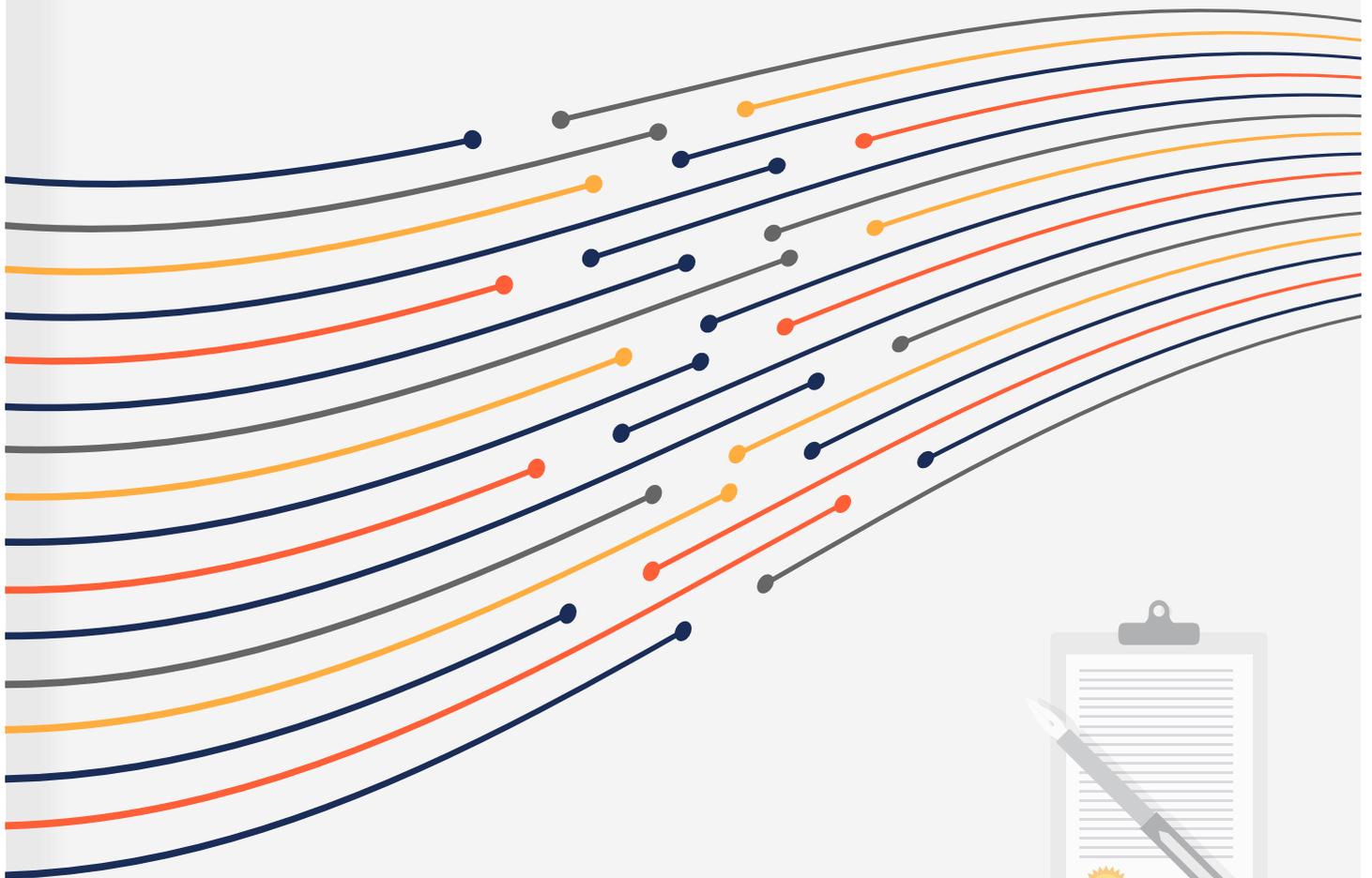


Abraham Accords

Impact on talent synergies between the UAE and Israel



Abraham Accords: Impact on talent synergies between the UAE and Israel

The relations between Israel and the UAE will have omnipresent long-term benefits through their similarities

Two apparently different nations, both rich in leadership talent, opened their doors to each other in August 2020 to promote peace and encourage collaboration between both countries.

Traditionally the distinction is real, Israel – an ancient kingdom that has endured many tribulations and the UAE – a young nation with a swift rise.

At present, however, they are remarkably similar in some respects. Currently, the UAE and Israel are proving to be an equally valuable centre for C-suite talent and growing businesses. Israel is known as the 'startup nation' (6,000+ start-ups), while the UAE could be called a 'scale-up nation' (2,300 startups, with the highest number of deals in the MENA region).

Israel's workforce is diverse with not just its own but also from Europe (25 per cent), Africa (12 per cent), Asia (9 per cent) and others (4 per cent) relative to its other MENA neighbours, which is somewhat close to the UAE where we see a melting pot of cultures.

In both countries, the youth population is the largest and fastest growing demographic, with outstanding educational avenues and post-educational prospects. With all of these synergies, it may come as no surprise that in the global talent competitiveness index, the UAE and Israel are ranked very close to each other at 19th and 20th respectively.

