

facilities management

FIVE MINUTES WITH...
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INTERVIEW



→
HE Eng. Khalifa Al Zaffin,
Executive Chairman, Dubai
Aviation City Corporation.

→
Evie Boustantzi,
Chief executive officer, Duserve
Facilities Management.

RISING FROM THE SOUTH

Under the guidance of Dubai Aviation City Corporation executive chairman **HE Eng. Khalifa Al Zaffin** and new chief executive officer **Evie Boustantzi**, Duserve is looking to stamp its authority across Dubai and the wider region primarily as a specialist in aviation FM

Words *Nikhil Pereira*

Photography *Lester Apuntar*

Duserve Facilities Management has seen a resurgence in the last few months after the firm managed to secure an influential FM leader in Evie Boustantzi as the firm's new chief executive officer.

We meet Boustantzi and Dubai Aviation City Corporation (DACC) executive chairman HE Eng. Khalifa Al Zaffin at the firm's headquarters in Dubai South. From the outset, it's evident that Al Zaffin is keen on developing and maintaining Dubai's South's facilities in a structured and future-proof manner.

"So let's discuss the rebirth of Duserve," I propose to HE Al Zaffin and Boustantzi as we make our way to the plush sofas in the Duserve HQ. Al Zaffin, stops and turns towards my

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HE KHALIFA AL ZAFFIN

direction saying: "Something has to die in order to be reborn. Duserve never ceased operations and in fact we are looking forward to an interesting new chapter for the company," he asserts.

Revenue growth for 2017 was 8%, but that figure is forecast to increase five-fold in 2018 to 45%.

"Dubai South itself is a big city, moreover we are looking at Dubai as our playground in the future. We are also looking at other areas of the world. We remain more focused on aviation than anything else, but in reality we will be present in every soft and hard FM field," Al Zaffin tells *fmME*.

Boustantzi joined as Duserve CEO towards the end of 2017 from Al Shirawi FM, where she served as the general manager of the company. Boustantzi shares her transition to the Dubai South-based outfit: "I first started interacting with Dubai South in August 2017, and we were at that point in discussion with a client based in Dubai South. We were looking at setting up a solar entity for them, and I was very impressed with the work ethic in Dubai South. I was inspired by the vision of HE Khalifa, and his empowering and open nature made it all the more alluring. Duserve came as a natural step, I felt I would get the right kind of support here."

Duserve FM, headquartered in Dubai South of which DACC is the parent entity, was founded in 2008. It's owned by Dubai Aviation City Corporation, the parent organisation of Dubai South. "Dubai South is a 140 km² freezone, we have logistics and aviation [among other sectors represented here]." Al Zaffin says: "And that's where the chunk of our operations lie as we have an airport, runways and



VIP Job
Duserve provides FM services for the VIP Terminal at Dubai South's Aviation district.

an airfield to look after. We also have a lot of tenants and we are also developers as we are building a lot of communities. We have already sold over 2,000 units and more ground work continues on the overall growth of the business community. We do all the FM works that pertain to a city, which is a lot. In fact we are trying to go beyond the conventional, and think about sustainability and energy in a very big way from the outset.”

Al Zaffin’s vision is to add to what’s normally perceived as IFM and take

on those disciplines in-house that other IFM companies usually look to outsource. “We are also looking at something as simple as landscaping, for example. In the short term, Duserve will be offering a basket of services that others cannot offer, all the way from engineering, energy audits and conservation to landscaping and maintenance. We are looking at a big spectrum.

“The way we look at it is; we need to landscape the vast expanse of Dubai

South anyway. Which means we need to build huge nurseries and also house other operators who are in the business of nurseries. They will help us do our business and at the same time carry out their own in and around Dubai South. So, for me, landscaping is a low hanging fruit that I can add to our services. It’s the same if you take other disciplines as well. Electromechanical, for instance, we carry out that operation for the entire Dubai South area,” he informs.

Dubai South is widely seen as the emirate’s future economic platform over the next decade. The Government of Dubai will invest \$70bn in the freezone, while it has been projected to house one million residents and generate 500,000 jobs. By 2025, Dubai South is expected to generate 35% of the emirate’s GDP.

Amidst all the activity and development, Al Zaffin has strictly

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EVIE BOUSTANTZI, CEO, DUSERVE

ALIGNING THE FM SECTOR'S PERFORMANCE WITH HH SHEIKH MOHAMMED'S VISION

"If you look at the general policy of Dubai Government — which is driven His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum — it is based on efficiency, quality and sustainability. I'm not aware of him saying something specific about this [FM] industry, but what applies to other industries definitely applies to our industry as well. That is for a player to come and disrupt the model with a much better model that will help the country, its people, and the business with much better service and cost of operation," says HE Khalifa Al Zaffin.



instructed Boustantzi that business from within the freezone should not constitute more than 30% of its total share. Boustantzi says: "We are in the process of building crucial expertise through the different sectors we operate in — aviation, logistics, residential, commercial and supply chain.

