



# International Partners Network

Creating  
cross-border  
collaboration  
channels



## Post-Event Report

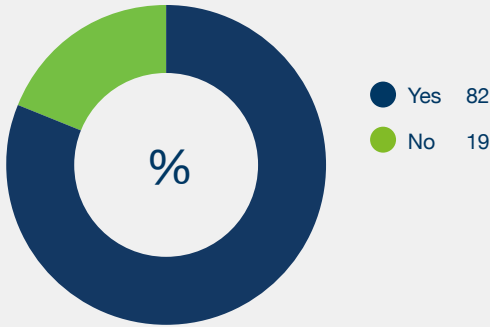
8 March 2023

**DUBAI CHAMBER**  
INTERNATIONAL

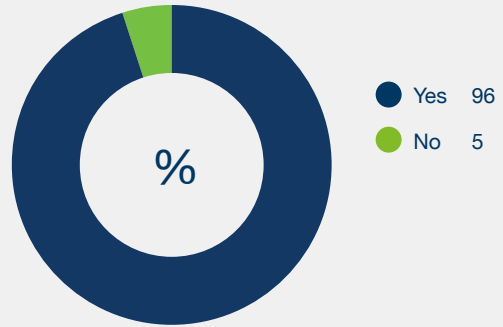
# Insights and Learnings

Prior to the inaugural International Partners Network (IPN), Dubai International Chamber connected with you, our members, to obtain insights and feedback surrounding your most pressing challenges and concerns. The aim of this new survey is for Dubai International Chamber to find out how it can further develop opportunities for its respective business communities together. Here's what you had to say.

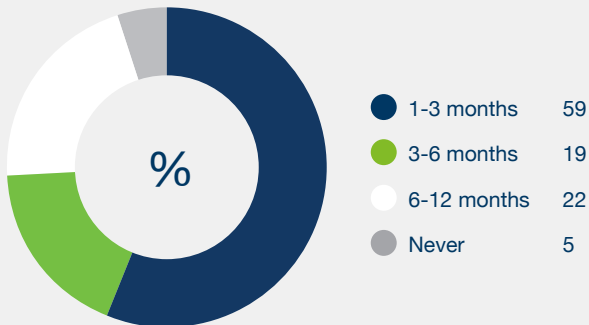
Are you aware of the different channels where Dubai Chambers can support you?



Do you feel that your Chamber affiliation brings value to your business?



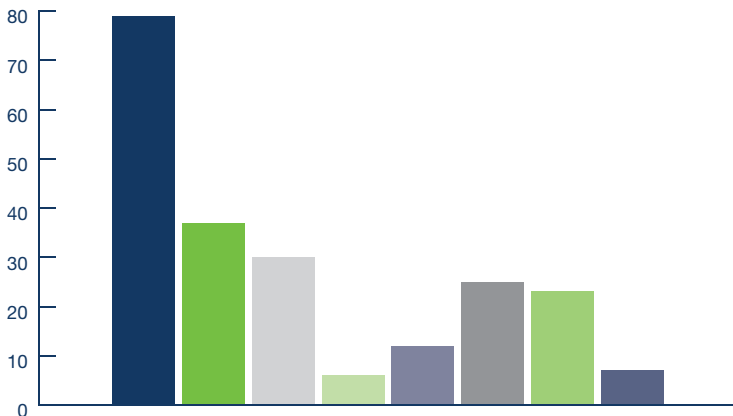
How frequently do you interact with Dubai Chambers?



96%

feel that their Chamber affiliation brings value to their business

Which Chamber services do you most frequently use?  
You can choose more than one answer.



- Events 79
- B2B 37
- Economic Research 30
- Legal Services 6
- Membership & Documentation 12
- Commercial Directory 25
- Dubai Chambers Global Offices 23
- None of the Above 7

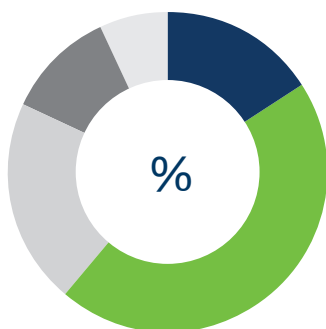
**How can Dubai Chambers provide better services to further enhance the business ecosystem and fulfil your business requirements?**

“Regular engagements with stakeholders, and an ‘express desk’ for key international partners.”

“We would love to see more research papers published that are aimed at traders of other countries.”

“More interactive B2B in-person events, and networking opportunities.”

