

Workplace Emotions

Workplace Emotions:
Emotional Intelligence
in Bahraini Management

By

Suhaila AlHashemi and Richard Tzudiker

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P U B L I S H I N G

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by Suhaila AlHashemi and Richard Tzudiker

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To my father, who is the source of my inspiration,
my mother, who was always there for me,
to my children for being so patient,
and to my friends for their support.
—Suhaila AlHashemi

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FOREWORD

Suhaila AlHashemi

The concepts of leadership and emotional intelligence (EI) are recognised to be vital elements in organisations today. These concepts include vision creation, goals accomplishments, ambition, self-awareness, character and skills in tuning into others' emotions, through the ability to establish relationships and bonds. The literature provides an insight into the topic but it focuses on research conducted in the West and particularly in the United States. Little material is available on EI and leadership in the Gulf area. This thesis examines the relationship between these two concepts within the context of national and organisational culture in Bahrain.

The research covered five major organisations in Bahrain: petrochemicals, petroleum, telecommunications, shipbuilding and repair, and banking. It examined the relationship between six leadership styles (Coercive, Authoritative, Affiliation, Democratic, Pacesetter and Coaching), and components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills) identified by Goleman (2000). The research adopted a deductive approach using a combination of questionnaires (Emotional Competency Inventory and Managerial Style Inventory) and interviews with 103 executives and managers. The research found a relationship between the six leadership styles and emotional intelligence. The six leadership styles were used by the executives who showed moderate levels of emotional intelligence. National and corporate culture influenced the relationship between leadership styles and emotional intelligence. The standardised tests used need to be adjusted to suit the culture in Bahrain. The findings of this research therefore add a new dimension (namely, national and corporate culture in the Gulf Region) to the concept of emotional intelligence.

Richard Tzudiker

Workplace Emotions is based on a study by Dr. Suhaila Ebrahim AlHashemi of the University of Bahrain, which explored the influences of culture and emotional intelligence on leadership styles in Bahrain. Her

dissertation's key elements are interwoven with an interesting story involving an American entrepreneur, a major Bahraini company, and a quality control crisis.

This book is the second in a series of “business novels” designed to entertain while teaching about the modern business culture of the Arabian Gulf States. Our first book, *A Cup of Coffee*, followed our American entrepreneur as he established his business in the Sultanate of Oman. Our academic foundation was a doctoral thesis by Dr. Salem Ben Nasser Al Ismaily examining leadership styles in the Gulf Region. Dr. Al Ismaily sits on the board of directors of the Gulf Aluminum Mills (GARMCO) of Bahrain, which generously provided the background and setting for *Workplace Emotion: Emotional Intelligence in Bahraini Management*.

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Suhaila AlHashemi

At the outset, I wish to thank all those who have offered their advice and assistance in completing this project. Starting with the Business School at Napier University, my appreciation goes to my supervisory team. No formal acknowledgement can truly reveal the depth of my gratitude to the many chief executive officers and senior managers who participated willingly and generously in many interviews, questionnaires and discussions conducted as part of this research.

My appreciation goes to Hay McBer (Hay Group) and all the staff who assisted in this research, for providing me with the opportunity to apply their tests of emotional intelligence and managerial style.

No formal acknowledgement can truly reveal the depth of my gratitude to the many chief executive officers and senior managers who participated willingly and generously in many interviews, questionnaires and discussions conducted as part of this research.

My special thanks go to Dr. Salem Al Ismaily, Investment Minister, Sultanate of Oman, for giving me the opportunity to write this book; and to my co-author, Richard Tzudiker, for helping in transforming my thesis into a beautiful novel.

No words can describe my deepest appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Ebrahim J. AlHashemi, who has been my inspiration throughout this research project. His continuous support and encouragement made all the difference, especially at times when everything seemed to be moving at a slow pace. I was also fortunate to have a supportive family; I would have not been able to complete the thesis on time without their continuous support and understanding.

Richard Tzudiker

I owe special thanks to Suhaila for ensuring that I accurately presented the findings of her unprecedented study; to my friend and writing partner, Salem, and my brother, Bob, for introducing us; and to my wife, Donna, for her constant love and support.

CHAPTER ONE

SULTAN'S CHALLENGE

I took a few seconds before answering my phone. As often as I'd made the eight thousand mile trip from Houston to Oman, twenty-four hours of travel still wore me out. I'm not sure why all the airlines thought 10:30 pm was the best time to land in Muscat, but I couldn't sleep last night, and at mid-afternoon I fought to stay awake. I'd been on the phone all day, I was tired, and I had to be careful not to offend anyone.

I read the phone display and was relieved to see my caller was my good friend, Sultan.

