

## Oman to Launch Brand Ambassador Program

Muscat - Oman has a rich history, boasts outstanding natural beauty and is recognized the world over as a warm, friendly and welcoming nation. Indeed, research has shown highly positive associations with the sultanate thanks, on the whole, to our highly successful and rapidly developing tourism industry. However, this strong brand equity is currently largely one-dimensional.

His Highness Sayyid Faisal Al Said, CEO, Oman Brand Management Unit (OBMU) suggests that there is a gap between perceptions of Oman as a great place to relax and holiday, the growing dynamism within the sultanate and the substantial commercial opportunities it offers the international business community.

Therefore, the challenge is to reposition the stereo-typical profile to better reflect Oman's thriving entrepreneurial spirit, inward investment opportunities, manufacturing and ICT successes and the sultanate's steadfast commitment to life-long education and training for all.

Sayyid Faisal explains that this repositioning is being tackled by presenting an umbrella brand image for Oman, supported by a long-term strategy for raising the profile of Oman's businesses, organizations, products and services. By presenting a unified approach and showcasing success stories in tourism, business, education and ICT, OBMU will be better positioned to promote Oman nationally and internationally as an ideal place to buy from, invest in and visit.

The OBMU CEO contests that national identities consist of more than images, flags, logos and ceremonials, they are also shaped around compelling stories that make sense of where a nation has come from and where it is going. "The storytelling challenge is as relevant to the future of companies as it is to the future of countries. National identities don't emerge from nature; people create them," suggests Sayyid Faisal.

He goes on to explain: "Since the beginning of time, stories have been the way we've communicated. Today, we might have e-mail, text messaging or video conferencing to make the transmission process easier, but stories are still the way we most easily assimilate and pass on knowledge, information and experiences."

OBMU's Azzan Al Busaidi agrees: "When we connect with a story, we take on its message; we start to own it by adding to it and passing it on. For brands, in a more complex and pressured world where every country, region, company, service or product is trying to stand out from the crowd and shout louder for the attention of the customer base, a story can be like gold dust. This is why we'll be launching the Oman Brand Ambassador Program (OBA)."

The perceptions people have of Oman are critical to our ability to be recognized as a country in which to live, work, invest and visit. In this regard, it is imperative that we explore and understand perceptions of the sultanate and take immediate action to address our image and profile nationally and internationally. "Launching the OBA initiative will be instrumental in helping Oman correct misperceptions and present an accurate and informed national image – one that we can be justifiably proud of," says Sayyid Faisal.

To promote Oman's best stories, twenty sector Brand Ambassadors will be recruited. Together, they will present the dynamic and attractive face of Oman. By sharing Oman's business, tourism, education, technology and cultural experiences the Brand Ambassadors

will showcase Oman's distinctive characteristics. "It's these stories that will help build a compelling and authentic brand story for Oman. Indeed, these brand stories are the foundation on which powerful and convincing nation branding awareness campaigns are built," comments Al Busaidi.

To begin, the twenty Brand ambassadors will tour the sultanate and present at schools, colleges, businesses and government organizations - promoting the quality, excellence and distinctiveness of the sultanate. "They will be a significant resource in helping build Oman's credentials nationally and internationally. These are experienced and forward-thinking people that truly embody the spirit of Brand Oman," smiles Lamy Al Habsi, OBA Program Manager.