

Leader of the pack

In just one year, CEO Sutton Turner has led Abu Dhabi real-estate company Khidmah from a tiny team of 20 to a whopping 495, and it's still growing. What's the secret of his success?

IN THE last two years Sutton Turner has covered a lot of ground, both personally and professionally. "My family has enjoyed travelling to China, Jordan, Greece, Oman, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and many other places during our two years here in Abu Dhabi," says the Texan. "The cultural and learning experience has been wonderful for us."

If you don't know his name, you may very well recognise the company he's steered through the recent financial troubles; the name Khidmah is splashed across properties around the UAE, and many residents have used www.UAE2Let.com.

An alumnus of Harvard Business School, Turner brings more than 15 years of experience in the real estate sector – meaning growing companies from seedlings into large corporations is nothing new for him. "In 1996, I helped start an acquisition company in the USA where we purchased over 12,000 residential units across the US in less than two years.

"I saw so many inefficiencies in the management of the properties as well as opportunities to improve a property's performance with better management. In 1998, I started a management company with four of the properties we had purchased and began building an operation which grew to 320 employees across 11 states in America."

In part it was this development that drew the attention of one of Abu Dhabi's largest developers. He came to Abu Dhabi in May 2008, hired by Sorouh Real Estate to start the first Emirati-owned and Emirati-operated services management company. Khidmah launched a year ago, during Cityscape 2009.

Though Khidmah helps find renters and buyers for properties all over the capital, property management is perhaps what the company does best. Khidmah customers can use a range of services including consulting, facilities and maintenance, leasing and resales, security, cleaning, landscaping, health and fitness, customer call centres and more. Even better, all services are provided under a single point of contact, a system that helps to improve communication and maximise service while at the same time saving money.

Currently Khidmah oversees properties in Khalidiya Village and Corniche Tower, off the island in Sas Al Nakhl Village and Golf Gardens, in Al Reem Island's forthcoming Sun, Sky and Tala Towers, in Dubai's Lake Shore Tower and in Al Ain's Al Oyoum Village. The company also recently won multiple contracts to provide services to nine buildings of the Municipality of Abu Dhabi across the Emirate.

As freehold properties throughout



Quietly confident CEO Sutton Turner

Abu Dhabi approach completion, more and more home buyers should be interested in a company that services properties in such a way that owners and renters need never interact. Even better, Khidmah can manage properties that are owned by non-residents, which is great news for anyone who wants to buy into the promising Abu Dhabi market but isn't sure about future plans.

"The Khidmah board has a massive vision for Khidmah, and I hope I will be here to see it fulfilled," says Sutton Turner. "We are just getting started and now have 495 employees within the first 12 months of existence.

"I plan to be here to see our company put into practice our plans for providing quality property management all under one roof with no outsourcing at an affordable price.

As passionate as Turner is about his company, his dedication doesn't stop at his office door. In 2009, he helped found the Joseph Alliance, a non-profit aid organisation that is currently building an orphanage in Ethiopia.

The experience of living in the UAE has

been a positive one for Turner, his wife and two daughters. "I absolutely love the conservative and family oriented pace of Abu Dhabi. We truly enjoy living and being friends with people from all over the world. The Emirati culture and its rich heritage of hospitality have been wonderful to experience."

Turner also speaks to and trains leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo twice a year. He's a strong believer in the theory that a leader will produce leaders like himself – in his blog on the Khidmah website, Turner writes, "We teach what we know, but we reproduce what we are." If he's right, those students he instructs stand to gain much from this profitable executive. And he's not going anywhere soon.

"I love training leaders, and with our Emirati Internship Program and leadership lessons I teach each week, I continue to be excited about the future of Khidmah and the future of this country. My family loves it here, so we plan on staying as long as Khidmah needs my leadership." ■



Q: What do **81,659** copies of Abu Dhabi Week look like?

A: Laid end to end, they would complete 4.5 laps of Yas Marina Circuit.



Abu Dhabi Week

81,659 copies every week

