



▲ Talal Al Ajmi is also a board member at online broker One Financial Markets, which was established in London in 2007

Today's Gulf investor has a better understanding of the market

Talal Al Ajmi, founder and CEO of Kuwait-based online trading platform VI Markets, discusses GCC investment trends, the pandemic's impact on various stocks and the big winners of 2021

How has the pandemic affected your operation and client demands?

The pandemic changed our vision regarding working from the office to working from home. We faced a couple of initial challenges as the

operations team feared the concept of working from home. However, with the resources we had and minimal time to adapt we achieved our goals and even succeeded. Our client services team was performing almost more than 12 hours a day due to the lockdown to provide all

the necessary services our clients needed. This reflected positively on our company numbers and client base, as our services were carried online. Through Zoom, online workshops and other means, our operations team worked hard to provide clients a smooth transition towards



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operating and providing all our services online to satisfy their demands. I believe this also strengthened our customer loyalty and increased our base.

What investment trends have you noticed emerging over the past year?

We noted rising interest towards investments in sectors that showed potential gains in the future, primarily in technology companies. We also saw a great shift towards trading in sectors that showed huge opportunities in the oil and energy sectors. Although they had a downturn at the beginning of the pandemic, they rebounded positively.

Alongside that, many investors concentrated in areas that represented a great chance, especially in tourism, aviation and gold. Of course, the stimulus plan that was passed by the US government impacted the market positively and allowed many people to benefit and gain at that time.

What is Gulf investor sentiment like around forex trading at the moment?

I believe that the people who trade in the Gulf by nature tend to trade in stock markets as they favour it along with forex because I have seen that many investors here tend to be risktakers due to two reasons: a lack of awareness of the markets and lack of education. Therefore, educating investors through investment methods, training courses and workshops was and is still my main goal at the company. Due to that, today's Gulf investor is more aware of the market and has a better understanding of the way they should manage their capital. I believe the pandemic has also changed the way Gulf investors tend to trade in many areas.

As vaccinations roll out, are your clients more bullish or bearish when it comes to gold, currencies and oil investments?

Vaccines have contributed a lot to the change in the trading activity. This included a great shift towards buying stocks in airline and energy companies, hoping that the pandemic will come to end with the rollout of the vaccines. Meanwhile, at the same time, people who saw this coming are now enjoying the gains from rising oil prices and making



▲ There is a visible trend that shows investors are moving away from gold and investing in oil



▲ With Al Ajmi at the helm, VI Markets provide investors a tailored online trading service in Kuwait

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2010

The year in which online trading platform VI Markets was set up in Kuwait

huge profits. Nevertheless, usually investors at the time of stimulus packages or even after vaccination moving towards the end of the crisis, tend to shift and invest in high-risk assets such as stocks while moving away from gold.

What factors are encouraging your clients to adopt a more patient, long-term approach with their investments?

I always advise investors who wish to invest in stocks three things: Buy, hold or sell. I believe that the situation we are all going through made us learn that there are some factors in the market we cannot control – and due to that we always advise our clients to learn the art of management, managing their portfolio in the best manner possible. Particularly when trading in CFDs, they need to understand how to manage the right number of points as well as the optimal time they should enter to buy or sell, depending on the technical analysis frame.

In terms of stocks, we always encourage our clients or potential investors to understand their nature. We can't treat stocks like forex – each has its own nature and specifications. Therefore, with buying stocks you have to have a long-term approach and assess the surroundings. This comes through reinforcing the idea of awareness. Buying a stock is like buying any investment – you can wait for it to increase in price, but it might not happen overnight. 