

Interview: Mohammed R Alsuwaidi – chair, founding partner, Alsuwaidi & Company

CAN YOU GIVE OUR LEGAL BUSINESS READERS AN OVERVIEW OF ALSUWAIDI & COMPANY.

Alsuwaidi & Company is a full-service business law firm, rooted in regional know-how. Since the firm's inception in 1997, we have supported leading businesses across the UAE and beyond, assisting them to navigate complex and commercial challenges.

Our goal is to bring legal certainty to our clients and in doing so, helping them to innovate, grow, and thrive. We have built a reputation for our knowledge and expertise and our formidable standing in the Dubai and Abu Dhabi Courts is second to none.

Our regional expertise is consolidated by wider knowledge of international legal systems and the firm boasts a number of qualified

practitioners who are well respected and known among judges across the UAE. We know what works in court and what does not. That is really down to practice and experience. We feel that gives us a significant edge.

Our dispute resolution practice operates across practice and with sector specialisations. We are kept busy by disputes in the insurance sector, Islamic banking, construction, and real estate. Our maritime and international trade practice is known for arresting ships, and enforcing foreign judgments in the UAE. We handle employment

that we comply with to help reduce the infection rate with regular office sanitisation. We reduced the number of persons allowed in any given meeting room to maintain social distancing. It has been an adjustment, but our colleagues have done very well at adjusting and we are all acting responsibly. Any minor colds or Covid symptoms are reported, followed by quarantine, and Covid tests frequently carried out.

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT ANY TRENDS OR CHANGES IN THE LANDSCAPE YOU ARE SEEING EMERGE WITHIN THE UAE DISPUTE RESOLUTION MARKET?

We have seen a lack of liquidity in the market which is a direct outcome of the pandemic. This means some businesses have struggled to meet their financial obligations, and a significant number are needing to tighten their purse strings. There has definitely been an upsurge in the number of employment disputes as companies try to reduce their financial burdens. Construction projects that faced delays, or suppliers of materials that haven't been paid, or individuals and companies defaulting on bank loans, are just some of the legal dispute activities we are seeing. There is a lot of 'breach of contract', but a lack of cash to fund disputes. Ultimately I think the pandemic has paved the way for litigation funders to step in and finance some of these claims.

ALSUWAIDI & COMPANY HAS SUCCESSFULLY SUPPORTED ITS CLIENTS' BUSINESS THROUGH ITS GLOBAL NETWORK FOR MANY YEARS NOW. ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL JURISDICTIONS YOUR FIRM HAS EARMARKED FOR GROWTH OVER THE NEXT YEAR? AND WHY?

As such we have no plans to open any foreign office. Alsuwaidi & Company is a law firm born of the United Arab Emirates and our footprint extends across three emirates, with offices located in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Ajman. We only open an office when we are certain we can provide uncompromised legal support to our clients. Where our clients need support beyond the UAE, our membership to Multilaw ensures our clients receive the excellent care and skill from our vetted network of law firm partners.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF ANY CLIENT RELATIONSHIP?

'Our full rights of audience before UAE courts give us a significant edge in how we handle our client matters.'

Mohammed R Alsuwaidi, Alsuwaidi & Company

arbitrators and lawyers registered to practice in the DIFC and ADGM courts, enabling us to provide for our client's needs in all forums. Our dispute resolution practice boasts an amicable track record which is demonstrative of our successful prowess.

Our legal teams are fluent in Arabic and English, and have an established network with regulatory bodies, government agencies and the court circuits.

Whether we are handling non-contentious matters for our clients, or disputes, our approach is to consider ourselves an extension of our client's business and to help them find practical ways to achieve their business objectives.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MAIN POINTS THAT RANK ALSUWAIDI & COMPANY AS A LEADING FIRM IN THE UAE LEGAL BUSINESS MARKET?

Our firm's main strength lies in our dispute resolution practice. We have operated in the region for over two decades, so have both a deep-rooted knowledge and legal network. Unlike newcomers to this region, our knowledge and

disputes across sectors but notably in healthcare and aviation.