"On top of that we are changing a bit the culture of the way we operate. We are building a framework in which people have a different mind-set. We are working on the team's soft skills, and how they take initiative. Our aim is to develop into a company that offers memorable service — good or excellent service doesn't cut it anymore.

"Ultimately, we want our clients to be loyal for the right reasons. In many cases, even if you are the cheapest and

offer the best technical services [it's not good enough] unless your customer feels you are looking after them in terms of identifying their needs before they actually arise. That's when you become partners," she adds.

Al Zaffin adds: "We have a lot of clients here [within Dubai South] and we don't have exclusivity [for their FM business via Duserve]. That is not fair to the business, and to other businesses around, and ultimately it's not fair for our clients. We want to be chosen by our clients on merit.

Becoming specialists in aviation FM


Al Zaffin says the focus for Duserve is to excel in providing facilities management in the aviation sector. After all, Dubai South is a major

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HE KHALIFA AL ZAFFIN



Strength in numbers
Duserve currently employs 1988 employees, a large number of them are based in Dubai South itself.



Forecasting big

Duserve experienced revenue growth of 8% in 2017, and Boustanzhi hopes to increase that number to 45% in 2018.

logistics hub which has the Dubai World Central airport located within it.

“Aviation is our core area of focus, and airports will be our major driver,” Al Zaffin says, adding: “And that comes from my background, having maintained airports for a long time before I became the executive chairman of Dubai South. I managed the projects side of airports — the engineering and strategy rather than the building maintenance.

“But I started my career in maintenance, which means I understand the ins and outs of airports — from strategy to design, to execution and eventually maintenance. It’s a large field to be in, and our strategy is to work very closely with Dubai International Airports [which includes both Dubai International and Dubai World Central and other surrounding areas] to win their confidence and do

all the FM there, eventually,” he says.

Currently Duserve continues to be the FM service provider of choice for the VIP Terminal at Dubai South’s Aviation District which Boustanzhi describes as offering a “seven-star level of service”.


Al Zaffin maintains Duserve’s stance is to not to steal business away from the existing FM operators working in Dubai’s airports. “We are looking at cooperating [with existing FM companies]. I don’t like the idea of competing and taking other people’s business. I think if we work together, the overall picture is big enough for all of us. So, it’s not a threat and everyone plays on level field.

“We are not heavy handed in the way we operate... If our offering is not better financially or from a technical point of view nobody will choose us anyway. We don’t believe ‘the airport is ours and we are winning all its work’. If we

STAFFING IN THE SOUTH

Duserve employs in excess of 1,988 employees. On the matter of employee welfare HE Khalifa Al Zaffin says: “All our staff reside on site in Dubai South and staff welfare is very important to us from the highest employee to all blue collar workers. We want our staff to stay with us for a long time and for all the right reasons.

“We will be investing in state-of-the-art workshops from building to joinery, and MEP to sustainability things. Even when it comes to staff or labour accommodation, we are building differently. We are disrupting the model by building three-star to four-star style units for accommodation,” he says.



Getting technical

Al Zaffin says Duserve will only partner with those companies that are able to add value to its existing portfolio of services.

don't win work fair and square it means we are not efficient enough. We would like to take people by the hand and help each other along the way," he reveals.


In terms of contracts and clients Duserve continues to work with Nakheel to deliver FM services for the Ibn Batuta Mall, soft services for Dragon Mart 1 and Dragon Mart 2, concierge services for the Golden Mile on Palm Jumeirah, Emirates Financial Towers, and security services for the entire portfolio of Aramex's facilities, Boustantzi shares.

She also says that the company has been growing steadily over the last 18 months, with a positive outlook for 2018. Contract duration is a matter that is resolving itself, Boustantzi says, as more clients are warming up to the idea of longer contracts. "The entire industry is looking forward to that mind-set [of three year to five-year contracts]," she states.

Dubai South is a smart city and technology is a key enabler, which means a new level of technological integration will be on the horizon. She adds: "Duserve has the latest CAFM applications whereby we control all the properties through a central repository, remotely and essentially going for predictive maintenance rather than reactive or preventative maintenance. We have also begun a dedicated FM design consulting arm to address issues from the outset."

Al Zaffin adds: "We are not interested in just providing bodies to do a job, and in turn our clients engage with us. We want to suggest changing certain installations that might result in power saving, for instance, and have less people doing the work. The ideal scenario is to have all our software and CAFM integrated with theirs [the client's], taking complete control of their centre of command, looking at it completely from their side."

He also says that technological implementations are pivotal for an FM company to generate true value for its clients. "Duserve FM has taken giant strides in this direction," Al Zaffin concludes. ■



Training and development

Duserve staff are BICSc certified and the firm will soon receive its ESCO certification.