

**Essay 1:** Outline why you would be a good candidate for the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Fellows Program. You should include how you plan to build on your past experience to contribute to development in the Arab World and highlight plans to return to the Arab World to work (800 words).

I believe I would be a deserving candidate for the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Fellows Program based on my past experience and my future ambitions.

I am an Egyptian who was born in Dubai in 1977, a city that has played a fundamental role in shaping me, instilling in me great ambition and a can-do optimism. I left Dubai aged 17 to study Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the Imperial College of London. I also worked in the City of London after graduation. My professional experience has been spread across Consulting, Public Strategy and Entrepreneurship in marketing and fashion. The unifying theme has been a focus on 'change'. Consulting offered an ideal environment to learn about business in general and specifically how to plan and implement change in organizations. My experience working with the Dubai Government allowed me to be involved with one of the most exciting and transformational governments in the world. Finally my experience starting Kitsch22 was founded on the idea of initiating a creative youth-movement in Dubai and the wider region, our vision was to bring about cultural change.

Technology, creativity and business have been the three guiding forces of my life. As an engineering undergraduate I specialized in Human Computer Interaction, a discipline that brings together design, computer science and cognitive science. I also enrolled in several business electives to develop my knowledge of the field.

As a child of the networked age, I found technology beguiling and was inspired from an early age by Wired Magazine, Marshall McLuhan and Nicholas Negroponte. Even in the pre-world wide web days I was seduced by the techno-utopian promise that even rudimentary technologies such as email and bulletin boards seemed to herald. This love for technology, the endless opportunities for creativity it provides, and its potential for change continues to inspire me.

During the last four years, I have combined my passions for art, music, design and fashion into the Kitsch22, the business I founded in Dubai.

I gained great experience while working for organizations including Andersen, KPMG and the Dubai Government, learning about strategy, finance and organizational excellence. I was fortunate to work under some truly inspirational leaders in that time which imparted an appreciation and understanding of what goes into being an effective leader. In 2004 I married the skills I had amassed through my corporate experiences to my passions, forming an organization that focused on developing and nurturing the burgeoning creative scene in Dubai. Kitsch22 ushered in a creative youth sub-culture that simply did not exist in this part of the world. We launched 'Five Green', an art gallery featured in Wallpaper, that The Economist called Dubai's best. iBO, the alternative music venue we started has been featured in Vanity Fair and was deemed 'a national treasure' by Time Out Dubai called it . We have been lauded by publications including the New York Times, Vogue and Der Spiegel and the Financial Times who called us 'Creatives who are responsible for a series renegade artful happenings'. Kitsch22 was additionally named the 'Entrepreneurial Startup of the Year' at the Lloyds TSB 2006 Small Business Awards.

My ambition is to merge my engineering foundation and my love and appreciation of the arts (music, film and literature) with a rigorous business education in order to return to the Middle East to launch a youth-oriented media company where I can have a significant social and cultural impact.

The region is witnessing an exciting bout of economic liberalization, presenting an adventurous mix of opportunity and risk. Within the region's media industry, there are few innovative corporations that have been able to connect with the large youth population.

An MBA will strengthen my financial understanding and managerial theory and provide me with insight into the media industry which I am keen to enter. I have had an intense, hands-on experience working with musicians, artists, designers and other creatives since setting up Kitsch22 and 9714 (our company's marketing agency division) which has given me a deep first-hand insight into various creative processes. I believe the combination of my engineering education, consulting work experience and creative understanding will make me a valuable asset in a media industry that is currently desperately trying to reinvent itself. I want to play a part in its re-invention.

My technology, business and creative backgrounds combined with the skills, exposure, and experience I will gain from an MBA would position me well to achieve my ambition of creating a media organization that positively impacts the Middle East.

**Essay 2:** What are, in your opinion, the most significant challenges that the Arab World is facing? What measure would you propose to address these issues effectively? (500 words)

The Arab World faces a myriad of challenges across the social, cultural and economic spheres; I will choose to focus on those that resonate most deeply with me.

### The Youth Challenge

60% of the population in the Arab World is under the age of 30 according to the World Bank. This is at once the most pressing challenge we face and our greatest potential opportunity.

Challenges that must be addressed include:

- An education system that does not produce graduates adequately prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century work experience;
- High unemployment rates particularly amongst the young;
- A pervasive apathetic, insular attitude that does not bode well for our competitiveness in an increasingly connected and rapidly globalizing world.

A large unemployed, uneducated and unmotivated youth population would have potentially disastrous consequences feeding political and social unrest. It would also be a huge wasted opportunity.

