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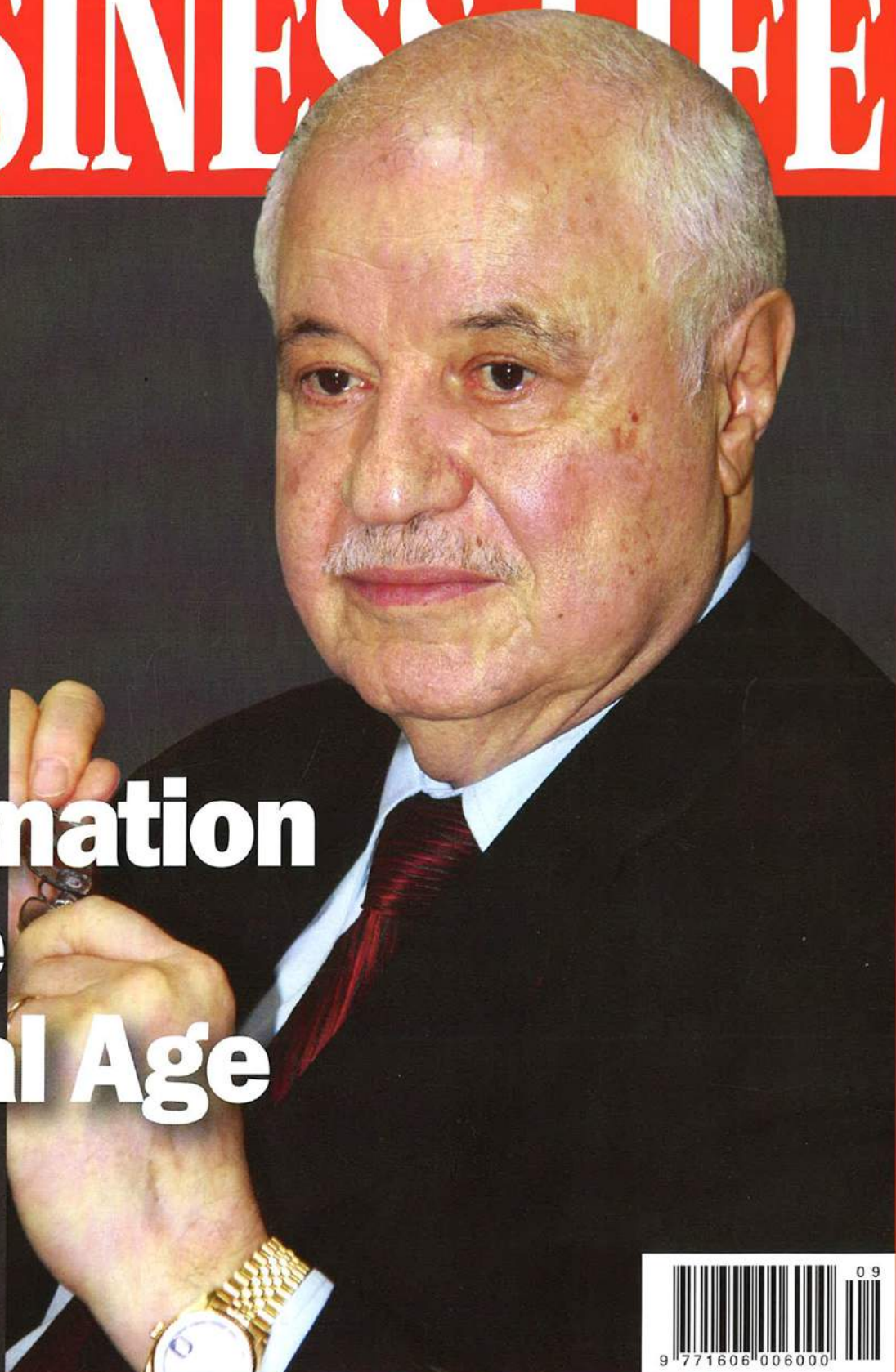
Aspetar wins best  
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# BUSINESS LIFE

