

**MEAFINANCE**

# SME

## Business & Finance

**SUMMIT & AWARDS 2026**

23 APRIL 2026

RITZ-CARLTON JBR  
DUBAI, UAE

### **SME Financing - Gaps and Opportunities**

Leading stakeholders from across the regional SME world attending the 2026 MEA Finance, SME Business and Finance Summit will debate what still needs to be put into place to meet the potential of our region's small and medium sized enterprises, and define the opportunities that can and will arise for banks, fintechs and technology suppliers as these gaps are filled.

While sincere efforts and much energy is being devoted to encourage, nurture and assist entrepreneurs and SMEs across our region, there is still a lot more than can and must be done to meet the true potential that a highly performing and diverse SME ecosystem can bring.

In terms of our region, there has probably never been a better moment in history to put our efforts into assisting the functioning and aspirations of SMEs and startups. Economically, the GCC is firing on all cylinders and in many ways is the envy of more established economic regions. Governments and regulators are attuned to the needs of SMEs, building frameworks and enacting laws to encourage small business growth and investment. Banks and financial institutions are limbering up to become more flexible and accommodating of the needs of SMEs and fintechs, and technology providers are applying their knowledge and imaginations in ever new ways to make the financial working necessities of startups and small businesses easier to satisfy.

However, there is still more to be done to edge nearer to meeting the potential that SMEs can bring to regional economies, and we must not fail to act accordingly during this most opportune moment in time.

More than **300** regional banking and business leaders with a format that aims to bring and engage the entire spectrum of interested parties including bankers, business owners, entrepreneurs, investors, technology businesses, fintechs and other stakeholders from along the value chain.



# What to expect

**300+**

Leaders from Banking and Financial Services, Business Owners, Entrepreneurs, Investors, Technology Businesses, Fintechs, Regulators

**6**

in-depth and lively sessions on the future and state of SMEs in the region

**30+**

Thought Leaders, Innovators and Market Makers & Experts

**6**

Hours of Peer Interaction & Networking

# Why participate

**Solid** engagement opportunities for your company with decision makers, to directly detail your company's solutions to today's most pressing SME and small business-related issues.

**Charles Der Sahakian**  
Managing Partner  
CVML

**Mohamed Khaled**  
Founder  
Hotdesk

**Hamed Ahli**  
Head, Free Zone Leasing & Licensing  
Meydan Free Zone

**Exposure** to the regional banking communities with your brand visibility in the networking and exhibition area during breaks and through participation in panel discussions and keynote presentations.

**Opportunities** to be recognised and celebrated as a bank, technology business or service providing business at the forefront of regional SME

## BE AN EVENT PARTNER

We can offer a wide range of options for sponsors depending on your needs, level of engagement and the branding presence and impact you want to achieve during the event.

## INDIVIDUAL EVENT PACKAGES

In addition to our existing packages, we can sit with you to develop a bespoke sponsorship package to provide targeted exposure and engagement before, during and continuing beyond the event.

## PANEL 1: What We Want - What today's regional SMEs want from banks

Beyond loans and day-to-day financial services, what do regional SMEs want from their banks? Whether requiring services suitable for a start-up or for an established business with a track-record, today's SMEs are fully aware that thanks to technology and increasing competition for their attention, they can demand their banks provide the kind of services and flexibility only available to big business just a few years ago such as, advisory services, trade and supply-chain finance or real-time payments. So, what are they asking for, what are they being offered and what will they be asking for in the coming years?

## PANEL 2: Navigating the Obstacle Course - Managing the Challenges of Regional SMEs Today

Not all SMEs are startups, who face many one-off challenges when starting out. However, most have moved past the beginning phases and have been operating for years. What are the main challenges faced by regional SMEs at this changing and uncertain period in time? Access to finance is always challenging but how much more now as the costs of doing business rise? How do they acquire and retain talent? As technology further embeds as essential, how can SMEs find the resources to adopt it at the same speed as bigger businesses? How can SMEs keep pace with the increasing regulation and source reliable and accurate market data? How can they face the intense competition with against bigger, more recognised brands. Can our region's SMEs overcome the obstacles of today's business environment?

## PANEL 3: Bridging the Gap - Meeting the Financing Needs of Regional SMEs?

There is no shortfall of statements on, or acknowledgements of the key role that SMEs play in regional economies, but there is an enormous shortfall when securing adequate financing, with, as estimated by A T Kearney, there being a gap of more than US\$250 billion. How can this gap be bridged? Will it need the changing of long held beliefs and attitudes? Will it require a new approach to risk or re-examination of lending policies, and what might these new approaches be? How much potential in terms of economic growth in our region is going unused as a result of the funding gap? However, does this mean that there are now real opportunities for agile banks and fintechs to capitalise on building products, systems and services that help close the divide?

## PANEL 4: Banking Bandwidth - How Technology is supporting SMEs Finance

Technologies such as AI are not an option for businesses today, but how can they be most usefully deployed in the SME and startup context? At today's pace of developments, how should start-ups and SMEs decide the right technology for them at the outset, and for the medium term too? As tools for automation of essential back-office tasks such as payroll, inventory management and accounting, technology obviously has a role but are there now specific advantages or opportunities it brings for small business that were not available until recently? Can or do banks play a role in the choice or provision of AI and technology for SMEs and start-ups, or should their input be no more than providing finance for it?

## PANEL 5: Free Determination - SMEs, Freezones and Banks

There are over 100 freezones across the Middle East, with each providing a variety of special tax incentives, customs exemptions or lighter touch regulation. With this much choice, how should SMEs decide which is best for their business, or whether indeed they really need to be based in a freezone? How important is it to understand your existing and projected banking needs when selecting a freezone, and does the choice influence the financial services an SME receives? What are the considerations an SME must make when deciding whether to set up in a freezone and what might be the implications of not choosing well?

## PANEL 6: Trading Places - Trade & Supply Chain Finance for SMEs & startups

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**Meet Existing & Potential Clients**

Use Booth Space to invite and host your existing and potential clients and reinforce your brand in the market

**Build Brand Trust & Confidence**

Be present in front of your potential clients and build trust and confidence in your brand

**Showcase Product or Service**

Use your exhibition space to launch new product/service or demonstrate your technology & service

**Conference Sessions**

Engage your target audience by presenting thought leadership and participating through panels

**WHY SPONSOR?**

**Unlock Growth Opportunities**

Exclusive orientation and meeting support to help your brand advance through beneficial collaborations

**Generate High Quality Leads**

Leverage your physical presence to meet face to face with prequalified audience to generate high quality leads

**Industry Feedback**

Gain valuable input and feedback from your target industry

**Save Time and Resources**

Save your valuable time and resources and realise multiple sales and marketing goals



BENEFITS	PLATINUM	GOLD	SILVER	LUNCH	LANYARD	BADGE	EXHIBITOR
Exclusive to one company	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Opportunity to provide Welcome Note	✓						
Interview of Senior Representative	✓	✓	✓				
Access to all sessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Standalone Presentation	✓	✓					
Panel Member in Discussions	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Exhibition Space (3x2 sqm)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advert in Event Booklet	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Logo on website with hyperlink	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Logo on all Marketing Collateral	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Branding on Post Event Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>COST (USD)</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>



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