



Cedar Routes members in a group photo

Cedar Routes An Aviation Industry Group Launches for Lebanon

On Wednesday, October 25, Cedar Routes (CR) held its inaugural meeting at Middle East Airlines Headquarters, Beirut - Lebanon

To know more about Cedar Routes, an interview was held with one of its founders, Mr. Michael Bell (Senior Client Partner & Leader, Civil Aviation Practice in Korn Ferry International).

Q: What is Cedar Routes?

A: Cedar Routes is an affinity group that brings together people who work in the aviation industry, those who are well connected in Lebanon, whether raised here or have heritage through family or even connections through spouse, company or business, but most importantly, they all have interest in Lebanon.

Q: What are the objectives of Cedar Routes?

A: The purpose is to bring the group together to really advance the interest of Lebanese Aviation inside and outside Lebanon. There are several areas of activities of the group: mentorship, networking, development of the industry, and the group can even help to attract investments to Lebanon through their connections.

Q: Can you tell us about the inaugural meeting?

A: We held the meeting to bring this group together and to create Cedar Routes. During the meeting we discussed the mission, membership, and activities that we want to undertake. The attendees (and those who couldn't come to Lebanon but are online with us) are serving as the founders and the first Board of Directors of Cedar Routes.

It is not intended to be exclusive to this group. We have a large list of people that we like to attract, people who have connections to Lebanon.

Q: How was the idea formed?

A: I had this idea for many years. Being the executive recruiter in the aviation business, my job is to meet people, and some of them were from Lebanese origin. I kept a list of them, and I thought it was a good idea to get these people together through a group to allow them to network with each other. I brought the idea to Mr. Mohamad El-Hout MEA Chairman - Director General, who welcomed it and encouraged to proceed with it by organizing it and to identify the group by 10 to 15 persons who could be the founders. We approached these people, and they all agreed to come to Lebanon. What is common about the group is their high interest and commitment to the organization.

Mr. Bell noted that the first Cedar Routes conference will be held in September 2018, hoping to attract more people to the group by that time.

After the meeting the group toured MEA Training and Conferences Center.

The members of CR gave their impression of the Center and commented on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout as MEA Chairman - Director General.



MEA Chairman - Director General Mr. El-Hout with Cedar Routes members in front of the simulator

Michael Bell

Senior Client Partner & Leader, Civil Aviation Practice in Korn Ferry International



Impression of Training and Conferences Center: The Center is magnificent. This is a magnet to bring together the people in the aviation business. I am very impressed. People who will come here will walk away with a different view of Lebanon and of MEA.

A word on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout: I would like to mention that the 15 founders of Cedar Routes who represent every part of the industry come from prestigious companies but perhaps, most important than anything, they all represent success stories. Mohamad El-Hout has done a remarkable job in turning MEA around. We look to him as an excellent role model of Lebanese success stories, and we like young people and Lebanese people around the world who are building their careers in aviation to look at him as a role model.

Jeremy Akel

Former Senior Vice President, Chief Operations Officer at Bristow Group



Impression of Training and Conferences Center: Beautiful facility, great foundation for training young men and women to be experts in aviation, and it makes me very proud as Lebanese to see something like this. The facilities are state of the art, very modern, and there are some things I have never seen

before during my 22 years of aviation industry. I have never seen such level of training and equipment. This will surely make Beirut have the role it had before in training.

A word on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout: As a little child, I grew up loving MEA. Looking at MEA today and what Mr. El-Hout has done to it makes me more proud to be Lebanese. He has made a tremendous achievement.

Michel Azar-Hmouda

Business Leader, Americas – CAE Commercial Aviation

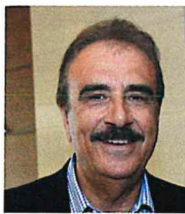


Impression of Training and Conferences Center: What I have seen is very impressive. I don't think one could ever expect something like that. I am in the training business myself, and it's very nice to see emphasis around training.

A word on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout: The turnaround of MEA is a very good story, and for us we are happy to help take it to the next level. We have one of our flight simulators here as CAE, and I don't think we expected to see something like this.