Our full rights of audience before UAE courts give us a significant edge in how we handle our client matters. Our approach is rooted in pragmatism founded through our insider knowledge on how matters are interpreted and resolved in court.

GIVEN THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, HOW HAS THIS AFFECTED YOUR FIRM?

The UAE faced a strict lockdown back in April 2020 which served its purpose as we were able to contain infection numbers fairly early on.

The strict lockdown meant the entire office migrated to working from home. This should have been challenging, but we were able to adjust very quickly to remote working. As a law firm that champions legal technology, we adjusted without issue and our clients continued to receive the excellent legal service.

We returned to the office in early summer 2020. At first on a rotational basis and gradually everyone was back. There are strict protocols

I believe that communication is the most important part of any client relationship. To provide accurate legal service, it is vital you understand your client's business, their goals, and really understand them as an organisation. That can only be attained through communication. Clients want frequent updates to their legal matters, thus again, communication is vital. Of course, trust, transparency, providing quality work, and excellent legal service are important too.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT ALSUWAIDI & COMPANY THAT HAS ENABLED YOU TO RETAIN TALENT WITHIN THE FIRM?

We are fortunate to have a low turnover. In fact, there have been several instances when lawyers have left only to return. Which is great! We like our lawyers. Having operated for over two decades, we have been fortunate to attract superb lawyers, from an array of international backgrounds. Being in the UAE legal sector for over two decades has enabled us to carve an enviable niche in terms of attracting talent.

WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON THE GROWING ROLE TECHNOLOGY PLAYS IN THE GLOBAL LEGAL MARKET PLACE? AND HOW HAS YOUR FIRM ITSELF EMBRACED THE LATEST INNOVATIONS TO THE MAXIMUM EFFECT FOR BOTH YOUR EMPLOYEES AND CLIENTS?

Alsuwaidi & Company use technology to enhance our client experience and help us better serve our clients. We are the first (and to my understanding, only) law firm in the UAE that is implementing SAP technology to integrate the entire operations of our firm. Our investment in technology has enabled streamlined accounting, superior case management and an integrated platform where we are able to manage our client and prospective client communication. By advancing our operations, we are able to further improve on our client services and remain price competitive by operating efficiently. This is further supported by our existing case management platform (CasEngine) which not only provides our clients with systematic updates but furthermore, for clients signed up to the system, we are able to grant them access so they can view their individual case updates in real time, in both Arabic and English.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT, IN A PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CAPACITY?

In professional and personal, I am proud of my colleagues – some of whom have been with the firm since the very start. Everyone at Alsuwaidi & Company is special and unique and I am proud



‘Alsuwaidi & Company use technology to enhance our client experience and help us better serve our clients.’

Mohammed R Alsuwaidi, Alsuwaidi & Company

of working with such brilliant people. I am also proud of the firm we have built that has great clients, and a great work life balance. We get the work done, and we do it well. At the same time, we take care of ourselves and each other. I should mention, we have recruited a personal trainer for the firm. He helps us maintain our fitness goals. I really think it is the little things that make a difference, and that make a great firm a great place to work.

WHEN YOU LOOK BACK AT YOUR CAREER AND THE KNOWLEDGE YOU’VE GAINED, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS WHO ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE LEGAL INDUSTRY?

Keep learning, keep searching, keep listening, keep experiencing, keep reading and keep distinguishing yourself to become intellectual in all relevant aspects. I think it is really important whatever your career that you are active on working on yourself as a person, because ultimately, people do business with people. Also, keep pace with technology. Technology

enables us to be fast and reach our goals more accurately. One final note, don't forget to balance your personal life with your work life. Keep fit and healthy, and never compromise your wellbeing. Remember a healthy mind thrives in a healthy body.

For more information, please contact:

Mohammed R Alsuwaidi,
managing partner

Alsuwaidi & Company
252 Emarat Atrium Building
Sheikh Zayed Road, PO Box 7273
Dubai
United Arab Emirates

T: 971 4 321 1000
E: info@alsuwaidi.ae

www.alsuwaidi.ae