

COMMUNITY



SHARING KNOWLEDGE

KO is not just a website anymore, but rather a project managed voluntarily across the Sultanate and driven by community members, both local and expatriates, bringing a myriad of talents under one roof, Board of Directors Tariq Al Barwani, BabySam Samuel and Rym Aoudia tell Oommen John P in an interview





Tariq Al Barwani

He is the Chairman of the Board of Directors & Founder of Knowledge Oman. From creating computer programmes that impacted thousands of users in Oman to partnering with public and government institutions that launched unique TV, Radio and Events programmes for the public, creating and selling a rich internet portal website to an international group of companies, working within new functions of organisations- Tariq Hilal Al-Barwani, best known for being Oman's popular IT expert is an innovator who focuses on using information technology to make a difference to the society.

In addition, he shares knowledge as a prolific speaker in various schools, colleges and universities, creates a leading volunteer knowledge sharing platform of local and expat residents that work together solely to fill knowledge gap within the country. He is also the recipient of various local and international awards. His unique projects and various experience that led to local and international awards is a proof in the pudding of the value Tariq has created over the years.

Can you tell us about Knowledge Oman?

Knowledge Oman is an award-winning community platform of knowledge sharing and social impact. Established in April 2008, Knowledge Oman first started as a mission to solidify the vision of the country's ruler, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, to transform Oman into a knowledge-based society. Driven by the community and for the community - Knowledge Oman brings together diverse talent to enable and create knowledge sharing platforms and innovate many 'firsts' with community initiatives. Knowledge Oman is a house of every local and expat individual living in Oman with a passion of sharing valuable knowledge in any industry and impacting the society in a positive way.

Knowledge Oman's presence in ICT realm?

Knowledge Oman was initially conceived as an online platform, specifically to connect people in the community to create, share and promote knowledge as a knowledge based society. Spearheading this mission was Tariq Hilal Al Barwani, who believes that while knowledge is power, this power no matter how great, is of no value unless it is shared or put into practice. With this in mind, Tariq, along with a group of local and expatriate community volunteers launched Knowledge Oman. The site started as an English-based web forum where people could login, become a member, create and exchange knowledge which included anything from basic arts

BabySam Samuel

Member of the Board of Directors & Senior Vice President of Knowledge Oman since October 2014. Joined Knowledge Oman in 2013 extending support in strategic direction. Baby Sam Samuel is a Management Consultant with core expertise in Turnaround Management, Strategic Consultancy and Business Mentoring and an accumulated experience of over 16 years in various senior management roles.

He is currently involved in diverse entrepreneurial activities.

- * He is a Consultant offering Turnaround Management, Strategic Consultancy & Business Mentoring & winner of the prestigious Global Achievement Award for 'Business Consulting' – received in 2015 from Global Media in association with Kerala chamber of Commerce.
- * He is the General Manager and Business Designer for the IT Company InterTech LLC and Organisation Mentor for Adventz - the leading Design House in Oman.
- * He plays the role of a Brand Advisor and Business Mentor for a few other start-up initiatives in Oman.
- * He is an elected member on the Board of Directors, Indian Schools. He is the Director-in-charge of the Centre for Special Education, Indian School Ibra, Indian School Ibri, Indian School Khasab and Indian School Al Maabela.

and business to the likes of complex sciences. Few months after the launch, it was realised to have an Arabic interface to cater to the diverse readership and community needs and thus an Arabic forum was created. Soon after, a fully-fledged portal website was created along with dedicated teams that undertake both online and offline activities to meet the objective of making knowledge freely available to everyone in the country. Today, KO is not just a website anymore, but rather a project managed voluntarily across the Sultanate and driven by community members, both local and expatriates, bringing a myriad of talents under one roof.

What are the initiatives of KO?

Knowledge Oman has actively introduced various initiatives for the country, driven with the passion to empower people and communities through knowledge and social innovation. The impact-focus areas of Knowledge Oman currently include the Social Enterprise Accelerator programme, the Knowledge Ambassadors programme, and Community Seminars that connect professionals to share their expertise and facilitate learning. This is in addition



to partnerships with private and public entities in enabling and supporting knowledge-based initiatives.

