

III Feature:

Right: Ahmed Ramdan, Managing Director,
Roya International

Below: Roya International provided
Hospitality and Design advisory to
The Monarch Dubai



Roya: guiding hospitality to success

Roya International, a leading hospitality solutions specialist, marks its 10th anniversary this year. Over the last 10 years, the company has earned a reputation for its expertise and commitment in providing tailor-made solutions to the hospitality and real estate industries.

Roya in Arabic means 'vision' and Ahmed Ramdan, founder and CEO of Roya International is the visionary behind the company that has turned many hospitality dreams into reality. He recalls how he started Roya International.

"We at Roya are visionaries; visualisers," smiles Ramdan, "I was an hotelier for many years. In 1998, I was working in InterContinental Hotels when I realised that there was a gap in the market in terms of advising investors about hospitality, so I started the company at that time. Investors did not know who to look for or where to look for advice on the type of mixed-use development; on the type of hotel to build; what kind of restaurant they needed; how to approach hotel operators to operate for them; how to put the entire package together. I created the company from that because I saw a need."

Key areas of expertise

With an impressive client list that ranges from major developers to hotel operators, governments to blue chip corporations, private investors to public companies, and hotel management companies, Roya International



provides the inspiration, insight, knowledge and skills that every developer or owner requires.

"What do we do is very simple.

We have four major activities," says Ramdan. These four major components are: hospitality advisory, development advisory, asset management, and Food and Beverage or restaurant advisory.

Hospitality Advisory for instance explains Ramdan, "has anything to do with a hotel and hotel operations. You have a renovation problem. The hotel is not performing very well. You have to re-do your food and beverage. It's like a doctor doing a general check-up on you. We do that. We advise you on anything to do with hotel and services – basically anything."

The Development Advisory provides expertise in advising a client on what type of hotel to build, where to build, who should be the operator, who should be the contractor, what lifestyle it should convey. "Once we advise the client on all that, we conduct research," says Ramdan. "We coordinate all the activities related to the project from start to finish, until the business is up and running and then we leave. This Advisory is for hotels, for mixed-use developments, serviced apartments, large restaurants, or all these activities combined or separate."

"Client Representation or Asset Management is the third division," says Ramdan. "Once the hotel is running, we liaise between the hotel operator and owner to monitor the hotel's performance versus the market. We see if the hotel is optimising its efficiency. Does it have the right people working there? Do they have the right service? Are the interests of the owners looked after? Are the owners protected? We look at that. We select the right hotel operator and negotiate a good contract for the owner – that's Asset Management."

The fourth major service Roya provides is Food & Beverage or Restaurant Management. "We can do turnkey services for restaurants,"

Ramdan points out. "It's the same as we do for a large hotel. Say you want to have a nice restaurant; if you love Italian Restaurants and you want to build one. We find the right location for you. We decorate it for you. We help you with the feasibility study. We do everything we can for you. We can man it, fill it. You have a vision – we will realise your vision."

Roya, Ramdan says is always completely committed to the project. "It's as if it's our own. We are very possessive of our projects." Roya International has a pool of experts. "We have experts in hotel operation. We have experts in finance. We have people who are experts in architecture. We have experts in interior design. We have experts in contract negotiations with hotel operators. For every activity we have, we have a batch of experts sitting and negotiating. We have a hands-on team of executives."

Roya's direct links with the industry's leading architects, designers, franchisers, operators, investors and developers make it a one-stop-shop to facilitate decision making processes.

An expert's advice

"Right now, our occupancy is very healthy. I think it will continue in the coming years because of the shortage of accommodation. Our fear is that the prices may go up. If hoteliers are taking advantage of this phenomenon and increasing their prices regularly – this may have an adverse effect on us."

Does he see that happening soon? "Part of it is also hooked to the dollar. The dollar is weakening so the prices go up. Compared with prices a year ago, a European who pays by Euro finds today's rates cheaper. That's the problem. I think once the dollar stabilises then we will see what will happen to the market."

Ramdan has some advice on how people in the industry can head off such challenges. "I think first, it is imperative that we increase supply. I think it's a free market. If you increase

"We're totally committed when we take on projects – it's as if it's our own.

We are very possessive about our projects"

supply in different categories, not necessarily in the five-star category or a business hotel, increase supply in three-star hotels, in family hotels – if these are increased – that will automatically settle the price. At the moment, everybody's building five-star hotels. That's one of the problems."

With tourists coming here, he goes on to explain, everybody will benefit – airlines, car rentals, hotels, and the entire tourism chain. There are cab drivers, tour operators, tourist guides. Tourism has trickle down effects that benefit so many. That is what Ramdan calls the "multiplier effect" which he says, will continue.

Tourists, depending on their nationality, he points out have different levels of purchasing power. "Gulf tourists come here for shopping," says Ramdan. "Some come for shopping and for leisure. There are different types of tourists entering the market. Luckily, Dubai or the UAE is ready to cater to all types of tourists."

"We have all types of accommodation here, which cater to the different needs of tourists. That type of product will continue in Dubai. It will be highly segmented in the future family hotel resorts, for instance to cater to the family segment. The hotel industry is going in that direction." H
By Maria Elena C Alba