WELCOME SPEECH

FOR

REEM BELJAFLEH

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, (**name them if you think it’s appropriate**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**name CEO and company officers if present**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and of course to our new, exciting, and eager crop of fresh graduates, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk a bit about my experiences and thoughts throughout my adventure with Dubal. (**Do you want to acknowledge the person that asked you to speak? If so you can add**) I would also like to express my gratitude to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for acknowledging my commitment to my career and to the success of this fine company. It is through hard work, determination, and awareness that I have been able to learn and grow as a professional and I am humbled to have been asked to share this platform.

To our participating graduates, I want you to know that it was not so long ago that I sat where you are right now, as an eager and determined neophyte, ready to “conquer” the world. I remember back then, about seven years ago, I received an email from my university… I am a graduate of Zayed University… and that email suggested that I apply to Dubal for employment. I remember that a friend and I went to the offices one Saturday shortly after and searched for a person in the HR department. We were told there were no vacancies at the time, and even though I had no experience, there was an alternative-the company had … and has… an eighteen-month training program. Even at that early stage, with no professional history to speak of, I had a sense that this was the place in which I wanted to work. Although it took me almost one year to enter the program. I was determined, persistent, relentless, and **naïve**, all of which proved to serve me well in my “maiden voyage” or, as we can say, the launch of my career.

I arrived into the program and I heard stories… remember I was naïve… new… “fresh meat” as it were, and I wasn’t jaded, tainted, tired or cautious. I was **EAGER**. I knew I was there to **WORK** and to **LEARN** as much as I could. There were legends circulating about my first supervisor. I was told she was “tough.” Some may think that’s bad news, but I knew the opposite. The tougher the boss, the more I would learn. I would learn to focus on my tasks, I would learn to welcome “overwhelm,” I would learn to multitask… and mostly I would learn to go **towards** the work instead of looking for the easy way out. One of my first tasks as a graduate trainee was to organize human resources documents…. for **THREE THOUSAND EMPLOYEES**…. **BEFORE** records were converted to online files. Yes, I had to organize the paperwork for all of these colleagues. You know what? I **WAS** overwhelmed!!!! That’s great!!! I was happy to learn the systems, build a foundation, hone my skills, and contribute to the greater good of the organization.

As I worked and learned and demonstrated my alacrity… that’s a word you should all know and demonstrate on a regular basis… it means “**cheerful willingness**,” my managers and supervisors recognized the hard work I was doing, and guess what? They decided to make it harder!!! I could not have been happier!!! I was identified as a “high flier” and was “fast tracked” through the trainee program and instead of being in it for eighteen months, I completed the regimen in one year. As a graduate trainee, I was expected to do a one-month familiarization plan. As a little point of reference, let’s keep in mind two things: (1) I entered this part of the program in August…. And (2) the parts I had to become familiar with were the factories… Oh. Wait…. did I mentioned I was working in the factory next to the…. smelters? In 44 degree Celsius heat? In AUGUST? But you know what? I was there to learn!! I was there to build a foundation! I was there to get to know as many aspects of the business as possible… and I was eager and thankful for the opportunity… especially since no one mentioned the free facials and built in weight loss program that was an ancillary benefit of working next to the smelter!! (**Wait for the laugh**). No matter what, I knew I was gaining precious knowledge and endurance skills that would last throughout my career.

As I worked my way through the network of tasks and programs… and promotions, I built my knowledge base as well as my network of contacts and experience. As a performance manager I needed to know as many people as possible, who they were, what was expected of them, the capabilities and challenges demonstrated, and how to creatively problem solve… after all… the main goal of any professional organization is to keep moving forward in an environment that is productive and harmonious on all fronts.

I progressed from Performance Manager to Superintendent to Head of Performance Management and in 2014 the company merged. I became Interim Associate Manager of Performance Management…. over a combined company- a combined company that was now considered multi-national. Of course this presented new challenges, but I want you to know this very important point: I do not view new circumstances as “challenges.” To me they are **OPPORTUNITIES** to work hard, learn, grow and contribute further. The combined company became nationalized and I have received word that I will be receiving a new official title… (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) I was thrilled to hear the news…. and so was the printer that got to print up yet **ANOTHER** set of new business cards!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

This new merger will create a period of transition… there will be new openings for cooperation, resilience and familiarization; there will be great **opportunity** to learn and grow and collaborate at unprecedented levels and we need to identify the future of this company. Hopefully it is sitting right in front of us.

As you graduates enter this program, please know that we are all eager to work with you to identify your talents and to build your foundations. Although we understand that you’re just out of school, in many cases this is your first adventure into the professional sector. Although you knew your “old worlds” well, this is a “new world” for you. I know someone whose mantra is “I don’t know what I don’t know” and that is true of all of us. We owe it to ourselves and our employers to be vigilant about keeping an open mind, paying attention, remaining “on purpose” and learning as much as we can every day in every aspect of work and life. You are here to build a foundation. You are here to work harder than you’ve ever worked before. You are here to walk in the footsteps of our leaders…. your supervisors, management, and the executives of this organization. Our CEO, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ started by sweeping the floors and worked his way up. **ANYTHING** is possible with optimism, determination, and the drive and willingness to take responsibility and to succeed. There are certain trajectories that people follow on the road to success, but nothing is worthwhile if you’re not willing to do the really hard work. You **CANNOT** build a career on air. You need practical experience and that is what is offered here at Dubal.

Here’s another point to keep in mind. We are part of this great country. Modern Dubai was built on the vision of one man, HH Sheikh Mohammed (**Please use his full and proper title**). He is a man with a modern vision who also knows the meaning of hard work and has offered inspiration to all of us. He is a visionary and a leader that inspires. Remember his words, “Do we have to stand still to avoid the risk of falling or stop flying for fear of an air crash? Ever since I took a leadership role, I have encountered several challenges. But I never gave up and I never bowed to them.”

The essence of life is about stepping into the unknown, taking chances, learning and building a future individually and as a collective. What lies before each one of you is opportunity that is elusive to most people. Make sure you understand the potential and what is expected of you.

It is your time to learn what it takes to be leaders. It’s time to build your foundations, strengthen your focus, demonstrate your willingness to learn, hone your determination for producing excellence, and sharpen your skills in every aspect of business and in life. It is your turn to learn responsibility and contribution to a vital team all united with a common goal. I congratulate all of you for being here and I look forward to learning of your “opportunities” and successes!! Thank you all!