The other side of the youth challenge as contrasted with most developed nations' worries about ageing populations, is the Arab World's demographic opportunity. As the ratio of working-age to dependents increases, a corresponding increase in wealth can be expected. The Arab World's youth bulge can be turned into a transformational asset, but only by capturing the associated and thusfar untapped potential productivity. This will involve preparing and motivating the young to contribute productively while creating enough opportunities to absorb the unprecedentedly large wave of new entrants to the workforce.

We must Empower our youth and I have outlined a three-pronged strategy:

### Education

The 2003 Arab Human Development Report highlighted clearly the importance of knowledge as a means of socio-economic development. Globalized competition and the transition to knowledge economies are some of the powerful forces reinforcing education's central role in the Arab World's development.

We must seize the opportunity to nurture the youthful energy and openness to new ideas and technologies to help the Arab World modernize. An urgent focus on educating the Arab young is of paramount importance.

### Economy

The second component of the strategy to turn our sizeable youth population to our advantage is rooted in the region's economic development. We must tackle the frighteningly high levels of unemployment commonplace in the region by encouraging economic growth and by extension job creation. Measures to grow the roles of the private sector and foreign investment in the region should be enacted. Entrepreneurship should be encouraged and bureaucratic barriers to small businesses should be addressed. Female participation in the workforce should also be promoted.

These efforts will serve the dual purpose of contributing to economic development while addressing the risks inherent in societies with an abundance of working-age unemployed young people. Challenging, satisfying jobs will provide our youth with a vital sense of self-worth.

### Expression

The final component of my proposed strategy is to encourage creative expression amongst the Middle Eastern youths. Providing young people with tools and platforms for creative expression can positively channel the energy of the youth.

Creative sectors in the developed world (music, film, arts, etc) are vast industries in their own right. They also play a crucial role in defining societies as well as fermenting communication and exchange between different cultures.

Again I suggest a holistic approach:

- Ensuring education highlights the importance of creativity;
- Creating and celebrating role-models in the arts;
- Assisting in the building of cultural industries;
- Enshrining respect for freedoms of speech;
- Accepting a plurality of ideas and opinions.

The Arab Youth must be allowed to dream that they can be whatever they choose to be, and then be allowed to achieve their dreams.

**Essay 3:** Where in your background would we find evidence of your leadership capacity and/or potential? (500 words)

I was made captain of our high-school field hockey team aged 13 and have found myself in leadership positions ever since. From being voted Vice-President of the Imperial College Arabic Society to organizing annual snowboarding holidays for friends and a trip to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, I have always gravitated towards positions of leadership.

I started Kitsch22, a marketing agency positioned to work with companies that wanted to connect with Dubai's emerging creative community. Although I had no direct experience in the field of marketing, I saw a trend emerging in Dubai. There was an emerging community of culturally aware early-adapters who helped shape the opinions of the citizens of Dubai. Marketers wanted to reach out and influence this attractive demographic. These taste makers included artists, designers, musicians, fashion designers as well as bankers and government technocrats.

My first clients included brands such as Calvin Klein and Diesel, which I worked with to plan unconventional communications campaigns and events to reach this fashion forward community. I built a small team, which I am proud to say is still with us today, to organize art exhibits, movie screenings and fashion events for clients.

Kitsch22 consistently introduced innovative solutions allowing brands to engage with targeted demographics. One example was the regional amateur short-film competition we launched for the BMW Group, using film as a powerful platform to promote the MINI Cooper brand. More recently, Kitsch22 organized an art symposium for Emaar, the leading property developer in the Middle East, that brought together over thirty artists from around the world to create public art for the city of Dubai.

I have consistently pioneered new businesses with Kitsch22 that have introduced concepts and youth cultures new to the region. These include an art gallery and fashion concept store called Five Green, an influential alternative music venue in Dubai called iBO as well as region-wide design competitions and music competitions. We have also introduced new fashion labels to the region while incubating locally based designers work.

I have built Kitsch22's client portfolio to include Bloomberg, McKinsey&Co., Estee Lauder and BMW. A highlight of my recent work was being asked to consult Viacom on the recent launch of MTV Arabia.

Although always blessed with an ability to motivate people, a lot of the leadership skills I can now confidently claim were learnt on the job as I grappled with the challenges of building and leading a small business. Growing up in an entrepreneurial environment, I have always been comfortable with taking risks which has been an important advantage.

I hope to continue cultivating my leadership abilities at the Columbia Business School to help me achieve my long term ambitions in the Middle East media industry.