Chaker Chahrour

Vice President and General Manager, Global Sales and Marketing at GE Aviation



Impression of Training and Conferences Center: I am amazed and stunned with the facility and the factuality of things. Congratulations, it is a great accomplishment.

A word on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout: He has done a marvelous and tremendous job. I was watching his performance for years and every time I meet with him, I tell you I am more and more impressed.

MEA News

Tony Charaf

TNC Executive Coaching and Consulting



Impression of Training and Conferences Center: I am shocked, truly shocked. I have seen so much in the world of aviation, and I am amazed. This is state of the art. Second to none, and all I hope is that we fill this place up with business to generate cost for the airline, and this is critical.

Zeina Gedeon

President and Chief Executive Officer at Me Inc. and Chief Executive Officer at TravelBrands, Inc.



Impression of Training and Conferences Center: The Center is a showcase. I have never seen something more beautiful. It is a showcase for the whole world to see.

A word on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout: I am surprised and impressed by the accomplishments and the

financials of MEA. I was surprisingly shocked to be honest. I always thought the company loses money and doesn't make money. Now I see it is one of the best companies, and this makes me feel very proud.

Olivier Hourri

Executive Vice President, Strategy, Growth and Key Accounts of Olivier Hourri Advisory Services



Impression of Training and Conferences Center: I did not expect any of what I have seen. I was here in 1996 or 1997 when I was one of the consultants for the restructuring project, and we basically paved the way for what the Chairman has embraced, but this is a big transformation and a pride for us as Lebanese.

A word on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout: This is a

significant and very impressive turnaround story. It is good for MEA and good for the civil aviation in Lebanon. The company is still thriving and consistently profitable despite the fact that the aviation world is very competitive. There are big monsters around MEA competing against it. This is a typical small airline squeezed between 3 major airlines in Europe and 3 major airlines in the Middle East and being able to survive, thrive and grow, and to be profitable is a testimony of great leadership and also all MEA employees.

Pierre Jeannot

Chairman of the Advisory Board, Aviation Think Tank at Concordia University



Impression of Training and Conferences Center: Beautiful design. I have seen many training centers, but this one is marvelous in quality. This is a success for MEA.

A word on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout: It is a very impressive performance of MEA which became a vibrant airline. Its Chairman's potential is reflected in how this airline is expanding.

Marwan Lahoud

Chief Strategy & Marketing Officer and Member of the Group Executive Committee at EADS – Airbus Group – Airbus



Impression of Training and Conferences Center: I visited the center around two

years ago when it was only a building. I was within a delegation, and Mr. El-Hout took us for a tour there and started telling us that this will be like that, and there will be so. Honestly, many people in the delegation did not believe that all can be done. Now I see that everything he said came true. It is a world-class training center. *A word on the 20th anniversary of Mr. El-Hout:* When we see what Mr. El-Hout and the team have achieved over the 20 years, we ask ourselves if their performance continues 20 more years, where will the airline reach. MEA is amazing, being our national airline and the carrier of our flag. Today, we are proud of its development.



Below are brief profiles of the founding members and first Board of Directors of Cedar Routes.

Michael Bell

Born in Lebanon/ Tripoli. Lives in Miami, Florida, USA. Has Master of Business Administration, University of Toronto (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1986) and Bachelor of Industrial Engineering, University of Toronto (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1984). Works as a Senior Client Partner & Leader, Civil Aviation Practice in Korn Ferry International.

Jeremy Akel

Born in Lebanon/Beirut. Lives in Houston, Texas, USA; has Master of Business Administration, Georgetown University (Washington, D.C., USA) and Bachelor of Science, Aerospace Engineering, University of Colorado (Boulder, Colorado, USA). Worked until 2016 as Senior Vice President, Chief Operations Officer at Bristow Group.

Michel Azar-Hmouda

Born in Lebanon/Ain Saadeh. From Dallas, Texas, USA. Has Master of Business Administration, Southern Methodist University (Dallas, Texas, USA, 2017) and Bachelor of Engineering, Electrical, Electronics and Communications, McGill University (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1997). Works as the Business Leader, Americas – CAE Commercial Aviation.