September 2018

## Information in the Digital Age

Technology and the  
internet start to  
reshape the future in  
the Middle East



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Lebanon.....LBP5,000  
Saudi Arabia.....SR12  
Kuwait.....KD1

U.A.E.....Dh12  
Bahrain.....BD1  
Qatar.....QR12

Jordan.....JD2  
Oman.....OR1  
Cyprus.....CE1

Egypt.....EP5  
Europe.....Euro4  
U.S. & Canada.....\$4

Algeria.....DZD200  
Libya.....LD4  
Morocco.....MAD33

Tunisia.....TND4  
Yemen.....YR10  
Syria.....SYP150



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# Information in the Digital Age

Technology and the internet start to reshape the future in the Middle East

**T**he renowned Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization (TAG-Org) was founded in the seventies by a famed business tycoon who is known regionally and globally. In an exclusive interview with BUSINESS LIFE magazine, HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh focuses on intellectual property protection and patents which are needed for innovations and inventions and explains how organizations can make the most of the digital opportunity and avoid the many potential pitfalls that come with the adoption of new technologies. HE Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh brings together his understanding of how everything is going to change as a result of artificial intelligence and robotics, the new inventions and the development of the internet into the internet of things (IoT). His newly established Talal Abu-Ghazaleh University College-Jordan for Innovation has already kicked off the registration formalities in order to support Arab innovators and promote the concept and relevance of intellectual property rights in Arab countries.

Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh believes that the new generation has to be ICT based in order to reach its goals. Moreover, he sees a need for change in the Arab education system. Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh says that accessing these technologies will enable us to become better human beings and predicts that the new generation will look back and consider our age to be archaic.

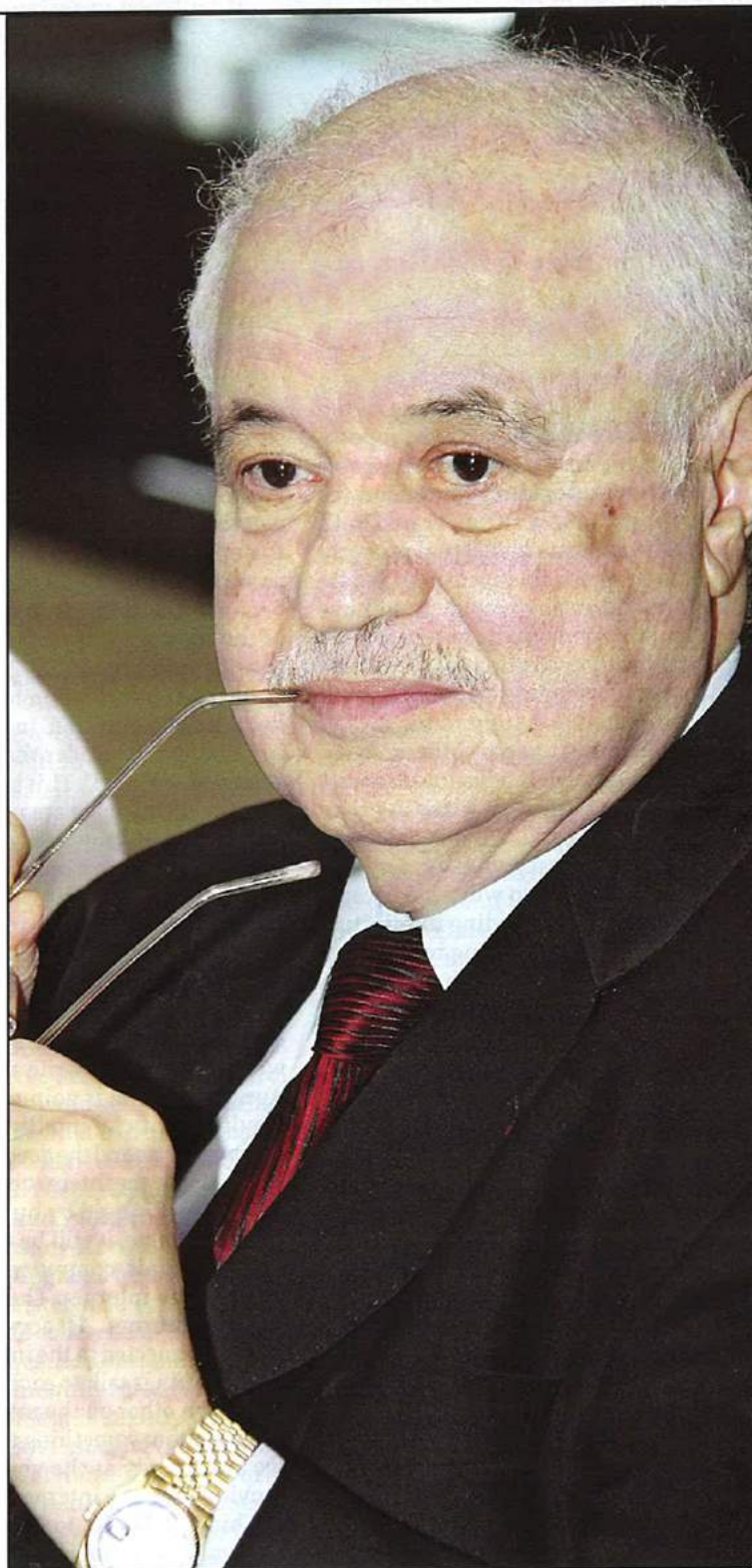
In 1972, Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Company (TAGCO) and Abu-Ghazaleh Intellectual Property (AGIP) were set up, specializing in the fields of accounting and IP respectively. Since then, Abu-Ghazaleh has founded a total of 140 professional service firms specialized in various fields such as management, consulting, legal services and IT.

