

# GULF BUSINESS

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## DRIVEN BY THE FINER DETAILS

**BILLIONAIRE BUSINESS LEADER GHASSAN ABOUD TELLS US WHAT'S BEHIND THE RISE OF HIS INTERNATIONAL CONGLOMERATE**



6 291100 749874  
BD 2.10 KD 1.70 RD 2.10 SF 20 DHS 20  
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# Shahzad Ahmed

**Chairman and CEO of Blue Ocean Group**

## **MY EDUCATION**

My father was in the air force and we had a transfer every few years, meaning the school changed and so did the learning environment. The major plus of this was adapting to new market dynamics – a new city, new school, new environment – and this resulted in continuous learning and adapting. Darwin's famous 'survival of the fittest' theory was at play continuously. I graduated with honours in chemistry from Aligarh university, followed by an MBA from Bangalore, specialising in marketing.

## **MY START**

I had my internship and first job in account management at a leading advertising agency, and went on to work at multinational agencies and companies over the next 25 years. It was there that I developed the skills of tangible and intangible marketing and sales. The experience of multi category and multi brand provided a strong base to move onto operations management and strategic

thinking. I moved from advertising to marketing, sales and retail, and then to management – my last job being the CEO of Gigaset (formerly Siemens Home and Office Communications). The next and final hop was a transition to entrepreneurship by setting up Blue Ocean Global six years ago. I enjoy this new and amazing journey every day and continue to explore new milestones. Every day brings new challenges, excitement and learning. It's the Almighty that gives the motivation and strength to continue and find meaning to life by serving customers and colleagues who work tirelessly with me. Our objective is to exceed expectation anytime and every time

## **MY APPROACH**

My attitude is to never give up, and have the mind of a winner. We convince ourselves in the office that failure is not an option, though we do fail frequently. We don't waste time but rather analyse the failure and try again. A positive attitude with a solutions approach brings success and learning from failures or mistakes which is a part and parcel of daily existence. Our approach is to keep working on ideas that reduce stress and anxiety at work, which will lead to a better environment. We believe in delegation and empowerment to the maximum so that the seniors are mentors, and there is a chance for the youngsters to learn and perform. The major factors that bring and keep business are trust and transparency, built over the years with collaboration at every level.

## **HIGHS AND LOWS**

The greatest highs have been to build teams and brands in different organisations, such as Siemens, Gigaset, Samsung, LG distribution and now Blue Ocean Global. Starting with a vision to be a global master distributor, we now represent multinational brands Gigaset, Black and Decker, NEC, Motorola, SKROSS, and many more. We have withstood the test of time and have grown to create B2B, B2C, online and institutional business across 40 countries from Dubai.

The lows have been the struggle of a start-up and the initial period of uncertainty. It is the strong resolve, efforts of the team, relationship with customers and the will of the Almighty that has taken us into our sixth year of growth. Our strong value system and professional approach to business with a clear vision has taken us through the lows.

## **DOS AND DON'TS**

Life is all about hope, strong values and faith in the Almighty. To be successful in life – meaning a satisfied and happy family, besides productive work – it's imperative to have an attitude of giving. It can be multi-dimensional, ranging from looking after parents, children, wife, colleagues and those in need in what ever way possible. Kind words, advice, financial support, even a smile goes a long way in sharing happiness and giving peace of mind.

I have learned to be an optimist, to be patient and to be focused on the goal of creating. And to stay away from negativity, arguments and a pessimistic mind. For me, the biggest 'do', is to control your temper and take decisions with a positive mindset. ☒