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Contact: Deirdre M. Coyle, Jr.  
[dcoglejr@nexteconomics.com](mailto:dcoglejr@nexteconomics.com)  
KSA mobile : +966 54247 6365  
USA mobile: +617 504 4547

**2010 Ranking of Fastest-Growing Saudi Businesses Indicates  
Bright Entrepreneurial Future**

*Companies create over 19,000 new jobs*

**Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, January 25, 2010, 8 pm** – The second annual list of Saudi Arabia’s fastest growing emerging businesses, released today at an Awards Ceremony at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Competitiveness Forum in Riyadh, reveals a diverse array of robust companies, the majority founded by entrepreneurs, male and female, who are young and aggressive. They also show that entrepreneurship in the Kingdom is surging. They are growing fast and expect to accelerate the pace, expanding nationally and throughout the Middle East. Saudi Fast Growth 100 winners all have a track record of extraordinary revenue growth, while accounting for the creation of thousands of new jobs.

The Saudi Fast Growth 100 is national program to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in Saudi Arabia that ranks the fastest-growing emerging companies in the Kingdom. The list was created by the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority’s (SAGIA) National Competitiveness Center with joint founding partners Al-Watan newspaper and AllWorld Network. Joining the initiative as Strategic Partners are the National Commercial Bank, Sukoon International, Siraj Capital and Phenomenal PR. “Compiling the Saudi Fast Growth 100 list led us to several encouraging conclusions,” said His Excellency Governor Amr Al-Dabbah, SAGIA’s Governor. “The dynamism of the applicants demonstrated clearly that Saudi Arabia is creating a business climate that supports and rewards innovation and entrepreneurial initiative. This vital group of emerging growth companies provides the oxygen of the economy. The winners of the Saudi Fast Growth 100 list will be the guides to our future. These trail-blazers will be the most potent signal that Saudi Arabia is a dynamic economy full of creativity and opportunity.”

AllWorld Network and Harvard Business School Professor Porter (AllWorld’s Chairman) have created similar rankings of fast growth emerging companies in the US and the UK. “The Saudi Fast Growth 100 companies, led by dynamic men and women, represent the leading edge of a new approach to Saudi Arabia’s competitiveness,” says Harvard Professor Michael Porter. “These companies have already created more than 19,000 jobs and their ambition is to keep growing.”

A survey of Saudi Fast Growth 100 CEOs outlined a picture of business dynamism and

CEO optimism. The analysis provides many fascinating insights into the Kingdom's entrepreneurial economy.

During the five-year period measured (2004 – 2008), 45 Saudi Fast Growth 100 companies responding to the survey created more than 19,000 jobs since they were founded, of which 11,000 were created in the last five years. The companies grew at a 41-percent average compound annual growth rate, with revenues ranging from SAR 4 million to SAR 1 billion.

The average age of company CEOs at start-up was 33 years and many of them have formed three or more companies. The highest concentration of companies is in High Tech and Telecommunications followed by Health & Education, Public Relations, Media & Publishing, and Construction & Engineering.

Moreover, while evidence suggests a culture of what analysts describe as “opportunity seeking,” the process is based on solid business fundamentals. Close to 90 percent of the businesses formed by the Saudi Fast Growth 100 CEOs are still in operation. A majority of survey respondents indicated that growth plans over the next few years included acquisitions, initial public offerings, and expansion throughout the Middle East and beyond.

“This is one of the hottest entrepreneurial environments in the world with high rates of successful start ups. A generation of sophisticated entrepreneurs is emerging to fill the market gaps created by the Kingdom's large companies and government,” stated Anne S. Habiby, one of the co-founders of AllWorld. “The majority of Saudi Fast Growth 100 entrepreneurs have started more than one company, and the majority plan to establish another company in the next two years. The conditions are right and the evidence confirms that entrepreneurship is surging in the Kingdom.”

The findings establish the Saudi Fast Growth 100 as a new benchmark for the country, and one that meets international benchmarks of US and European entrepreneurial competitiveness.

Hatim Mouminah, CEO of AlWatan explained that the reason they became the Media Partner for the Saudi Fast Growth 100 was to expand the culture of entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia and create a “voice” for the Kingdom's emerging companies. Says Mouminah, “The Saudi Fast Growth 100 gives us an invaluable opportunity to report compelling stories of innovation and success from companies. By reporting on the Saudi Fast Growth 100 companies, AlWatan aims to support and encourage young business leaders because they are the future of the Kingdom's economy. Participation in the Saudi Fast Growth 100 costs nothing for the companies, and is a fantastic opportunity for growing companies to be recognized.”

While the survey results are generally positive, they also reveal obstacles impeding business development and growth. Respondents cited difficulty accessing growth capital and excessive government regulations as serious impediments. Also cited was the need for skilled workers and the absence of a program for training needed employees.

“The problems cited are clearly serious, but the good news is they can be corrected,” said Deirdre Coyle, co-founder with Habiby of AllWorld. “The paucity of start-up capital, surveys indicate, is due in part to the lack of information about Saudi businesses and the country’s business climate. With regard to human capital, there is general recognition of the need and the benefits of building a deep, skilled labor pool. Plans are in development.”

SAGIA and AlWatan are playing a critical market-making role bringing to light examples of entrepreneurial success. As these emerging companies and emerging industries become known, new entrepreneurs will be inspired to build companies and capital markets will form to support them.