**In your line of work, which of the following is the most challenging business need when assisting companies?**



Access to Information/Facts & Figures	16
B2B & Networking	46
Government Support	21
Business Set-Up	11
Other	7

**Which Dubai government entities do you work with the most?**

“Dubai Chambers, the Department of Economy and Tourism in Dubai, and Dubai Municipality.”

“The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Economy.”

“Dubai Chambers, Dubai Customs, and all freezones across the emirate.”

**What are some of the frequently asked questions that you receive from businesses that are interested in relocating/expanding to Dubai?**

“Costs related to opening a business, ease of doing business, bank accounts, residence visas, cost of living...”

“Market access opportunities and requirements to export to Dubai.”

“Emerging sectors (opportunity for investment), comparative costs of freezones, incentives for business setup in Dubai, factor costs, Golden Visa...etc.”



# Welcome: Let's Collaborate!

## Featuring



**HAZEL JACKSON**  
CEO, Biz Group  
Event Host &  
Moderator

**W**ednesday 8 March 2023 saw the inaugural International Partners Network (IPN) event take place at the Dubai Chambers headquarters. Aiming to bridge the gap between Dubai Chambers and the international business community, the IPN gathered business leaders to discuss how both entities can work together to fully support trade and investment to their respective regions and markets.

Hazel Jackson, IPN's host and moderator, gave guests an introduction to the day's schedule and how the concept of the gathering was born. Emanating from a diplomatic dinner, in which collaboration was encouraged alongside networking, senior leadership at Dubai Chambers felt that such collaboration should be at all levels including business councils, in order to better support UAE businesses to grow.

"This should be something we work hand in hand together", said Jackson, who herself has been in the UAE business community for 30 years. "This [event] should be something that continues; that these conversations continue."

She explained that more than simply helping businesses come to the region, Dubai Chambers has a role to help them thrive.

"How do we help businesses come to the region and not just come to the region or come to Dubai, but thrive in Dubai because I think it isn't just about getting more people here ... it's about helping success. And that's the relationship that we want to pull together today," she added.

Guests were invited to network and get to know each other, as well as encouraged to ask questions of the speakers to make the most of the event.



# Icebreaker: Would you rather?

**D**uring the first session of the day, attendees cited the ability to network and foster strong partnerships with industry players as a key requisite of the newly launched International Partners Network (IPN) initiative by Dubai Chambers. IPN has been launched by the Chambers' Dubai International Chamber to engage and connect trade promotion agencies, commercial attaches, and local business councils through events and networking exercises for greater strategic outcomes.

At the start of the session, Hazel Jackson posed three questions to the approximate 100 industry players in attendance as part of the icebreaker exercise:

- Name three things you like to do outside work
- Name three words others would use to describe you
- Name three things you want to achieve out of today

Delegates seated at the tables were given 90 seconds to frame their answers before discussing their responses in detail with their colleagues seated next to them.

The 10-minute icebreaker exercise was an informal way for delegates to share what was expected out of the day's event, leading up to answering the third and most important question of the agenda.

While furthering networking opportunities remained the paramount ask by those in attendance, Suresh Kumar, Chairman of the Indian Business and Professional Council added "learning and sharing" through greater connectivity was also an important goal of the IPN.

Other ideas suggested by fellow members included restructuring support and helping Dubai Chambers go global, while bringing more business opportunities to these shores.

Jackson further added that with this IPN initiative, there would be a more streamlined approach in getting updates from Dubai Chambers, along with

**"This [event] should be something that continues; that these conversations continue."**

facilitating meetings with people who members can work with in future, while also "figuring how we do better together, how we support each other."

The host further added that it was vital to foster more dialogue between Dubai Chambers and its partners following the fairly recent changes at the organisation.

In March 2021, as per a directive by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, Dubai Chamber – now known as Dubai

Chambers – was restructured, leading to the formation of three chambers for the emirate.

They are: the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, Dubai International Chamber, and Dubai Chamber of Digital Economy.

Following the news, in October 2022, Dubai Chambers also announced the appointment of His Excellency Mohammad Ali bin Rashed Lootah as its new President and CEO, in line with the emirate's vision to advance Dubai's global economic status.

As a part of its strategy to promote cross-border dialogue and to facilitate further collaboration and synergy with key stakeholders, Dubai International Chamber launched this IPN, a new platform for members to exchange ideas, create cooperation opportunities, and work collectively towards greater economic gain.



## Featuring



**MOHAMMAD LOOTAH**  
President & CEO,  
Dubai Chambers

# Strategy in Focus

**T**he President and CEO of Dubai Chambers kicked off his session by speaking of the Chambers' diversification since the pandemic. His Excellency Mohammad Lootah told the audience of the more international focus the Chambers is taking, in addition to reforms it is making to bring together the emirate's business community with the government, in order to have greater dialogue on legislation and policy development.

