

Local

Zain kicks-off fifth edition of Zain Great Idea accelerator program

Company continues strategy in accelerating tech startups and pushing excellent talents



Al Khashti with Al Mana and Al Dehani during the launch of ZGI 5.



A number of ZGI alumni.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, launched the fifth edition of its Zain Great Idea (ZGI) tech startup accelerator program, through which the company offers Kuwait's entrepreneurial community the chance to take their startups to entire new levels.

Zain announced the official launch of ZGI 5 during the special event it held at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh. The event witnessed the presence of Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Ak Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability and Innovation Manager Haya Al Mana, Brilliant Lab founder Neda Al Dehani, ZGI alumni, as well as many prominent figures in Kuwait's entrepreneurial community.

Zain Great Idea has been one of the most successful initiatives Zain presented to the Kuwaiti market as part of its comprehensive innovation and entrepreneurship strategy. Throughout four successful editions, ZGI empowered, trained, and invested in hundreds of creative and driven Kuwaiti youth, of which many now own thriving and active Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to this day. Encouraging and providing the proper resources for the local entrepreneurial community is a top priority for Zain, as the company is keen on contributing to the further progress of Kuwait's economic and national development.

ZGI is established by Zain in association with Brilliant Lab, a startup Accelerator Service from Kuwait, and Mind The Bridge, a global organization bridging the world through entrepreneurship education for startups, enterprises and investors to succeed in global markets. Mind The Bridge is based in Silicon Valley with offices in San Francisco and London.

During his speech at the event, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti said: "First, I would like to welcome you all to ZINC, our dedicated platform for encouraging anyone with a fresh mind to pursue digital investments and think creatively outside of the norm. Our Innovation Center is an open, supportive environment that helps everyone - especially young, eager entrepreneurs - to generate new ideas and develop them into viable opportunities. Today is a special day as we proudly announce the official launch of the fifth edition of our beloved Zain Great Idea tech startup accelerator program".

Al Khashti explained: "When we first launched ZGI back in 2010, it was merely a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative we designed to support the youth into making their entrepreneurial dreams come true. Zain was the first in the region to launch such a comprehensive program of this kind. Then, throughout nearly 10 wonderful years, we embraced over 500 entrepreneurs, travelled to 4 countries, and helped nearly 70 of the brightest Kuwaiti minds accelerate their ideas into active and thriving SMEs in the market. We realized ZGI wasn't just about social responsibility, it was much more than that".

Al Khashti continued: "In fact, I am very proud to announce that today's event was fully catered for by four bright Kuwaiti SMEs that are ZGI success stories. Many more bright entrepreneurs who are ZGI alumni are with us today as well, and they are all live proof of what this program can achieve. We couldn't be more proud of them".

Al Khashti added: "We learned a lot from this journey, and as we waited for the Kuwaiti tech startup market to mature more, we think it's finally the right time to take ZGI to the next level. Our team worked hard on rebuilding the program from scratch, and with ZGI 5, we are planning to find - within the qualified startups - what meets our strategic plans in digital services in order to present them into the business market".

Al Khashti further explained: "We have



Al Khashti with Zain's team and ZGI alumni.

also added an all-new phase to the program: Co-developing. After Zain Great Idea is over, finalists will get full access to Zain's cross-functional team to help them get the most out of their newly-accelerated startup. ZGI's entrepreneurs will be able to get consultations, mentoring, deals, tactics/strategies, and more from Zain specialists in various areas that are essential to any business, including sales, marketing, communications, legal, networks, IT, and more. We think this will be the most thrilling part of ZGI 5, as we co-develop these home-grown talents together and see them flourish into fully functioning profitable businesses".

Al Khashti concluded: "Today's business world is witnessing fast-paced advancements in technology, and as a result of this, tech startups quickly became the top choice for

entrepreneurs. As the leading digital service provider in Kuwait and the region, Zain strongly believes in shouldering this crucial



Al Khashti speaking during the event.

field and help home-grown talents flourish in their journey to success. We cannot wait to see ZGI 5 help bring out the next game-changer in Kuwait".

Neda Al Dehani, founder of Brilliant lab, commented: "we are proud of this partnership with Zain, which extended throughout

seven years. During this time, we received and trained over 500 tech entrepreneurs in Kuwait who were looking for a way to develop their projects. We look forward to this new partnership this year, through which we aim to accelerate and establish innovative ideas. We hope to meet everyone's expectations". Al Dehani added: "our role is to collect the most advanced experiences in the tech world and offer them as consultations and intensive workshops for the participants throughout nearly four weeks. The Bootcamp phase will witness the presence of many key players in technology from the top universities and academic institutions in the region and the

world". Al Dehani explained: "there are new services that Brilliant Lab will offer during the fifth edition of Zain Great Idea, including early funding services for projects that meet our policy. I invite anyone with a tech startup to apply for ZGI 5 and benefit from such services".

Zain is well aware of the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects. Springing from its growing commitment towards practicing its social responsibility, the company is committed to printing a positive print through all its activities. This has led Zain to embrace the most influential issues in the community, including the support of youth, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

PARTICIPATION AND TERMS

The program is open for all Kuwaiti Nationals aged 21 and above, and the applicants must be the original owners of the idea. Team submissions are acceptable, but only one person (who is nominated by the team) may participate in the Zain Great Idea Bootcamp & Zain Great Idea Accelerator Program in collaboration with Brilliant Lab and Mind The Bridge in San Francisco, United States of America.

The tech business idea may be implemented in Kuwait or any other country, and may be implemented in any sector, including but not limited to apps, websites, online services, e-commerce services, Fintech, gaming, and tech products. The judging panel, which consists of a pool of candidates specializing in academia, entrepreneurship, and investments, will select the final applicants who will be taking part in the Bootcamp phase in Kuwait and the ZGI Accelerator Program in San Francisco.

PROGRAM PHASES

Phase one - Applying:

After agreeing to the terms and conditions, applicants should apply their tech startup idea by filling in the online form at ZAINGREATIDEA.com and attaching any supporting documents or videos.

Phase two - Bootcamp:

Eligible applicants will participate in the Bootcamp phase in Kuwait. Throughout three weeks, they will learn the essentials of accelerating their tech startup at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) led by instructors from Stanford University, IE Business School, Venture Capital firms, and entrepreneurs.

Phase three - International Acceleration program:

If the startup idea makes it through the judging panel, the participants will have a chance to attend the International Acceleration program in San Francisco with Mind The Bridge. Throughout two weeks, they will get to learn from the world's top tech companies by visiting their headquarters and meeting their teams at Silicon Valley.

Phase four - Zain Demo Day:

Upon their return to Kuwait, the participants will review their business in one-on-one sessions with Brilliant Lab in preparation for Zain Demo Day. During Demo Day, they will pitch their accelerated business to an audience of investors and potential business partners and get to transform their startup idea into a profitable business.

Phase five - Co-developing:

After Zain Great Idea is over, participants will get full access to Zain's cross-functional team to help them get the most out of their newly-accelerated startup. They'll be able to get consultations, mentoring, deals, tactics/strategies, and more from Zain specialists in various areas that are essential to any business, including sales, marketing, communications, legal, networks, IT, and more.



The crowd at the event.