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Mr. Mutasim Mahmassani
General Manager – Al Baraka Bank Lebanon

Mr. Mahmassani is a remarkable example of a banker who achieved a successful career path – without having to complete all his MBA requirements. His proven track record speaks louder than academic degrees. With his great ambition he worked his way up to attain the position of general manager.

During his studies at AUB, he already gained hands-on experience by working for the Arab Bank. In the last semester of his MBA studies, with only 8 credits needed for graduation, he accepted a job offer with City Bank in April 1975. These events Mr. Mahmassani described as a milestone in his early career, for he had interrupted his studies for three months to work for City Bank. He even followed the Bank that moved to Athens Greece, due to the Lebanese events. Those three months, however turned into 20 years, during which he pursued a brilliant career.

He never had any regrets about not having obtained his MBA, because he was capable of proving that ambitious work and solid experience can often count more than academic accomplishments. His chosen strategy to combine university studies and practical exposure led to total success constituting a very viable recipe for his work life.

PERSONAL PROFILE

- MBA studies at the American University of Beirut
- Completed most requirements for the MBA degree
- Bachelor of Business at the American University of Beirut

- Married with six children: Zaher, Maher, Hani, Rami, Dana, and Nour El Hana
- Hobbies: quality time with family

After two productive years in Athens, he was transferred to City Bank in Bahrain where he rapidly advanced to assume the position of financial controller dealing with 35 branches. During the first oil in the Gulf area in 1982, he moved to Arab Bank always working as financial controller. During his tenure with Arab Bank he climbed up the corporate ladder reaching the position of Assistant General Manager in charge of Credit and Marketing until 1995. He then decided to join the Libyan Bank also in the capacity of Assistant General Manager, a position he maintained until his return to Lebanon in 2006, accepting a new appointment by Al Baraka Bank- the first Islamic bank operating since 1992- in Lebanon as General Manager. This constituted his first encounter with Islamic Banking. He gladly accepted the challenge, fully aware of the future prospects of this new dimension in banking.

Mr. Mahmassani is currently confronting three major challenges:

- 1- A negative public image of the bank inherited from a previous period.
- 2- Prevailing common misconceptions on Islamic Banking, especially that it is only restricted to Muslim customers.
- 3- The fact that the Gulf States are 30 years ahead in experience in Islamic Banking.

He is fully preoccupied with the formidable endeavor of boosting the bank's image, with a view of rendering it as successful or possibly more than other AL Baraka subsidiaries outside Lebanon. He is highly optimistic about the great prospects awaiting his operation, feeling confident that the bank will soon command a respectable market share in Lebanon.

Fairness, honesty and sticking to the basic values and principles are the keys to his leadership style. He believes in teamwork. " The institution can not survive on individual efforts but collective ones, provided individual achievements are properly recognized".

Mr. Mahmassani has no specific role model, all hard working people with strong determination and who do not give up easily, tend to inspire him.

He adopted his father's belief that children receive a good education and values along the way- the rest is their own business. He passed his wisdom on to his children- 4 boys and 2 twin girls- of which the eldest son follows his father's footsteps and pursues a career in banking. He met the mother of his children at City Bank where she was working during the same period. Mr. Mahmassani dedicated to his work, thus, enjoys spending quality time with his family whenever possible.

Concerning the future of Lebanon and the middle East region he thinks that the ups and downs of the past will remain. However, according to him the Lebanese learned to live with this situation and believe and stick to their country. It is a part of their culture. Lebanese always maintain their optimism and trust in their and trust in their homeland. The current boom in the real estate sector, despite all odds, is a solid proof of the viability of the Lebanese in all circumstances.

BANK DATA

- The essence of Islamic banking is synonymous with the welfare of societies.
- First bank according to Islamic principles under commercial banking laws in Lebanon.
- Operating subsidiaries in ten countries: Bahrain, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, South Africa and Lebanon.
- Future target markets: India, Southeast Asia and Malaysia.

- Six branches in Lebanon with 130 staff members
- Product range covers most of Islamic Banking products.