"As-salaámu :alái-kum," I said in unpracticed Arabic, *"Kaif Háal-ak, Sultan?"*

"Wa :alái-kum as-salaam," Sultan reassured me. "I am well, John, *wa inta?"*

"I'm fine, thanks. A little tired," I confessed.

"No doubt; yet there you are at work! You should be resting so you are alert for our meeting this evening."

I felt a flush of embarrassment. "I'm sorry, Sultan. Did I forget an appointment?"

"No, my friend, there was no appointment, but please join me for coffee later. We shall have a most interesting discussion, I assure you."

"Sultan, you know me better than anyone in Oman. Please don't be offended, but I need sleep, not caffeine."

"I understand, John. Do me a small favor, though. Tonight, when you cannot sleep because it is morning back home in Texas, go online and study the Kingdom of Bahrain."

"Bahrain? Why is Bahrain so important right now?"

I heard Sultan laugh at my curiosity. "I just returned from Mumbai. Gulf Air connects in Bahrain, and I found myself seated next to a Bahraini CEO very much interested in your services."

"Suddenly, I'm very awake. Tell me more."

Sultan pretended to scold me. "First, do your homework and get some rest. I only arrived home two nights ago. I have some catching up to do,

myself. Let us meet at your office tomorrow afternoon. I'll tell you all about my Bahraini friend."

"He's your friend?" I had to ask. This was sounding like the perfect opportunity for PetroSpect. Our Muscat operation was a great success, but further growth in Oman would be limited. Our strategy was to establish a solid reputation in Oman, and then branch out to the other Gulf States. Sultan would never have spoken of me if he didn't believe we were ready for Bahrain. He must have heard the excitement in my voice.

"Yes, John, he and I are friends. And I serve on his Board of Directors."

I had to know more. "What's the company?"

"Tomorrow is not soon enough, John?" Sultan thought for a moment, and then replied, "The company is The Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill Company. GARMCO is the largest downstream aluminium producer in the region."

"Must you say 'al-yu-min-ee-oom'? It's 'al-oo-min-um'," I joked, mostly to relieve my apprehension. I knew very little about smelters or aluminum processing. And we had only recently applied our technology and services outside the oil industry.

Despite my own initial fear and excitement, though, I recognized Sultan was asking for my help. He knew my experience, my limits, and my abilities. He knew PetroSpect represented cutting edge engineering. Whatever was happening at GARMCO, Sultan believed I could help. I took a more serious tone. "I'll learn what I can about Bahrain and GARMCO and alumin-i-um. We'll meet for coffee in the afternoon."

I said goodbye, suddenly energized. Sultan. Bahrain. Aluminum. I thought of little else as the day wore on. I read through the stacks of memos and reports covering most of my desk, but my attention drifted. I started surfing the web, beginning with the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is an archipelago of thirty-three islands rising from the Arabian Gulf, midway between the Qatar peninsula and Saudi Arabia. Roughly the size of New York City, Bahrain Island is only 48 kilometers long by 16 kilometers wide. Capped on its northern coast by its capital city, Manama, the main island is home to all but a fraction of the entire population of just over 1,214,705 people, including about 235,108 non-nationals (as for July 2011), mostly from India and Pakistan, with some Europeans and Americans added to the mix.

In ancient times, Bahrain was a strategic port along the trade routes between Mesopotamia, now Iraq, and the Indus Valley civilization across the Indian Ocean. Over the centuries, Greece, then Portugal, and then Persia ruled Bahrain with varying degrees of independence. In 1783, the

AlKhalifa family expelled the Persians, creating the dynasty that rules the Kingdom to this day.

Bahrain began its economic development signing a series of treaties with the United Kingdom during the 1800's. It remained a British protectorate until its independence in 1971. The new Amir of the State of Bahrain, Shaikh Isa bin Salman AlKhalifah initiated a period of dramatic changes in Bahrain. As an independent nation eager to join the world community, Bahrain joined the United Nations; the Arab League; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO); and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

In 1999, His Majesty Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa AlKhalifa became King of Bahrain after the death of his father. He promised to restore democracy and ultimately change the country from an Emirate into a Constitutional Monarchy. In 2002, the National Assembly opened. The Assembly was comprised of an elected parliament and the Shura (consultative) council formed in 1993. The parliament intended to give people a voice in the decision-making process.

The King has stressed that traditional attitudes towards women will not restrict their progress. Equality for women remains an important theme in modern Bahrain. Women have the right to vote and hold public office. Women may own property and businesses, and work in executive and managerial positions in both public and private sectors. Her Highness Shaikha Sabikha bint Ibrahim AlKhalifa, serves as Chairwoman of the Supreme Council for Women. She pledged stronger legal rights, better financial prospects, and increased political participation for Bahraini women.

Islamic beliefs and traditions permeate Bahrain's culture. Over 80% of its population is Muslim, but Bahrain allows freedom of worship, and Christians, Hindus, Jews, and Buddhists openly practice their faiths.