Previous projects included introducing the first community KO school free e-learning courses, the KO online library to promote a reading culture, an online platform Oman Videos of educational video sharing, a local social networking platform Oman Wall, the iCommunity blog of community articles, the Show Your Potential programme that guides participants to qualify for Microsoft certifications, and more.

How is KO empowering the youth through e-learning programmes?

Knowledge Oman has been imparting knowledge, coaching and mentoring in the community through online and community platforms. In 2009, Knowledge Oman introduced the KO eSchool as the first free e-learning community platform in the Sultanate and a major leap towards free online education in Oman.

KO eSchool first introduced ICT courses with enrollments in English and Arabic of over 280 participants, followed by soft skills development courses free for all. This was followed by expanding with a series of talks and seminars in the community to bring live

learning experiences. In particular, the network of Knowledge Ambassadors actively delivered sessions across the colleges and universities of Oman to reach out to youth and facilitate their transition from academia to the market place. KO also offered both online and live coaching opportunities for social enterprise initiatives matching them with an expert to help them kick-off their ideas to real life projects. Knowledge Oman further extends value to the youth and volunteer community by empowering them with personal fulfillment of making an impact in the community and people's lives, utilising their skills and talent for a good cause, gaining learning and opportunities for personal growth, attaining hands-on experience and exposure of community initiatives, networking with like-minded individuals keen to make a difference, and receiving public recognition for their contribution.

What is the mission and vision of KO?

Empowering Oman as a Knowledge Society by making knowledge freely available to everyone in the country and enabling growth and learning opportunities through knowledge sharing. Today we all recognise the need to enable a diverse economy beyond dependency on the oil & gas sector, to nurture a leading solution-oriented society, and enable capacity-building for the people – providing access to knowledge and putting knowledge to applied use is cornerstone of this success and wealth of the nation.

How is KO collaborating with the community?

Knowledge Oman has associated with a number of public and private entities in creating programmes, launching initiatives, and promoting projects that contribute to the mission of a knowledge society. Collaborations include entities such as C3 Consult & Coach for a Cause, Riyadh - the Public Authority for SME Development in Oman, Silatech, Qatar Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, and Microsoft - the largest software company in world, The London Speaker Bureau - a leading global speaking agency, eMax - the largest electronic store in the country, ITA, the Omani Women Association, Dar Al Ataa, Tawasul think tank, Protiviti, Oman International Trade & Exhibitions, IQPC, Fleming Gulf, TriFold Expo, the Ministry of Education of Oman, the US Embassy and various colleges and universities in Oman, among others. Knowledge Oman continues to welcome opportunities that bring greater value to the people.

Can you list the achievements and accolades won by KO for its initiatives?

Knowledge Oman has received both local and international recognition for its role rendered in the community. This includes being recognised after only one year of launch with the International

Rym Aoudia



Member of the Board of Directors & President of Knowledge Oman from October 2014. Joined KO and supported in leading various roles in growth of the organisation since its inception period from 2008. Rym Aoudia is currently part of the Board of Directors of Knowledge Oman, offering guidance to the overall organisation, its leadership and specifics of KO partnerships and communication.

Rym has been the President of Knowledge Oman from October 2014 and has been part of the organisation since 2008 passionately contributing to its community expansion and strategic direction. She is also a news anchor at Oman TV, certified as a CTT Consultant using the Barret Values Cultural Transformation Tools and trained in the JackCanfield Success Principles of Human Transformation Development. Rym's professional experience spans management consultancy, coaching and training, communication, and social development.

Standard Web Technology Award from Oman Web Awards 2009, also attaining the Brand Leadership Award from World Brand Congress, recognition for the Outstanding contribution to the cause of education Award by the World Human Resource Development (HRD) Congress and attaining the Golden Strategic Award for Culture from the Pan Arab Web Awards.