar.

Since 2013, Ghada al Youssef is also the executive manager for communication and sustainability at Nama Group, an electricity and water services company. She focuses on managing stakeholder requirements, PR, marketing, and she has developed a sustainability policy that takes into account the social, economic, and environmental aspects of the company's operations.

According to Ms. Al Youssef, Nama Group is also involved in many social activities, and the company encourages its staff to create projects in their communities that focus on charity work, beach cleanups, and other initiatives that promote positive and sustainable change for the community as well as for the environment. Nama Group's subsidiaries are currently focusing on moving towards renewable energy, with the goal of having 20% of the energy generated by renewable sources by 2025, Ms. Al Youssef says.

The Omani government has already developed its vision for 2040, and Ms. Al Youssef believes it gives both the public and the private sector a clear direction to move towards. She is a strong promoter of SME development, and believes the ecosystem is on the right path with the sector becoming a driving force behind the economy.

With that in mind, Ms. Al Youssef loves to provide mentorship and advice to young entrepreneurs free of charge whenever she is available. *"For me, that's my contribution to the community,"* she says. In addition to that, she is currently the business advisor for a new company in the UK, founded by students from London Business School, which aims to create a property search engine that includes multiple search filters in order to match the customers' needs more accurately than other platforms.

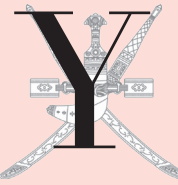
Given her extensive background in business, it's no

My advice to youth:

Make time for what matters. There is no such thing as "I don't have time to do something," it's about how you plan your time.

My message about Oman:

Oman is a great investment hub and there are many opportunities for foreign investors to participate in the public or the private sector. People are starting to be more aware about Oman and they see Omanis as being approachable and collaborative - I think these values are what the modern business world needs.



surprise that Ghada Al Youssef has faced many challenges in her career. The most difficult one was opening her own restaurant, as she had no prior experience as a business owner at the time, and the concept was unheard of before in the local market. But, as an ambitious person, she attended courses, trained herself, learned new cooking methods, and she even rolled up her sleeves and served at the tables to get insight into how everything works from the bottom up.

Regarding future plans, Ms. Al Youssef has recently begun franchising the Ubhar concept in the Gulf area, starting with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar, where she observed there is a demand for Omani brands. She also plans to start merchandising through her restaurants, including its own cook books.

In describing to other people what she does, Ghada Al Youssef often finds that they don't understand what her career really is, because she has always been involved in so many things. She says she later learned that there is an actual term for what she has been doing, and that's having a "portfolio career", which involves plenty of delegation and time management. Being able to plan her time well has allowed Ms. Al Youssef to achieve quite a lot in her career, as well as in her personal life, and her journey offers a powerful lesson for any Omani entrepreneur.

Credits John Marcus