

DOING THE RIGHT

Al Shaqab Director **Claudia Starr** tells **The Foundation** how her organization is aiming to increase Qatarization – while ensuring that all employees meet their full potential.

THING



In just a few short years, Al Shaqab has gone from just 8% Qatarization to almost 50%. An impressive feat when you take into account that Al Shaqab is the second-largest employer at Qatar Foundation, with more than 200 staff.

But even statistics as eye catching as these are not enough for the equestrian facility. As it continues its rapid growth, Director Claudia Starr has a simple target for future Qatarization: "as many as possible".

Successful Qatarization is about much more than simply hiring people to make up the numbers, Starr says. It is integral to a training programme, the strength of which lies in ensuring staff of all nationalities meet their full potential.

"We don't just want workers at Al Shaqab, we ultimately want leaders," says Starr. "So we don't just focus on the standard guidelines, but on soft skills. Things like how to negotiate a contract. Inter-personal skills like conflict resolution; how to work with team members and how to create a positive atmosphere at meetings; listening skills."

Across Al Shaqab's vast 267-acre site, a huge number of nationalities intersect to manage and maintain its world class equestrian facilities. And when there are so many people involved in critical work, the opportunity for miscommunication is as great as there are people involved.

Which is why staff of every nationality are given help to improve their written English too.

"On a project of this scale – particularly with so many different cultures involved – everyone needs to be confident in written English in order not to be misinterpreted,"

“ I DON'T THINK THERE CAN BE ENOUGH FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: THAT IS INSPIRING PEOPLE TO DO THE WORK INSTEAD OF FORCING PEOPLE TO DO A JOB ”

*Claudia Starr
AL SHAQAB DIRECTOR*



Starr adds. "But to maintain team spirit, they need these soft skills to be really efficient."

Starr says that her ultimate aim is to transition as many Qataris as possible – some of whom begin as trainees – into leadership positions. "I see my role as Director as more of a mentor than anything else," she says. "I'm trying to help get the best from everyone and create the strongest team possible to build Al Shaqab."

"I don't think there can be enough focus on leadership: that is inspiring people to do the work instead of forcing people to do a job."

The training does not all take place in the classroom – much of it consists of ensuring everyone has as many opportunities as possible to experience and take part in



international competitions. That's especially important for those who have never been exposed to such events, and would therefore be disadvantaged.

Other aspects of the training are more formal. Starr points to an ethics and compliance programme she has initiated. "It deals with risk assessment and risk management – a total programme from finance to PR to employment to image and branding. It makes sure that every possible approach to our work is done in accordance with international law, and covers anti-corruption, human resources issues – an ethics and compliance officer takes an oath to be totally transparent."

Starr feels that the global horse industry has allowed its reputation to suffer due to a lack of effective self governance. "That means ethics and compliance should be taken seriously by everyone in it – and Al Shaqab is doing just that by taking a leadership role internationally." •

For further information please visit www.alshaqab.com



QATARIZATION IN ACTION

Ali Al-Mannai



Qatari national Ali Al-Mannai, aged 28, works as Assistant Manager of Facilities and Support Services at Al Shaqab. Here, the Qatar University graduate describes his experience of working at the organization.

"I studied mechanical engineering, then took a diploma course in Mexico through a company called Hylsa Steel. I was working for Qatar Steel when I found out about an opportunity to join Al Shaqab."

"I'd always been interested in horses, so even though my background was in engineering it appealed to me and I applied for the job. I also wanted to take on a new challenge, and to gain experience in a different field."

"I joined Al Shaqab on 1 August, 2007. I'm responsible for ensuring that the facilities are secure for horses, employees, members and visitors, and that all departments are served by having the required staff and equipment."

"In all honesty I was not aware of the high ratio of Qataris working at Al Shaqab before I applied to work here. I



enjoy working with so many other Qataris, and obviously we spend a lot of time together socially, but one of the great things about Qatar Foundation is that it's such a multicultural organisation.

"I work alongside people from all over the world, so it's a great experience to get to learn about different cultures. At the end of the day, I believe in team work, whether you're working with Qataris or not."

"Having said that, I think that Al Shaqab's Qatarization programme is very important work – I want the best for all Qataris and I think it's important that they should have these opportunities."