The culture is strongly patriarchal. The father is the head of the family, a very strong and cohesive social unit in both its nuclear and extended forms. His authority influences individuals' attitudes and behaviour in all aspects of their lives: social, political, and professional.

Bahrain's main industry was pearl diving until the discovery of oil in the 1930's. The petroleum industry had an enormous impact throughout the region, providing jobs and improving the general welfare. Bahrain and the Gulf States prospered greatly as the price of crude oil soared during the 1970's, leading to substantial cash surpluses and triggering investment opportunities for Bahrain and its close Gulf neighbours. At the same time,

Bahrain recognized its dwindling crude oil output and the need to diversify its economy.

Sensitive to its relative size and central location among the Gulf States, Bahrain joined Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in May of 1981. The GCC envisioned eventual unity among its members, and promoted common economic and political goals. Symbolizing the GCC trade partnerships, the twenty-eight kilometer King Fahd Causeway opened in 1986, linking Saudi Arabia with the island Kingdom of Bahrain.

Bahrain recovered from the economic slump caused by the Gulf War in 1991 less dependent on its oil production, and emerged as the financial capital of the Middle East. New industries were encouraged by Bahrain's stable government, sound currency, modern infrastructure, and economic freedom. The Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard Company (ASRY) was established in 1977 to service oil tankers; Gulf Petrochemicals Industry began producing methanol and ammonia for world export; and Aluminium Bahrain Company (ALBA), established within the same period, became one of the world's largest aluminum smelters.

ALBA's success created downstream aluminum industries, including the Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill Company. GCC governments in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, and Qatar formed GARMCO in 1981. A series of expansions steadily increased capacities and diversified the product line. GARMCO became the largest secondary aluminum producer in the Gulf Region, with sales offices on four continents.

GARMCO's corporate structure was a typical hierarchy. Sultan served with six other Directors on a Board overseeing the Chief Executive Officer and the General Managers of Administration, Operations, and Sales & Marketing, and controlling over two dozen managers throughout the organization. The Board answered to the shareholders, with the Kingdom of Bahrain holding about 38% of the stock.

I fell asleep at my desk surfing the Internet, and barely remembered the cab ride to my hotel, the call home to my wife, Rebecca, or finally falling into bed. I felt quite rested after eight solid hours of sleep, and the new day cooperated nicely, moving quickly and productively toward my meeting with Sultan. I kept my laptop logged in, and read more about GARMCO and Bahrain whenever there was a break in the action.

Sultan arrived for coffee late in the afternoon. We greeted each other as old friends. In fact, we met only three years earlier when Sultan salvaged my first attempt to establish my business in the Middle East. Under his mentorship, I learned much about Arab culture and the importance of trusting relationships. More specific to my business, I

learned that family, tribe, culture, and tradition influenced the various management styles I encountered in my Omani organization as much as by education and training. Sultan and his associates helped me recognize and understand the cultural undercurrents I experienced in building my management team. I adopted different leadership styles to suit different people and situations. Above all, I learned to be more patient, compassionate, and respectful of Arab ways.

Sultan and I were about the same age, but otherwise bore no physical resemblance. I was at least six inches taller, and looked like I might still be able to play football. My hair had greyed in recent years, and I no longer wore the moustache and goatee of my youth. In contrast, Sultan's full beard was deep black, and the white turban wrapped around his head never quite hid the black hair peeking out from under its edges. His traditional white *dishdash* hung loosely from his shoulders, disguising a frame as thin as his wire-rimmed glasses.

We both laughed easily, though, and humor proved to be our common ground. We had built our friendship on mutual trust and respect. Educated in the UK and armed with a PhD in economics, Sultan travelled the world promoting the Sultanate of Oman's economic opportunities, negotiating contracts with leaders of nations and industry. Locally, Sultan was well connected and highly regarded. He seemed to know everyone, and introduced me without reservation to business associates, acquaintances, and ambassadors. We long ago abandoned the cautious formality that characterized many East-West relationships.

"You appear rested, John," Sultan said, taking a seat in one of the armchairs in front of my desk.

I sat next to him. "I don't know how," I replied. "I was up half the night reading about Bahrain."

"And what did you learn?"

"I learned that Bahrain is an archipelago made up of thirty or forty little islands, depending on your source."

"That was a good start, but hardly enough to keep you from a full night's sleep. What else did you learn?"

We were briefly interrupted when my assistant served us coffee in small cups without handles. I displayed a Texas Tech coffee mug on my bookshelf, but had not used it in years. It would hold too much of the dark, strong brew to be practical. In this case, smaller was better.

I was not ashamed to refer to my notes as I recalled my Internet browsing. Sultan listened attentively, testing me with occasional questions, stopping me now and then to clarify a historic event or elaborate on some detail.

