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AL RASHED INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING COMPANY

BUCKING THE TREND



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Over the past two years, Kuwait-based Al Rashed International Shipping Company has seen significant international growth—and it relies on good quality staff to support its expansion plans

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It was precisely 60 years ago, in 1952, that the highly respected Al Rashed family launched the Al Rashed International Shipping Company in Kuwait, creating a new business stream for the already highly successful family-owned group. Last year, the Al Rashed Group celebrated its centenary; and this year, the Al Rashed International Shipping Company will be celebrating its Diamond Jubilee.

Today, the company is a leader in the shipping market in the northern Gulf, providing global export and import services that include ocean freight forwarding, international air freight, domestic and international land transportation and custom house brokerage.

The company's rise to this enviable position began with the liberation of Kuwait during the first Gulf War, when it stepped in to a vacuum left by the devastation of the country's businesses and infrastructure, and expanded rapidly to supply the enormous amounts of materials and products required to rebuild the country.

That experience then formed the foundation of the company's first international expansion. With Iraq in chaos after the second Gulf War, the company took the brave step of opening offices in the volatile atmosphere of Baghdad in 2003, and became the first shipping company to provide a reliable quality service supplying materials to the international organisations tasked with rebuilding.

General manager Ravi Varrier, who has been with the company for over 32 years, believes that the quality of his staff is one of



The company is a leader within northern Gulf shipping

the most important factors in the company's ongoing success. A great deal of attention is paid to selecting, appointing and training good people, and to creating a working environment where everybody is treated fairly. "There is no politics or discrimination within the company," says Varrier. "We expect everybody to work as a team."

Each department has a formalised training programme. And while young people from overseas are appointed and trained, the policy is to employ local people as much as possible. "We believe this part of the world belongs to them," he continues, "it doesn't belong to the expatriates. So in Iraq, 99 per cent of our employees are Iraqis, and of these about 60 per cent are educated to read and write English very well, which is important for our clients. We are also training and employing a lot of young Kuwaiti boys and girls because they are the future of the company."

Varrier has already spotted a number of young Kuwaitis with significant potential, and takes a personal hand in motivating them, progressing their careers by giving them challenging and interesting tasks and overseeing their training. Much of the training is provided internally, but staff also have the opportunity to attend international



Moving freight

conferences in Europe and Asia to broaden their knowledge and experience.

Looking at the company's performance over the last two years, the most notable feature is the ongoing growth and expansion. Since 2010 the company has almost doubled its workforce in Iraq and Kuwait, taking the head count from 180 to 350. "We have also invested around \$5 million setting up new warehousing facilities in Iraq, and

expanding our operations into Saudi Arabia."

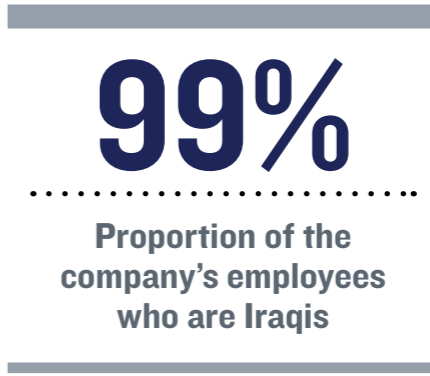
The expansion into Saudi Arabia has been carefully planned, and will continue to be rolled out over the next two years. "Saudi Arabia is potentially a very big market for us," says Varrier. "We have formed a joint venture partnership with the logistics company Kanoo, and we will be working with them in all our operations in the Kingdom."

The first step, taken this year, was to open an office in Dammam and staff it with six people. But already there are plans to increase the staff level to cater for the increasing business. "Unlike other countries

where there has been a slowdown due to the difficult global economic situation," Varrier says, "there are a number of projects going on in the Saudi oil and gas sector which are making this a very exciting market for us. Our plan is complete our expansion into Saudi

over the next two years by opening further offices in Jeddah, Jubail and Riyadh, in partnership with Kanoo."

In the near future, the company is looking to build a fourth warehouse in Iraq, to cater for the new medical facilities in the Basra area. Meanwhile there are a number of interesting projects that are



“THERE IS NO POLITICS OR DISCRIMINATION WITHIN THE COMPANY. WE EXPECT EVERYBODY TO WORK AS A TEAM”



Providing freight services



The company is focusing on the oil and gas sectors



Al Rashed provides global import and export services

“WE MAINTAIN OUR QUALITY OF SERVICE BY LISTENING TO OUR CUSTOMERS AND RESPONDING VERY QUICKLY”

awaiting decisions in Kuwait, most of them in the oil and power sectors. “Our strategy is to focus on the oil and gas sector. Meanwhile we are already involved in the new Mubarak Al Kabir port project which is currently under construction.”

In the longer term, Varrier sees some possible market opportunities in Libya and will be exploring the viability of expanding into this North African country.

Wherever it operates, the company brings with it an enviable reputation for quality and efficiency, which has its roots in the principles and values of the founding Al Rashed family.

“In Kuwait, we are a local company, and the family remains very involved in the business,” Varrier explains. And he believes this ongoing family support is an important contributor to the company’s

reputation. Meanwhile, the principles of integrity and transparency are rigorously applied to all dealings throughout the business, and there is an overriding focus on good customer service.

“We give great prominence to communication with the customer,” he continues, “and we maintain our quality of service by listening to our customers and responding very quickly if there are any issues or problems.” The processes for quality management are compliant with international standards, and in 2010 the company was awarded the ISO 9001:2008. Meanwhile, operational performance is closely monitored throughout the business and the lessons learned are then applied to improving service levels.

It is the personal touch, however, that continues to differentiate the company from its competitors—and this is an integral part of company culture. On the ground, staff are employed for their knowledge and experience of the local customs and languages, while at a higher level customers can always discuss problems and requirements directly with Varrier or with a member of the Al Rashed family.

For a business to be truly sustainable, it’s satisfying the customer that counts. **BE**

For more information about Al Rashed International Shipping Company visit: www.al-rashedgroup.com



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