

# usd engineer

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UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO



**NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY  
TAU BETA PI INSTALLED**

**STUDENT-ATHLETES ARE  
SHIFTING THE PARADIGM**

**USD HELPING WOMEN  
CLOSE THE GENDER GAP**

**ALI ALMATROUK IS ONE  
IMPRESSIVE ALUMNUS**

Ali Almatrouk's high standards and consistency served him well at USD and throughout his career. "It all keeps me quite busy, but it's all really fun," he says.

# Impressive Impresario

Ali Almatrouk applies USD lessons to his Kuwaiti-based businesses

by Steve Murray

Ali Almatrouk is a busy man, and that's just the way he likes it. The CEO of Makers, Inc. — a Kuwaiti company that Almatrouk created in 2009 — recently launched a second business venture in real estate.

"I come from an entrepreneurial family," he says. "My grandfather was an entrepreneur, and my great grandfather was one of the leading merchants in Kuwait from the 1920s to the 1950s. I always looked at these two great men as idols in my life; I want to continue on their path."

Almatrouk has already traveled quite a way down that path. "I wanted to work in big corporations first, to learn what goes into running an organization. I also wanted to learn how to recognize what these organizations were doing that was right or wrong so I could use that experience when I started my own business."

He started his career in the family merchandising business — Mezzan Holding Company — and then signed on at telecommunications firm Zain Kuwait before setting out on his own. Today, Makers, Inc. promotes educational technology products in Kuwait, although Almatrouk has plans to move the company into other services, too.

"We chose education first because I had some experience in tutoring at USD and we saw that this market is underserved in Kuwait. It was a real opportu-

nity and we jumped on it," he recalls. "I also used Texas Instruments products while I was at USD and they helped me tremendously in my engineering classes. We contacted Texas Instruments and things moved on from that."

They certainly did. "We're now the official distributor in Kuwait for two companies," Almatrouk explains. "Texas Instruments Education Technology and Vernier for Science and Technology."

He credits the USD engineering program for helping to cultivate his personal work ethic.

"We spent lots of time in the labs. We literally spent most of our weekdays, and sometimes weekends, preparing our projects and lab reports," he recalls. "But for me, the hands-on time made for the best experiences. As students, we developed very special relationships with each other because of all the time we spent working together."

Almatrouk also acknowledges close faculty relationships for keeping him focused on his goals. "The faculty knew us by name, and were interested in our success. I still keep in contact with them."

The high expectations of the engineering faculty provided lessons that still resonate. "Dr. Susan Lord, for example, forced us to be as perfect as we possibly could be," he recalls. "If you submitted something, it had better be error-free. She also pushed us to be organized. I still use her methods to

organize my work today. It saves a lot of time and makes you very efficient and productive."

Lord is quick to note that the lessons flowed both ways. "A circuit simulation tutorial that Ali developed for a homework assignment was so good that we used it to train our new engineering students."

Almatrouk's high standards and consistency served him well at USD: As a student, Almatrouk served as chair of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers student chapter and was president of its honor society, Eta Kappa Nu. He earned his BA/BS in electrical engineering in 2007, graduating summa cum laude.

He is quick to credit his education at USD as a key component of his success and says that shaping employees into ethical and competent managers is a big part of his business strategy.

"USD emphasized ethics a lot in my courses, including engineering. To build a stable company, it's important that people trust you. We want the common link between all of our products and services to be high quality; honesty in dealing with clients reflects our exceptional customer service."

Others are now noticing Almatrouk's talent and drive as well. The Kuwaiti government recently selected him to be part of its Thukhur Promising Leaders program, established to nurture the future leaders of Kuwait.

"It's a competitive program. I

was one of 100 people selected from 650 applicants," he says with pride. The program, which he completed this summer, involved focused business and leadership training at Cornell University.

Although he married in 2008 and welcomed the birth of his daughter, Sheikha, in 2011, family life has not slowed him down. This year, he started a new business — Oro Realty Group USA, LLC — along with his brothers, Mohammed and Hasan. Oro will manage property in both Kuwait and Southern California.

"We want to balance the risk in our businesses by diversifying our portfolios," he explains.

"It all keeps me quite busy, but it's all really fun. The days are long, lasting until late in the evening, and I also do lots of traveling between the Middle East, Europe and the U.S."

Despite his busy schedule, making time for USD is a priority for Almatrouk. When he learned that he would be a 2012 inductee into Tau Beta Pi, the national engineering honor society, he adjusted his travel schedule to make sure he'd be in San Diego for the initiation ceremony last February.

And clearly, the university will continue to loom large in his life: In 2010, Almatrouk established the USD Alumni Association chapter in Kuwait. Given his boundless energy and esteem for his alma mater, there's little doubt that this venture too will thrive. 🇰🇼

COURTESY OF ALI ALMATROUK