“In many ways,” he said, “Bahrain and Oman are similar. We share a history of occupation and independence. Our people are a mix of local tribes and foreign settlers. We shared the incredible good fortune brought by the discovery of oil reserves, and the accompanying intrusion of modern societies into our cultures and traditions. In fact, the government has encouraged higher education and has implemented a policy called ‘Bahrainization’, replacing foreign workers with Bahrainis wherever possible. Oman has a similar policy, but foreign workers take jobs Omanis would rather avoid. This is a tradition that will not be easily changed.”

“We have a similar situation back in the States with illegal aliens,” I said. “Those jobs are looking better now that so many Americans are unemployed.”

“Did you research GARMCO?” Sultan asked.

“Yes, I looked at their website. I was impressed, but I have to say I still don’t know much about the process or equipment. The mining company we’re helping uses roller mills to grind rocks into powder for their coarse ground products. I suppose GARMCO’s *rolling* mills are entirely different.”

“How are you helping the mining company?” Sultan asked, sidestepping a discussion of roller or rolling mills.

Sultan’s question was more about helping GARMCO than a concern for the mining company.

“PetroSpect did some work for the parent company’s petroleum division. They were impressed with our process engineers’ ability to think on their feet. We spent a couple of weeks touring several plants, and then redesigned one of our inspection modules to slip right into their production lines. It worked right out of the box. Installation downtime was minimal, and we passed all the test runs. We saved them a lot of money.

“The general manager bragged about us to his boss, and we were asked to look at their cost-sensitive industrial minerals division. We weren’t familiar with the industry, but their processing was much simpler than petrochemicals. After a few weeks of tours and analysis, we developed an entirely new application of our inspection technology, created a prototype, plugged it in, and watched them smile.

“We didn’t stop there, though. Our engineers were able to suggest other process improvements, and we did it in a way that didn’t offend the establishment. Some of their maintenance people had been with them for thirty years, and were reluctant to change their proven methods. Ironically, the changes we proposed didn’t involve their beloved equipment at all.

“We observed that maintenance people didn't seem to get along with production people, and production people didn't get along with sales people. Weekly staff meetings were a boring litany of statistics and reactive scheduling. A few managers did all the talking while most seemed lost in their coffee mugs, nodding their heads now and then in silent agreement.

“The only time we saw anything close to real discussions was when someone from sales attended the meetings. Invariably, the sales person would confront the production boys over classic supply-and-demand issues. Driven by customer needs, sales would argue for shorter lead times while production preferred longer production runs for better cost control. They behaved like children, each side restating their issue without offering a solution. The meetings would inevitably deteriorate into emotional displays of frustration and finger pointing. A recurring theme was each side accusing the other of not seeing the big picture. It was clear to us that no one knew what the big picture was.

“I took advantage of the relationship I developed with the general manager, and tactfully described the staff meetings we observed. I didn't have to implicate specific individuals because the problem seemed to exist company-wide. The GM was surprised to hear that his vision and the company mission weren't better known.

“He was a bright guy. He admitted he'd distanced himself from his people, but hadn't realized the extent of his isolation. He determined to visit the front lines himself, and put together a task force to fix what he thought had been open lines of communication. Before I left his office, he called his human resource manager and made an appointment to discuss ways to get his managers to work together as mature adults.”

Sultan smiled at my subtle sales pitch. “So, you are not afraid of another challenge?”

“GARMCO? What's to be afraid of?” I asked. “We look at the process. Whether it's oil or rock or metal, once we understand the flows, we see where our technology can help. Then we turn the design engineers loose.”

“I know your engineers can help us, John. The problem lies in our finished product inspection, and I believe your equipment can easily be modified for our use,” Sultan said. “But I am intrigued by your contribution to solving their people problems.

“GARMCO has experienced tremendous growth in a very short time. Over the years, we have gradually moved away from reliance on foreign expertise. As we educate and train Bahrainis to assume management roles, we have seen very smart people become very bad managers. Some

have difficulty handling increased responsibilities. Others cannot effectively supervise or motivate their people. Several managers found it impossible to cooperate with other managers and left GARMCO. We have hired a consulting firm to implement a study of our organization's emotional intelligence. Have you heard of EI, John?"

"I read a couple of books about emotional intelligence about ten years ago, but I honestly don't remember a lot of it. I know people can measure their emotional quotients as they can their intelligence quotient, and that EQ's are just as important for success as IQ's. And, I remember that self-awareness and empathy are a big part of a person's EQ."

EI made good sense when I read those books, and I remember feeling emotionally intelligent for a while. Then I got busy and filed EI away in the back of my mind. I like to think my enlightened leadership kept the team together in rough times, but the truth is my people were dedicated to our vision and needed little guidance from me.

