

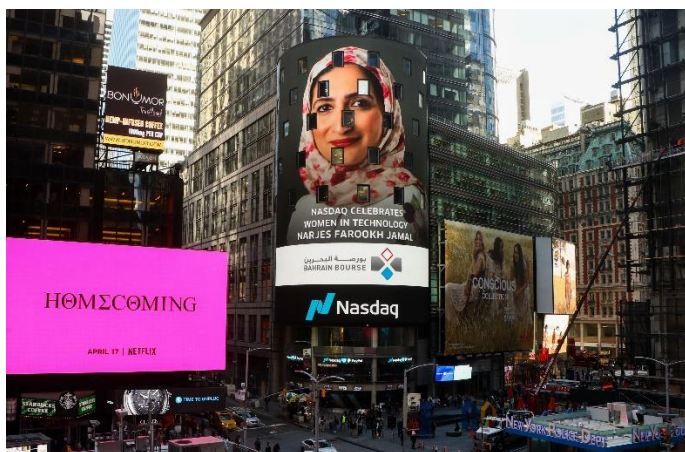
TECH

NASDAQ WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY: NARJES FAROOKH JAMAL, COO OF BAHRAIN BOURSE

Narjes Farookh Jamal shares how technology has influenced her career.

NASDAQ WOMEN

IN TECHNOLOGY: NARJES FAROOKH JAMAL, COO OF BAHRAIN BOURSE



Narjes Farookh Jamal is the Chief Operating Officer at Bahrain Bourse. As the second-in-command to the Chief Executive Officer, Jamal is responsible for the efficiency of business, as well as overseeing Bahrain Bourse's ongoing market operations and procedures. This includes maintaining control of the diverse functions and the many components that make up the operations such as strategy and business developments, trading operations, and all other facets of the business. We sat down with Jamal to learn how technology has influenced her career, as well as the advice she would give to young professionals who want to work in financial technology and capital markets.

1. How has technology influenced your role at Bahrain Bourse?

Certain fabrics in my character and personality have served as a foundational layer to being a COO. I excel in multi-tasking, understanding the correlation of information that can lead to certain outcomes, and I enjoy going into the grey area of operations to problem-solve and bring things together, adapting to all responsibilities I have encountered and the current environment.

Having a technical background has enabled me to look beyond and be willing to take on cross-functional roles or assignments that could expose me to other facets of the business.

When you are in a technology field, it's critical to be flexible and be willing to adapt so you are in the right place at the right time. Managing major business projects before they even start keeps you in the loop of the whereabouts of the business and the operations bringing you to a level of awareness, as well as a comprehensive understanding of the operations

2. Throughout your career, what challenges have you been presented with that you've had to overcome?

Throughout my career, I have been assigned different responsibilities that were not necessarily in line with my expertise or educational background. This diversification was adventurous and challenging at the same time, forcing me to think ahead and be ready for the unexpected, yet the urge to succeed made me always move forward and never reject any responsibility no

matter how minor or major it was. This practice has shaped my skills and provided knowledge in all different aspects of the operations.

The increasing speed of change, from shorter product development life cycles to a continuously evolving technology continues to be challenging. Maintaining the status quo is never acceptable in the technical world, nor is it acceptable in the capital markets. Being in line with the advancement technologies and adopting state of art systems, introducing new market opportunities and capturing market broadminded momentums made us always race against time.

3. How has being a woman in the financial and technology industry impacted your career?

To be honest, in the Kingdom of Bahrain, I don't believe gender barriers inhibit women from advancing in their careers. Many women are fortunate enough to reach to higher positions from working hard and proved themselves being capable.

Of course in the history of the Exchange I was the first woman to reach to a management level and the first to take the position as a COO. Being in these positions you need tenacity, you must keep going and be very brave. I remember the first time I attended the Exchange's management meeting – I was the only woman – the experience overwhelmed me. I was overpowered by the very fact that I was there amongst all the other men. I sat silent for the first couple of meetings, the others were so eloquent in putting their views forward that I was awestruck. But as I listened, I realized that everyone was making the same point, they were reproducing in different way to make their voices heard. It was then when I realized that I had to stop fluffing around and pluck up my courage and make my voice heard.

That thought makes me proud, especially working in the financial and technology industry. It also challenged me to work harder and to prove that I was different and that I could cause a difference in the surrounding environment.

I might have faced some challenges from my peers not accepting me as a woman in-charge and being in a leading position. Yet my superiors have always been men, and they have never treated me differently, they are absolutely gender-neutral. I have always worked hard to be judged by results and never gave myself excuses to advance in my career.

I've found it challenging to strive for a better work/life balance. Often, I am working late hours many times during projects while attending to my husband and children at the same time. Yet having children has not been a barrier to my success. I have three wonderful boys and have always been committed to my duties as a mother.

4. What advice would you give to young women who aspire to be in the financial and technology industry?

Take any opportunity that allows you to gain confidence and prove yourself. You have to tailor your own style as you move on, even if it means learning to be tough as well as direct. Also find someone that can mentor you throughout your career, I tend to do this to the young people joining the organization.

Working in capital markets, you have to be able to take risks most of times yet remain consistently outstanding. Always promote yourself through your hard work and tangible achievements, never allow your gender to interfere between you and your ambitions and success; and always be a positive role model in understanding how to balance between your work and personal life.

Especially in the financial and technology industry, the competition is high compared to males dominating higher positions, so you have to be persistent in advancing in your career despite all challenges.