

► **TRIBUTE**

How Reda Dalil left his mark on the university and on readers

► **AI AND BIG DATA**

Al Akhawayn's bold new ambitions

► **CYBERSECURITY**

An 18-month master's program launched by AUI and Deloitte

TELQUEL IMPACT

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THE 2025 WHO'S WHO OF AL AKHAWAYN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI 20 LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES

They are engineers, entrepreneurs, executives, and researchers. Trained in English, their career paths reflect the changes in the employment market and offer guidance to a new generation seeking meaning and impact.



AI AND BIG DATA

AlAkhawayn University's Bold New Ambitions

TRANSFORMING ALAKHAWAYN UNIVERSITY (AUI) INTO A HUB OF EXPERTISE AND GEN-Z TALENT TRAINING IN AI AND BIG DATA, WITH THE TARGET OF ACCOMMODATING 5,000 STUDENTS BY 2026.

AUI President Amine Ben-said discusses the launch of new digital programs designed to meet the growing market demand for qualified talent in disruptive technologies.

Following your accreditation as a university that meets the international standards of American universities, what are your short-term development priorities? Our

positioning as a Moroccan university that adheres to the international standards of American universities, equipped with the prestigious NECHE accreditation, alongside renowned institutions like Harvard and MIT, compels us to focus on two main priorities. The first involves our ability to adapt to Gen Z and the continuously evolving job market. AlAkhawayn University in Ifrane aims to facilitate rapid access to the job market for our graduates, based on tailored technical skills and a foundational set of competencies that shape the human dimension of the student. Our second operational priority is to equip students with knowledge that fosters a multidimensional perspective – one that prepares them not only professionally but also for a balanced and fulfilling life beyond graduation. This priority stems from a recognition of the pressures and risks that new technologies place on Gen Z.

Our efforts in enhancing our human capital also aim to support a transformation within Gen Z, who are more motiva-



ted by skill development, the impact they can have, and well-being, rather than merely job access. Given the distinct interests and characteristics of this generation compared to the previous generation, our university also aims to facilitate a symbiosis between new talents (Gen Z) and experienced managers and professionals (often from previous generations) in the job market. The employability rate of our graduates is a testament to this, ranging from 87% to 100% in engineering disciplines upon graduation.

How has the AUI School of Engineering adapted to digital transformations to update its degree offerings

in AI and Big Data? The shift for AUI's School of Engineering began in the 2020-21 academic year. Currently, this school educates 1,680 students out of a total of 3,750 across all disciplines. Specifically, we have decided to simultaneously launch several new Bachelor's and Master's programs focusing on disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics, Big Data analytics, Industry 4.0, Cloud computing, and mobile software design.

The goal of this overhaul in our degree programs is to meet the demand and needs for qualified personnel expressed by the digital ecosystem, both nationally and internationally. This revamping of our training degree offerings has led to an exponential increase in the number of enrollments in our School of Engineering. Today, the number of students has more than tripled, from 475 students in 2020 to 1,680 students at the start of the 2023-24 academic year.

Beyond the distinct approach between the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the School of Engineering or the Business School,

The job placement rate of AUI's engineering programs ranges between 87% and 100%.



how do you bridge these two distinct disciplinary worlds, including in relation to the digital field? Our approach is transversal; this is inherent in the American "liberal arts" model adopted by AlAkhawayn University since its inception. Alongside strengthening the degree offerings of the School of Engineering, the AUI Business School has also bolstered its courses by launching specialties in digital marketing and "AI and Business Analytics," which include specific modules related to digital marketing, AI, Big Data, and Industry 4.0.

Our Business School capitalizes on the exceptional performance of its students in specialties that combine business disciplines with quantitative and computer science disciplines. In the 2023 Major Field Test (MFT) in Business – a benchmark exam taken by students from over 3,000 programs worldwide – AUI's Business School cohort ranked in the top 5% in Quantitative Analysis and the top 6% in Information Systems.

The goal is to train graduates who possess both technical and business backgrounds, with various combinations of major and minor specialties based on the student's aptitudes and/or employer needs, aligned with job market dynamics and the growth of companies driven by disruptive technologies such as AI and big data. To support this growth in our programs, our faculty, and our students, we have built eight new residential buildings this year and plan to open four new academic buildings with new laboratories and six additional residential buildings by the summer of 2024, to accommodate 5,000 students by 2026.

AUI's openness to and partnerships with the private sector have long been a key factor in attracting students. What is your approach to collaborating with the private sector in the era of telecommuting and employee nomadism? The major innovation in this area is the integration of the "experiential" component into our training programs. For example, we have developed a work-study co-op program (formation en alternance)

starting from the second year of our programs, allowing students to spend the first semester at the university and the second in a company. We launched this program with fourteen partner companies to date.

We have increased the flexibility of these programs thanks to our branch in Casablanca, which allows our students to combine, very early on, professional life and academic training. We have also innovated with our partners, such as the Moroccan subsidiaries of Leyton, Capgemini, Alten, and A&K, where our students, residing on our campus in Ifrane, are recruited in a telecommuting mode, often for international clients, alongside their university studies. Currently, we offer this telecommuting program to our

students with eight partner companies. Negotiations are also underway to develop additional training partnerships.

Beyond training and access to the job market, a university's ranking depends on its research laboratories and its researchers' publications. Where does AUI stand in terms of R&D? AUI aspires to be a leader

in education that values entrepreneurial learning, academic leadership, and innovative and creative approaches to equip Gen Z students with transversal skills, enabling them to develop the mindset and competencies needed to generate added value for their companies and have a tangible impact at the economic and social levels, including internationally.

This pragmatic vision also guides our approach to R&D. In other words, our focus is not merely on increasing the number of our scientific publications. The challenge is to develop an R&D ecosystem that has a real and concrete impact on our country's needs.

For instance, to serve our immediate environment, our R&D focuses on issues such as water optimization, forest fire protection, renewable energy to combat the winter cold experienced by our fellow citizens in the mountains, and the impact of AI on education.

Additionally, given AUI's distinctive model and experience, we have successfully secured EU funding as the lead institution on an ambitious €1 million project related to investigating leadership and innovation in higher education. ■

AL-AKHAWAYN-DELOITTE

A Strategic Alliance to Train Cybersecurity Leaders

ALAKHAWAYN UNIVERSITY (AUI) AND DELOITTE MOROCCO CYBER CENTER (DMCC) RECENTLY ENTERED INTO A PARTNERSHIP TO LAUNCH AN 18-MONTH SPECIALIZED MASTER'S DEGREE IN CYBERSECURITY, WITH A TARGET OF TRAINING 30 EXPERTS PER CLASS.

As part of its proactive strategy of collaborating with the private sector, Al Akhawayn University is stepping up its commitment alongside industry players to adapt its training offerings to the critical needs of the job market. Following structural partnerships with several renowned firms, the university is now joining forces with Deloitte Morocco Cyber Center to launch a specialized master's degree in cybersecurity next September.

Lasting 18 months, this program will train 30 experts per class, combining academic immersion and field

experience to address the skills shortage in a sector that is key to Morocco's digital sovereignty. "The agility of our industrial partnerships enables us to anticipate market changes. This master's degree in cybersecurity illustrates our ability to transform business needs into concrete training programs, where theory and practice feed into each other," emphasizes Prof. Salah AlMajeed, Dean of the School of Science and Engineering. Designed to reflect the operational realities of businesses, this master's program will include modules co-developed with Deloitte, including technical workshops, cyberattack simulations, and internships with industry partners.