Over the years, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh has managed to establish close partnerships with global organizations.

Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh is also a Senator in the Jordanian Upper House. He was awarded over 40 decorations and official awards (Jordan, France, Tunisia, China, Bahrain, Lebanon, etc.). Dr. Abu Ghazaleh Chaired 14 UN taskforces and initiatives. He is also Vice-Chair (with Ban Ki-Moon) of UN Global Compact, Vice-Chair, UN ICT Taskforce, Chair, UN Global Alliance for ICT & Development, Chair, UN TF on Harmonizing of Professional Qualifications, Chair, UN Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Accounting and Reporting Standards, Chair, Network 11 (Digital Technologies for Sustainable Urbanization Network)-UNSDG, Chair of over 50 companies worldwide, Honorary Chair of over 20 institutions worldwide as well as Chair of over 30 corporate social responsibility.

He holds four Honorary Doctorate degrees (USA, Jordan (2), Palestine) and a Decoration of Independence - Jordan (1967) and a Decoration of Independence of the First Order - Jordan (2016).

Saying the above, it is important to know that The Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization (TAG-Org), is an international holding company that operates out of more than 100 offices worldwide in the Arab region, Africa, Europe, Asia and North America.



**Interview:** HE Talal Abu-Ghazaleh: Chairman and founder of the international Jordan-based organization, the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization (TAG-Org)



**BL:** How did you achieve this remarkable progress in your businesses around the world and how did you benefit humanity? How did your success happen?

**DR. TALAL ABU-GHAZALEH:** I am just an ordinary professional who dedicated his life to promoting professional services for the purpose of capacity building in the hope that this will contribute to economic development. Since the company was established in 1972, our mission was and still is to provide the highest quality professional services for the purpose of supporting the process of development in the region and throughout the world. When you have a sense of a mission, it is different from when you have targets or ambitions. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization is an organization with a mission to act as an important catalyst and as an important ingredient in the process of development worldwide. Since 1972, the group focused on intellectual property protection because intellectual property is the most important aid needed for innovation and invention. Franklin D. Roosevelt said that intellectual property is fuel to progress, no inventions and no development in the world could have been achieved without the system of intellectual property protection. If I spend time and money developing an idea, I want it to be protected or patented for myself and not infringed upon by others. Today, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Intellectual Property (AGIP) is the largest and leading firm throughout the world. We are not just the largest group in the region, we passed that stage twenty years ago when we became global leaders for providing intellectual property services including registration and protection of intellectual property. The other concept was accounting and we realized that accounting and accountability are basic to the development process and we are now on the top twenty accounting firms in the world in a group called the Group of G20 in accounting.