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**Editor's Notes:**

*Winners are ranked according to their revenue performance between 2004 and 2008. The company with the largest percentage increase in revenue secures the #1 spot on the list. The #2 company has the second best results, and so forth.*

*The selection criteria are based on international standards of competitiveness originally developed by Inc. Magazine to create the Inc. 500. The criteria are as follows:*

- (a) Applicants must be privately held, for-profit, independent businesses. (In this case, independent means that a company is not a subsidiary or a division of a larger company with other revenue-generating operations.*
- (b) Must not be a publicly traded company, non-profit, holding company, franchise, bank or utility company. Private companies established by government or where government is a majority stakeholder are also not eligible.*
- (c) Applicant companies must be based in Saudi Arabia.*
- (d) Have 8 or more full-time employees in 2008.*
- (e) Have generated revenue of at least 400,000 SAR in 2004.*
- (f) Have generated revenue of at least 4 million SAR in 2008.*
- (g) Applicants must provide audited financial statements to verify their revenue (turn over) numbers.*

*The winning companies are divided into two categories:*

*(1) Saudi Fast Growth 100: Companies five years old or older with a proven track record of growth. They are ranked on the percentage increase of their annual revenue/turn over between 2004 and 2008.*

*(2) Saudi Fast Growth 100 Start-Ups: Companies less than five years old but with a profile that, other than longevity, would qualify them as candidates for the Saudi Fast Growth 100 list. They are ranked on the percentage increase of their annual revenue/turn over from 2007 to the end of 2008.*

**The Saudi Fast Growth 100 Founding Partners**

**About SAGIA**

*SAGIA, the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, was established in 2000 as part of the new foreign investment law in Saudi Arabia. Its purpose is to attract investment to Saudi Arabia and more recently its mandate has evolved to encompass the enhancement of the Kingdom’s overall competitiveness. SAGIA plans to attract sufficient investment to achieve rapid and sustainable economic growth in Saudi Arabia, capitalizing on the Kingdom’s competitive strengths as the global capital of energy and as a major hub between East and West. It aims to position Saudi Arabia among the top ten most competitive nations by 2010 through the creation of a pro-business environment, a knowledge-based society, and by developing new, world-class ‘Economic Cities’.*

### **The NCC**

*The National Competitiveness Center (NCC) was established by SAGIA in 2006 to act as an independent body to monitor, assess and support the enhancement of competitiveness in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The NCC fully supports SAGIA's 10x10 campaign to make Saudi Arabia one of the top 10 most competitive countries in the world by 2010 and is heavily involved in helping SAGIA to reach this goal. The NCC fulfills its role by serving as a think tank, facilitator and communicator of change. The NCC fulfills this role in three ways: First, it serves as a think tank for change by conducting and developing competitive assessments and monitoring the implementation and results of change programs. The NCC's programs focus primarily on improving the ease of doing business within the Kingdom, through spurring modernization of the general business environment. Second, it works as a facilitator of change by creating forums for discussion in the public and private sectors. The NCC annually coordinates with SAGIA to help organize the Global Competitiveness Forum. Finally, it acts as a communicator for change, sharing success stories and generating momentum for the Kingdom's ongoing competitiveness efforts. The NCC seeks to educate the government, private sector and general public on the importance of national competitiveness, through such channels as its competitiveness driven initiatives, that seek to embed, encourage & recognize competitive behavior across private & public sectors. In addition, its Competitiveness Reviews, competitiveness bulletins, speaking engagements, and its website all serve to bring to the forefront the latest in competitiveness based thought.*

### **About AlWatan**

*In less than a decade, Al-Watan Saudi Daily grew to become one of the leading Saudi newspapers with readership that covers the entire Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As of the start of this week, Al-Watan is approaching the readers in the Kingdom with its new edition, which marks a milestone for the newspaper that was by itself considered a milestone in the history of press in Saudi. The need to modernize the newspaper was the reason for renovating the newspaper design and content as well as expanding its printing facilities across the Kingdom, making it the only Saudi daily that is printed every morning in four major cities. The 48-pages of the new edition will cover in depth Saudi affairs with a wide range of feature stories, news, analysis, and reports. Al-Watan will not only serve the entire Kingdom, but it will serve the region as well by reporting national stories that of interest to local and regional readers although it will still focus on its national base of readers.*

### **About AllWorld Network**

**[www.allworldlive.com](http://www.allworldlive.com)**

*AllWorld's mission is to find and accelerate all the scalable growth businesses in the emerging world by 2012. A decade ago, the co-founders of AllWorld Network – Deirdre M Coyle and Anne S. Habiby -- joined forces with Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter and Inc. magazine to create the US Inner City 100 list, looking for competitive entrepreneurs where no one thought they existed – in America's economically distressed inner cities. In that first year, only 120 companies entered the competition. But by 2008, there were 10,000 companies vying to be on the Inner City 100 list. Companies have to be privately held and each one competes for a spot based on its sales growth over the past five years. The Inner City 100 became an American phenomenon and its own engine of growth. In 2001 the UK's then-Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, asked the team to create a UK Inner City 100 with the Financial Times in 2001. In 2007, Coyle and Habiby established AllWorld Network to take this model global. They began in Saudi Arabia at the invitation of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority. The inaugural Saudi Fast Growth 100 winners were announced at the 2009 Global Competitiveness Forum in Riyadh.*

*Building on the success of the Saudi 100, AllWorld launched the South Africa Fast Growth 100 in November 2009, and in 2010 will launch the Arabia 500 and the Africa 500.*

*AllWorld looks for growth companies that are creating the next economy of ideas, jobs and industries and puts them on the global radar screen. With market visibility, these companies of 25 or 200 employees are able to scale up by attracting world-class capital, talent, partners and opportunities. Without it, the growth of emerging countries is suppressed.*

*In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, AllWorld believes media is the underleveraged asset for growth. AllWorld calls this [Visibility Economics™](#).*