

Mr. Mohammed Ali AlQaed – Chairman of Silah Gulf Company



02-March-2016

Profiling Bahrain as an ideal location of choice for establishing business in the GCC region, Silah Gulf. Tell us more about the company and its operations.

Headquartered in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Silah Gulf was launched in 2009 as a joint venture in the Middle East region by UK-based Merchants (Dimension Data) together with the Informatics & eGovernment Authority.

Today, Silah operates with a workforce of over 750+ customer service professionals, supporting clients throughout the region in the telecom, banking, government, travel and retail industry. Being the brainchild of the Economic Vision 2030, it focuses on creating sustainable jobs in Bahrain as it delivers end-to-end service solutions including advising companies how to transform and improve their customer-experience infrastructure, technology and training solutions.

Silah's objective has always been to deliver exceptional customer experiences, both for the public and private sector clients. It is a multi-award winner in the regional service industry which takes a consultative, but yet pragmatic approach combining global best practices and local expertise to provide exceptional customer-experiences.

How is Silah supporting and addressing the strategy of Bahrainization?

Call center organizations such as Silah have a significant direct and indirect employment potentials. The service industry offers attractive compensation and career development opportunities for graduates and professionals; as well as incorporates previously marginalized groups, especially women and youth, into the formal labour pool. I am proud to say that the majority of our 750+ employees are Bahrainis and constitute almost 100% of the staff for the governmental services. In addition, 40% are women and the average Silah professional is 27-years-old.

Silah has contributed in creating over 1,500 direct jobs in the Kingdom and trains over 500+ professionals a year. It has set clear career paths and provided specialized trainings to Bahrainis thru the Silah Academy. Considered as one of the leading premium customer-experience solutions provider in the region, Silah has established a partnership with Tamkeen in order to train more Bahrainis to become employed in the increasing call center sector in and out of the Kingdom.

Can you define Silah's applied benchmark?

To become successful, *benchmarking* must be implemented as a structured, systematic process. Silah Gulf's constant reliance is made on innovation; for instance, Silah is keen to enhance eParticipation for our citizens by opening several channels of communication with the people, including social media networks and contact centers such as the National Contact Centre. As for the company's private sector clients, Silah handles the full communication spectrum – from calls and web chats to new digital communication such as WhatsApp.

One of the company strategies is to shift from a local operating call center provider to a regional customer-experience solutions player. It operates based

on best practices and industry standards capitalizing on a competitive quality, operational, cost, and HR framework. With core focus on maximizing quality and customer-experience for our clients, Silah aims to meet and exceed the set key performance indicators against the volume of interactions – proving a first-class customer service.

Silah Gulf has undoubtedly made significant achievements in a relatively short period of time, to what do you attribute its success?

With over 20 million interactions handled a year and 25 industry awards, Silah has not only positioned itself as a key employer of choice, but as the leading customer-experience solutions provider in Bahrain as well as the fastest growing in the GCC.

Every significant achievement follows our leadership guidance and directions to raise the level of customer satisfaction. The leadership's involvement was certainly the factor for success as it has ensured that the right strategy, focus, enforcement and power is set in place. It has also assisted in profiling Bahrain as a service destination of choice.

The outcomes of the latest issued Strategic Market Review of the telecommunications sector disclosed that Bahrain is taking significant steps towards ensuring that regulation is in-sync with technological developments. The country's recent industry market has positively developed in a number of areas like the substantial investments which have been made in new technologies, notably the roll-out of competitive Long-Term Evolution (LTE) networks throughout the country.

Additionally, Bahrain has achieved high recognitions in several international telecommunications and ICT indicators as well as rankings such as the United Nations and ITU reports. In 2014, Bahrain and Jordan were recognized as the only countries in the region which fully liberalized the telecommunications sector; with Bahrain being the only country that adopted a structure and a model similar to that implemented by the European Union. It was also ranked as the 26th globally within the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index.

The key was to combine Bahrain's privileged pool of talents, proven methodologies, industry best practices and the right leadership to create competitive solutions tailored for the GCC market and its customers.

How has Silah saved on companies?

Partnering with Silah offers clients access to a wide-spread of dedicated, professional, expert and high-quality services. Outsourcing labor intensive and volatile supporting processes not only provides clients more time and focus to strengthen their core business process, but more importantly contributes in improving services, while reducing operating costs.

The company is specialized in the customer-experience field as it has the superior process and technical infrastructure; thus, the customer whose facing operations can be managed more efficiently with better quality output. Regional GCC clients which near-shore their customer processes to Silah in Bahrain benefit from a competitive cost structure and an abundant pool of talent. It benefits numerous clients within the Telecom, Banking, Government, Travel and Retail industries which partner with Silah.

With all the recognized footprints, market recognitions and the several operations in the Gulf region. What does the future hold for Silah?

Silah is clearly paving the way for the customer service industry in Bahrain and the focus is moving from being a local market leader to becoming a regional player in the Middle East, attracting regional clients to outsource their operations to Silah in Bahrain and promoting the Bahrain business hub. Silah is headquartered in Bahrain and currently has an operational partner network in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The potential for Silah and the goals for growth are tremendous. The service industry in the GCC is at a paradigm shift and customer-experience is becoming a key differentiator for many companies and public services. Silah will continue to expand its outsourcing, consultancy, training and technology offerings as well as expand in the region.

The service industry will certainly play an important role in creating job opportunities for both locals and expats alike – steering Silah Gulf to remain at the forefront of this industry