

Qortuba Furniture, At Home Furniture, ALFEMO

Abd Al-Mohsen Mohammad Al-Ajmi

A Success Story of Inherited Roots

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| Name | Abd Al-Mohsn Mohammad Al-Ajmi |
| Major | A University degree in technological sciences Computer sciences, MIS, and an MBA in Islamic funding Currently, he is preparing for a Ph.D. In economy. |
| Marital state: | Married |
| Brands: | Qortuba Furniture, At Home Furniture, Baitak, and ALFEMO as Franchise |
| Administrative Position | CEO in the previously mentioned three brands |

Abd Al-Mohsen Al-Ajmi 's journey, as an initiator, was a bit different from most initiators because he built his chain of business on an existing -though simple- project specialized in carpet trading, founded by his father that is called Qortuba Furniture. Before Abd Al-Mohsen Al-Ajmi commences managing that association, he worked on developing and expanding his activities through providing furniture in it. Soon, his rapidly developed; thus, he started his own brand which is called "At Home," and after he established it by few years, he expanded it towards Egypt. Then, he received the franchise right of the Turkish industry brand ALFEMO, and currently he is preparing for a new expansive step towards Saudi Arabia. All of these developments which took place in more than a decade reflected steady and ambitious vision of the initiator Abd Al-Mohsen Al-Ajmi . If you asked him about his futuristic ambitions, now that his projects have become classified in the medium-large category, he would answer, "Going back to the roots"; he curtails his answer to that he is willing to establish new small and medium projects which have the spirit to motivate themselves from inside.

Abd Al-Mohsen Al-Ajmi talks about the details of his story in the initiators world, saying that Qortuba Furniture, as a store specialized in carpet trade, was established in 1966 by his father with a partner over an area of 200 square meter. The activity of the company continued unchanged till 2002 when Al-Ajmi began to take care of company's management and decided to develop and expand his activities. Hence, he took the first step by commencing importation of furniture that is directed at the middle class, in addition to the importation of office furniture, equipment, and related décors. At that time, the furniture sector was generally experiencing rapid growth, and it recorded notable investment economic viability. Then, Abd Al-Mohsen Al-Ajmi began to work to develop his business through opening importing lines from new markets, especially from China, and he succeeded quickly in reaping the fruits of his expansions. This development was achieved in the light of a booming commercial movement at the time, which was supported by the expansion of trade, especially with Iraq during the rebuild stage that it was going through after 2003. Therefore, Qortuba Furniture flourished from a mere family business to company that is based on firm economic and financial biases.

At Home and the Geographical Expansion Experience

Since then, Al-Ajmi concentrated especially on wise reinvestment of the outcomes of his efforts and the profits resulting from it, emphasizing the necessity of benefitting from the boom state that the sector was going through. After lengthy study of the market, he confirmed that there is a need for a more advanced level of services; therefore, came the idea of launching the new brand At Home to be one of the leading integrated stores in Kuwait, specialized in all that is related to the furniture world for all different uses which spreads over an area of 5500 square meter. Naturally, this step meant emotionally more to Al-Ajmi, considering it to be the first brand he administrates its development contrary to Qortuba Furniture, which was an established foundation, even if it had much less commercial activities before he supervises it. Concerning this Al-Ajmi states, "The first step in founding a new establishment will hold both financial and emotional risks at the same time for the initiator." He adds, "We were forced to achieve success in order to prove to everyone the capabilities of the new management that started to administrate the company." Indeed, the new company succeeded, as it began to make profits, starting from the first year of operation. However, he did not hide the truth that At Home did not start from nothing, but it relied on the existing biases that Qortuba Furniture already had; whether it was storage, management or finance. As for the main challenges, they manifested in establishing a new kind of companies that the local market had not known before.

5 years have barely passed since the establishing phase when Al-Ajmi began to study the available methods in order to achieve a new advance in At Home. He states: At that time, we had much funding; it was ineffective to reinvest them in the Kuwaiti market again, considering the changes that occurred in the furniture trade local market which rendered it jammed. Thus, the search began for new markets that could constitute new windows, enhancing our relationship with the original exporters, especially that the main foreign companies are spread around the Arabian Gulf including the Kuwait in huge numbers of branches and capabilities were attempting to attract them. This has created much more competition for At Home Association because we had to face the largest international brands. Al-Ajmi adds: Consequently, we decided to enter the Egyptian market, basing our judgment on many biases, including: The size of the market; the smooth commercial relationships between Kuwait and Egypt which could ease the procedures; and finally, the lack of the advanced services' concept in the Egyptian market. At Home, accordingly, entered the Egyptian market since 2008, and soon the number of its branches rose to reach 5 branches, spread in different areas. As Al-Ajmi was extremely careful to follow a wise expansion policy, based on correct economic biases, he decided to reduce the size of his existence in Egypt as a result of the political developments that was occurring in there since 2011. The number of the branches was, consequently, limited to 2 branches, but that did not mean refraining from pumping more investments there.

ALFEMO in Depth

At Home's success did not limit Al-Ajmi's ambitions; he, therefore, decided this time to add a deeper experience and seek to satisfy the mainstream clients who are seeking new innovations and novel designs in the world of furniture. He also aims to achieve a higher integration between the various furniture activities of the group. The group has received the international commercial franchise ALFEMO. It is a Turkish association, ranked among the top five largest companies in its country, and at the same time, it owns about 150 branches around the globe. Hence, it was a step that aimed to transfer technical knowledge in addition to marketing expertise and developing the brand from an association of such size to a team workgroup. The same time, he indicated that the importance of having a franchise lies in deepening the vision to the market and the sector, especially that such large associations regularly prepare continuing studies about markets' expectations.

Towards Saudi Arabia

Al-Ajmi is currently preparing to expand his business towards Saudi Arabia, which is considered to be one of the largest markets on the region level. The company's decision to enter this new field is based on the long expertise it has gained in the local market, whether it is on the product or on the administrative level. The company's vision is characterized by starting with one branch until it has the chance to comprehend the market deeper; nonetheless, it is expected that the number of branches would raise up to 5 during the next 5 years, spread across the main cities.

The Administrative Structure

Amidst all of these significant developments, Al-Ajmi has developed new approaches in order to group all of these various associations under one umbrella. Thus, it can be said that Qortuba Furniture Co. has transferred into what resembles a holding company, which incorporates in it the 3 brands: ALFEMO, Baytak, and At Home. It is worthy of note that Al-Ajmi, as CEO of these brands, is always present along with his workgroup in offices that are completely separated of the various exhibition; these exhibitions are supervised and administrated by a separate team, which in turn, is administrated by the company's management.