"Cybersecurity is no longer a choice, but a necessity for Moroccan and African companies. This program will train profiles capable of countering cyber threats while stimulating innovation," adds the dean. This new partnership is part of AUI's commitment to systematizing university-industry synergies. Companies help shape the curriculum, identify priority skills, and recruit talent upstream. This model has already proven its worth with industry giants, where students alternate between campus and remote work assignments for international clients starting in their second year of study.

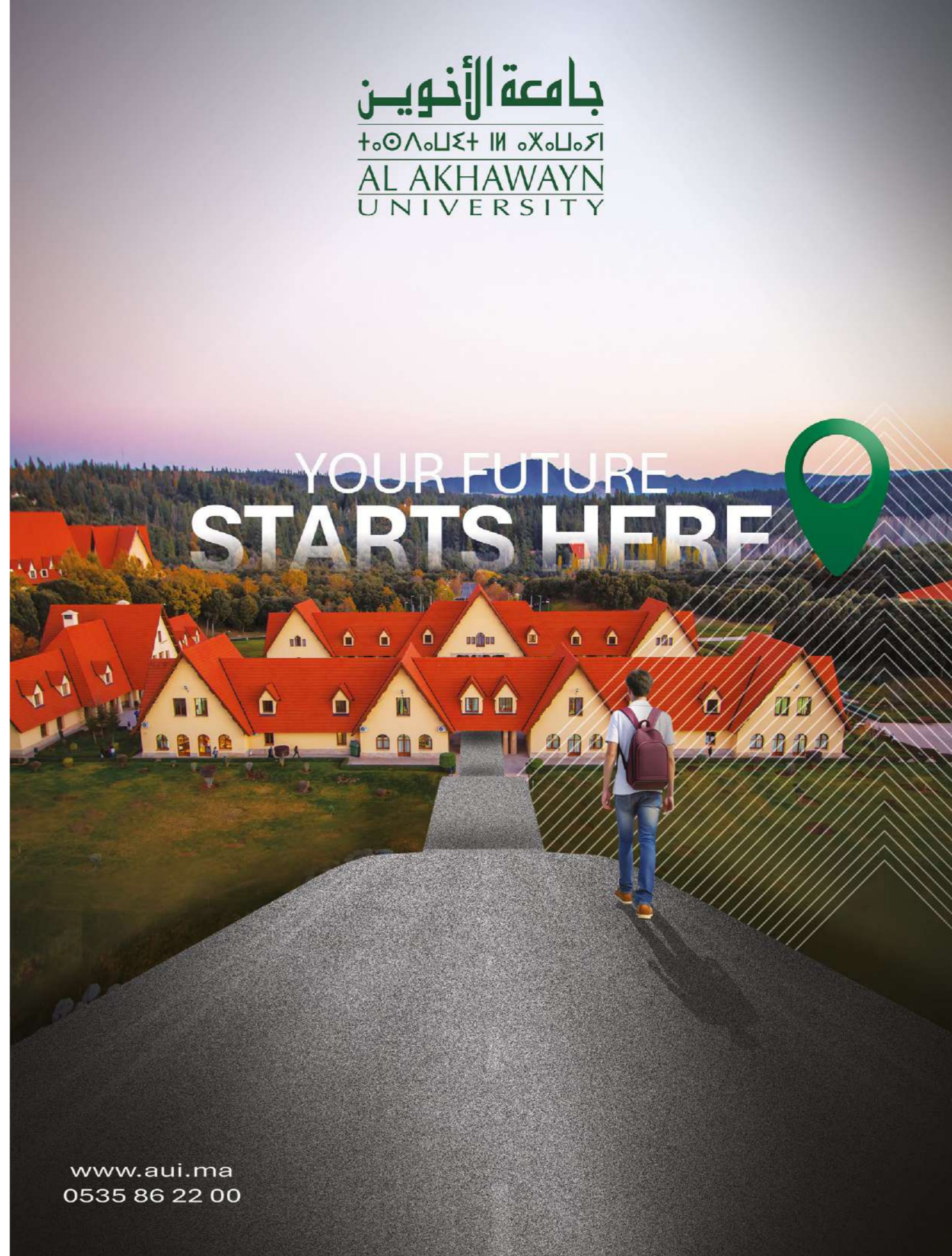
With this master's degree, AUI is consolidating its position as a hub of expertise in disruptive technologies, alongside its AI and Big Data programs. The university relies on state-of-the-art infrastructure, including four new academic buildings inaugurated in 2024, and impact-oriented applied research to respond to national challenges such as data security and the resilience of critical systems.

Beyond education, AUI is strengthening its cybersecurity R&D projects in collaboration with international institutions. Among its priorities are the protection of critical infrastructure, ethical AI, and predictive risk analysis. The university is also piloting an EU-funded project on innovation in higher education. ■



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 AL AKHAWAYN
 UNIVERSITY

YOUR FUTURE
 STARTS HERE



TRIBUTE

How Reda Dalil Left his Mark on the University and on Readers

RÉDA DALIL FORGED A RARE PATH DRIVEN BY CONVICTION AND CRAFT. PROVOCATIVE YET PRECISE, HIS VOICE RESHAPED TELQUEL'S EDITORIAL TONE AND LEFT AN INDELIBLE MARK ON THE READERS.

Réda Dalil stood out in a wide range of fields, from finance to journalism and writing. After graduating from Lyautey High School in 1996, he enrolled at Al Akhawayn University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. In 2001, he launched his career in finance.

It could have been a straight path—but eight years later, he couldn't resist the pull of journalism, a field he was undeniably passionate about. After a brief stint at Owner, he found his footing as editor-in-chief and later as publisher at Le Temps magazine. From 2016 to 2018, he served as editor-in-chief of Economie & Entreprises. In 2018, he joined TelQuel. Week by week, readers of the magazine and website came to recognize his sharp, impactful writing—and just a year later, his unapologetic editorials were being widely shared on LinkedIn. One thing is certain: Réda could be provocative. But then again, that's exactly what we expect from the press.

DEEPLY MARKED BY THE SUBPRIME CRISIS

Because there's one quality that consistently stands out in readers' recollections: Réda was a writer. Journalism—with its ideal of neutrality that often mutes those consumed by passion—was not enough for him. Even before making a name for himself in the press, Réda had already ventured into literature. Through writing, he was able to explore more personal themes. His first novel, *Le Job* (2013), which earned him the La Mamounia Literary Prize, delves into the fears he faced as a finance professional during the 2008 subprime crisis. After all, "I spent eight years of my life crunching numbers," he wrote. Then came *Best-Seller* (2016), portraying the life of a man—much like himself—doomed to write.

Réda's passion became even more evident to TelQuel readers in May 2019, when he became the magazine's publisher and began writing its editorials. Uncompromising editorials that revealed, analyzed, and deconstructed—without ever hitting below the belt. Online tributes often repeat the same sentiment: "His famous editorials aimed for the heart, never the face." His voice will forever leave its mark on the readers of TelQuel. ■



KAOUTAR EL MAGHRAOUI

Putting IBM on the AI Radar

FROM IBM'S RESEARCH CENTERS IN THE UNITED STATES, KAOUTAR EL MAGHRAOUI IS ONE OF THE RISING FIGURES IN THE GLOBAL RACE FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

A graduate of Al Akhawayn University, where she earned a master's degree in computer networks in 2001, Kaoutar El Maghraoui also holds a PhD in computer science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York.

