



Houda Hdadou

Houda's leadership story starts at AUI as she became very active in the field of engineering. Indeed, she was a research assistant in the school of Science and Engineering in the renewable energies field. Apart from being a high academic achiever, she was also driven to develop her soft skills by being active in clubs. For instance, she volunteered in the Hand in Hand club and eventually joined the second cohort of the Leadership Development Institute in the fall of 2010. She stated that the LDI has been extremely helpful because it gave her mostly exposure and skills that were not necessarily learned in classrooms.

H: "At the LDI, you meet people from different majors and that is helpful. It was also one more thing to add on the CV and made the difference."

Her hard work paid off after her graduation as she received the Exxonmobil MENA scholarship. This scholarship brought her to the US where she studied a Master of Science and engineering for 2 years after which she immediately got recruited by a National Oil company.

As uncommon as it was at that time, Houda joined the petroleum industry. However, this did not stop Houda from pursuing a career in this industry, especially in this male-dominated field.

Ten years ago, it might have been an alien thought for girls to be involved in the oil and gas field. However, it has been more and more common to have girls choosing to study STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects, providing a natural pathway into the industry. It became no longer a matter of gender diversity but more about a diversity of thought (Offshore Technology, 2019).

H: "At the end, it's a series of dots that connect and then you realise that everything happens for a reason."

Undeniably, this journey was not all rosy. Houda had to pull a strong face and character while facing the stereotypes facing women. Living and working in another country cultivated her cultural intelligence which allowed her to overcome the cultural obstacles that she had to face. Indeed, Houda developed a tremendous ability to work in an aggressive and passive environment. Although she left Morocco years ago, she still believes that the challenges that women face are

numerous. For instance, she argued that there is still a huge gap between bigger cities and rural areas concerning access to technology and education.

Houda was privileged to have key people encouraging her at critical points in her life. She eventually became a successful energy consultant for various companies throughout the years. Today, she works as a Senior Technical Auditor at ADNOC group in the United Arab Emirates, one of the world's leading energy producers.

Her message for future female leaders is as follows;
"Keep the focus, set a plan and go for it"

