

# مينالاك MENALAC

## MEMBER TALK

MARCH 2021

The idea that **'LEARNING CAN BE FUN AND FUN CAN PROMOTE LEARNING'** has created a new concept of EDUTAINMENT. MENALAC is happy to speak with **MR. SHAZAD ALI, CEO, CHEEKY MONKEYS**, a leading multi-country edutainment brand on the ethos of his brand, how they have navigated through the COVID crisis and their future plans.



**Tell us a bit about your brand and operations, what is Cheeky Monkeys as an experience and which age group is it aimed at?**

We focus on ages 1 through 7, we believe we are a true interactive edutainment center with focus on a holistic development of our children, building their imaginations, creativity, and their ability to develop motor and social skills with no electronics or video games at our facilities. We focus on Events, Classes and Birthday parties in addition to play and fun. Our Facilities are designed using the Montessori system, where the child has the ability to move from one activity to another on their own and at their own pace without supervision thus demonstrating independence.

**What was the inspiration for you to create this brand and in which countries can your Cheeky Monkey operations be found?**

My Kids were the inspiration, after realizing that there was an absence for a true edutainment facility that you can take your kids to on a regular basis without impacting your pockets greatly, we started looking at global concepts, unfortunately nothing pooped out to what we desired in an edutainment center and then decided to embark on building the ideal center to cater to kids ages 1 through 7. Today you can find Cheeky Monkeys in the UAE, KSA, Lebanon, Philippines and the United States of America.

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**With the impact of Covid-19 felt by our industry globally, please share with us how you have handled the new operating requirements, are there any ideas you have implemented that have helped to ease your business back into trading?**

Just like the entire industry, the impact of Covid has been devastating, the process of building back along with the required changes has impacted our core. We have made significant changes including sanitizing the facility using bio safe foggers, sanitizing every reusable item after each use, creating social distancing along with training our team members on these new best practice procedures aimed at creating a safe environment for the children and adults visiting Cheeky Monkeys.



**What does the future look like for Cheeky Monkeys are you planning any new operations or considering entering any new markets within the MENA region in the next 2-3 years?**

We are currently focused on expansion into Saudi Arabia through our franchise partner with 15 locations planned over the next 3 years, We plan on entering Bahrain, Kuwait, Algeria and Morocco in 2021/2022 and build on the momentum of the brand.

**For any new investor considering opening a leisure and attractions operation in the UAE, what would be your one golden nugget piece of advice?**

Location as always is the key, understanding the ever-evolving market of UAE is very important and staying current in your offerings will help you drive the customers through your doors.

**Finally, please share with our readers your thoughts on MENALAC and the benefits of being part of this council as an operator within the MENA region.**

MENALAC has been a great source of information, connections and market intelligence for us. With tremendous resources among members, you have the ability to tap into the leaders of our industry through one single channel.