As a principal researcher at IBM Research AI, her work focuses on innovations at the intersection of systems and artificial intelligence. She also teaches computer science at Columbia University in New York City, continuing a long-standing passion—just over twenty years ago, after finishing her studies at Al Akhawayn, she had already been teaching courses there in computer networks, assembly language programming, C programming, and Pascal programming. IBM's decision to entrust her with a strategic research center is itself a powerful endorsement of her expertise. For IBM, this center is a key asset in the fierce competition among major tech companies in the AI race. It hosts research and development activities, prototyping, testing, and simulation for new applications of artificial intelligence.

Kaoutar El Maghraoui led a research project there that applied IBM Watson's cognitive technology to diagnose and solve system issues on the Power platform. Her main areas of interest include cloud computing, operating systems, high-performance computing, distributed systems, and analytics.

A CHARGED AGENDA

A sign of the growing influence she holds within her company, Kaoutar El Maghraoui contributed to shaping IBM's vision for the future of computing in both research labs and enterprises, with a focus on strengthening IBM's leadership in AI. Previously, she was part of the advanced systems groups, where she studied various aspects of the AIX operating system, including performance, multithread and multicore scheduling, Flash SSD storage, system diagnostics, and operating system failure recovery.

Kaoutar El Maghraoui has received multiple honors, including the prestigious Robert McNaughton Award for best computer science dissertation, the 2021 Best of IBM Award, the 2021 IEEE TCSVC Women in



Service Computing Award, and the 2022 IBM Technical Corporate Award. She is a member of the Society of Women Engineers and a co-author of numerous conference papers and journal articles in systems research and high-performance computing. She has also served in various roles—co-chair, program committee member, and reviewer—at major technical conferences.

Despite a demanding schedule, Kaoutar El Maghraoui is deeply involved in community work. She is the global vice president of ArabWIC, the Arab Women in Computing community affiliated with the Anita Borg Institute. Her advocacy centers on promoting and increasing women's participation in science and computing. She has also been an active member of the leadership team for the Grace Hopper Celebration (GHC), the world's largest gathering of women in computing. ■

SALMA MOUKBIL

How she Reinvented Toyota Morocco

FROM A DOUBLE MAJOR IN FINANCE AND MARKETING TO THE HELM OF TOYOTA MOROCCO, SALMA MOUKBIL BUILT HER RISE ON VERSATILITY AND BOLD DECISIONS.

Since her debut, Salma Moukbil, General Manager of Toyota Morocco, has nurtured a passion for challenges. It started on the benches of Al Akhawayn University (AUI), from 2001 to 2005. "I did a bachelor's in finance and another in marketing. Those were two fields I was extremely interested in. AUI offered the opportunity to pursue two majors at the same time and gain that versatility," recalls the General Manager of Toyota Morocco. A dual skill set that proved to be decisive for the rest of her professional career. "It allowed me to explore the intersection between these two fields, which ultimately complement each other. You can't do finance without having the strategic mindset of a marketer. And when you work in marketing, finance helps structure your strategies," she explains.

REJECTING BOXES, EMBRACING POSSIBILITIES

Driven by a desire to succeed, she began her career at Samir. A position she left after only six months to join Toyota Morocco as a management trainee. That means there was no specific title. She worked in every department, she explains. A lucky break for the young manager, who doesn't like being confined to one department and avoids labels. So she had the opportunity to work in the workshop,



which is of major importance in ensuring quality after-sales service, she emphasizes. After gaining experience in all departments—sales, finance, marketing, commerce, and more—she was given the chance to choose her own department. She chose marketing. She started at the bottom of the ladder and eventually earned the title of product manager. She held that position until 2009, when she moved into CRM (Customer Relationship Management). At the time, she was the first to launch digital marketing at the company. Digital tools were still underdeveloped, and CRM was not yet an important department.

FROM CRM TO GENERAL MANAGEMENT: RISING THROUGH STRATEGY

"We really stood out through major projects focused on customer relations and digital. Toyota was thus able to transform itself and brilliantly manage the entire customer relationship. Hence the need to take risks, have a clear vision, and not be satisfied with the status quo," she reflects on the experience. Added to that were leadership and interpersonal skills. "The business world is about know-how and, above all, about soft skills. And that too, I learned at AUI," notes Salma Moukbil. After five years as CRM manager, she was promoted to marketing director in 2014. A very strategic department at Toyota: "It's a profit center. We set up the product strategy, pricing, etc. And we also handle several commercial aspects." One of the biggest challenges in that role? "Marketing hybrids in a market that was entirely diesel-oriented at the time." That challenge served as a springboard from marketing to general management, which she took over in 2018. Thanks to that 360° project, hybrids gained a foothold in the market. Toyota sales increased by more than 30% in a market that saw less than 2% growth over the past five years. Salma Moukbil emphasizes: "Hybrids are now synonymous with Toyota." ■

JULIANNE FURMAN

Ambassador of the Moroccan Automotive Industry

AN AMERICAN DIPLOMAT TURNED CEO, JULIANNE FURMAN CHOSE MOROCCO TO BUILD MORE THAN A CAREER. AT THE HELM OF POLYDESIGN SYSTEMS, SHE HELPED TURN A TANGIER-BASED SUPPLIER INTO A GLOBAL AUTOMOTIVE POWERHOUSE.

Julianne Furman is part of the very first graduating class of Al Akhawayn University in 1996. As the Managing Director of automotive supplier Polydesign Systems, she is also involved in multiple organizations where she serves as a bridge to her country of origin, the United States.

An American by nationality, Julianne Furman began her career in diplomacy, working in Washington and then in Guinea, before changing paths. Now the Managing Director of Polydesign Systems in Tangier, she later enrolled at Al Akhawayn University, where she earned an MBA in Finance in 1996—making her part of AUI's very first graduating class. After completing her MBA, she decided to remain in Morocco to contribute her expertise to the country she now considers her own. She joined the Moroccan-American Council for Trade and Investment, where she served as an ambassador for Morocco to American investors. In 2001, she was entrusted with leading Polydesign Systems, a subsidiary of the Exco Automotive Group based in the Tangier Free Zone. Twenty-three years later, the company—specialized in interior equipment and components—has become a cornerstone of Morocco's automotive industry. It now employs over 1,600 people and supplies major carmakers such as Renault, Stellantis, Volkswagen, Audi, Ford, Volvo, BMW, JLR, and Daimler. "Each week, Polydesign exports to 120 destinations across 26 countries around the world," she reveals.

DISCIPLINE AND FLEXIBILITY

This growth, according to the Managing Director of Polydesign, stems from "the agility, autonomy, and culture that define the company within its ecosystem." To attain first-tier supplier status with

major automotive manufacturers, a company must meet extremely strict standards and demonstrate significant flexibility. Polydesign boasts the first accredited quality laboratory for automotive testing in Morocco. The company has also embraced renewable energy, installing a 1.2 MW solar power plant in 2022. Founder of the Association of Investors in the Tangier Export Free Zone (AIZFET), Julianne Furman also serves on the boards of CGEM Tangier-Tetouan, the National Business Council, and the Moroccan-American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham). She is actively involved with the Fulbright Commission and the UN Global Compact. Believing firmly that companies have a responsibility to their communities, the Polydesign director is engaged in various social causes, including cancer prevention and the promotion of education. Outside of her professional commitments, Julianne Furman is passionate about classical music. Her instrument of choice—the piano—has been a personal refuge since childhood. ■



MOUNYA ELHILALI

The Art of Connecting Neuroscience and Engineering

FROM AL AKHAWAYN TO JOHNS HOPKINS, MOUNYA ELHILALI HAS BUILT A CAREER DECODING HOW THE BRAIN AND MACHINES PROCESS SOUND. HER AWARD-WINNING RESEARCH IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ASSISTED LISTENING AND INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS.

Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mounya Elhilali and her research attract significant attention, funding, and awards. A look back at her journey—from Al Akhawayn to Johns Hopkins University.

Mounya Elhilali is part of the very first graduating class in engineering from Al Akhawayn University (AUI), earning her degree in 1998. Shortly afterward, she moved to the United States to pursue further studies at the University of Maryland, where she earned a master's degree in 2003 and a PhD in Electrical and Computer Engineering in 2004. She then joined Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, where she is currently a professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and holds the Charles Renn Chair.

Founder of the Computational Audio Perception Lab, Mounya Elhilali has made a name for herself through groundbreaking research that deepens our understanding of how both the human brain and machines process sound. Her work bridges a crucial gap—between neuroscience and engineering—by focusing on brain function models that shed light on human intelligence and help create intelligent machines capable of replicating human-level performance.



ASSISTED LISTENING

In her own way, Mounya Elhilali explored the practical applications of artificial intelligence long before they were “industrialized” and made headlines. With over 150 journal articles and conference papers to her name, her research has also led to the development of audio technologies that aid in medical diagnostics and assisted listening. In an intensely competitive environment, her lab consistently secures funding from major agencies, with more than \$20 million in direct research support raised to date.

Holding joint appointments in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, she is also affiliated with Johns Hopkins’ Center for Language and Speech Processing and the Kavli Neuroscience Discovery Institute.

AN AWARD-WINNING ACADEMIC

Mounya Elhilali has received numerous awards in recognition of the impact of her work. In 2017, she was honored with the JHU Catalyst Award. Two years earlier, she received the Kenan Award for innovative projects in university education, as well as the Young Investigator Award from the U.S. Office of Naval Research.

She was also recognized with the prestigious Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on outstanding scientists and engineers at the early stages of their independent research careers. ■

SARAH KERROUMI

Driving Transformation at Ynna

FROM GLOBAL FINANCE TO THE HEART OF YNNA GROUP, SARAH KERROUMI HAS LED A SWEEPING MODERNIZATION OF GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGY. HER LEADERSHIP BLENDS SUSTAINABILITY, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, AND A FIRM BELIEF IN PURPOSE-DRIVEN GROWTH.

Sarah Kerroumi’s trajectory reflects her ability to combine strategy, transformation, and conviction. After earning dual degrees from Al Akhawayn University and Johnson & Wales University, she built her career in strategic management and international finance before returning to Morocco in 2009 to join the Ynna group. There, she gradually took on key roles in strategic oversight, governance, and development. A turning point came in 2013 with her appointment as Secretary General. She was then tasked with structuring and modernizing the group. “At the head of 26 subsidiaries operating in five key sectors (industry, energy, chemicals, retail, and agri-food), my mission was to reorganize the holding company and its subsidiaries in order to strengthen governance, drive growth, restructure certain activities, and push forward digital transformation, with the goal of fostering a dynamic of sustainability,” recalls Sarah Kerroumi.



advocates for stronger female representation within governance bodies. “It’s a cause I consider essential, both for business performance and for the societal evolution of our country,” she emphasizes.

She earned her Bachelor of Business Administration from Al Akhawayn University in 2002, a program she considers decisive: “Al Akhawayn gave me much more than a diploma. It allowed me to adopt, very early on, a culture of high standards and international openness, while maintaining a local grounding and a sharp sense of responsibility. I learned to think in ecosystems, to defend convictions with rigor, and to combine strategic vision with operational agility. That integrated approach

has become a major asset in my leadership journey.”

LEADING WITH CONVICTION

Sarah Kerroumi believes in participative management with a strong transformative dimension. For her, engaging employees around a clear vision is essential. “It creates commitment and stimulates everyone’s creativity. Kindness, transparency, active listening, and leading by example are also fundamental levers of leadership, which must be adaptive and evolving depending on the context and the goals. My role is to unite teams, create a stimulating environment, and encourage initiative,” she explains. A good leader, in her view, is also someone who helps others grow while remaining aligned with their values—even in tense moments. Three qualities have shaped her journey: the ability to think strategically, endurance in the face of complexity, and a constant demand for self-improvement. “I deeply believe that success comes from coherence between what we do, what we think, and what we embody,” she says. What drives her every day? “Contributing to a growth trajectory that is useful, inclusive, and lasting, in service of major contemporary challenges such as responsible industrialization and the development of human capital,” she concludes. ■

ASMAA QUORRICH

The Journey of A Marketing Strategist in the Gulf

ASMAA QUORRICH HAS BUILT A CAREER ON BOLD DECISIONS. NOW AN ENTREPRENEUR AND GLOBAL CMO, SHE EMBODIES A LEADERSHIP STYLE ROOTED IN AUTHENTICITY, AMBITION, AND IMPACT.

She led marketing for KFC across the MENA region and Pakistan, repositioned Saudi Arabia's tourism image, and founded a renowned wellness center in Dubai. Asmaa Quorrich is one of the Middle East's most prominent marketers, a distinction that earned her a place in the Wall Street Journal's CMO Network, which brings together decision-makers at the helm of the world's most influential brands. Behind this journey lies a mindset the businesswoman sums up in a single sentence that has become a guiding principle in her life: "We are not the product of our circumstances, but of our decisions."

Asmaa Quorrich began her academic journey at Al Akhawayn by choice, drawn to its Anglo-Saxon and flexible education system, which allows everyone to build their own path: "Al Akhawayn gave me the opportunity to thrive, to express my personality, and to shine." She then went on to receive a Fulbright scholarship that took her to Suffolk University in Boston, where she earned an MBA in marketing in 2003.

A GENUINE LEADER

Asmaa Quorrich began her professional career at Toyota Morocco, then quickly climbed the ranks at Procter & Gamble and Pepsi. In 2015, she already held the position of Chief Marketing Officer at KFC for the MENA region and Pakistan, with a revenue portfolio of one billion dollars. She led a strategic transformation there that revived the brand, reinvigorated growth and earned her recognition within the giant Yum! Brands,



the world's leading restaurant group (KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell...).

After this challenge, Asmaa Quorrich took on a new one: entrepreneurship. "If I know how to build brands for giants like KFC or Pepsi, why not do it for myself?" she thought at the time. By launching ZAAZ Wellness & Beauty in 2019 in Dubai, she had a very precise idea: to create a space inspired by Moroccan traditions, designed for active women, in a refined and soothing

setting. "I wanted a place for women. A bubble. A refuge." ZAAZ quickly became a reference in luxury hospitality. Next step: international expansion.

The businesswoman also remains a leader sought after for her expertise: the Saudi government identified her and entrusted her, in 2022, with the position of Chief Marketing Officer within the Saudi Tourism Authority. She became the first Moroccan – and one of the few women – to occupy such a role, at the head of a team of 100 people.

Asmaa Quorrich defines herself as an "authentic leader". Both demanding and protective, she invests in her teams, develops talent, and aims for excellence, she says. ■

BOUCHRA EL BACHIRY

The Ambassador of African Tech at Microsoft

FROM ORACLE TO MICROSOFT, BOUCHRA EL BACHIRY HAS POSITIONED HERSELF AT THE HEART OF CLOUD COMPUTING, AI, AND CYBERSECURITY ACROSS FRANCOPHONE AFRICA.

