

Section:	Direct Selling Festival
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## Direct selling set to boom in the Middle East

As many sectors feel the pinch from the global downturn, the direct selling industry appears to go from strength to strength.



Figures from 2008 put global revenues from direct selling (conducted person-to-person, away from a fixed retail location) at \$110bn - judging by the interest already generated in the Middle East, the sector is set to grow rapidly in this region. Last year's Dubai International Direct Selling Festival, the first and only such event in the region, attracted 45 industry leaders exhibiting their wares to 3000 visitors from 35 countries.

Neither is the medium by any means new to the Middle East. In the UAE, there are already a number of established direct selling companies in operation - names such as SEANET International, Forever Living Products, DXN, SISEL, Power Plus, Amega Global, RMP and Better Globe.

Forever Living Products, with \$2.5bn turnover and a well-known name in the sector, has operated in the UAE for the past 9 years. 'In the UAE we have 7 registered offices in the GCC,' the company's Managing Director, Eliser Salvador, said at last year's event. 'Currently, we have more than 50,000 FLP members in the GCC.' While the medium lends itself to a range of product categories, around 90 percent of direct selling is within the personal care and nutrition industries.

There appears to be specific reasons why the sector fares well during times of economic turmoil. At a time when many UAE residents may welcome a way to supplement their income, direct selling, believe proponents, may provide an ideal platform for many to boost their earning capacity. 'It enables people to choose from a number of opportunities that they can run as their own business, part-time - whenever is most convenient,' explains Niousha Ehsan, co-founder and business development manager of the Direct Selling Educational Institute (DSEI). 'Direct selling doesn't require any particular experience or financial resources, which makes it very appealing to many people.'

And while many direct selling companies have found the Middle East to be a lucrative market for a number of years, there is much potential for growth within the region, feels Ehsan - particularly amongst the female population.

*'Direct selling has by no means been fully exploited in this part of the world. Bearing in mind that 85% of people in the business are women, there is considerable interest from women within the region. Direct selling also provides a tremendous opportunity for students that would like to boost their income.'*

The Dubai International Direct Selling Festival runs from 3rd to 4th April at Dubai Festival City. The exhibition is free of charge and open from 11am to 9pm over both days.

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