I was very lucky to learn about technology and it was in a little village outside London called High Wycombe and it was a center for IBM where IBM was launching its new technology called "word processor". The word processor was the first step towards today's information and telecommunication technologies. Since 1965, I have been a keen follower of the development in the field of intellectual property and that is why when Kofi Annan wanted to establish the UN task forces on intellectual property and on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and he called a group of 52 leaders, governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector. I was

lucky enough to be one of this group and I was even lucky when I was elected to be its Co-Chair. When I Co-Chaired the UN ICT task force, the mission was to work and develop strategies for the world in the field of ICT.

My interest in serving my business clients made me also interested in The World Trade Organization (WTO) which is an intergovernmental organization that regulates international trade. WTO was one of the three international organizations that were established. The WTO officially commenced on 1 January 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement, signed by 124 nations on 15 April 1994, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which commenced in 1948 after the world war. I was asked to serve on a panel of experts at the World Trade Organization in Geneva and the responsibility was to produce recommendations for shaping the future of world trade. So I submitted a report recommending that we need a new round of negotiations to address the many emerging issues, particularly in the field of technology because the invention and operation of the internet was not taking into any consideration the WTO. The world now is all about information technology and knowledge revolution. In fact, I am writing a book now under the title "A Brave Knowledge World". This book highlights the world which we are in – an evolving revolution of knowledge and technology. The revolution of knowledge which will impact our bodies; our brains; our technologies; our gadgets; our lives; our buildings; our roads because everything is going to be different. In fifty years' time, our grandchildren will write about this era we are in today in a language similar to what we currently write about the Stone Age. Everything is going to change as a result of artificial intelligent, including the inventions and the development of the internet into the internet of things. Today, the internet is used by human beings. In few years' time, it will be used by things. In other words, computers on their own will use the internet. The weapons will use the internet. All accessories in life will be connected to the internet. Not just human beings talk to each other or work with each other on the internet. I am not talking about something to be perceived, we are already at the verge of using or moving from the internet to the Internet of Things (IOT). So, to summarize, I have always been fascinated by the changes in the world that impact our life and I was very lucky to be able to always learn. I am two things: I am a knowledge worker:

Everything I do is knowledge based and I am a student. Today, at 80 years old, I study like a student. I do not read. People in my age read, see films. I do not do that. So when somebody else is reading or enjoying whatever it is, I do the same but I do it with the eye of a student, trying to learn from what I see, from what I read and to be able to develop my own operation. We are now operating in 110 offices which makes us the largest group in the world in many fields because we have been perusing cutting-edge technologies in our business. As a simple example, our client in any country in the world does not have to send us an email or a message or a telephone call or fax. He has access to his accounting file with us and he can access his file and read whatever information he wants as to where we are working on his job and to leave instructions while we are sleeping or to inquire and the computer would answer him. Therefore, we are operating globally is because of the enabling power of ICT which unfortunately many companies do not understand and that is why I am launching my book in November with the objective of providing a gift, and it is not something that I am selling or making money from. I would like to offer it to everybody in the world to present my perception about the future of the world particularly young children. I spent most of the time talking to students and to the youth in order to make them aware that whatever they are studying; whatever they want to do, whatever business they are going to run, if they want to succeed, they have to be ICT based.

We cannot compete in this world; we cannot have any success if our operations are not ICT based. The largest companies in the world are ICT-based. There are four companies competing to reach one trillion dollars in 2020. It is an immense figure. This includes Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft. They are all competing. They are all in the hundreds of billions. It is announced that probably, Apple already reached a market cap of 1 trillion in August. No company in any business can dream of reaching that figure. This is the one that is the wealth of the future and that is why my book targets what I call "the Fourth Revolution". We are now in the fourth industrial revolution i.e. the revolution of knowledge. If you want to become wealthy, the source of wealth in the future comes only from creating a knowledge product and that is why I also ask the WTO to trade a new product called "knowledge product" because WTO was born before the emergence of the internet. They did not realize that