Bouchra El Bachiry is part of a new generation of women succeeding in the tech world. Since 2024, she has held the position of Senior Regional Channel Sales Manager at Microsoft, covering Francophone North, Central, and West Africa. In this region, she plays a key role: supporting "governments and businesses in tackling critical challenges such as cybersecurity, digital inclusion, and the integration of AI into public services," she emphasizes.

AT THE FOREFRONT OF INNOVATION

This expertise is built on 13 years of experience in the sector: a graduate in Software Engineering from Al Akhawayn University (AUI) in 2005, she chose to start her career in international tech. She later completed her education with an MBA in Management & Marketing from École des Ponts et Chaussées in Paris. "I spent eight years at Oracle, where I covered Morocco, Francophone Africa, Egypt, and the Levant, developing strong commercial and partnership expertise. Then I spent five years at VMware refining my technical and managerial skills in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa," she explains.

Throughout those years, her time in Ifrane proved invaluable: "AUI taught me to think broadly, to structure my reasoning, and to engage in debate. But above all, the university gave me a deep conviction: Morocco can be at the forefront of innovation and technological progress." Her studies also instilled essential values such as "excellence, perseverance, autonomy, leadership, and the ability to be self-driven," she lists.

"SECURITY BY DESIGN"

Throughout her career, Bouchra El Bachiry says she has embraced a collaborative, empowering leadership style focused on impact and innovation: "My goal is to build lasting relationships of trust with my teams, partners, and clients while fostering creativity." In a world dominated by cloud and AI, she emphasizes the impor-

tance of security: "Digital advances are only sustainable if data and infrastructure are protected." She systematically integrates a Security by Design approach – embedding proactive cybersecurity and responsible AI principles at every stage of digital deployment. A key strategic lever for innovating with confidence. What drives her? A desire to "make a concrete contribution to the development of the countries where we operate, and to that of Morocco, a true digital engine for Africa." For her, integrating AI and cybersecurity allows institutions to access reliable data, strengthen healthcare systems, improve social coverage, and ensure more predictive and transparent governance. ■



OMAR LATAOUI

The “Tech Knight” CEO of Finatech

FROM TELECOMS TO TECH LEADERSHIP, OMAR LATAOUI TRANSFORMED FINATECH INTO A LEADING AFRICAN DIGITAL INTEGRATOR. HIS FOCUS ON CYBERSECURITY, DATA CENTERS, AND INNOVATION HAS MADE THE GROUP A NATIONAL BENCHMARK.

If he weren't fully absorbed in steering the explosive growth of his company, Omar Lataoui, CEO of Finatech, might have pursued a radically different—yet equally competitive—path. In addition to tech and Andalusian music, this executive is also passionate about equestrian sports. He is a two-time Moroccan national champion in amateur senior show jumping. Holding a Master of Science in Computer Networks from Al Akhawayn University, along with several degrees from prestigious American institutions, this forty-something is part of the very first graduating class from the Ifrane-based university. Omar Lataoui began his career at Medi Telecom, where he led the development of mobile data services. His journey then took him to IBM, where he helped implement IBM's software sales strategy in the Moroccan market. In 2007, he joined the Finance.Com group (now O Capital), where he contributed to the creation and development of Steria MedShore, a joint venture



specializing in IT offshoring. Four years later, Omar Lataoui took over the “Systems and Technologies” department at Finatech, before being promoted to Deputy CEO and eventually becoming CEO in 2018.

A CONTINENTAL BENCHMARK

From the moment he took office, he redirected the group's core business toward new technologies and digital transformation, with the ambition of making it a tech integrator on a continental African scale. To achieve this, the company relied on top-tier talent and partnerships with global industry leaders, including Cisco, Huawei, Dell, and others. The CEO of Finatech would no doubt have been knighted by none other than Michael Porter (the renowned strategy professor at Harvard Business School) who advised managers to choose one of three generic strategies to maintain a company's competitive edge. For Finatech, Omar Lataoui chose to focus on data centers, cybersecurity, networks, and digitization. And it's a strategy that has paid off. Today, the company stands as a benchmark in African tech. It is part of the exclusive group of the 500 largest companies in Morocco—a remarkable feat, considering that the tax registry listed 420,000 businesses in 2022. One of the group's most notable achievements is its involvement in the massive Mohammed VI Tower project, currently under construction in Rabat. Finatech is providing solutions for security networks, access control systems, communications, and smart building automation. ■

OTHMANE NADIFI

From AUI to the Helm of Mondelez Morocco, a Career in Distribution

FROM P&G'S FIELD OPERATIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA TO LEADING MONDELEZ MOROCCO, OTHMANE NADIFI BUILT HIS CAREER ON BOLD CHOICES. HIS PATH REFLECTS A SIMPLE BELIEF: REAL LEADERSHIP STARTS ON THE GROUND, CLOSE TO THE CONSUMER.

By taking “a less conventional path” for someone with a finance background, after graduating from AUI in 1999, Othmane Nadifi took the first step on the long journey that would eventually lead to his appointment as Managing Director of Mondelez Morocco in October 2020. “Rather than following the logic of my academic background, I chose to move abroad to Saudi Arabia, diving into distribution and business development with Procter & Gamble,” he explains. This bold decision marked the beginning of his rise. Twenty-five years later, Othmane Nadifi reflects on that unexpected choice: “Starting on the ground, in direct contact with distribution channels, is the best way to understand brands and get closer to the consumer,” he emphasizes. His first exposure to this world actually came during his final semester at Al Akhawayn. Approached by P&G, his interest in this new career path was sparked—then nurtured—by “sound advice and a convincingly presented project. I'm thinking in particular of Moncef Belkhatat and Abdeljalil Likaimi, who I consider un-



disputed masters in the fields of distribution and business management more broadly.” After that first challenge, he climbed the managerial ladder while also exploring different types of companies. His key stops? PepsiCo International, Eaux Minérales d'Oulmès, Reckitt Benckiser, and VBM Pepsi, where he served as Chief Operating Officer for seven years.

LESSONS FROM AUI AND THE EVOLUTION OF DISTRIBUTION

Looking back, Nadifi recalls a wealth of lessons he attributes to his time at AUI. He prefers to express them as maxims, such as “an idiot who takes risks has a better chance of succeeding than a genius who stays in their comfort zone,” “the past is history,” or “you must remain a lifelong student.” These

are lessons learned at AUI through extracurricular activities—especially sports—as well as the diversity of the curriculum and collaborative projects. He takes that same retrospective lens to the evolution of business development and the distribution sector over the past 25 years. “This sector has undergone deep, positive transformations. Rising demand and consumption, the emergence of large and mid-sized retail stores, stronger local production, and the rise of e-commerce are key factors—without forgetting neighborhood shops (‘moul lhanout’), a channel that remains very important,” he explains. With major upcoming sporting events, the distribution sector in Morocco is preparing to enter a new era. For Othmane Nadifi, it's yet another opportunity for a sector already in full transformation—and, as always, he approaches it with calm and confidence. ■

AOMAR BOUM

Bringing Moroccan Influence to California Campuses

FROM AL AKHAWAYN TO UCLA, AOMAR BOUM HAS BECOME A LEADING EXPERT ON RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE MAGHREB. HIS WORK REVISITS FORGOTTEN MEMORIES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE REGION'S PRESENT.

