

Al-Futtaim to foster human capital to support expansion

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Al-Futtaim, one of the region's foremost family-owned companies is embarking on a journey of substantial expansion, with a keen eye on fostering its human capital by attracting more talents and nurturing their skills to drive innovation and sustainable growth in line with its vision for the future.

"We are looking to dramatically expand our business over the next few years by diversifying our offerings and expanding into new sectors locally and regionally. Therefore, our overall human capital base will grow to some degree in relation to the growth that we are experiencing within the business," David Henderson, Chief Human Resources Officer at Al-Futtaim, told Khaleej Times in an interview.

Henderson, a seasoned professional with a rich background in human resources spanning over three decades, joined Al-Futtaim earlier this year.

Asserting that there are more than 33,000 employees representing over 100 nationalities in Al-Futtaim, Henderson emphasised the importance of implementing robust career progression paths to ensure retention and satisfaction.

"At Al-Futtaim, our human resource is the bedrock of our group, and we believe that embracing inclusivity and diversity will pave the way for a brighter tomorrow. But managing a diverse workforce requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges and embraces cultural differences. As we are a growth-oriented company, we offer abundant opportunities for our workforce," Henderson said.

"As the head of HR, one of my primary responsibilities is to cultivate an environment where internal growth takes precedence over external recruitment. This is not to diminish the importance of external hires, which remain crucial for bringing in fresh skills. However, we recognise the significance of nurturing and promoting talent from within our ranks, as part of our employee value proposition. Investing in career development and skill-building is key to retaining talent and fostering ongoing career growth, benefiting both the workforce and the company as a whole," he added.

Moreover, Al-Futtaim is committed to nurturing the development of the Emirati workforce, reflecting its dedication to supporting the objectives set by the Emiratisation initiatives in the UAE.

"We recognise that we have a big role to play as a major employer in the region in terms of developing local talent at all levels in the organisation. I am pleased to say we have had quite some success in that area. We achieved an Emiratisation rate of 13.4 per cent in 2023, and we are planning to further accelerate this process," Al-Futtaim's Chief Human Resources officer said.

Robust Emiratisation programs and strategies implemented by the group, such as Sinyar, the Emiratisation platform,



summer work programs, vocational training, and other initiatives, have played a significant role in developing the skill sets and career opportunities of Emiratis.

These initiatives underscore our ongoing efforts to support governmental plans aimed at enhancing the skills and presence of Emirati cadres across various sectors, Henderson said.

In addition to its dedication to Emiratisation initiatives, Al-Futtaim -a major player in the private sector- is committed to 'We the UAE 2031' vision in terms of contributing to business diversity and supporting the local economy.

In alignment with its growth trajectory, Al-Futtaim also stressed the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in reshaping business operations.

"We, at Al-Futtaim, understand the significance of integrating technology into our operations. The recent appointment of Moza Omar Al Futtaim as the Chief AI Officer of the group underscores our seriousness to harness the enormous potential of artificial intelligence across our operations... It is our responsibility to support our current workforce through retraining, upskilling, and facilitating transitions to other parts of the organisation," he said.

"In my capacity as the Group Director, Human Resources, I am committed to fostering a culture of innovation and continuous learning within our HR Department. This involves not only adopting AI but also ensuring that our team is adept at using such technologies to enhance their capabilities."

Today's leaders cannot be expected to remain merely specialists in their respective fields, according to Henderson.

"We need leaders that have the agility and the breadth and the willingness to embrace all aspects of what it is to be an effective leader. This becomes even more crucial as you progress from middle management to senior roles, demanding a broad perspective and adaptability," he said.