

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL WITH A STRATEGIST

Ahmed Al Khuzaie
Managing Partner, Khuzaie Associates

“A political campaign can be an exciting experience. A great deal will happen between now and Election Day and with a little forethought and planning, you can be prepared for all the twists and turns and, in many cases, control the situation,” says Ahmed Alkhuzaie, Managing Partner of the eponymous Khuzaie Partners, a Washington DC based Public Relations and Communications Company.

Founded in 2010, Khuzaie Associates is part of a select and elite group of international political consultants, who work with political aspirants and have the know-how to influence and sway political careers. Khuzaie Associates is independent and non-partisan and is sustained exclusively by honorary work, says

Ahmed Alkhuzaie. Focusing on the future and anticipating evolving client needs is not only about understanding where clients will want advice but also about how they want that service delivered.

During the last few years, Khuzaie Associates has been at the forefront of developments that have changed fundamentally the management of Political Consultancy - from the adoption of IT systems and sophisticated document management processes to investment in 'best in class' learning and development to creating efficient and cost-effective offshore legal support, administrative, business research and technology centers.

Today, however, we are far away from the pressures of political campaigns, chilling in the cool, luxurious confines of the Capital Club. Our conversation carries us over the landscape of a long and interesting career, a journey that has today reached a point where Alkhuzaie can look back and reflect with more than a little satisfaction.

“Life took me left and right. I took a lot of decisions, worked in many places in different fields. My parents initially thought that I was not focused. Yet on a later stage I found out that these experiences got me to where I am today.”

After an idyllic childhood in Bahrain, he left the safe and familiar comforts of home to carve out his own path, not knowing clearly what he wanted or where he wanted to end up being. From a part time job in an Altenheim - a distinctive life care senior residence - in Germany, where he became proficient in German, he experimented with fashion, PR, marketing, banking, a brief detour into the food and beverage industry and even more surprisingly, to music.

“All of that combined, made me reach where I am today and I am proud of it.”

So it all just came together at the right point!

Yes, exactly. Working in politics requires a broad spectrum. I should have a wide view on things and a

wide understanding as well. I need to know people, to have contacts and connections, to understand their issues, backgrounds, what they look for, their aspiration and their dreams.

Having worn many professional hats, how would you describe your career and what exactly is your job today?

My job, besides managing my people, can be summed up as three main things - Campaigns, management and consulting.

I focus on policy, by which, I mean the writing of laws, pushing them forward, convincing people with it until it becomes a law. And then we focus on image management monitoring. For example, we understand what your opponent is doing, how they do it, where the fault is and how to attack and get the perfect results.

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Explain what some of the primary areas of activity that your company is involved in?

As I said we focus on two or three main elements. Political consulting is a blend between economics and politics - which is the application itself and the public. We have to convince the people of what we are doing. That requires proper planning. So as I said, we start with monitoring and analyzing - Opponent watch, if I may term it. Then we put together the laws and we gather the army of people who are going to support us, whether they are from the same party, or

from a different party. It is for the greater good of the people after all.

When we talk about IT, for example, our company came up with software that monitors all the activities of a parliament. We did this for the congress and we applied it for the Indian parliament at Sansad Bhavan. We are implementing it in Kuwait and hopefully in Bahrain as well. What we do is that we analyse the activity of every member of the parliament - which party he follows or belongs to, his background, his gender etc. and if you compile all that together it makes it faster for you to understand the performance of the parliament, the performance of the parties, what have they achieved or if they have achieved nothing.

Would you say that Khuzaie Associates is an enablement agent that works to enforce technologies and thought processes for global and public welfare?

Yes. Although I will add to that, we are more like partners. We are normally contracted to help on exploring existing ideas, make sure it's implemented properly. We ensure that knowledge transfer is done properly and the outcomes are delivered as such.

Who make up your clients and your employers?

Our clients are governments, parliaments, institutions - either private or public. We talk about for example the Bahrain Institute of Political Development, Parliaments such as the Bundestag in Germany, the National Committee or the French parliament, as well as the Congress, the Senate in the United States. We have clients all around the world.

What does your company offer your clients? You have already answered that in a way but I want to know what makes you exclusive.

What makes us exclusive is that we have a considerably small team of just 11 members. That's our family. Each is specialized in his own field. The difference between us and others is that we are the only one, the company and the individuals, who are certified internationally. Certified by the

International Association of Political Consultants, certified by the American Association of Political Consultants, the European Association of Political Consultants and others as well.

Why we are special is because we tailor-make every plan. We don't take anything off the shelf. Each country has its own individual issues, each country has its own ways of handling things. Different laws, different behaviors, even different protocols of greeting people. So we take all that into consideration and sometimes even have a collaboration with local companies in order to make things happen.

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Being in Washington how do you manage your trans-continental interests?

I am a Bahraini by nationality, by heart, by origin and I love my country. Yet lets put it this way... If I wanted to invent a new engineering marvel, I'll go to Germany. If I want to work in perfumes, I'll go to Paris. If I want to be a model, I go to Milan. If you want to work in politics, you have to be in DC (Washington DC).

You have played an important role in the Alliance Francaise here. Tell us about that.

Well that was a long time ago. I was a board member elected by the committee back then, led by Khalid Almoayyed. They wanted young blood and because I was studying French back at that time, and I had good relations with everyone there, I was offered a position and I took it gladly. For a period of almost five years I was a board member. I have learnt a lot and I have contributed a lot. I was helping with events. Organising the events was one part; work on the budgets was the other part. I just got better at doing a lot of things while I



was there, from making quotations for renovations, expansions and so on. Thinking back, I have probably learned more than I contributed.

You are multi-lingual, and speak German, French.

I speak a little French, I speak German, Arabic, and English fluently and I am learning Hebrew now. And a little bit of Latin.

What opportunities do you see in Bahrain for yourself and the kind of role that you play?

Well the market has expanded massively ever since the state became a kingdom. We are a new democracy. We need lots of training, we need lots of manuals, we need to educate the public. Its not an easy process and some countries took hundreds of years to reach where they are today. We are going at a much faster pace. I think we are doing a great job and I am glad and proud to be a part of that.

Your project here might not be ready to announce.

We don't announce our projects. We always work behind the scenes, away

from the public. But you see the results happening and we may be part of that.

What is your opinion about Bahrain's business friendly market and how the world perceives it as a place where you can come and work or do business easily?

First attractive point in that image is that Bahrain is a tax haven. That's what everybody knows about Bahrain. Second is that it is friendlier than other countries in the region. Everybody is living in harmony. We have always lived in harmony. I am a Bahraini, having an American company, and I think this is the place to be. Therefore we are doing a lot of business here. We don't have any issue with anybody. We just take permissions on everything and it's all done. Everything is clear.

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Do you always visit The Capital Club when you are in Bahrain? How has the Club helped you in your business interests?

Capital Club is my second home. I don't have an office in Bahrain so I have all my meetings here. Whether its business related or if I am asking my wife out or even if I am having a party - birthday parties or anything, it is literally my second home. The staff are my family members. I know them all. They know what I like and what I want. I love it.

And of course it helps you network as well and gives you a platform for business. I have met a lot of my clients here. If I don't know them, staff members introduce us as co-members in the place and it works from there. @

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