Post-COVID, Dubai Chambers – and Dubai itself – went through a lot of restructuring, he said. For the Chambers, for example, a big move was to introduce business advocacy to include all business councils and business groups in every step of legislation reform in the city, either during the drafting of laws or inputting suggestions. More business groups have been created to ensure the Chambers is better connected with every sector.

The audience learnt of Dubai Chambers' efforts to reform and reengineer the legislation process. Previously, the Chambers had a committee that overlooked draft laws; however, now it includes specific business sectors involved from day one. Proposed new legislation will be taken to businesses across the sector, in order to hear feedback and maximise legislation and policy-making.

"On average, the adoption of comments from the legislative department for the government was 59%," HE Lootah said, in some cases up to 90%. "The government listens to the comments from the private sector. We always need to ensure



that we have seamless and smooth communication."

Globally, the Dubai International Chamber has been a key factor in the growth of the Dubai Chambers activities.

"Dubai has always been known as a global trading hub so we'd like to be one of the top three in the world," HE Lootah continued, adding that it is critical to have concentrated strategies. "We were mandated to take the lead on the Dubai Global Initiative, which is an initiative that enables Dubai businesses to get access to 50 global offices under the management of Dubai Chambers.

"The offices will function as the trade promotion offices to help businesses increase the trade into different countries," he stated, explaining that this is a two-way process. Not only will Dubai businesses access new markets, but this can also attract investment and new businesses to Dubai, whether that is multinationals or SMEs.

A new focus for 2023 is the opening of at least 12 offices in territories including Asia. In February, the Dubai International Chamber opened an office in Hong Kong, its third Asian office in the plan to eventually have five in the region. Four offices are also opening in Europe, the first offices in that territory for the Chambers.

HE Lootah added that Dubai Chambers is "utilising the international office as a

vehicle for Dubai-based businesses... Part of supporting our members is to ensure that they have the scalability when it comes to their business growth."

He also told the audience that digital focus is "the third chamber", a specialised chamber supporting the growth in the digital economy and giving access to the emerging sector for businesses in Dubai within a 10-year plan.

**"Dubai has always been known as a global trading hub so we'd like to be one of the top three in the world."**

"The Digital Chambers has specific targets; not only around helping businesses to move digital, [but] even to attract more tech talents to the city so we can give access to companies here to the best talent in the digital sphere globally."

New reforms in the Chambers now require C-suite level members from business groups to ensure that if Dubai Chambers needs to bring members to meet authorities, these high-level executives can communicate on a strategic level, not only an operational level.



## Featuring



**HASSAN AL HASHEMI**  
Vice President – International Relations



**OMAR KHAN**  
Executive Director – Dubai Global



**TAMI AL HERAIS**  
Executive Director – Attraction

# Meet Dubai International Chamber: Your Global Partner

**T**he roadmap into the future has placed Dubai Chambers on a clear path set forth by the leadership with a goal to double the size of the economy from AED 1.4 trillion to AED 3 trillion by 2030, while also aligning with the Dubai Global initiative launched by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council, to establish 50 representative offices for Dubai in five continents.

Dubai Global, led by Dubai International Chamber, aims to attract foreign MNCs, SMEs, investors, and international talent to the emirate by showcasing the emirate's competitive advantages and engaging with overseas stakeholders.

Hassan Al Hashemi, Vice President, International Relations at Dubai Chambers, started off by crediting Dubai Chambers for the important relationships it has fostered over the years.

"Businesses that go overseas, they go with a purpose. It is an opportunity for them to tell others what we have and what we can achieve. All of them are fueling the dynamic of what Dubai stands for," he said.

Omar Khan, Executive Director of Dubai Global, added that connections were everything in this growth cycle.

"What's important to remember is that Dubai Chambers and similar entities don't

deal in manufacturing products. They deal in connections and contacts and that's our bread and butter," he said, citing examples of UAE-based companies such as Emirates, Emirates SkyCargo and DP World. "Take DP World and its trade connections as a perfect example. Eleven per cent of the world's trade is going through Dubai Ports. Dubai is hyper connected and we want to take it to the next level.

**"Dubai Chambers provides the unique opportunity to cooperate and create partnerships to enable mutual economic growth."**

"With Dubai Chambers expanding to 50 offices around the globe is that next step. All of these offices will be licensed under the Dubai brand. They will live and breathe Dubai standards and leverage our connectivity."