Aomar Boum, professor at UCLA and member of the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco, is a distinguished ambassador for Al Akhawayn University. This historian and anthropologist is a recognized expert on religious and ethnic minorities in the Maghreb and the Middle East, with numerous publications to his name.

Historian and anthropologist Aomar Boum is a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and a member of the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco. In Aomar Boum, Al Akhawayn University has one of its most distinguished ambassadors. Originally from Lamhamid, near Foum Zguid in the province of Tata, the young Aomar Boum studied at Al Akhawayn from 1995 to 1997, after earning a bachelor's degree in English literature from Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech in 1993.

Four years later, he completed a PhD in anthropology at the University of Arizona, which went on to offer him a teaching position in the Department of Near Eastern and North African Studies.

Today, Aomar Boum holds the Maurice Amado Chair in Sephardic Studies within the departments of An-



thropology, History, and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at UCLA.

A prolific author, he is the co-founder and co-editor of the Tamazgha Studies Journal as well as the series Morocco and Its Mediterranean Space: Texts and Translations. He also co-edits the academic journal Souffles Monde, a tribute to the iconic magazine Souffles, the literary and artistic publication launched in 1966 by a group of committed poets, including Abdellatif Laâbi.

A SPECIALIST IN ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE MAGHREB

He is also the driving force behind the Amazigh Studies Initiative at UCLA and co-directs the Moroccan Jewish Studies Initiative there. His research focuses on the place of religious and ethnic minorities—such as Jews, Bahá'ís, Shiites, and Christians—in post-independence nation-states across the Middle East and North Africa. These are subjects for which he is regularly invited to speak at conferences and symposia around the world. His deep knowledge and insightful analyses on the challenges facing ethnic and religious minorities in the Maghreb and the Middle East are especially well regarded. Professor Boum is also the author of numerous publications and scholarly articles. Notable among them are: *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*; *Historical Dictionary of Morocco* (with Thomas K. Park); *The Holocaust and North Africa* (with Sarah Abrevaya Stein); *Wartime North Africa: A Documentary History, 1934–1950* (also with Sarah Abrevaya Stein); *The Undesirables: A Holocaust Journey through North Africa* (with Nadjib Berber); and *The Last Rekkas of Morocco*, co-authored with Majdouline Boum-Mendoza. ■

NAOUFEL JELLAL

The Inspiring Journey of “Weld L’Blad”

AFTER A CAREER ACROSS THE GULF WITH PEPSICO, NAOUFEL JELLAL RETURNED TO MOROCCO TO HEAD LES EAUX MINÉRALES D’OULMÈS. HIS PATH REFLECTS GLOBAL EXPERIENCE, ADAPTABILITY, AND CONFIDENCE IN MOROCCO'S GROWTH POTENTIAL.

Naoufel Jellal embodies a journey marked first by expatriation, then by a return to his roots. A graduate of Al Akhawayn University (AUI) in Ifrane, he is now at the head of Eaux Minérales d’Oulmès, where he returned in 2020 after sixteen years spent in the Gulf countries. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates... his career led him to hold several leadership positions within PepsiCo. He climbed the ranks from franchise director (Morocco, Tunisia, then Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, and Qatar) to general manager of the food division, before being appointed senior sales director for the GCC/Levant, and later general manager of the “Premier” partnership with Expo 2020 Dubai. Among these markets with varied dynamics, he notes a major difference: “The Moroccan market is more complex due to its vast geography, but also more promising. Per capita consumption can still grow, especially with the major upcoming events,” he affirms.

EXPATRIATION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

How did he experience those years abroad? “I was fortunate to be expatriated right after graduating in 1999. Adapting wasn’t easy at first, but being open to diversity helped me integrate. Later, I returned to Morocco in leadership positions, taking on responsibilities quickly,” he shares. The transition into professional life was smooth, as he was recruited straight from campus by the Saudi subsidiary of Procter & Gamble. He credits this successful integration to two key strengths from his AUI education: strong emotional intelligence, which lessened the cultural shock, and a rigorous academic foundation. “AUI graduates compete with those from the best universities in the MENA region,” he notes.

He emphasizes that in Ifrane, he grew in an environment that valued diversity, inclusion, and acceptance of others, which strengthened his ability to take initiative and follow through. He particularly highlights the Liberal Arts educational model, which, in his view, fosters open-mindedness and self-confidence in students.

Highly active in extracurricular activities, he developed a true sense of commitment and a strong desire to contribute to the community. This path of excellence led him to earn a Fulbright Program scholarship to pursue an MBA at Boston University—an opportunity made possible thanks to the support and reputation of AUI. Naoufel Jellal continues his community involvement, particularly within the Al Akhawayn Alumni Association. He believes it is “the least one can do” for the country and for his university. “I am convinced that it should be seen as a duty, an unconditional commitment,” he concludes. ■



DRISS SLAOUI

From his Dorm Room at AUI to Morocco's Digital Stage

AT 17, DRISS SLAOUI LAUNCHED WELOVEBUZZ FROM HIS AUI DORM ROOM TO GIVE HIS GENERATION A VOICE. YEARS LATER, HE TURNED THAT STUDENT PROJECT INTO ONE OF MOROCCO'S MOST INFLUENTIAL DIGITAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.

At 17, Driss Slaoui launched Welovebuzz from his dorm room at AUI. Fifteen years later, he's both an entrepreneur and an investor, still driven by the same obsession: to create, to learn, and to share.

His journey began in 2010. Fresh out of high school and fueled by insatiable curiosity, he felt the urge to fill a gap—the absence of a media outlet that truly spoke to the youth of his generation. He turned that gap into an opportunity. From his room on the AlAkhawayn campus, he built the first version of Welovebuzz, which has since become one of the most followed media platforms in Morocco, reaching over two million people every day.

"I've always been very curious, especially when it comes to technology. Also, the fact that I felt there was a lack of relevant information pushed me to create Welovebuzz. My goal was to offer a media outlet that reflects the expectations and consumption habits of my generation," he explains.

Long before launching his media venture, Driss Slaoui had instinctively embarked on a unique learning journey through video games and web development. This



modern, hands-on approach proved to be both practical and valuable. "I used to play social video games where every decision directly impacted my progress. Games help you develop critical thinking and adaptability, which are incredibly important," he notes. This experimental learning mindset also fueled another of his passions: web development. "I wanted to understand, deconstruct, and rebuild. The web was an endless playground where the only limit was your ability to learn and experiment," he explains.

At AlAkhawayn, logic and discipline were central. It was there that his creative drive and desire to learn were refined and structured. The academic program at AUI in Ifrane gave him scientific discipline and methodology. "Both

approaches are complementary. Self-learning pushes you to be curious, to test, to explore, while university provides a framework that helps you organize your knowledge."

Above all, AUI was a rich ecosystem of opportunities and social connection, where Driss Slaoui built friendships with many of his future partners and clients—not to mention the founding members of the Welovebuzz team.

Once his project was up and running, he approached its development with a simple yet powerful mindset: "If others have done it before me, there's no reason I can't do it too—and maybe even do it better."

It's with that attitude that Driss Slaoui turned limited resources and a small audience into an engine for innovation, ultimately delivering services like brand content now sought after by major companies such as P&G. ■

OUSSAMA BERRADA

In the Driver's Seat of Success

NOW GENERAL MANAGER OF BUGSHAN AUTOMOTIVE GROUP, OUSSAMA BERRADA CLIMBED EVERY RUNG OF THE LADDER: FROM INTERNAL AUDITOR TO FINANCIAL DIRECTOR, BEFORE ULTIMATELY TAKING THE HELM OF HYUNDAI MOROCCO IN 2018. A RISE BUILT ON FIELD KNOWLEDGE AND A STRONG ANALYTICAL CAPACITY.

