

Firas Barakat

Head of Communications & Marketing | Strategic Communications Leader | Expert in Thought Leadership & Stakeholder Strategy | Public Affairs Advisor | Public Speaking Coach

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Strategic Communications & Public Affairs Advisor with 23+ years of experience across Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, specializing in corporate, government, and financial communications, public affairs, crisis management, media engagement, and integrated marketing. I've advised leading government entities and blue-chip companies including Siemens, Saudi Ministries (Finance, Transport, Energy, Communications & IT, and others), Local Content & Government Procurement Authority, Saudi Ports Authority, Saudi Railways, Zain Telecom, MA'ADEN, Microsoft, British Airways, among many others.

Building on my expertise and knowledge, I've become a trusted and performance-driven strategic communications advisor and public speaking coach to numerous Governmental Leaders and C-Suite executives, providing communications counsel on public speaking, strategic communications, public affairs and reputation management. I have a strong portfolio of successful projects and campaigns in thought leadership, executive visibility, and public outreach.

Core Competencies

- **Strategic Communications Leadership:** 20+ years designing and executing integrated strategies aligned with business goals to build brand reputation and influence.
- **Public Relations & Corporate Communications:** Led high-impact PR initiatives that reinforce mission and vision across internal and external stakeholders.
- **Public Affairs & Government Relations:** Advised senior officials and engaged with ministries and regulatory bodies to manage high-stakes, policy-sensitive communications.
- **C-Suite Advisory & Media Training:** Coached Ministers, CEOs, and Governors on public speaking, media handling, and high-visibility appearances.
- **Media Relations & Executive Visibility:** Built strong media networks, secured top-tier coverage, and elevated executive thought leadership through campaigns and events.
- **Crisis Communications & Reputation Management:** Led crisis response strategies ensuring proactive, unified messaging to mitigate reputational risk.
- **Internal Communications & Employee Engagement:** Developed internal messaging platforms and campaigns that foster alignment, culture, and team cohesion.
- **Event Strategy & Project Leadership:** Directed high-profile forums, launches, and stakeholder engagements from concept to delivery.
- **Integrated Marketing & Brand Positioning:** Delivered multichannel marketing strategies (digital, content, events) to enhance brand equity and visibility.
- **Analytical Thinking & Problem Solving:** Navigated complex issues with data-informed strategies tailored to sector-specific challenges.
- **Cross-functional Team Leadership:** Managed diverse global and regional teams across agencies and corporates to deliver unified, high-impact communications.

Professional Experience (+23 Years)

May – October 2025: **Regional Director, Business & Clients | Head of KSA Office**
Ruder Finn Atteline, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Led business growth and client relations in Saudi Arabia.
- Provided strategic communications, crisis management, and media training to C-level clients.
- Oversaw PR strategy, content, thought leadership, media engagement and team operations.
- Managed the operating plan for growth and profit, budget and P&L.
- Reported to CEO MENA and EVP Growth & Operations, MENA.

June 2021 –
October 2024 **Country Head of Communications**
Siemens, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Led the full spectrum of communications, public relations, marketing, branding, reputation, crisis, and public affairs initiatives across all Siemens business units in Saudi Arabia.
- Localized Siemens' global brand narrative for the Saudi market, significantly increasing earned media exposure and deepening engagement with key public and private stakeholders.
- Spearheaded content strategy and executive visibility programs, securing top-tier media placements and positioning Siemens as a leader in public sector innovation and sustainability.
- Acted as senior advisor to the CEO, and Business Unit Heads on public affairs, government relations, and strategic external engagement.
- Collaborated closely with global and regional communications teams to align local strategy with Siemens' global mission, vision, and campaign objectives.
- Directed end-to-end execution of all communications, marketing campaigns, branding initiatives, industry events, customer activations, and trade shows.
- Oversaw internal communications and employer branding programs, especially during key transformation and crisis periods, ensuring alignment, clarity, and culture reinforcement.
- Delivered executive coaching and media training to Siemens leadership, including speechwriting and public presentation support.
- Built and managed strong relationships with key journalists and media stakeholders to ensure consistent, high-impact media coverage.
- Authored and edited core editorial content including press releases, thought leadership articles, executive speeches, and social media messaging.
- Reporting directly to the Country CEO, and the Regional Head of Communications for the Middle East & North Africa.

September
2020 – May
2021: **Managing Director (temporary contract)**
Alef International – Publishing & Media, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Led business operations and communications strategy for government and private clients.
- Oversaw PR, research, content, and creative teams.
- Delivered media coaching and reputation management advisory to senior officials.
- Provided senior advisory to C-Suite executives pursuing strategic communications counsel on managing reputational and business impact.
- Managed the operating plan for growth and profit, budget and P&L.
- Reported to Chairman and CEO.

June 2019 –
May 2020: **Managing Director**
Hewar Group, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Managed client programs and agency operations across public and private sectors.
- Advised C-Suite executives on crisis communications, strategic positioning, and public speaking.
- Led internal teams developing communications strategy and delivering media engagement, content services, and thought leadership programs.
- Managed the operating plan for growth and profit, budget and P&L.
- Reported to CEO and COO.

November
2017 – May
2019: **Managing Director | Head of Operations in Saudi Arabia**
Finsbury, (WPP Group), Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Counseled ministries and major corporates on national announcements and global forums.
- Delivered public speaking courses and media training to Ministers, Key Officials and CEOs.
- Led communications programs for Saudi Budget, strategic Vision 2030 programs and initiatives, PIF-linked entities, and other flagship companies.

- Led the teams responsible to develop communications strategy, crisis communications, media engagements strategies, thought leadership programs, and content development.
- Managed profitability and financial aspects of the company's ongoing business and projects.
- Reported to Partner/ CEO Middle East & Africa.

June – October 2017: **Senior Communications Advisor (3-months project basis)**
Alef International – Publishing & Media, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- Led communications and content development for SAR and NWC.
- Developed crisis and stakeholder engagement plans.
- Supervised PR, communications, social media, content and production teams.
- Advised C-Suite executives on strategic positioning, and public speaking.
- Reported to CEO.

February 2016 – May 2017: **Director/ Head of Operations**
ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller (WPP Group), Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Key Responsibilities

- Led the clients' programs in terms of strategic communications planning and implementation.
- Led the teams responsible to develop communications strategies, PR program, reputation management program, media engagement activities.
- Led client strategies for industrial, financial, and corporate sectors.
- Delivered communications and branding strategies for PIF-owned Dussur.
- Trained internal teams and led knowledge transfer sessions.
- Reported to Managing Director Middle East and CEO Middle East.

Earlier Roles Include:

- Head of PR Unit – JWT (WPP), Saudi Arabia
- Managing Director – Pixels Communications (Co-Founder), Saudi Arabia
- PR Director – Weber Shandwick, Saudi Arabia
- Country Manager – Landmark PR (DDB Group), Saudi Arabia
- Co-Founder – Connoisseur Global Events, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- Academic Supervisor – SABIS School, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- Account Manager – Afkar Group, PR & Events, Lebanon

Personal Information

Birth Date: 28 June 1978
 Gender: Male
 Nationality: Lebanon
 Residence Location: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
 Visa Status: Residence Visa – Transferable

Education

October 2002: **Beirut Arab University** – Beirut, Lebanon | Bachelor's Degree in law