Tami Al Herais, who serves as Executive Director of Attraction at Dubai Chambers said her role was one that cut across all sectors.

"I am looking forward to engaging more companies and attracting them to Dubai.

I want to walk the journey with companies starting out in Dubai as the first year is always so difficult. And I want to see them through their challenges and taste success," she explained. "Seeing them succeed is the most important step, followed by what value they generate for the economy as a whole."

Looking ahead, Al Hashemi stated: "We are engaging with embassies and consulates in the UAE, as well as foreign trade and commercial offices that work with them, to establish several new business councils that will cover countries that are currently not represented by existing business councils."

He added that businesses might look at venturing into new markets and it was the job of Dubai Chambers and its team members to present opportunities available to businesses.

And through business matching programmes and other collaborative initiatives, Dubai Chambers provides the unique opportunity to cooperate and create partnerships to enable mutual economic growth and expand trade opportunities between two countries.

"We always prime businesses before they get here," said Khan. "You have invited companies to set up businesses here but how can you ensure their growth? This is part of us taking care of the ecosystem so they can grow and expand."

As the road ahead comes with a clear vision for Dubai Chambers, Khan further added that Dubai remained in an enviable position of possessing relevant data.

"We are in a global village; we are fast, connected and hyper efficient. We have leaders coming in from every part of the world and there's a lot of data that can be leveraged. We are simply lifting our heads and seeing how we can connect better."



# Sharing **Success Stories** from your Peers

## Featuring



**SURESH KUMAR**  
Chairman, Indian Business & Professional Council Dubai



**MILENA DIMITROVA**  
Deputy Managing Director, Dubai Office – French Business Council



**ABDUL AZIZ NASSER**  
Deputy Director, MEA, Hong Kong Trade Development Council



**KIRSTEN STAAB**  
Director, Hamburg Representative Office Dubai

**W**ith this session focusing on how some of the International Partners Network (IPN) members have leveraged their network to create successful events and business activities, experts from around the world took to the stage to share their success stories from their time working with Dubai Chambers.

Milena Dimitrova, Deputy Managing Director for the Dubai Office of the French Business Council, told attendees of one particular success the organisation has had in recent years. Rather than Dubai being “a destination of its own”, Dimitrova shared how it has become a gateway to other regions. For example, as the French Business Council aimed to move into East Africa – of which many of the French businesses were dealing with the territory from the emirate – the Dubai Chambers helped organise a delegation targeted at French SMEs in 2018. Additionally, the Chamber’s Nairobi office helped the group connect with B2B and government level meetings. As a result, and since then, two MOUs have been signed between France and Kenya.

The connection with Hamburg, which began in 2006, has also been a fruitful one. Kirsten Staab, Director, for the

Hamburg Representative Office in Dubai, spoke of common interests, especially in industries such as maritime, aviation, healthcare and logistics. With both Dubai and Hamburg being port cities, Staab said the relationship with the Chambers has helped “build pillars for companies and stakeholders to meet”.

She elaborated: “It’s a relationship which makes sense for both sides.”

The relationship with Dubai Chambers has also helped raise the profile of Germany’s second-largest city in the areas of both business and tourism. This







was boosted when Emirates opened direct flights to Hamburg. Additionally, the cultural education and bridge – which has opened doors into business in the UAE – has been greatly supported by the Chambers, making entry into the country far easier, she said.

“The network, thanks to the Dubai Chambers, is still the most valuable part of my work,” Staab concluded.

Suresh Kumar, Chairman of the Indian Business and Professional Council in Dubai, has worked with Dubai Chambers for many years, connecting individuals with businesses. Stating that “policy advocacy” is also a key area in this relationship, Kumar clarified that it helps overcome challenges that businesses face.

“It needs to solve specific business-related issues”, he added, with focus groups organised by the Chambers playing a key role in this. Policy recommendations are escalated through the Chamber, Kumar explained, taking it right to the Dubai Executive Council.

This is a vital voice for businesses here, he stated. For example, gold and jewellery imports that have had issues or challenges were raised and resolved promptly with Dubai Customs thanks to the Chambers’ intermediary support. He said the relationship is a “success story”.

Abdul Aziz Nasser, Deputy Director for the Middle East and Africa (MEA) at the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), spoke of how the organisation moved from Beirut to Dubai more than 40 years ago, at a time when Dubai envisaged itself becoming a hub like Hong Kong.

