

DXL INDUSTRY PROFILE



DXL Magazine headed to the Middle East to catch up with Firas Odeh, Business Development Manager for AmCan International Group and find out just how AmCan International has grown to become a leading exporter in the Middle East's Beauty, Cosmetic & Supplement Industry.

Firas, thank you for taking the time to sit down with us. Can you please tell us all when AmCan originated, and why the group was started?

Established originally in 1991 as a general trading firm, AmCan was initially involved in the export and distribution of general consumer goods including Cosmetics and Beauty products throughout the Middle East markets. Over the years, AmCan developed a wide and diverse customer base in the Middle East due to its strong reputation of integrity and innovation. Furthermore, the company was able to reach greater regional coverage by forming joint ventures with three companies in different countries in the region. This enabled the company to expand into new areas of business. In 2004, AmCan formed a new division dedicated to the export and distribution of Food Supplements in the Middle East Region.

Who was your company started by, and what sort of background do they have?

Mr. Jamal Odeh, President and Founder of AmCan International Group, was born and raised in Amman, Jordan. Mr. Odeh was initially involved in the construction industry in Kuwait. By 1990, he was the managing partner of one of the major construction company's in Kuwait. However, as the Gulf War unfolded, Mr. Jamal migrated with his family to Canada where he established AmCan International with the purpose of distribution and exportation of general consumer goods to the Middle East market.

Tell us about your key employees. Who are they and what do they do?

First of all, I would like to personally thank the Beach Planet Team who have been a great partner and helped us in developing the Kuwait market. I would like to thank Mrs. Shown Al Tariq, Mr. Omar Al-Motar, Mr. Hassanad, Mr. Rami Al Baidh and all of their associates. It has been a pleasure working with all of you.

Mr. Firas Odeh, Business Development Manager, is responsible for contacting new suppliers and developing new businesses throughout the region. As the founder of the food supplement division within the company, he has been extensively involved in the business for the past two years.

Mr. Nour Al Khalib is our Country Manager in Saudi Arabia. He is currently working on developing the food supplement business in Saudi Arabia. Although, he is currently facing some challenges with regard to registration, we are hoping to open this market soon.

Mrs. Dana Al Sayed, Mohammed Hammoudeh, Tariq Qatanani, and Wael Borini, all also play crucial roles in the continued success of our company.

Firas, what separates your company from the rest of the distributors in the Middle East?

As the Middle East is considered a developing market in terms of the Food Supplement industry, none of the large business in the industry have yet entered this market. Most of the current players are considered rather small to mid size companies. Therefore, many of the current players have not been able to carry more than 1 or 1 brands given the high targets required by manufacturers. When AmCan decided to get into the food supplement market, our aim was to capitalize on the market need to have a major distributor representing many brands, in turn, this will help all of the smaller companies and retailers develop a wide and rich product offering in their stores instead of having a full shelf of Vitamin E and another shelf of Vitamin C.



3 Firas Odeh, Business Development Manager, AmCan International Group

Although, AmCan has not been the first mover into the food supplement business in the Middle East, the fact that it has extensive knowledge in importing along with a wide customer base enabled us to capture a large market share. Moreover, the fact that we have been able to deal with some of the major brands in the industry have helped us develop our marketing channels rapidly and efficiently.

Moreover, our competitive pricing strategy has compelled many of our customers to deal with us rather than with the manufacturers directly. By doing so, they were no longer tied to minimum purchase orders and volumes per year nor stuck with two or three brands.

What do you credit most of your success to?

Keeping our promises has been the major success factor of our business. By doing so, we were able to develop a strong relationship with our suppliers and

gain the trust of our customers. Even within our company, we all work hard and we feel like a family, none of us have the attitude of "I can not wait to go home". As a matter of fact, we usually work after hours to get the job done!

Do you have any interest in expanding your company into other international sales territory?

AmCan is a truly international company in the sense that nearly 90% of our sales are exports. We have exported to many countries including, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Sudan, and even Russia. In terms of the Food Supplement Division, we have been extremely successful in Kuwait and we are also developing other market channels within the region at the current time.



▶ ONE OF AMCAN'S WAREHOUSES IN KUWAIT

Are there any new products you are excited to start distributing soon?

Nutrabelics is one of the brands that we will begin distributing in Kuwait and we hope that we will be able to capture some market share through this brand. Also, we are currently distributing many brands including, TWINLAB, SCHEFF NUTRITION, BSN, NUTREX, LABRADA and Nature's Answer. We are also expecting to start business with some other major players in the industry within a couple of months, such as Wender Nutrition.

What other plans do you have to help your company grow?

Currently our major focus is directed at registration of the major products that we currently represent in new markets such as Saudi Arabia and Dubai. This will enable us to develop new channels of distribution and reach greater market coverage in the Middle East.



▶ HANI AL-SAYED, SAUDI REPRESENTATIVE FOR AMCAN



▶ BURJ AL ARAB, DUBAI

What supplement combination would you recommend for someone just getting started?

Although such recommendation are usually different from one person to another, we usually like to recommend a combination of the "Major Supplements" as we like to call them; Proteins, Creatines, Nitric Oxides, and Amino Acids.

What do you believe is the best thing about the supplement industry?

Competition! The presences of many strong companies in the industry have contributed to the development of the food supplement industry as a whole. Many new products and scientific breakthroughs are the direct result of the competition that is currently taking place between all of the food supplement companies within the industry.

What about the worst?

Definitely the domestic registration process for imported brands. This has been the major constraint of developing new sales channels and in the Middle East market.

What do you see as the future of the sports nutrition industry?

Since it is at the developing stage in the Middle East, we are expecting that the sport nutrition industry will expand rapidly in the upcoming future. This will be fueled by the many companies that will enter this industry which in turn will increase competition and develop the market.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody that has contributed to our success. We would also like to thank all of our customers and employees, without whom we would have never made it.



► INTERNATIONAL HEALTH PLANET LAUNCHES AMCAN