Chaker Chahrour

Born in Lebanon/Nabatieh. From Reading, Ohio, USA. Has Bachelor's Degree, Mechanical Engineering, University of Illinois (Urbana, Illinois, USA). Works as Vice President and General Manager, Global Sales and Marketing at GE Aviation.

Tony Charaf

Born in Lebanon/Zalka El Maten. From Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Has Master's Degree, Science of Management, Northrop Institute of Technology (Inglewood, California, USA, 1977); Bachelor of Science, Aircraft Maintenance Engineering, Aviation, Northrop Institute of Technology (Inglewood, California, USA, 1975); and Airframe & Powerplant license, Private pilot license. Works as TNC Executive Coaching and Consulting.

Mohamad El-Hout

From Beirut. Has Master of Business Administration, American University of Beirut (Beirut, Lebanon) and Bachelor of Economics, American University of Beirut (Beirut, Lebanon, 1981). Works as Chairman and Director General of Middle East Airlines. Led the restructuring of Middle East Airlines - Air Liban after two decades of heavy losses, thereby allowing MEA to become profitable starting the year 2002 for 18 consecutive years.

Zeina Gedeon

From Lebanon/Beirut. Lives in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Has BA in Public Administration, American University of Beirut (Beirut, Lebanon, 1987). Works as President and Chief Executive Officer at Me Inc. and Chief Executive Officer at TravelBrands, Inc.

Olivier Hour

From Lebanon/Beirut. Lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Has Masters, Industrial Engineering; Ecole Nationale Supérieure de

Chimie et de Physique de Bordeaux (Pessac, France, 1985) and Master's degree, Information Technology and Automation, University of Bordeaux I (Bordeaux, France, 1985). Works as Executive Vice President, Strategy, Growth and Key Accounts at SmartKargo. He is also the Founder and Chief Executive Officer at Olivier Hour Advisory Services.

Pierre Jeannot

His wife is Lebanese. Lives in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Has Honorary Doctorates from McGill University (Science), Concordia University (Law), and University of Quebec. Holds Bachelor of Science, Sir George Williams University and the following honors: Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Officer, Order of Canada; Officer, Légion d'Honneur, France; Independence Medal, First Order, Royal Hashemite Court, Jordan. He is Chairman of the Advisory Board, Aviation Think Tank at Concordia University.

Marwan Lahoud

Born in Lebanon/Amchit. Lives in France. Graduated from École Nationale Supérieure de l'Aéronautique et de l'Espace (Toulouse, France) and Ecole Polytechnique (Palaiseau, France). He is Chief Strategy & Marketing Officer and Member of the Group Executive Committee at EADS – Airbus Group – Airbus.

Jose Maluf (not present)

His grandparents are Lebanese. Lives in São Paulo, Brazil. He has Master of Business Administration, from Instituto Brasileiro de Mercado de Capitais (IBMEC), (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2006). He is Head of Fleet Planning, TAP Air Portugal and Special Advisor for Aircraft Programs at Azul Brazilian Airlines/TAP Air Portugal.

Khaled Naja (not present)

Born in Lebanon/Tripoli. Lives in Colleyville, Texas, USA. He has Master of Engineering, Civil Engineering, Penn State University; State College (Pennsylvania, USA, 1998); and Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering, University of Virginia (Charlottesville, Virginia, USA, 1997). He is the Executive Vice President, Infrastructure & Development at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport

Alina Nassar (not present)

Connected to Lebanon through her grandparents. Lives in San Jose, Costa Rica. Has Master of Laws, Law, University of Texas at Austin (Austin, Texas, USA, 2002) and Juris Doctor with honors, University of Costa Rica (San Jose, Costa Rica, 2000). She is the elected president and member of Board of Directors at International Aviation Women's Association (IAWA).

Abdul Wahab Teffaha

From Lebanon/Beirut. He has post-graduate studies in Socio-Economic Development and Political Sociology. He is the Secretary General of Arab Air Carriers Organization.

Roula Zaarour (not present)

Born in Lebanon/Anfeh. Lives in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. She has Master of Business Administration, John Molson School of Business (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1998) and Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Lebanese American University (Beirut, Lebanon, 1992). She is the Chief Operating Officer at Real Ventures.