

SMOOTH SUPPLIER

Armada Distribution is associated with the highest quality brands. In Carol Mourad they have found an MD to match, as she always delivers.

CAROL CHALHOUB MOURAD/MD Armada Distribution

With over 25-years operating in exclusive distribution, the Armada company has managed to stick around longer than most.

But it's not just the quality of their service that has kept this member of the Fattal Group going.

The majority of their partnered brands may have a distinguished and historic past, but Armada is a business embracing the future and, thanks to modern technology, looks set to be at the top of the delivery supply chain for some time.

Headquartered in Dubai, with three branches across the UAE (Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah), Armada supplies premium quality FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) throughout the UAE. From large retail to small cafes, hotels to airlines and pharmacies to petrol stations, their level of coverage is widespread.

With the FMCG business in the UAE having

achieved record growth in the past few years, and widely forecast to continue this upward curve, competition is tough and there are plenty of young organisations desperate to break into this market.

As Carol Chalhoub Mourad, Managing Director of Armada, points out, hers is an industry that demands exceptionally high standards, as she advises all newcomers; "There is intense competition in the field of logistics and FMCGs impose very strict standards of accuracy," she warns. "Our brands not only insist on fast delivery but also expect the end consumer to receive the product in the finest condition".

Armada's reputation attracts the high end of the market. Their brands include many of the finest names; including Evian, Loacker, Badoit, Hershey's, Ocean Spray and Halter, to name just a few.

As the only woman running a distribution business in the region, Carol is proud to have not only been at the helm of Armada for 11 years but also to have proved so successful in, what →





is, a primarily male dominated industry. “Unlike media or banking, this business fails to attract many female employees,” says Carol. “But I like to think I’m changing that and my unique approach, so far, seems to be paying off”.

With Armada recording double digit growth every year since her appointment, few could argue with Carol’s financial achievements. But it is her attention to detail that, she believes, has kept the company where it is.

“One of our partners is Loacker, who make fine quality chocolate and wafer confectionary”, she explains. “When you visit one of their European factories and taste a wafer direct from the production line, as I did, it is so warm

and fresh. When this happened, I knew I had a responsibility to bring our customers as close to that experience as possible.”

This kind of service assurance demands a huge team, all working in unison. From pinpoint pick-ups and delivery, to logistics, temperature-controlled warehousing, refrigerated truck management etc. The integration of all these individual elements is where Carol truly made her mark, implementing modern technology throughout the company.

“We were all used to a much more relaxed way of doing things in the region previously,” says Carol. “But the speed of growth and change here in the UAE was shocking and the

ability to deal with these changes, whilst maintaining high levels of service, was imperative. It truly was an adapt, or die, scenario.”

Today Armada is a fully automated company with every single division of their business operating through a sophisticated system of software and applications. Whether in sales, merchandising or even deliveries - that are all GPS tracked, no department is excluded.

“Even the communication with our suppliers is automated,” boasts Carol. “When a supplier wants to see figures for the month or receive updates on their items, they can simply download an App and access all the relevant data instantly.”

This level of communication is also offered to every single employee at Armada. All personnel are provided the same android system, so there is compatibility between each individual and free and easy communication between all staff.

With the majority of their suppliers having been with them from the beginning, Carol cites honesty, transparency and consistency as the overriding reasons for their loyalty.

However, with the market expanding at such a pace, there are the inevitable management changes in many of these multinational companies.

Carol’s biggest frustration is the loss of these personal relationships.

“Losing friendships, that you have forged over time, can be very difficult personally, especially when you have built real trust between you,” explains Carol. “Fortunately, from a business standpoint, this is where our level of connectivity really takes over, as the system almost runs autonomously during any boardroom shuffles, take overs or company

“ We were all used to a much more relaxed way of doing things in the region previously... ”

relocations. The system is so proficient, that it gives us time to establish and build new partnerships.”

As to the future, Carol is wary about thinking too far ahead, saying: “We originally had a five-year plan, but we needed to restructure so rapidly that, today, we are much more comfortable operating on a three-year timeline.”

Armada may be one of the oldest companies in the game, surrounded by young and enthusiastic challengers, but it would be unwise to underestimate both their experience and their ability to embrace new ideas.

Just like the Loacker wafers they deliver, Armada is suitably protected for their journey ahead and, whatever the future may hold, they are determined to stay fresh in their market for as long as that journey continues. 🔗



Quality goods matched with quality delivery



Perks of the job



Clean and organised in every aspect