

# HIKMAT ABOU ZEID



Hikmat Abou Zeid, a prominent Lebanese figure, has worn multiple hats throughout his dynamic career, showcasing his abilities as an entrepreneur/businessman, political and social militant, and insightful writer. He is a proud father of three children. Currently Acting as Chairman of the Board of OMT SAL.

Born in 1981 in Beirut, his journey has been marked by a multi-sectorial business profile and a firm commitment to his country.

From his early days of academic accomplishment to his leadership in the corporate world, Abou Zeid has emerged as a true visionary who navigates seamlessly between the worlds of business, political, social engagement, and literature.

In high school at Lycée Franco-Libanais Beirut, he embraced French secular ideals, immersing himself in French history, literature, and values.

Growing up amidst the complexities of Syrian occupation in Lebanon, he couldn't turn a blind eye to the political situation. Fueled by a strong desire for change, he envisioned a better Lebanon, nurturing an unwavering sense of Lebanese citizenship. During this time, he and a group of friends founded a political debate club, reflecting his early inclination for expressing his contesting personality and sparking discussions for positive transformation.

The latter played a key role in mobilizing opposition to the Syrian military occupation at Lycee Franco Libanais, leading eventually to the formation of a united group of schools called ISM (Independent Student Movement), a national student movement, aiming at debating the Lebanese political reality, fed with a revolutionary sense of change.

This group brought together like-minded students from several prominent Beirut schools, all working together aiming to challenge the status quo, advocating for a free Lebanon.

Unyielding in his pursuit of change, he faced the iron grip of authorities after distributing forbidden political flyers advocating

for independence and sovereignty in his homeland, Hikmat was caught by a security checkpoint in Wadi Chahrour where he spent 48 hours behind the walls of 'Noura' prison. This brief incarceration only fueled his determination.

Hikmat Abou Zeid was an active member of the Studentship resistance movement that first had the courage, in early 2000, to raise the Syrian occupation problematic as a prerequisite for any fight for equality, representativeness and sovereignty of a violated national independence.

Setting his academic foundation in 2004, Abou Zeid earned a law degree specializing in Lebanese private law from USEK Holy Spirit University, a testament to his commitment seeking to understand the fundamentals of his nation's legal landscape. This educational background served as the cornerstone for his later political engagement.

In 2006, Abou Zeid expanded his horizons by acquiring a Master's in Management Studies from "Institut Supérieur de Gestion" (ISG) in Paris, France, a member of the CGE (Conférence des Grandes Écoles). At that time, completing higher education abroad was a common practice for ambitious Lebanese youth to escape the dictatorship of the Syrian stranglehold over the country.

This step broadened his global perspective, and deepened his understanding of corporate management & Capital Markets, laying the groundwork for his future influential presence in the financial realm.

Abou Zeid sense of exploration lead him to move to Toronto, assuming a first job with “Western Union” Canada, where he occupied the role of the Arab ethnic sales representative, where he proactively contributed to the expansion of outlets in GTA (Great Toronto Area), expanding Western Union network among Arab ethnic presence areas.

This experience contributed in his business ground learning curve of ethnic management, a key direction towards understanding the dynamics of money transfer business.

Choosing to return to Lebanon, Abou Zeid, driven by his curiosity for capital markets, forwent involvement in the family business, which included owning 50% of “Western Union”, the American and global money transfer leader representative in Lebanon “OMT”. Instead, he embraced a role within "Fidus," the wealth management arm of SGBL.

At a young age, Abou Zeid served as a relationship manager, overseeing a bundle of active accounts in Fidus, leading him to experience his first and tangible learning curve for capital markets, touching base with one of the toughest financial crises in the history of mankind in November 2008.

Abou Zeid’s eager to this field was revealed in 2009, when he founded Ahli Investment Group (AIG) in Lebanon, a venture partnering with “Ahli International bank”, as a positive reaction to the impactful experience he has lived throughout the 2008 subprime crisis. AIG was empowered by the central bank’s

endorsement, a prime brokerage financial institution, targeting local and Arab clients.

In March 2009, following the completion of an executive education program in Strategic Banking Management at INSEAD Fontainebleau, France, Abou Zeid enhanced his expertise in the field, paving the way for new opportunities and challenges in the dynamic world of banking finance.

Hikmat Abou Zeid's journey led him to be appointed as executive board member at OMT SAL.

He orchestrated a transformative restructuring plan from 2009 to 2013, solidifying OMT's position as a pioneering market player in Lebanon's financial solutions landscape.