I remembered the importance of self-awareness when I was building my new team in Oman. Those first weeks were nearly disastrous. Staff meetings left me feeling that I hadn't properly understood someone, or hadn't made myself clear. I was afraid I couldn't effectively lead if I couldn't communicate. The EI books said self-awareness enabled management of emotions. To control my fear, I tried a little mind-clearing meditation before every meeting. I listened from a quieter perspective, and learned people didn't always speak aloud. If they did, what they said wasn't always what they meant. They didn't intend to deceive me. Their culture made open expression difficult. If I hadn't come to grips with my emotions, I'd have missed the messages.

"Self-awareness is the starting point," Sultan said. "If you cannot identify what you feel, it is difficult to control your emotional responses, and you will not recognize what others may be feeling. Empathy is not possible if you cannot identify what others feel."

"Is this what your consultant is teaching at GARMCO?"

"This is part of what she teaches. Maryam will be conducting a survey to help us understand the relationship between the leadership styles used by GARMCO's managers and their levels of emotional intelligence. We will use her findings to develop training programs aimed at raising EQ's while providing more traditional management skills training. This approach to leadership development has worked well at some of Bahrain's most successful companies."

"Do you believe raising a manager's EQ will make him more cooperative?" I asked.

“We hope so. There are other forces at work. As in Oman, Bahraini managers are heavily influenced by their cultures and traditions. You recall it may be difficult for an Arab to admit failure for fear of bringing shame to his family. A manager would rather avoid such an admission, and might not be entirely honest if he is confronted. Yet, honesty is an important component of emotional intelligence. We will not train him to dishonor his family, but we cannot build an organization without honesty. So, we have a conflict that only he can resolve.”

Sultan taught me years ago the importance of “saving face” in Arab cultures. For that reason, I avoided direct confrontations with my people. It was enough for them to know I was aware of a missed deadline or a bad decision without putting them on the spot. Mistakes were fixed, and no one would be hurt or embarrassed.

“I’d like to meet your consultant. What did you say her name was?” I asked.

“Maryam is her name. Her father is a good friend. He and I were classmates in Scotland some years ago, and now Maryam, too, earned her doctorate degree from the same school. He is very proud of his daughter. Her thesis was based on her study of emotional intelligence and management styles at five of Bahrain’s most successful companies, each an industry leader. I will introduce you to Maryam when we go to Bahrain.”

“I’m ready! When do we leave?”

I looked forward to solving GARMCO’s technical problems, but I was somehow even more excited to get involved in the emotional intelligence issues. After business school, I never took time for management development courses. I thought I was a pretty good leader, but I was curious to see how I measured on the EQ scale.

“On second thought,” I said, “I could really use the rest of this week here in Oman before we go to Bahrain. I must have committed to a half-dozen dinner parties yesterday, and I should spend some time with my people before they forget what I look like.”

Sultan laughed. “I understand, John. I’ll make arrangements for our trip, and let you know the details. I think you’ll enjoy Bahrain.”

CHAPTER TWO

GARMCO

Gulf Air Flight 559 flew nearly due west over Oman's northern mountain spine and the United Arab Emirates before reaching the Arabian Gulf coast north of Abu Dhabi, seat of government for the UAE. We changed time zones over the Qatar peninsula and regained the ten o'clock hour. Ninety minutes after leaving Muscat, we landed at Bahrain International Airport.

Sultan and I rode the escalator from the Mezzanine down to the Arrival Concourse and Baggage Claim. We separated briefly at the immigrations counters for "GCC Nationals" and "Non-GCC Nationals." The officials checked my visa, and then, because neither of us had anything to declare, we proceeded through Customs.

Armed police watched over us as my bag rolled through an x-ray scanner, and then was opened for inspection. Their presence more comforted than disturbed me, just as I wasn't bothered by the extra hand-search back at Seeb Airport. Random security checks were fine with me.

We took a taxi for the fifteen minute drive from the airport on AlMuharraq Island to the Ritz-Carlton Bahrain Hotel in Manama. Traffic flowed easily over the causeway connecting the two islands. The wide highway skirted the northern edges of the city and the Gulf shoreline.

The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain Hotel & Spa sat on twenty acres of choice real estate on the shore of Manama Bay. The resort boasted its own island and lagoon, private beach houses, sports facilities, a marina, and, of course, indoor and outdoor pools. My first impression affirmed its five-star reputation. Our cabbie drove around a lively fountain to the top of the circular drive and dropped us in front of the grand entrance.

"GARMCO made our reservations, John. They arranged a special early check-in, and reserved a suite for you."

"A suite in a five-star hotel?" I asked. "That wasn't necessary."

"We want you to be comfortable. You may be here longer than you planned. The suite has a big desk for your work, too."

I pretended to ignore his hint that I should work after hours. “Please thank everyone at GARMCO for their generous hospitality. But, I don’t want to know how much it costs.”

