

Inspired pursuits:
omar samra, founder,
wild guanabana



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MENA's creative entrepreneurs talk on what it's like to turn a passion project into a business venture, and share their insights for pursuing creative ambitions in the MENA region.

It's almost impossible to not feel inspired hearing Omar Samra's story of how he went about setting up his adventure travel company . This Egyptian entrepreneur used to have a corporate career in finance before he set up his own enterprise that was driven off his own - a zeal, really, which has seen Samra travel to more than 80 countries around the world already. Wild Guanabana differentiates itself by offering memorable, out-of-the-ordinary and ethical travel experiences for its customers, and Samra is keen on maintaining the company's small-but-intimate feel- the goal, as he puts it, is not to become supremely rich, but rather to " make a change, to be a part of something bigger than myself."

THE Q: For a business such as Wild Guanabana that was founded on a very specific set of ethical principles, how do you go about measuring the company's success and growth, while staying true to your foundational values?

" In terms of measuring success, I personally think, and it's something I feel very strongly about, that, looking at the world in general, the way we measure value is inherently flawed. How we measure value in the world right now, in terms of companies, is basically based off shareholder return, or if it's a private company, the bottom-line and so on. But this sort of measurement is actually flawed, because it might have been effective in the times of the industrial revolution or pre that time, but now the world has

limited resources. And so value creation cannot just be about increasing shareholder value or selling more things, it's about . So it has to encompass things like, the people that work with you, are they being inspired in the place that they work and able to create? The people that you serve, the clients, are you changing their lives, are you having a meaningful impact in what they do? How are you conserving your environment, raising awareness about current issues through the work that you do?"

Omar Samra at TEDx

" And so, in a way, I never intended for Wild Guanabana to become an empire kind of thing- certain kinds of businesses, if you grow them beyond a certain point, it's impossible to [it was founded with]... So when I looked at myself and my business, I believed that I had to maintain a certain sort of scale in order to be faithful to the values of the business, and be able to serve every single client the way we wanted to, a personal service that is of high quality and still caring of the host community, the environment and so on. And even though we are a small company, we can play a much bigger role if we stay faithful to the sustainable guidelines that we have. We can become a champion of our industry, and hopefully inspire other companies, big and small, to ."