

Alpadis Group CEO on Momentum & Ambition in the Global Corporate & Private Client Services Industry

Alain Esseiva, Chairman, CEO, and co-founder of Swiss corporate and private client services firm Alpadis Group is highly enthusiastic about the firm's roughly one-year old operation in the Dubai International Financial Centre. Hubbis spoke with him recently to hear how they have been building a new team and obtaining the necessary licensing to provide corporate and private clients with the company's full range of solutions. He sees great growth potential ahead, and reports the firm has a clear strategy for differentiating itself from competitors. Alain will forgive us for saying that he is a veteran of the trust and wealth structuring industry, but like his continuing passion for endurance sports, including ultramarathons, his energy and entrepreneurial drive for Alpadis Group remain undiminished.



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ALAIN ESSEIVA
Alpadis Group

Alpadis Group is a Swiss-based group that delivers multi-jurisdictional corporate and bespoke private client services. They provide corporate services for multinationals, SMEs and entrepreneurs that enable market expansion regionally and internationally while ensuring full compliance for the structures set up under their clients' mandates, and that are then managed by Alpadis Group across different jurisdictions.

They also extend services to private clients to protect and consolidate their wealth while achieving their life goals. These services include wealth planning and asset structuring, trusts and foundations, as well as charities and philanthropy.

Taking the next steps

Alpadis Group is headquartered in Switzerland, but Alain himself lives and works out of Singapore. The firm announced in November last year that it had obtained its licence to operate in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and had opened its second office in Dubai. Located in the heart of DIFC, Alpadis Corporate

Services (DIFC) Limited will service its growing roster of financial services clients including investment funds, investment managers, family offices, private investors, and other structures.

The team at DIFC will assist regulated and unregulated organisations, as well as private individuals, with several vital corporate and wealth services including helping firms get established in DIFC, wealth management services, foundations, succession planning and other services for firms that may or may not require regulatory and compliance needs.

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“It was less than a year after we first opened our office in Dubai that we were able to launch our second office in the prestigious DIFC,” Alain reports. “That was our ninth office globally and will allow us to further expand the range of services we offer our clients. Our DIFC office will allow us to protect and grow our customers' wealth, work closely with Dubai's wealth management ecosystem, and guide new residents, entrepreneurs, and businesses as they situate themselves and expand in Dubai.”

Rapid expansion

Alpadis Group opened the first office in Dubai in January 2022. In

the months since, Alain reports that they have helped more than a hundred individuals, entrepreneurs, and corporates to establish themselves in Dubai, and they continue to serve their existing client base of Dubai residents with corporate services, succession planning and Family Office services. “The new office in DIFC Gate Village is now up and running to allow us to build on the platform we had already established, as we see great potential ahead,” Alain explains.

He notes that Alpadis Group focuses mainly on mid-shore or onshore jurisdictions, led by

Zurich, Hong Kong, Singapore and also Dubai. With trust licenses in each of those markets and plans to significantly boost their Singapore presence as well, Alain says they aim to reach the rising numbers of HNW and UHNW clients who need sophisticated structuring support.

Managing complexity

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Key Priorities

Alain explains that he remains a totally committed entrepreneur who loves building capabilities, expertise, and growth. Acquisitions are also in the cards, as well as organic expansion.

“Wherever I see an opportunity, either I set up something from scratch or we make an acquisition if we think it is relevant in the type of service that we provide to our clients,” he explains. “At the same time, we are always intent on hiring better professionals, improving our value proposition to our clients, finding new products, and expanding our services.”

The multi-year vision

He closes the conversation by reiterating that the growth, dynamism, and diversification of the region are truly remarkable. “We are here for the long-term, to build a sizable business,” he reports. “The UAE has a 50-year strategic plan, and there are tremendous opportunities ahead.”

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He adds that the firm already has an operation in Bangkok where they are looking at making an acquisition. Thailand offers great growth potential, he reports, but that operation is largely for corporate services not private clients per say, who in Asia will be handled through Hong Kong and Singapore, where Alpadis Group offers both corporate and private clients services, like in Dubai.

Over in Zurich, the office is largely a private client practice.

Dubai and the UAE

Turning specifically to Dubai, he reports that the UAE is becoming a far more diverse and vibrant financial centre, and with new vehicles introduced such as the foundation, is becoming much more of a go-to centre for regional and global clients, those who live in the region, or plan to, and those who might want to conduct their business and wealth affairs through the DIFC, or more broadly in the region.

He explains the appeals of the UAE are now far clearer, and the

UAE is therefore attracting wealth from all over the world. He notes that there is far greater openness in terms of structures, the economy is far more diverse than ever before, Dubai's prominence as a global financial and lifestyle centre is on the rise, and the regulations have liberalised to help drive the region's proposition to the next level.

A significant transformation

"With the Abu Dhabi Global Market as well, there is a real weight and seriousness now to help expand the onshore and offshore asset management activity from the UAE," he observes. "Wealthy individuals can move to the UAE to set up businesses that compete locally, or they might see the region as an ideal base from which to structure their global business or investments," he explains. "All such clients need help with wealth and legacy planning and structures, including life insurance, a core element of wealth planning these days. PPLI, for example, sits well with trusts and foundations. We are experts in helping on all these matters."

Alain says that even in this day and age, there is still something unique about the Swiss approach to wealth management and private clients. "It might sound somewhat simplified, but we are independent, and we have our Swiss way of doing things," he reports. "We fully understand confidentiality, we truly understand what a private client is, and we truly understand quality of advice and service."

Standing tall

As to the competitive environment, he says Alpadis

Getting Personal with Alain Esseiva

Alain's bio on the Alpadis website starts 'Born in Switzerland. Made in the Alps. Lives in Singapore.'

He is an entrepreneur who co-founded Alpadis Group and today acts as Chairman and CEO, leading the business, development, strategy, and growth aspects of the Group, and overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Singapore office.

Alain comes from Fribourg in Switzerland, attended school there, and later went into an accounting apprenticeship accounting, and then obtained a diploma in trust structuring, and then worked as an auditor and an accountant for about 10 years.

"I found accounting interesting but somewhat limiting and moving more into the trust industry was a highlight," he explains. "I immediately liked the profession, the challenges it brings and the people you meet along the way." He worked for Radcliffe Trust Company, Jupiter, Tindall, and others, before venturing out to create Alpadis so on and so forth.

Alain has two grown up children aged 35 and 27 with his first wife, one living in Switzerland, the other finishing up her studies in Australia.

Leisure time at home might involve long-distance running or long-distance cycling, and he has completed a number of Ultramarathons from 50 to 250 kilometres each. He also loves skiing at home in Switzerland, or in Japan. "I am passionate about endurance sports, but I have paused as I managed to break both feet in an accident," he reports. "However, I can still cycle, which I do regularly."

He says the toughest ever race he participated in was in Atacama, Chile. "The race is over 250 kilometres over seven days. "Atacama is a desert, the driest place on planet earth, and all the competitors were self-supporting, so it was incredibly tough. I would probably say the sheer insanity of that type of endurance running actually translates to great focus and patience in my working life," he concludes.

Group stands well ahead of the numerous small shops offering different types and levels of service. "We provide a much more personalised and comprehensive approach to client needs and operate as a one-stop shop for

them," he reports. "We are also working hard to educate the market as to our expertise and to build our reputation amongst the serious, higher-quality participants in the financial and professional services arenas." ■