The relations between Israel and the UAE will have omnipresent long-term benefits through their similarities, but most importantly, in the short term, there are multiple advantages in several sectors and a few doors have already been opened. MoUs and agreements have already been signed between the major banks (10+ deals) of both countries, as the opening of finance gateways is the basic prerequisite for any two countries to prosper in reciprocal trade and industry. FinTech Aviv and DIFC Fintech agreed on knowledge exchange, talent development and mutual introduction facilitation. Cooperation between the two countries will boost the digital transformation of services, InsureTech, neo-banking, fraud prevention, risk analysis, the use of AI to personalise banking services, and more.

Israel has developed a very competitive infrastructure (with 4.9 per cent GDP spend going into tech and representing 9.2 per cent of the workforce, which is the highest in OECD) that involves the advancement of technologies and strengthens cybersecurity. On the other hand, the UAE went from being an electronic government to being a mobile government and now a smart government. With external threats looming on the horizon, the UAE is looking to Israel's technology and cybersecurity partnership and to protect its digital space.

Via numerous events, most notably Emirates Angels in Abu Dhabi and OurCrowd in Jerusalem, investors and entrepreneurs from Israel and the UAE have signed mutual agreements and partnerships. Israel's entrepreneurs look forward to the friendly business environment of the UAE, world-class regulators, 5 per cent sales tax and no corporate tax. The UAE investors have always looked at Israel for investment prospects as close neighbours for a long time and now the opportunity has presented itself from a legal viewpoint.

On logistics, the logistics arm of Dubai Ports (DP) World entered into an agreement with Allaouf Logistics, based in Israel, to pursue growth prospects in freight forwarding and pave the way for other deals as a growth facilitator. On transportation, the ministries of transport of both countries have agreed on bilateral cooperation on smart transport and transport integration. On tourism, the UAE is expected to welcome an enormous surge of visitors from Israel and looks to become Israel's prime travel destination.

As most food (90 per cent) is imported, the pandemic has especially affected the food supply chain of the UAE. The UAE aims to work with Israel on several fronts to boost agriculture and the food supply chain, including drip Micro Irrigation, AgriTech, increases in efficiency and sustainability.

Most of Israel's energy comes from fossil fuels, where the demand for primary energy is considerably higher than energy expenditure. Israel would embrace the UAE as another source of energy supply, which would alleviate some geo-political pressure. As Israel is the largest non-oil-dependent economy in the Middle East (outside Turkey) and with sound macroeconomic dynamics, it is a big expansion goal for many UAE companies and conglomerates.

It is imperative that synergies and efforts across sectors be matched by increased talent demand and development, especially in top management and key decision-making positions.

It is necessary for businesses to get the right people to get a spring start, particularly to handle the complexities of board room culture differences in the UAE and Israel. In turn, there will be several C-suite roles in demand.

As many as 82 per cent of UAE-based organisations experienced at least one cyberattack in 2019 and more than half reported multiple attacks. The UAE-Israel agreement will pave the way for UAE based companies to take advantage of technological talent and expertise in Israel for stronger cybersecurity and infrastructure and would highlight the value of the bringing on board a strong chief information security officer.

Relationship driven functions such as chief business development officer, chief growth officer or head of sales are also likely to be in demand. The complexities and idiosyncrasies of either country should not be understated, with both the UAE and Israel opening doors for expansion. Having the right top-line driver who understands the realities of each country is critical. C-level appointments by investors (PE/VC companies) into their portfolio companies, including startups, are likely to be on the rise. With investors from both countries looking at new investment opportunities, it is expected that they will be supported by having the right mechanism to grow their investments through C-level appointments. The most plausible are investor-driven CEO and CFO hires.

It is hard to underestimate the enormity of the relationship between the UAE and Israel, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic in which both countries emerged from a low economy and harsh macro drivers. The Abraham Accords seem to have elevated the public opinion, created industry enthusiasm across sectors and provided talent with new ventures to excel.

Authors



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Amer has over 12 years of experience in executive search focusing on Board, C-level and strategic assignments. Having previously worked in London, he has been based in Dubai for over 8 years, covering the Middle East and Africa markets.

Amer is a strategic partner to his clients, which include top-tier financial institutions (banks, private equity firms, asset managers, payments companies, SWFs), multinational corporates, regional family-owned conglomerates, start-ups, management consulting firms, public sector entities and multilateral organisations. Amer leads the Banking and Financial Services business of EMA Partners UAE, however his expertise and track record also extends across other industries.

Prior to joining EMA Partners, Amer worked for some of the world's most prominent multinational executive search firms.

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Bala is an executive search consultant and senior researcher with EMA Partners International. He has helped clients with C-Suite & C-1 executive roles across various sectors with a focus on MEA and ASEAN countries through diligent mapping, sourcing from right pockets, candidate evaluation & management and ensuring positive onboarding with assisted leadership assessment and advisory.

He has conducted primary and secondary research on business topics to create white papers/ thought documents for clients & prospects. Additionally, he has also helped organize topics and discussion panels for EMA HR connects for Senior business leaders across India, Dubai, and Singapore.



Bala Kumaran

Since 1988, EMA Partners has been serving local and international businesses across multiple industry sectors. The firm has been instrumental in helping its clients recruit numerous leaders who have made a significant impact in their organizations.

With access to intellectual property through our association with Decision Dynamics AB, EMA Partners is a provider of leadership assessments and other advisory services to our clients.

Our expertise lies in assessing, hiring and developing leaders at the Board, C-Suite and Senior Executive level across industries. Our clients include global corporations, local companies and not for profit organizations.



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