He prominently defined a transformative strategy laid on three main vectors: launching “OMT” brand, expanding OMT’s network, and enlarging its portfolio of services, converting it from the provider of a sole “money transfer” service, to the provider of a wide range of financial solutions, dealing with the public as well as the private sector.

This strategy allowed the creation of an intrinsic equity value for the company, gaining an imposing status of a growing national corporation where he occupies the position of Vice Chairman between 2019 and 2024. In August 2024, Hikmat was elected as Chairman of the Board for OMT SAL. He contributed and still to the digitization of OMT business model, adapting the company for the next decade challenges.

Hikmat Abou Zeid leads the portfolio management family office of the Abou Zeid family since 2015, 50% owners of OMT SAL, overseeing multi sectors in Lebanon and abroad: waste management, mobile advertising, financial services, real estate, AI, natural energy, automotive and banking.

He served as the Chairman of Opel, the reputable German car brand from 2013 to 2018. During his tenure, he played a pivotal role in overseeing the company's operations, marking one of the fastest growing automotive brands, notably, he was able to negotiate the sale of Opel Lebanon to Abou Khater Group, owners of the Japanese brand Mazda, marking a significant milestone in the automotive industry.

Driven by his passion for investments and growth, and in line with his Lebanon d-risking and diversification investment strategy, he lead a strategic investment in the banking arena, specifically in Cyprus, to become a member of the board of Cyprus' fastest-growing Bank AstroBank, between 2017 & 2021, contributing to its strategic insights and growth dynamics.

In 2025, AstroBank was acquired by the Greek "Alpha Bank", marking a successful exit from the strategic banking arena in Cyprus.

The Abou Zeid portfolio is also dynamic in local and international private equity strategic ventures. The most relevant being the launch of "Maddict", a local Lebanese start-up, specialized in premium mobile advertising. The expansion of "Maddict" to

UAE lead to the creation of a sales team wing, backed up by a cost efficient Local Lebanese operation, imposing itself as the follower on the Premium mobile advertising market in GCC countries. Abou Zeid served as the company's chairman between 2012 and 2018.

With the intention of boosting the Lebanese economy and support small businesses, Hikmat Abou Zeid pioneered in establishing the Georgian-Lebanese Chamber of Commerce in 2019, fostering economic ties between Lebanon and Georgia through strategic collaborations and intra-trade events.

Since that year, and despite global uncertainties (Covid19 crisis), Hikmat was able, with the help of all the members of the chamber, to organize two conventions, linking Georgian SMEs to Lebanese counterparts, in the service of Lebanon competitiveness promotion. These conventions aimed at putting together Lebanese and Georgian officials, signing inter-governmental MOU's, in the service of Lebanon products (wine, food and beverage, general trade and tourism).

Beyond the realm of business, Abou Zeid's engagement in Lebanese society took on a literary dimension. An accomplished essayist and author, he wrote the insightful book "La Révolution Institutionnelle au Liban," or the "Institutional Revolution in Lebanon", in collaboration with "Edition Antoine" in 2022, overviewed by the former minister of interior, Dr. Ziyad Baroud. This essay tackled the corruptive political scene that governed over the past three decades, which Hikmat witnessed. The work

advocates for administrative decentralization, mirroring his commitment to progressive change within his nation.

For Hikmat Abou Zeid, decentralizing the administrative skeleton of the Lebanese Institutions kills the confessional central monopole serving as a key performance indicator reaching social and economic equality.

His essay was admitted at several prestigious French libraries, as a testimony of its content's relevance: Bullac, Institut du Monde Arabe, Matignon & Sorbonne.

As a fervent political activist, Abou Zeid's voice resonates through his thought-provoking articles and studies on Lebanese politics, which he disseminates through his personal blog.

His dedication to critical discourse underscores his determination to contribute positively to his country's socio-political development.

Recently, Hikmat's passion for poetry and expression came to light with his first poetry book "Les Artères de L'instant," again in collaboration with "Edition Antoine" where he wore a new hat as a poet, highlighting his inner passion for literature, publishing a set of poetry, written during his old days of Business school studentship in Paris (2002 - 2008), as well as more recently written ones between 2020 and 2022.

In 2024, Hikmat Published another Poetry Book entitled: "L'enfer Magique" published also by Antoine Library and translated to Arabic alongside his other publications.

Hikmat Abou Zeid's multifaceted journey as an entrepreneur, businessman, political activist and writer has been one of dynamic achievement and unwavering dedication.

With a relentless pursuit of excellence in both the business and literary realms, he strives to be an example of innovative thinking and commitment in the service of Lebanese Economy and Politics.

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