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On the surface, education and entertainment can seem an unlikely — and perhaps even odd — couple. However, over the years the interactions between the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) and The Talent Brokers have resulted in a thriving symbiotic relationship, which only seems to get better with time.

The first time The Talent Brokers walked into the bustling environment of the HCT, was back in 1994. At that time, Padma Coram was in the process of developing a first-ever top 10 Arabic countdown for the music channel, Channel V. Those were the days when satellite TV was in its infancy in the Middle East and South Asia. The Talent Brokers not only facilitated music television’s entry into the market, but also, pioneered the concept of outsourcing by single-handedly creating, managing and producing the content for Channel V.

In order to understand the young Arab mind, we thought the logical place to source views and opinions, would be to scout around a premier educational institution that was working on shaping the leaders of tomorrow. We were initially wary of the “technology” tag in HCT and must confess our pleasant surprise at the energy of the young adults within its campus. Brimming with ideas, bursting with opinions and busy with their academia, the HCT men and women were not afraid to ask and express. Their informed and opinionated discussions were just a sneak preview of the future of the UAE’s leadership. And we’re quite privileged and proud to have had access
to it before most.

Since then, The Talent Brokers has celebrated 28 years in the event organization industry. Working on a philosophy that encourages perseverance and dedication, we have established a global event and performance management and promotion company based in Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates with affiliates worldwide. The Talent Brokers manages, promotes, produces and organizes international events, concerts, commercial shows, performances and corporate events in the Middle East, India, Sri Lanka and South East Asia.

We have created and staged many of the major international performances and events that have visited the Middle East and India in the last 28 years, including arranging the critically-acclaimed tenor, Placido Domingo’s performance with an 80-piece Syrian orchestra. The spectacular event was for and on behalf of the HCT, as part of the Education Without Borders conference in Abu Dhabi in 2007.

Not restricting ourselves to a single genre, we have promoted a whole range of musical styles on a regular basis including Arabic, Soul, Dance, Rock and Indian, among others and have also been responsible for all the production aspects such as stage, sound and lighting. Our concert repertoire includes presenting artistes such as Elton John, Rod Stewart, Ravi Shankar, Luciano Pavarotti, Aishwarya Rai, Shah Rukh Khan, Amr Diab and Rageb Alame to name a few.

Over the years, The Talent Brokers has had the wonderful opportunity of working with the HCT in the form of organizing, managing or producing events. Each one of those instances has demonstrated an able and affable side of the HCT family.

The Talent Brokers strongly believes that an organization’s values flow from the top. And there can be no better proof of this than the HCT.

Our meetings and interactions with His Excellency Sheikh
Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, Chancellor of the HCT and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, have always left us more humbled and determined to better our efforts in everything we do. Sheikh Nahayan’s ability to remember the smallest details in individuals’ lives makes him a living example of true royalty and leadership. Given the enormous responsibility that accompanies his position, Sheikh Nahayan unfailingly remembers to add a personal touch — no matter how short-lived the conversation. Whether it’s enquiring after someone’s health, or family members, we have repeatedly been amazed by Sheikh Nahayan’s capacity to remember the important people in others’ lives.

Sheikh Nahayan’s modesty and his commitment to intellectual growth have permeated down to the staff and students at the HCT.

HCT’s graduates have achieved a rare combination of liberal and progressive thought that is firmly rooted in culture, tradition and humanism, without ever compromising on basic ethical values and integrity. There is a willingness to understand, learn and accept.

We have observed that the HCT students’ personalities are multi-faceted, as their interests in a wide range of activities are encouraged to grow beyond academics. Learning is a constant process and the most important lesson the HCT teaches its students is to make education a partner in life. With outlets that allow them to tap into their hobbies and extra-curricular activities, the HCT has succeeded in creating adults who celebrate diversity and are tolerant of differences. Real world experience is provided on the campuses enabling the students to fit right in from the moment they step into their first jobs.

Our recollections of the relationship between the HCT and The Talent Brokers would be incomplete without mentioning Norman Gray. Our stereotypes of academia were completely dispelled by Norman, the HCT’s former director of the Dubai Men’s campus and also our previous neighbor.
Initially, we would be extremely cautious around Norman and treat him with the traditional respect reserved for professors and educationalists. At times we would wonder if Norman would even respond to our neighborly overtures. After all, we were supposedly dealing with rock n’ roll.

However, it was Norman who would initiate all the fun interactions we’ve enjoyed as neighbors. We’ve had many memorable conversations with him and his family on extremely diverse subjects that have been most enriching, without ever touching on academics.

Norman’s contribution to the HCT has doubtless been enormous as is evident in the college naming a building in his honor, after his retirement. The act of recognizing Norman is again testimony that the HCT values its relationships and infuses that core human value among its students.

The legacy left behind by Norman is scaling new heights under the creative leadership of Dr. Tayeb Kamali, the vice-chancellor of the HCT. Despite the power of his position, Dr. Kamali’s simplicity and unassuming manner, rubs off on the students, who are respectful in their dealings with everyone. In his handling of day to day activities and inspiring a large body of faculty and students, Dr. Kamali’s ability to energize and encourage has always been a motivating experience for us.

On the occasion of the HCT’s 20th anniversary, we, Padma and Richard Coram and the staff of The Talent Brokers wish the very best for all its future plans and look forward to continuing the valued relationship we enjoy with the HCT.