AVIATION IS IN MY BLOOD - ALI AHMED ALNAQBI

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Are you sure, that if you have the opportunity to talk with an important person, you know exactly what you would ask? When I had the appointment for the interview with the Chairman of MEBAA Mr. Ali Ahmed Alnaqbi, I realized that I have so many questions and in the same time I've read a lot of what he had told already and it would be strange to ask something banal...So honestly, it was a moment to systematize what I would like to find out. I am so impressed by his capability to speak so very simple about strategic issues, about his passion for his mission and his kindness to stay a simple person. It's my pleasure to let you discover the resume of our discussion.

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Q. You spent almost 30 years in aviation industry, could you tell how and why you made such choice? Your way in aviation?

A. After my graduation in USA I had applied for several opportunities, which seemed interesting to me. I had a chance to be accepted in Presidential Flight. I started from very basic position, working sometimes 18 hours per day. I was building my knowledge, exploring all possible specifics and departments: accounting, finance, aircraft purchasing, aircraft management, IT, logistics. I was truly passionate about what I was doing. I spent 25 years in the same company! Working hard I made my way from junior staff to the second position in the company – Vice President of Finance and Administration. In 2003 I founded Royal Jet, to make business aviation accessible to wider client's circle. Again, it was a challenge for me, as even simple issues were far from easy to solve. For example, I came to a bank to discuss a loan for aircraft acquisition. They told – we give loans only to airlines, what is the business aviation? Many every day issues posed a question for me – How to raise the awareness of the industry? How to explain what it is business aviation? I've had discussed it with friends and colleagues and most of them told me to think about creating an association. So, in 2006 I launched the initiative to found MEBAA. We started with only 6 members and have a look where are we now. In order to do my best as Chairman of MEBAA I became a young retired one from Presidential flight. As you can see my way in aviation is quite challenging one. I would say I have aviation in my blood, I love the smell of jet fuel!

Q. How important to you are efforts in order to recruit future aviators, give them a dream and a goal to join the industry?

A. I see how much of aviation expertise, aviation knowledge is leaving the industry now. Due to different reasons: some of professionals are taking the retirement, some have health problems, some are leaving the industry for another career… The problem is there is not enough young professionals coming to aviation industry. Absolutely not enough. I think we need to make much more efforts in order to attract future generations of aviation professionals. I think we need to do much more than we are doing. At MEBAA events we organize a lot of activities for schools and

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students during “Future days”. For the majority the knowledge of aviation professions is limited by pilots and engineers. But it represents only 5% of all the diversity of aviation professionals. We can do better and we have to do more. We have to explain more about what dispatch is doing, flight operations, handling, about all possible specialization in aviation industry. That’s the only way to have future aviators in the industry. That’s the way to transfer the passion for aviation, the experience and the knowledge.

Q. MEBAA represents an amazing and in the same time very different region. What has changed since the creation of association: biggest success, biggest road to make, biggest challenges?

A. You are right. MEBAA represents very interesting, very different and very challenging region. We’ve opened several markets for business aviation and we have a lot of potential markets to open in the future. Sometimes the situation in a country, political problems, makes us to put on pause our activities. But, we never give up! We always continue to monitor the situation, we’re always ready to come and help to rebuild the country, to give the opportunity to rise economy again. For example – we’ve opened Tunisian market. We’ve organized a conference there, it was quite a success and now the country would be happy to host MEBAA show. We have a long road to make, a lot of efforts to help all Civil Aviation authorities to talk with each other, to sit at discuss and take decisions together. I am looking at Eurocontrol, European Sky… We have to make a lot of efforts in order to set united control in the region. You are right, MEBAA has the role of diplomate in such cases. Uniting nations, uniting Civil Aviation authorities, uniting region’s business aviation professionals to move forward, to work together on further development. Europe is a mature business aviation market, MENA region is a growing young market. So, we have so much to improve, to establish, to develop.

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Q. Education in and about business aviation industry, in your opinion what is a “must be done” in order to improve?

A. I think this is more than right: we have a lot to do to explain that business aviation it’s not only about flying for show-business stars or very rich people. It’s wrong to see this industry like that. It’s far from the reality. Photos, posted on social media are far from business aviation every day operations. We have an educational work to do to explain what is the running in. business aviation, what it takes to make an aircraft fly. We are not talking and explaining enough about medical evacuation for example or “fly and feed” initiative. But it is business aviation! Flying to remote areas, by helicopters or small aircraft, bringing medical help, transporting people, bringing food and humanitarian help. This aspect of business aviation we are not talking enough about. But we should scream about it! People have to learn and understand that it’s a part of our industry. Red Cross, it’s well known what they are doing, but they are flying business aviation operator’s aircraft, mean that very important cause is served by business aviation industry. In my opinion, education means also our engagement to explain what we bring to countries, to economies – we are creating jobs, we are creating activity, we are opening markets, we are creating opportunities to study and get TOP qualified professionals. It’s important! Of course, education inside of business aviation industry is very important as well. You have to learn in order to get better. I am learning every day I see MEBAA members and hear from them about what they want to improve. It’s a motivation for me. To help them come together and learn to create the common force. All together we can promote the markets, promote the industry, grow together.

Q. MEBAA Important goals to achieve in 2019?

A. The main goal is to contribute in our everyday work to the acceptance of business aviation throughout MENA region. It’s very important and we have a long list of what to do for this. We have to help companies and aviation authorities to work together to enhance safety and efficiency. You know, sometimes I am telling that professionals in business aviation are acting like enemies or themselves, because if each of them is thinking only about their profit, that’s far from logical way to succeed. Each and every day I am coming to work, it’s my pleasure to take a challenge to help

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professionals to come together and to promote industry together, to grow together and to make all step towards future development together. I am truly happy when I see one of our goals accomplished. But the road to make is so long, the list of goals is really long, so let's walk and see together.

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