We checked in at the front desk, and then boarded the elevator followed by a pair of bellmen with our luggage. Sultan and I agreed to meet in the lobby in an hour, and I followed my bellman to my suite on the Club Level. He escorted me through the living area, proudly indicated the promised executive desk, and then guided me into the bedroom suite. The room was cleanly decorated in light, natural tones, from the golden wood floors to the high ceilings. The picture windows looked out over the curved turquoise swimming pool, and past the deeper blue lagoon and the Gulf to the bright blue sky on the horizon. The view was beautiful, and I resolved to share it with Rebecca someday soon.

An hour later, we were in another cab heading to GARMCO. We backtracked toward the airport for a few minutes, and then turned south. This part of Manama alternated between residential and light industrial, interspersed with large, sandy vacant lots. The highway ended, and we turned left, following the coast of another broad inlet.

We passed what had to be a land reclamation project. A sea wall held back the Bay, while rocks and sand backfilled the shallow basin. Looking over my shoulder, I saw some nice homes lined up on the newly claimed shoreline. Sultan confirmed the land was reclaimed from the sea.

“Bahrain faces a critical shortage of residential land. The land reclamation effort has added nearly one hundred square kilometers to its area since 1981. That is an increase of over ten percent. This is a small project compared to what they are doing on the north shores.”

“Are they trucking in sand?”

“They are at this location, but the larger projects rely on dredging sand from the coastal bottom.”

We crossed the water on another causeway, headed south again. We reached the opposite shore, and Sultan spoke to the cabbie in Arabic. The man nodded and made a couple of left turns past warehouses and shipping docks. We turned into a parking space outside GARMCO’s headquarters.

The building surprised me with its purely functional appearance, especially after leaving the luxury of the Ritz-Carlton just a half-hour ago. GARMCO wasn’t showing off its success. Solid block construction clearly conveyed, “We have work to do here.”

We ducked inside to escape the noonday heat, and were greeted in English by the receptionist, a young Bahraini woman in Western business dress wearing a traditional Islamic headscarf.

“Welcome, Mr. Sultan. Welcome, Mr. John,” she said, nodding slightly. “I am Miss Fatima. Please have a seat. I’ll inform Mr. Imad you have arrived.”

Sultan had prepared me for these introductions during the week before the trip. He knew most of them personally, and provided some background information that helped me remember who the players were. Imad Ebrahim AlHassan had been GARMCO’s Chief Executive Officer since the untimely death of his predecessor three years earlier. Like so many of his countrymen, Imad earned his engineering and business degrees in Europe. He gained aluminum mill experience in Japan while the GARMCO plant was constructed in the early eighties. A native Bahraini, he traced his tribal ancestry back three hundred years. His accomplishments as CEO included overseeing a recent foil mill installation, and developing GARMCO’s new aluminum foil product line.

The receptionist answered her phone and looked our way. She nodded as if the caller could see her, and then rose to escort us around the corner and down the hall. Warm wood paneling along the corridor displayed photographs of GARMCO’s growth and certificates of its accomplishments. One certificate caught my eye, and I paused to read a coveted International Standards Organization ISO 9001:2000 Certification of GARMCO’s Quality Management System, dated a couple of years ago.

I caught up with Sultan and Fatima at the entrance to Imad’s front corner office. The CEO smiled at Sultan, stood and walked around his desk, arms open. The two men hugged and kissed each other on both cheeks. Sultan took a step back and indicated I should come forward.

“Allow me to introduce my friend, John Wilkinson,” Sultan said.

Imad extended his hand. “Welcome to Bahrain, Mr. John,” Imad said in perfect Queen’s English. “We are pleased at your interest in helping GARMCO’s little quality problem.”

“Thank you, Mr. Imad. I am looking forward to being of some assistance. From what Sultan has described, I believe we can solve your quality inspection issues. But, if you don’t mind, please call me John.”

“As you wish, John,” Imad said. “Let us all agree to use our given names, in that case.”

Fatima excused herself and left us alone. Imad walked to the head of a dark wood conference table and indicated we should join him. I waited while Sultan took the seat at Imad’s right hand, and then walked around the table to sit across from Sultan. I glanced around Imad’s office and saw furnishings that spoke to function, rather than style. The exception was a matched set of colorful woven rugs that hid most of the gray linoleum

flooring. I sat down just as Fatima returned with coffee and a tray of fruit which she placed between us.

“I hope you do not mind having a light meal with me here,” Imad said to me. “I did not want to waste your time driving downtown.”

“Thank you, Imad,” I said. “That will be fine. I’m anxious to get to work.”

Sultan laughed at my enthusiasm. “John tries to be productive at all times, Imad. He would surely starve if left unattended.”

“Not likely,” I said, patting my stomach. “I store food like a camel stores water.”

Imad smiled at our exchange, obviously pleased with our relationship. “Sultan speaks highly of you, John,” he said. “Some time ago, he brought your work in Oman to our attention. We did not think your inspection technology could be applied to aluminium processing, but when quality became an issue, Sultan convinced our Directors to let you try.”

“I noticed you stopped to read our ISO 9001 Certification,” Sultan said. “Are you familiar with ISO quality assurance, John?”

“Yes, I am. My first experience with ISO was while I was in school. I spent a summer working for an oil company that was trying to get certified. I must have written a hundred procedures they didn’t think they needed until the auditors asked for them.”

“The newer standards do not emphasize procedures and controls as much as the standards of the eighties and nineties,” Imad said. “Today’s focus is on controlling our processes to meet customers’ needs. We still have our written procedures in place, of course, but we would rather spend our time with our customers than auditing procedure manuals.

“Unfortunately, our inspection problems surfaced just three months before our next ISO recertification audit.”

I had my deadline without really knowing the problem. Imad and Sultan remained remarkably calm given the implications of losing their ISO certification.

I placed my napkin on the table and nodded to my new clients. “We’d better get started.”

Imad and Sultan looked at each other and smiled. GARMCO’s CEO turned to me and said, “We arranged a plant tour for you this afternoon. You will see the basic flow of materials from ALBA’s cast aluminum ingots to our finished sheets and rolls. Some of our processes are proprietary, but all doors are open to you. Our General Manager of Operations will escort you.

“Tomorrow, I would like you to sit in on our production meeting. Mohammed will introduce you to managers throughout the plant this

afternoon. In the morning, we will discuss our situation in more detail, and how you might help.”

“John is also interested in the Emotional Intelligence Program,” Sultan reminded Imad. “Will he meet Dr. Maryam?”

Since Sultan brought up the subject of emotional intelligence back in Oman, EI occupied much of my thought. I read some articles on the Internet and discovered the concept embraced dozens of organizations and programs aimed not just at business managers. Educators advocated developing emotional intelligence in young children, while therapists counseled their parents in self-awareness and self-control. Emotional intelligence even found its way onto the modern battlefield as military leaders realized the value of non-traditional troop motivators like empathy and compassion.

I nodded enthusiastically. “I would very much like to meet Dr. Maryam. I want to explore increasing my own emotional quotient, and perhaps implement an EI program in my own organization.”

Imad nodded and smiled at Sultan. “Yes, John, Sultan told me of your interest in our program, and I have mentioned you to Dr. Maryam. It will be my pleasure to introduce you. You are both busy this afternoon. Perhaps there will be time tomorrow, after our meeting.”

Imad stood and walked to his desk. He pushed a button on his phone. “Fatima, please call Mohammed. Our guest is ready for his tour.

“Mohammed is our General Manager,” Imad said. “He is most qualified to show you our production operations and explain the challenge we face.”

I met my guide in the lobby after saying goodbye to Imad and arranging to meet Sultan for dinner back at the Ritz. Mohammed introduced himself and handed me a white hardhat labeled “VISITOR.” We walked outside and Mohammed led me across the yard. He was my height, but his thin build cut easily through the afternoon heat. I plowed along in his wake, wishing again I’d lost the promised weight. Houston’s heat was mild compared to summer in the Gulf, and I couldn’t tolerate much time without air conditioning.

Mohammed showed me truckloads of aluminum ingots off-loaded into concrete storage bays outside a huge hangar-shaped building. Bucket loaders driven by blue-uniformed men in white hardhats nibbled at the edges of the shiny piles and disappeared inside. He explained the loaders were relocating an excess ingot supply. “Normally, the automated conveyor system keeps up with the supply from ALBA,” he said.

Mohammed noticed my own struggle to keep pace. “I am sorry, Mr. John,” he said. “It is cooler inside this building.”

I lifted my visitor's hardhat and wiped my face and forehead. "Thank you," I said. "I'm afraid I can't get used to this heat. And please, call me John."

Mohammed smiled. "You remind me of very cold winters I spent in upstate New York, John," he said as we walked toward the production building.

"What were you doing in New York?" I asked, embracing the picture of a frozen campus and the feel of snow in the air.

"I earned my Master's degree at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. I studied Industrial Management and Engineering."

I was familiar with RPI, of course, but didn't know what Industrial Management and Engineering involved. I asked Mohammed to explain.

"IME seeks to increase productivity by dealing more with people than processes, although I have to understand both. I look for improvements in organization, communications, planning, and technology. The managers who work for me have more specialized expertise in their areas of responsibility, such as transportation, materials handling systems, process and quality control, and so on. It is my job to see they all work together as productively as possible."

We finally reached the building's entrance. Mohammed opened the door and stepped aside, indicating I should enter before him. I immediately felt cool air circulating through the cavernous structure filled with machinery, overhead lifts, conveyors, and stacks of flat, shiny aluminum sheets and rolls.

"Wow!" I said to Mohammed as he closed the door on the hot, bright sunlight and stood beside me. "It looks like your IME degree should come in handy here."

We walked between yellow paint stripes that I hoped kept rolling forklifts and loaders from our path. Mohammed stopped at the foot of an open staircase that climbed inside the building's outer wall. He nodded for me to follow him up. From our new vantage point on the second level I could see from one end of the facility to the other.

More blue-uniformed men in white hardhats moved among others in red or yellow hardhats. White hats and lab coats manned computerized control panels alongside massive production equipment. Now and then a couple of workers stopped to briefly talk, while others wrote on clipboards or labels and tags. Far from earshot, I imagined crackling voices on the two-way radios they held to their ears somehow controlling the apparent chaos on the floor below.

Mohammed allowed me a few minutes to absorb the scene, and then explained the flow and functions of the various operations. He took time

to see that I understood one system component before turning to the next. The workers on the floor stole occasional glances up toward Mohammed and me as we walked together along the catwalk. I'm sure they wondered who I was, and why the General Manager himself escorted me through the plant.

The catwalk hugged the wall for a time before turning to skirt a set of offices perched above the plant's center section. Nameplates on the doors bore the names and titles of the occupants, but the glass-walled cubicles were unoccupied. Maintenance Manager, Engineering Manager, Process Development Manager, Hot Rolling Superintendent – all busied themselves elsewhere.

Mohammed pointed across the plant through hoists, belts, and cables to a matching set of offices mounted on the far wall. Seated around a conference table, five or six men watched a dark-suited woman wearing a traditional black scarf around her head write on a whiteboard. Distance made her writing impossible to read, but her hand moved from left to right, so I knew she probably wrote in English.

"All the managers are in that training session," he explained, "or I would be pleased to introduce you."

"That's okay. I'll meet them in the morning," I said. "Imad invited me to your production meeting."

"Yes, I know. That should be interesting."

"What kind of training are they getting?" I asked. "Is that the Emotional Intelligence study Sultan mentioned?"

Mohammed raised an eyebrow, maybe a little startled that I knew of GARMCO's interest in developing management's Emotional Quotients. It occurred to me that Mohammed's training in Industrial Management and Engineering had to involve some emotional intelligence, yet outside consultants had intervened. If he felt affronted, he hid it well.

"Yes, they are taking tests to determine their emotional intelligence. Dr. Maryam calls it their 'EQ' – Emotional Quotient. Are you familiar with EQ's?" Mohammed asked.

"Not so much," I answered, "but I'll meet Dr. Maryam tomorrow, too. I'd like to see how my own company might benefit from more emotional intelligence."

"Dr. Maryam has worked with other Bahraini companies to determine the extent of their EQ's, and how they relate to the various management styles we see in the Kingdom. In fact, her studies were the subject of her doctorate thesis at the university."

“Yes, I know. I am looking forward to meeting her. But let’s get a handle on your quality inspection problem before I’m sidetracked by emotional intelligence.”

Mohammed opened the nearest office door, labeled “Nasir bin Faisal AlMahdi, Quality Control Manager,” and waved me inside. “We’ll borrow Nasir’s office. Please have a seat, John.”

The problem Mohammed described was simple enough. Under pressure to increase profits, he had increased throughput and sacrificed product quality. His normally adequate inspection equipment appeared to keep up with the new demands, but customers reported a significant jump in product defects. He dialed back the inspection speed, but created a production bottleneck that drove his costs back up.

“Our Board of Directors is not happy,” Mohammed said. “Most are upset that GARMCO has never shown a profit. We succeed in every other measurable way, but cannot overcome our costs.

“I understand a member of the Board suggested you might be able to help us,” he said. Mohammed looked directly at me. His expression softened, and I saw at once his tired frustration and faint hope. His hands resting on the table, opened, palms up, invited me in.

“My friend, Sultan, knows what my company has achieved, and believes I can help GARMCO. From your description of the problem, I think our inspection technology can be modified and plugged in to your operation without too much difficulty. Quality Control can push that bottleneck somewhere else, and save you money in the process.

“I’m sounding like a salesman, though,” I said. “I expect I’ll ask my best engineer to fly over and check things out before I guarantee results. I want to hear from your managers tomorrow, though, before I call Houston. I need their input and full cooperation.”

I looked over the production floor to the conference room. Dr. Maryam, now seated, leaned toward a manager whose hands waved to emphasize his point. Even at this distance, I noticed his colleagues in postures suggesting varied levels of interest in what he said. A few slouched in their chairs, heads down, while others sat forward, heads turned to the speaker.

“They’ll speak their minds, won’t they?”

Mohammed smiled. “We shall see, John.”