

3 tips for local SMEs wanting to expand to the UAE

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28 Mar 2024

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is fast on track to become the IT destination for entrepreneurs and business owners to launch or expand their ventures - thanks to its strong currency, a high quality of life, a thriving business community, endless opportunities, safety, and the very attractive tax rate. The UAE economy is expected to grow by 5.7% in 2024 despite global economic challenges.



Source: [Unsplash](#)

As the South African economy is not faring as well, if you're an entrepreneur or a business owner, you might be looking to expand into the UAE region.

Where to start?

1. First thing first, you need a business license - this will allow you to run your business legally in the UAE along with obtaining a resident visa and being able to open a bank account.

So many different free zones offer business license packages - make sure to do your research as prices can vary.

My two tips here would be to choose the free zone in the Emirate where you plan to reside as it makes life logistically easier and to choose a business license package that includes co-working space (great for networking and making new business connections).

2. Secondly, you need to understand how business is done in the UAE - at times it can be different to South Africa.

It's very much about who you know, the connections you make and being perceived as trustworthy and reliable.

It's also about the communications mediums varying - most business in the UAE is done over WhatsApp. This took some getting used to as I've always used WA for personal communication rather than business. You will not be able to do this in the UAE so embrace WA usage for business if you're looking to work and trade there.

3. Finally, be incredibly respectful. The laws here are vastly different to those in South Africa, and there are limitations to freedom of speech too. Respect the laws, adhere to the rules, and enjoy what the country can offer.

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