



## **Company for Technical Knowledge for Advanced Education formally responds to targeted campaign against KSA operations**

August 3rd, 2010

The management of the Company has decided to formally respond to issues surrounding a planned campaign directed against its local operations. This follows statements from the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) on the cancellation of its local ICDL certification.

The Company would particularly like to convey the following to the Saudi media:

1. The Company opted to hold its response to the media campaign launched by the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation's management; and instead put every effort in reaching an amicable resolution away from the media spotlight.
2. However, the media campaign advocating the termination of ICDL activities in KSA persisted. This ultimately prompted the management of the Company to confront the various media statements and articles, shed more light on the issues, and address the problem appropriately.
3. The Company is requesting the media, particularly those that have already published articles expressing the views of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, to be fair and ensure balanced coverage by giving equal opportunity to air its own side of the issue.
4. The conflict between the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation and the Company is strictly financial and dominance; and has no basis of concern pertaining to quality issues of the ICDL program offered.
5. ICDL is an international certification with services offered in the KSA in the same manner and quality as those offered around the world. The Company is properly licensed in the Kingdom and runs a completely

legitimate business, contrary to allegations circulated by certain members of the press.

6. Part of the criticism from the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation comes from a former employee of the Company who was discharged months ago. This person held a senior position within the Company for more than 5 years and if quality or violations were factual, he should have recommended improvements to the local ICDL program during his term, instead of finding fault with the institution just shortly after parting ways with it.

7. The Company has always abided by all the terms under its agreement with the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation. The Company has made significant contributions to the Saudi community, foremost of which is the reinforcement of digital knowledge and the eradication of digital illiteracy in major segments of local society.

8. The ICDL program is commonly overseen by a single testing company in various host countries to maintain high levels of operational quality. Most successful operators of the ICDL program around the world rely on only one testing provider or an exclusive contractual relationship with one provider for offering testing services.

This approach is followed in many developing countries such as the UK, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Germany, and various African countries. Furthermore, many of the ICDL operators in Asia are considering following suit. For example, the UNESCO office in Cairo in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Telecommunications relies on a lone testing company to push its campaign of training 1 million candidates to obtain ICDL certificates.

The Company adopted this strategy in line with the international trend being adopted by operators all over the world and in full compliance with the testing standards set forth by the overall governing European Computer Driving License (ECDL) Foundation.

9. Since its inception in the Kingdom in 2003 after obtaining a license from ECDL, the adoption of ICDL program locally and regionally has gained unprecedented success. It has actively supported government initiatives to reduce digital illiteracy and has granted thousands of ICDL certificates throughout the Saudi community.

Last year, the Company was in fact honored for its achievements during ECDL's annual forum on the worldwide success of the ICDL program. The Company has remained firmly committed to meeting the demand of the

international certification at reasonable costs, and continues to enhance its quality of service. The Company aspires to become a global model as it constantly develops one of the best digital literacy campaigns in the world.

10. The greatest challenge currently being faced by the Company is the protection of trainee rights. ICDL is adamant about maintaining its achievements that it accomplished during the past few years.

11. There are presently over 10 million candidates for certification around the world and 1 million in the Arabic speaking countries. ICDL certificates are backed by the approval and participation of the region's various educational ministries, universities, and government authorities. The achievement of requirements for obtaining the internationally-acclaimed accreditation in any of the approved centers within the GCC or in any other place in the world poses a major challenge. For its part, the Company is prepared to take the necessary steps to cover unpaid test fees to maintain the program's quality and reward the immense trust given to ICDL by GCC countries.

12. As an independent digital literacy program, ICDL is validated through rigid testing. The program attests that the certificate holder possesses fundamental IT skills covering computer operation, file management, word and spreadsheet processing, database management, multimedia usage, Internet and e-mail. ICDL is endorsed worldwide by education ministries, universities and government organizations; accredited by more than 168 countries; and available in more than 46 languages.

13. The Company has been facilitating ICDL certification within the Kingdom and has been introducing the program to major decision-makers such as the General Organization for Technical and Vocation Training for more than 7 years, and in the process has invested significant resources and manpower. The allegations being directed towards it will not only affect its business, but also discourage any company with a new innovative business idea eyeing investments in the Kingdom.

14. The Company has been applying the same pricing set by UNESCO since it started operations in 2003, despite ECDL increasing its royalty fees, fluctuations in the Euro exchange rate, and the explosive inflation witnessed over the past few years. The Company's recent decision to increase its prices was a commercial decision and does not conflict with any agreements between it and other third party. Moreover, centers, organizations or individuals who find the increase unacceptable are free to adopt alternative programs that are more in line with their budgets.

15. As for concerns over the qualification of our test administrators and supervisors, the Company points out that its employees are all qualified Saudi nationals from reputed colleges and universities and have received extensive training by the Company to provide the required services. Since the TVTC is considered to be an expert on quality standards, it always had the right and the freedom to enforce its own quality standards over the centers that are under its jurisdiction. Alternatively, TVTC could have advised the Company in writing of any issues of concerns prior to abruptly suspending the ICDL program.

16. Regarding questions about the tests being used for the ICDL program locally, particularly the incidence of limited questions, the Company emphasizes that it has released new testing questions and exercises in December 2009 and continues to provide tests for the program in accordance with international standards as approved by the European Computer Driving License.

If a technical analysis is conducted, experts will find that the tests conducted offer 64 different combinations that are selected electronically based on the ICDL Syllabus Version 5.0 launched last year and implemented in several developing countries.

The abovementioned points are being highlighted by the Company to share its own viewpoint in response to statements and allegations attributed to the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation.