Talal Abdulkarim

Board & Executive Adviser · Leadership, Strategy & AI-Driven Growth · Partnerships & Commercial Development

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Executive Profile

Board and executive adviser who helps organisations turn strategy, partnerships and emerging technology into measurable growth. Four decades across technology, media, consulting and entrepreneurship in the United States and the Gulf — from a family business in Damascus to Intel Corporation, Al Jazeera Media Network and FranklinCovey Middle East, and founder of more than twelve ventures.

Combines corporate discipline with an entrepreneur's drive, and brings first-hand experience of what founders and growing companies face: building a product and a team, finding customers and scaling across borders. No one-size-fits-all: understand the opportunity, face the real challenges, design the solution to fit.

LEADING SINCE	GROWTH IN YEAR ONE	SUBSCRIBERS IN A YEAR	INTEL SALES GOALS	LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS	VENTURES FOUNDED
1985	300%	1M+	3×	100+	12+

Core Competencies

Strategic leadership & governance
Board and executive advisory; corporate strategy and transformation; programme and portfolio management (PMP); government and private-sector stakeholder engagement.

Entrepreneurship & innovation
Venture building, incubation and planning of new initiatives; mentoring founders; connecting companies with experienced experts.

Partnerships & ecosystem building
Strategic partnerships and sponsorship; commercial models and monetisation; business development and market entry across MENA.

Enterprise & SME development
Advising founders and growing companies; building management and leadership capability at scale; scaling from start-up to maturity.

AI & digital transformation
Turning AI and emerging technology into business value, with practical adoption for leaders and teams.

Cross-cultural leadership
Fluent in Arabic and English; bridging regional and international business cultures from the US to the Gulf.

Selected Results

- **300% growth in year one** at the Al Jazeera Media Institute, against a 12% annual target set with BCG — by rebuilding the offer around what the market needed.
- **1 million+ subscribers in under a year** — over 3× the target — after founding the Encryption Department at Al Jazeera Sports and building its first call centre.
- **3× sales goals** on Intel's first Wi-Fi home networking product, which he brought in and led.
- **Millions of dollars saved** on multiple occasions as Intel's lead negotiator on high-stakes purchasing and partnership deals.
- **75% less test-preparation time** at Intel after chairing the process-improvement team and redesigning lab testing.
- **25+ vendors worldwide** brought together through Intel Web Outfitter Services, a team he created and led.
- **Y2K reference standard:** created Intersolv's Year 2000 software test plan, adopted across the US as the reference for Y2K testing.
- **100+ leadership workshops** facilitated for corporate and government clients across the Gulf.

Organisations Worked With

Saudi Aramco · SABIC · Abu Dhabi Investment Authority · Al Rajhi Bank · Microsoft · IBM · Intel · Nokia Siemens Networks · Nestlé · PepsiCo · Etisalat · du · Zain · Mobily · Saudi Airlines · Oman LNG · Dolphin Energy · Qatar Foundation · Qatar Financial Centre · Capital Market Authority · DIFC · DEWA · Aldar · Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council · King Faisal Specialist Hospital · UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs · Ministry of Labour · Qatar Leaders

Professional Experience

Al Jazeera Media Network — Digital Division, Doha 2023 – Present
Manager, Business Development, Partnership & Sponsorship
Leads partnerships, sponsorship and monetisation across Al Jazeera's digital platforms, including Al Jazeera 360; owns sponsorship tracks for flagship events and branded programmes; designs new commercial models. Earlier in the role: partnership, incubation and planning for new digital initiatives.

Al Jazeera Media Institute, Doha 2012 – 2023
Manager of Training (2017–2023) · Manager of Marketing, Administration & Business Development (2012–2017)
Delivered 300% growth in year one; created new curricula and expanded into leadership, entrepreneurship and young-leaders development; partnered with national programmes such as Qatar Leaders and signed multiple MOUs.

MENA Smart, Dubai 2008 – 2012
Founder, Co-Owner & Managing Director
Founded a leadership training and consultancy firm; built the team and the executive workshop curriculum with international experts; secured an exclusive partnership with one of the world's top leadership authorities.

FranklinCovey Middle East, Dubai 2008 – 2011
Senior Consulting Partner & Facilitator
More than 100 leadership workshops — The 7 Habits, 4 Disciplines of Execution, The Speed of Trust, Great Leaders, Situational Leadership; supported Stephen R. Covey, Stephen M. R. Covey, Ram Charan and Chester Elton in delivering their regional events.

Al Jazeera Media Network, Doha 2003 – 2008
Technical Adviser to the Board · Founder & Manager, Projects and Encryption Departments
Advised the Board on technology; built new units from scratch, including the first call centre and the first ID and access-control system.

Intersolv, USA 1999 – 2001
Y2K test planning
Headhunted to create the Year 2000 software test plan adopted across the US as the reference standard.

Intel Corporation, USA 1997 – 2003
Technology & Product Management
Led the first Wi-Fi home networking product; created Intel Web Outfitter Services; chaired the process-improvement team; lead negotiator.

Abdulkarim Import, Damascus 1982 – 1988
Family business
Led office-equipment projects across maintenance, sales, contracting, delivery, import and export.

Ventures & Partnerships

To Be Entrepreneur LLC — Owner, USA. Holding company for digital media, consulting and platform ventures.

MENA Speakers — Owner. Speakers bureau for the region's leading voices and experts.

Brown Butter — Co-founder & adviser. Personalised, high-quality sweets.

Nora Sweets — Founder, USA. Arabic sweets and chocolate from Syria to the United States.

International Business Equipment — Founder, USA, 1990–2000. Customised computers and office equipment exported to the Middle East.

Abdulkarim Import — Family business, Damascus, 1982–1988. Office equipment, import and export.

MENA Domains — Founder & owner. Acquires, holds and markets premium domain names.

Built By Icons — Co-founder & adviser, 2026–. Independent expert network for the region.

Mounayi — Adviser. Perfumes, gifts and gift boxes blending Arab culture and Syrian artistry.

MENA Smart — Founder, Co-Owner & MD, Dubai, 2008–2012. Leadership training and consultancy.

Pacific Covers — Founder, USA, 1995–1998. Dust covers and maintenance for office equipment.

Shukran Qatar — Initiative. An independent thank-you to Qatar from its residents.

Has also started several other small businesses in the US across different sectors, and advised growing companies including Souter Group.

Education, Certification & Languages

- Master's in Technology Management — Portland State University, USA (2000)
- Bachelor's in Technology Management — Portland State University, USA (1998)
- Project Management Professional (PMP) — Project Management Institute
- Languages: Arabic and English (professional fluency in both)