More than simply business matchmaking, Nasser said Dubai Chambers has helped find opportunities and opened doors. Not only this, its leverage in the emirate ensures it works quickly and effectively, which is of great support for businesses in Dubai that can often be held up by systems and procedures they may not understand.

Dubai became a regional office for the MEA for HKTDC, and thanks to the help

and support of Dubai Chambers, the trade council is now in four countries, HKTDC told guests.

“Dubai Chambers has the initiative to take action ... They focus on how to make things happen,” he said.

**“It’s a relationship which makes sense for both sides.”**



## Alignment is the Key to Success

**W**ith the International Partners Network (IPN) meeting drawing to a close at the Dubai Chambers headquarters, key stakeholders attending this new initiative launched by Dubai International Chamber ended the day by participating in an interactive session where they shared ideas for greater cross-border collaboration, while discussing challenges facing them today and long-term solutions for greater cooperation.

While several members of the UAE's business councils, trade attaches and economic partners had earlier cited that B2B or business to business connections continued to be a challenge, despite the assistance provided by Dubai Chambers, this session allowed for a more open conversation in generating ideas on how to overcome this hurdle.

"Going by the feedback today, the biggest issue remains B2B matching

and connecting. How do I find the right business? How do I make the connection?," said Hazel Jackson, CEO of Biz Group and event moderator.

With seated delegates divided into groups, Jackson posed two questions that formed the crux of the exercise:

- **If you were to design the ultimate B2B and networking experience, what would it be and who would you invite to attract more businesses to Dubai?**
- **What are the roles of your organisation versus what do you need from Dubai Chambers?**

As ideas were exchanged, it soon became apparent that greater accessibility and the need for more networking events dominated conversations, with several novel suggestions also coming to light with every table sharing one recommendation.



"We collectively came up with the idea of creating an app where everyone who would attend [a networking event] would be profiled on it, like a pre-event

handshake. So when you come, you already know the 6-7 companies you want to connect and work with," stated Vanessa Abernethy, Chair of the New Zealand Business Council.



Paola Subeldía Blasco, Commercial Attaché of Paraguay in UAE, spoke at length about Dubai Chambers hosting specialised and intimate

B2B retreats with stakeholders.

"This could be a two-day activity, with all the participants staying at the same hotel for better engagement and a closer proximity to build better relationships," she stated.

Other solid ideas included Dubai Chambers making business councils and country trade attachés more accessible, while also working as a matchmaker between vendors and buyers, along with government bodies and private companies.





Cyprus Trade Centre’s Fadi Al Shelbi stressed the need for relevant data from Dubai Chambers to allow country representatives to work with legitimate businesses.

“The right data – which can help us in our day-to-day work – can guide us to deal with companies that are genuine,” he added, with data referring to company profiles, credit ratings, and individual stakeholders to connect with.



Charmaine Yalong, Commercial Attaché for the Philippines, pointed out that industry specific B2B events hosted by the Dubai Chambers after any major trade event in the emirate would go a long way in connecting many startups and

young players who are unable to find the space to represent themselves on such a big platform, either due to space or budgetary constraints.

Citing Arab Health and Gulf Food as recent examples of trade events in Dubai, Yalong added: “We need to facilitate more networking post major events to accommodate companies that simply couldn’t find the space to showcase themselves.

“But these networking events have to be industry specific, allowing us to further mobilise our networks and get more regional players involved.”

Several other ideas included conducting local fam trips to government and semi-government entities that could generate more cross-border business opportunities,

while another suggested appointing region-specific relationship managers within Dubai Chambers who can guide trade partners and business councils better.

Several members also asked Dubai Chambers to help build better relationships with local banks to make systems more streamlined that allow small and medium-sized businesses from overseas to set-up enterprises more effectively.

As the session drew to an end, Jackson highlighted the importance of cross-border dialogue and open communication that needed to continue and flow, adding: “Dubai Chambers wants to be more approachable but that also requires both parties to give and receive. The need of the hour is to keep this dialogue going and working together.”





# International Partners Network: The Attendees

Total attendance:  
**78**



Austria



Azerbaijan



Brazil



Canada



China



Cyprus



Czech Republic



Dominican Republic



France



Gambia



Germany



Greece



Hong Kong



India



Iran



Israel



Italy



Jordan



Lithuania



Luxembourg



Malaysia



Mauritius



Mexico



Moldova



Netherlands



Nigeria



North Macedonia



Philippines



Singapore



South Africa



Spain



Switzerland



Taipei



Tunisia



Turkiye



United Arab Emirates



United Kingdom



United States



Uruguay



Vietnam



Zimbabwe

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Dubai Chambers 2022 Annual Report**



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