

## Inter-Gulf '97

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I am looking forward to next year, and I would suggest an item for the agenda, which has not been covered certainly not in this conference and as far as I am aware, in previous conferences; and that is addressing the knowledge economy that is now developing and has become a dominant part of the global economy. Now on the Arab side of my life, I am extremely concerned that the Gulf region does not fall behind as the knowledge economy develops; and I am extremely concerned that those British companies which are engaged in the Gulf region in joint venture and partnerships do not in fact fall behind in the knowledge economy as well. I could certainly arrange next year for one of the speakers to actually address everyone on what the knowledge economy actually is and how it is developing.

## NOW WE MUST GO OUT AND ... SELL

First priority is to SELL, SELL, SELL with a real conviction that "Britain is Best". If we don't believe, then we will never convince others.

## COMMUNICATE

The Inter-gulf meetings prove the requirement. We must keep in constant touch on all matters of common interest. The BBGs are a valuable source of information and must be used as such. We must communicate effectively with HM

Government via institutions such as DTI, COMET, MEA, Chambers of Commerce, etc.

## REPRESENT

We must have the highest level of representation possible, both from HM Government and industry to ensure that all British bids receive due consideration.

## DIVERSIFY

Given that only one in thirty companies export at all, we must enlighten and encourage the rest - the potential and value available via export opportunities. We must also ensure that those that do export are pro-active rather than passive.

## REMOVE

The general ignorance and inaccurate UK perceptions that the Gulf is somehow more 'difficult' and 'dangerous', when quite the reverse is the actual situation.

## BUILD

We must build on our past reputation for quality goods and services by providing goods and services that are fit for purpose and best value for money, rather than today's lowest price.

## SHOW SYMBOLS OF PRESTIGE

Symbols of prestige are very important in this Region. They should be used wherever possible; We should ensure that both HM Government and the general public in the UK view

such symbols as investments that will provide handsome returns and not revenue costs.

## DEVELOP SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

SIGs are proving a major beneficial initiative and must be built upon. They must be propagated to all BBGs and to UK organisations wherever possible.

## EDUCATE

This is a major issue. We need greater educational influence. People educated in a British Environment will feel more comfortable, more at home with British goods and services. The ideal would be if we could bring together British universities to be set up in the Gulf with the appropriate local funding. We should also be encouraging Gulf nationals to enter the British educational system. The British Council are a major source of encouragement and information in this Region. There are also opportunities to be pursued via the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system, which has an excellent chance of becoming the training system in the Gulf.

*Jim Sillars, Conference Chairman, is Assistant to the Secretary-General of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce*

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## Stop Press: The SIGs promote themselves

On 21 April, a New Members and Inter-SIG Evening was held in the British Embassy

Amenity Hall. It was widely attended and seemed to attract a number of new SIG

members. A full report will be published in the next edition