"The automotive industry is uniquely rich. It's a world that has always fascinated me, because it combines innovation, competitiveness, and constant transformation," says Oussama Berrada right away. General manager of Bugshan Automotive Group—the automotive division of the Bugshan Morocco Group—since 2022, he emphasizes that the sector demands vision, precision, the ability to manage complexity, and close ties to the realities on the ground. The young executive spent over 12 years at Hyundai Morocco, a subsidiary of the Bugshan Group. "That journey allowed me to experience the automotive world in all its dimensions: financial, operational, commercial, and human," he says.

AUTONOMY AND DISCIPLINE

Oussama Berrada pursued his higher education at AlAkhawayn University (AUI), where he earned a bachelor's degree in finance. "That program gave me a solid foundation in management, strategy, financial analysis, and leadership. I had the honor of receiving the 'Outstanding Academic Achievements' certificate, an award presented by the university president in recognition of an exemplary academic path. That recognition meant a great deal to me," he says.

His time at AUI proved to be formative on several levels. "I learned to think methodically, to work in teams within an international environment, to speak with impact, and to demonstrate autonomy and discipline. This university doesn't just produce graduates—it shapes individuals capable of positively influencing their environment," the executive notes.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL VISION

Oussama Berrada began his career in 2006 at Ernst & Young, in auditing. "It's a school of excellence, where I had the opportunity to work with companies across a wide range of sectors. I learned to quickly understand organizations, adapt, and deliver precise diagnostics

with rigor and method." After three years in financial auditing, he joined Hyundai Morocco in 2010 as internal audit manager. This role allowed him to immerse himself in the company's operational workings and gain deep mastery of its key processes. "That cross-functional vision naturally led me to take on the role of financial director, a central function in a company generating several billion dirhams in revenue," he emphasizes.

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

The defining moment of his career remains his appointment as general manager of Hyundai Morocco in 2018. At that time, the company began a deep strategic transformation, with tangible results: significant revenue growth, Hyundai rising to the podium as one of the top three car brands in Morocco, a complete repositioning of the brand image, and more. "It was a very intense phase during which we were able to build a resilient, attractive, and high-performing model, driven by committed teams and

a strong corporate culture," he recounts. Oussama Berrada says he believes in management based on clarity, accountability, and closeness. "Giving purpose, setting ambitious but achievable goals, building trust, and encouraging initiative are at the core of my approach. For me, performance comes through people—through a culture of listening and through support that is demanding but compassionate," he concludes. ■



KARIM BENNANI

Oracle's Architect in Africa

FOR 25 YEARS, KARIM BENNANI HAS HELPED DRIVE ORACLE'S EXPANSION ACROSS MORE THAN 40 AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN MARKETS. HIS FOCUS TODAY: CLOUD, AI, AND POSITIONING AFRICA AS A KEY PLAYER IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY.

For a quarter of a century, Karim Bennani has embodied Oracle's rise across the African continent. A graduate of the very first class of Al Akhawayn University in 1999, he grew up with tech the way others grow up in a family home—building it, brick by brick, into something lasting. In Casablanca, he was one of the very first faces of the American tech giant in Africa. Today, he is one of its most influential voices.

In a sector where career paths often zigzag, Karim Bennani has followed a straight trajectory. Since joining Oracle in the late 1990s, he has never left the company. He has built from the ground up—first as a doer, then as a thinker, and finally as a leader.

It all began in Casablanca in 1999. Oracle had just set up its offices for French-speaking Africa, and Karim Bennani, then a fresh graduate with a degree in business administration from Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, was hired as marketing manager for the region. The company was shifting toward international expansion, and Africa represented a new frontier. Another advantage: Al Akhawayn's Anglo-Saxon approach and international outlook served as a true springboard for this kind of career.

From one position to the next, he expanded his scope of responsibility. Over the 2000s, he moved from marketing to sales management, then took on increasingly large geographic zones: first North Africa, then the Levant, Egypt, Turkey, and even-



tually the entire LEENA region (Levant, Egypt, North, East, West & Central Africa). A portfolio spanning more than 40 countries—from Casablanca to Baghdad, and from Accra to Addis Ababa.

His role? To grow Oracle's market share—and to support the technological transformation of major African companies.

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Karim Bennani leads sales strategies around the group's major offerings: Oracle Cloud, autonomous databases,

and more recently, generative artificial intelligence integrated into Oracle's solutions. He plays a key role in helping both public and private organizations adopt these technologies across critical sectors such as finance, energy, retail, and education.

Sovereign cloud, cybersecurity challenges, and machine learning-driven optimization are just some of the topics he discusses daily with African decision-makers. Oracle, historically a database software company, has evolved into a full-scale cloud solutions provider—a transformation Karim Bennani has significantly advanced on the continent. Leading multicultural and multidisciplinary teams, he coordinates go-to-market strategies across multiple subregions. He also regularly takes part in major tech summits, including the highly selective Oracle CloudWorld—Oracle's premier innovation showcase.

Through his journey, Karim Bennani embodies a form of African digital diplomacy: one where the continent is gradually shifting from being just a market to becoming a driving force in the data economy.

Married and a father of two, Karim Bennani remains deeply connected to his homeland. He is an active member of the Digital Africa Association, which promotes tech upskilling across the continent. His motto? That Africa should not only consume technology—but also produce solutions and cultivate talent. ■

ABDELMAJID FASSI FIHRI

Persuasion as Political Strategy

ABDELMAJID FASSI FIHRI HAS MADE PERSUASION THE CORNERSTONE OF HIS POLITICAL CAREER. AS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, HE BRIDGES MEDIA, POLICY, AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT.



Abdelmajid Fassi Fihri's political, academic, and civic journey shares a common thread: communication. A calling he affirmed during his studies at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, where he earned a bachelor's degree in professional communication in 2007. "My communication training at Al Akhawayn shaped my entire career. The courses, combining theory and practice, gave a lot of coherence to my path. I'm also a member of the Education, Culture, and Communication Committee in Parliament, because it's the committee I most identify with and where I try to be most useful," explains the Vice President of the House of Representatives. Abdelmajid Fassi Fihri also holds

a Postgraduate Diploma in "Politics and Media" from the University of Liverpool (UK), as well as a Master's in "Media Practice" from the University of Sydney (Australia).

Elected as a member of Parliament in 2016, then re-elected in 2021 as a representative of the city of Fez, Abdelmajid Fassi Fihri sits on the Education, Culture, and Communication Committee. His parliamentary work also extends internationally: he is a member of the Morocco-European Union Joint Parliamentary Committee and the thematic working group on artificial intelligence. Before entering Parliament, he served for nearly eight years as a special advisor to the general management of the National Broadcasting and Television Company (SNRT).

MANAGEMENT THROUGH PERSUASION

The Vice President of the House of Representatives describes his working style as "management through persuasion." "It's essential to convince the people around you in order to involve them in your projects. As Moroccan society is in constant evolution, it's also necessary to convince others of the credibility of your approach and the legitimacy of your objectives. Today, you must first persuade in order to gain support," he states. To achieve that, he believes listening, perseverance, and resilience are indispensable.

