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Lighting up both the sides of life

By Carole Spiers, Special to Gulf News
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With my English background, the new plans to turn Dubai Creek into the cultural hub of Dubai city instantly spark-off two reactions.

One of them is a heartfelt welcome to a scheme that will light up both sides of the creek with a whole new skyline of landmark museums, libraries, theatres and an opera house, along with 20 kilometres of smaller galleries and workshops to enable an explosion of new creativity. My own city, London, has been the beneficiary of many such schemes, and they have inevitably confounded the sceptics; their formidable cost eventually seen as money well spent.

My other reaction concerns the world view of Dubai, where work-life balance is not usually seen as one of the main benefits. To my business colleagues, the UAE is seen as a commercial powerhouse of extraordinary dynamism, where three or four years of 'all-work-no-play' will often enable a substantial, tax-free bank-balance to be accumulated back home, at the end of the contract.

However, as a business stress consultant, I can testify to the dangers of 'all-work-no-play', even for a short interval, let alone for a whole career. To those at the top, it is liable to ruin both the health and the home life, making the financial rewards seem a lot less rewarding! And to those at the bottom, it offers only repetitive work, boredom and a degree of monotony that is also stress inducing.

Clearly, Khor Dubai is well placed to balance up all that commercial effort with an appetising menu of recreational choices, right in the middle of the commercial quarter.

Encouraging a vigorous curiosity about life beyond the office.

This new, exciting project will, no doubt, increase Dubai's attraction for new business. But I am really thinking more about those already here and lower down the scale, where, in a fast-changing executive world, those who are uninterested in life beyond the office will look increasingly incongruous.

When employers ask you about your extramural pursuits, they are not listening-out for a set of approved hobbies. They are screening your mind and character for signs of a well-rounded personality - the kind of individual who will make an enthusiastic and efficient team-member, for the competitive

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advantage of the organisation.

Less and less can they use the diligent mechanical plodder who expects to be performing the same routines ten years from now, who will be disorientated by anything different. More and more, they seek the person who displays a vigorous curiosity about the world around them, embracing new methodologies and competing to keep up with the latest business and cultural trends.



And it is easy to see how the Khor Dubai project will help to satisfy these lively thinkers, while providing a stimulus for their less dynamic colleagues. For all groups, it can revolutionise the working day, not only by encouraging brisk lunchtime walks around a blossoming new townscape, but opening the mind to a mass of new impressions from each gallery-window or street sculpture or experimental poetry-reading. And employers who view it with mistrust as a time-wasting distraction for their staff will be shown up as yesterday's people!

Key points: Khor Dubai and work-life balance

- The Creek will enhance the world view of Dubai as a city of cultural pursuit as well as hi-tech business
- It will help change the 'all-work-no-play' character of the commercial quarter
- There can be a new style of working day, in and around the creek, with impromptu, beneficial breaks

The writer is a BBC broadcaster and motivational speaker, with 20 years' experience as CEO of Carole Spiers Group, an international stress consultancy based in London.

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