the internet is going to create something called knowledge products like Google. Google is a knowledge product. Google is simply a computer program and an invention in knowledge. If I can influence one person in every country in the Arab world to believe what I am saying, this part of the Arab world would become again the richest part of the world. All I need is Steve Jobs in one country, Mark Zuckerberg in another country, Bill Gates in a third country. I only want one person of this caliber in every country. I am not very ambitious. I do not want everybody to become a knowledge creator. I want one person and that person can create something equal to these great knowledge workers. This is how much knowledge creation is important. I am spending most of my time trying to create this awareness in the Arab world that the future is different. We need to change our education system, our government system, our business and economic system. We need to change everything we do in "our social life". I am scared to think that one day artificial intelligence will make a human being superior to another human being, not in knowledge, not in wealth, not in importance but in physical power as a result of artificial intelligence, the ability of our memory can be enhanced such that our brains can contain and manage as much information as any computer. One day, man's brains will be equivalent to the computers in its capacity of data mining, data storing and analyzing. Again, artificial intelligence can preempt diseases not to treat them but to stop them from happening. Through artificial intelligence, we can analyze the genes of a child and know if he is going to acquire a disease and we can stop it by fixing the genes.

So, these countries and those people who have access to these technologies will become better human beings and those who cannot will be inferior human beings and this is disastrous. That is why we need to develop centers for excellence, centers for research and this is what we are doing. In October 2018, we will be opening the first university of its kind in the world and it is called "Talal Abu-Ghazaleh College of Innovation" in Amman, Jordan. No student can graduate unless he invents something. And if you do not invent, you do not graduate. So, this is only a place where those young men who want to be inventors are enrolled and teachers do not teach there, they just guide students, they are tech advisors telling them how to invent; how



**Royal recognition and valuable trust:** Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh founder of Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization was appointed a member of the Upper House according to a Royal Decree by His Majesty King Abdullah II

to look for information, how to develop the information, how to make something new out of the information. This is a contribution; this is not for profit project.

**BL: What is hindering the emergence of Arab inventors?**

**DR. TALAL ABU-GHAZALEH:** This is because we have not yet started the process of knowledge transformation in this part of the world. Unfortunately, for example, most of our countries do not believe in e-learning. Most of our countries insist that a student should go to black boards and write with a chalk. Finland, for example, and other countries of the world do not require any school to teach language because when you use a gadget, you are using language. Unfortunately, our education system is very much behind. Our ministries of education still believe that they have control over universities and schools and they should tell them what to do and what to teach. I spoke on May 16 at Harvard University and I will be speaking at Colombia in September and I told them they are lucky because they have the chance to develop their programs because they do not have a minister who controls their system. Today, all colleges and universities are subject to restrictions and controls by the government in the Arab world.

So, the problem is mainly with the governmental system, governments are not able to understand that the world has changed. Why do Arab governments want to control everything that has to do with education but not with any other part of our life?

I received a letter from a certain control agency and a ministry of education

saying that we are teaching online and this is not accredited in our country and it is not allowed and we have to stop teaching online. Teaching online means that I am in a sphere which is outside their control. Online is a virtual world where there is no authority; no boundaries; no governments. They cannot dictate to me what I do on the internet. Schools and universities like MIT are teaching all over the world online and nobody can stop them. Sometimes, the governmental authorities do not understand that the virtual world and the realm of the internet is outside governmental control and jurisdiction. The president of MIT University called it the "Tsunami" of online education. Victor Hugo said "You can face an army, but you cannot face an idea whose time has come."

**BL: Dr. Talal, don't you think that the role of human beings is going to be marginalized by the emergence and implications of technology and the internet?**

**DR. TALAL ABU-GHAZALEH:** On the contrary, it will enhance our relations. Once, I was addressing a conference and I spoke of the future, for example, going back to education that there will be no universities or campuses. There is no campus in the knowledge world, it is all online and on a virtual space. I was with Bill Gates in a panels and we were asked this question you asked, and his answer was "Technology has nothing to do with social and human relations, it does not disrupt. Were we living better as human being in the Stone Age before any technology was there and were we better human beings? So, there is no relationship between the person to person and the person to the machine."