Abdelmajid Fassi Fihri is also active in international youth organizations. In 2018, he was elected president of the International Young Democrat Union (IYDU), the world's largest alliance of center-right political youth organizations, founded in 1981. He is also vice president of the Democrat Youth Community of Europe (DEMYC), the oldest center-right youth organization in Europe, established in 1964.

His commitment has been recognized internationally: in 2019, he received the Regal British Award from the House of Lords (United Kingdom) for his "positive contributions as a parliamentarian." The Australian government also awarded him the Outstanding Alumnus prize in recognition of his achievements at the University of Sydney. ■

GHASSANE EL MACHRAFI

A Logistician of Innovation

FROM TELECOM AND FINANCE TO LEADING AMDL, GHASSANE EL MACHRAFI HAS BUILT A CROSS-SECTOR CAREER DRIVEN BY PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT. TODAY, HE IS SHAPING A MORE COMPETITIVE AND CONNECTED MOROCCAN ECONOMY.

Ghassane El Machrafi's career path is decidedly cross-sectoral. After earning his engineering degree in telecommunications in Paris in 2008, he immediately returned to Morocco to begin a rich and diverse professional journey across several sectors of the national economy. Holding a bachelor's degree in computer networks from Al Akhawayn University since 2006, he considers his university years an enriching experience, marked by an American-style education that offered him an open-minded, confident, and resolutely optimistic outlook.

TELECOM AND INNOVATION

Upon his return to Morocco, Ghassane El Machrafi led the development of a hospitality and leisure offering in tourist resorts aimed at the domestic market at the Moroccan Tourism Engineering Company (SMIT) until 2010. He then moved to the private sector as Development Director at Société Générale des Travaux du Maroc (SGTM), where he oversaw real estate diversification activities. In 2013, he became Director of Assets at FC Communication, Morocco's leading outdoor advertising company. Three years later, he joined telecom operator inwi, where he led several departments, including those responsible for telecom regulation, inter-operator relations, and financial services as CEO of inwi money. This experience in the telecom sector lasted seven years.

A CONSTANT PURSUIT OF PERFORMANCE

Ghassane El Machrafi took the helm of AMDL in May 2023, with the mission of contributing to the development of a strategic sector for the competitiveness of the national economy. His leadership, both supportive and demanding, is driven by a constant pursuit of performance. Even in the private sector, he combined economic goals with initiatives of high societal value, beyond purely financial indicators. At inwi, he notably worked to democratize internet access in rural households and launched initiatives to promote broader financial inclusion.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Today, Ghassane El Machrafi puts his skills at the service of the state and contributes, through AMDL's achievements, to the country's path of development and economic modernization. In his view, professional success is relative. He prefers to speak of impact, accomplishments, and the building of trust-based relationships to unite shared ambitions. His mission is to help create favorable conditions for the growth of private initiative, improve logistical productivity for a more competitive national economy, and develop efficient urban logistics that meet citizens' expectations while preserving their mobility. ■



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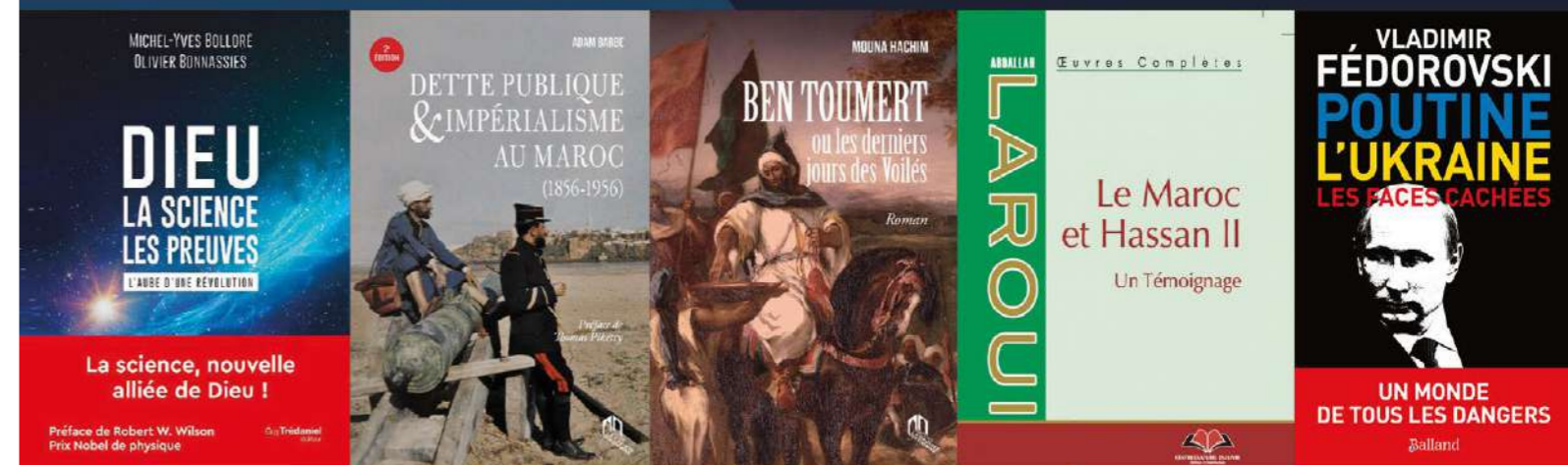
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WADIA AIT HAMZA

Leadership Built on Trust

FROM THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM TO AI LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS, WADIA AIT HAMZA HAS BUILT HIS PATH ON ONE BELIEF: LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT SERVING OTHERS. HIS CAREER BRIDGES COMMUNITY, INTEGRITY, AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES.



Wadia Ait Hamza has a unique perspective on leadership: "I define myself as a Servant Leader." This definition, drawn from the language of oxymoron, takes on full meaning in light of his explanation: "Leadership is not about a title, but about responsibility toward others. My role is to create the conditions for everyone around me to express themselves fully, feel safe, and grow within a framework of trust and clarity." A vision shaped by a path rooted in engagement. After studying international relations at AlAkhawayn University, a formative exchange at Montana State University in the United States, and strong involvement in the student activities office, Wadia Ait Hamza began his career as exchange program coordinator at AUI in 2002. "I then pursued a master's degree in Euro-Mediterranean affairs, followed by an internship at the European Institute of the Mediterranean in Barcelona, a think tank affiliated with the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs," he notes. This journey gave him a nuanced understanding of regional

dynamics, strengthened his geopolitical awareness, and expanded his international network.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Back in Morocco in 2008, he joined Toyota as Human Resources and Training Development Coordinator, before moving to the École de Gouvernance et d'Économie in Rabat in 2010. Three years later, he took up a position at the World Economic Forum in Geneva, joining the Global Shapers Community team, and was appointed Executive Director in 2017. Under his leadership, the Global Shapers Community expanded to over 500 cities and 15,000 members, with strengthened governance and impact evaluation frameworks. He also made a difficult but necessary decision: to close more than 250 hubs worldwide, "not because of a lack of results, but because they had drifted away from the community's values and standards." In 2022, he took the helm of the Forum of Young Global Leaders, a global network of leaders under the age of 40.

Now Director of Leadership Programs at the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence in Abu Dhabi, his mission is to "build bridges between leadership and emerging technologies." Between these two most recent positions, he took the time to write a book reflecting on what twenty years of commitment had taught him: *How Can I Serve? Navigating Leadership & Building Communities*. It is both a personal testimony and a call for leadership grounded in trust, service, and collective impact. "This project allowed me to reconnect with what truly drives me: service, integrity, and transmission," he tells us. ■

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