

THE

Directory

Advice From The Experts

Things to consider before you commit to a renovation project.

Competition: Win with 30 Min Hit

Be in with a chance to win a ladies session for you & a friend at 30 Minute Hit, Motor City.

Opinion: Resolutions

Our freelance reporter gives us another unsanctioned take on the world, seen through his unique lens.

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 **Contractors
Direct**



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

January in Dubai is a curious thing. The weather is finally behaving itself, the gym is temporarily full of optimism, and everyone is convinced that this is the year they will plan better and build smarter. With that curiosity in mind, welcome to the New Year edition of The Directory.

This issue is all about fresh starts and informed decisions. We begin with practical advice on what to consider before you renovate, the questions that should be asked early, the pitfalls worth avoiding, and why good planning wins every time. We also turn our attention to the future, with a closer look at the ambitious plans taking shape in Dubai South, and what they mean for developers, investors, and the wider fit-out industry.

As always, we showcase a selection of standout projects, highlighting the teams and thinking behind them, alongside giveaways, reader contributions, and a few familiar voices from the industry who know that no project ever goes exactly to plan, no matter how well the bold promises were written.

Whether you are planning your next project, keeping an eye on what is coming next, or simply enjoying the quieter pace of January, we hope this edition offers insight, perspective, and a reason to keep reading.

Here's to a new year of better decisions, better spaces, and projects done right.

Until next time!

Jason Blunden
Editor-in-Chief

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ADVICE FROM A PROJECT MANAGER

Stephan Labuschagne
Project Manager, Project People

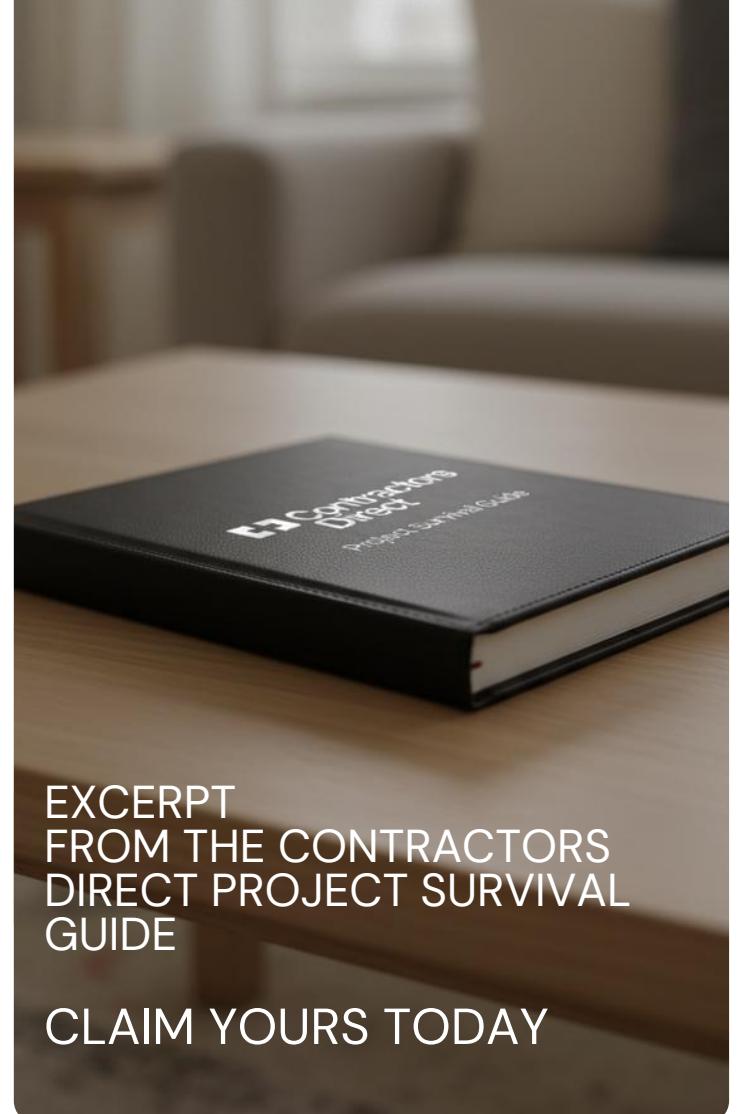
Things to consider before you renovate

At Contractors Direct we take pride in helping customers effectively bring their renovation goals to life.

With that as our mission, we have created a handy project survival guide, helping you to navigate step by step through planning, design, approvals, execution, snagging, handover, and maintenance.

This Edition we are featuring advice from that project survival guide, in the form of a checklist of things to consider before you renovate. Making sure you have considered each of these points, and have an answer to any questions they bring up, is crucial to launching a successful renovation project.

To claim your own copy of the guide, or one of our limited edition project survival kits, email your details to community@contractors.direct



Define Your Why

Before you dive into Pinterest boards, figure out why you're renovating.

Is it to add value before selling, create more space, or finally have that dream kitchen?

Knowing your why will keep every decision focused.

Set a Realistic Budget (Then Add 15%)

Every project has surprises. Some pleasant, and some less so.

Plan your budget. Then add a 10–15% buffer for the inevitable.

Decide What You'll Handle, and What You Won't

Enthusiasm fades quickly when approvals, plumbers, and project timelines collide.

Be honest: what can you manage yourself, and what needs a pro?



Check Permissions Early

In Dubai, approvals can take longer than you think.

Before you start, check if your project needs NOCs from developers or authorities (Trakhees, DCD, etc.).

Our project managers can guide you through the maze.

Communicate Clearly (and Often)

Misunderstandings can delay projects and drain patience.

Set a clear communication rhythm of regular updates, WhatsApp groups, and site visits, so everyone stays aligned.

Choose the Right Contractor, Not the Cheapest

A low quote can be tempting, but cost-cutting now often means redoing work later.

Plan Around Your Life

Renovation disrupts routines. If possible, schedule around holidays, school terms, or quieter work periods. You'll thank yourself later.

Gather Inspiration (But Stay Practical)

Collect reference photos, materials, and styles you love, and think about how they'll actually live in your space.

Prepare Yourself Mentally

Renovations are exciting, but they can also test your patience.

There will be dust. There will be delays. But there will also be your dream space at the end.

Ready to renovate?

A well planned renovation rarely happens by accident. It is the result of clear decisions made early, honest conversations along the way, and realistic expectations from day one. When you take the time to prepare properly, the process feels less overwhelming and far more rewarding.

Whether you are refreshing a single room or reworking an entire property, the goal is the same. Fewer surprises, better outcomes, and a space that genuinely works for the way you live or work.

If you are at the very beginning of your renovation journey, this checklist is a solid place to pause, reflect, and sense check your plans. And if you would like extra guidance, our project professionals are always happy to help you think things through before the first wall comes down.

Because when renovation decisions are made with clarity, the end result feels even better to walk into.

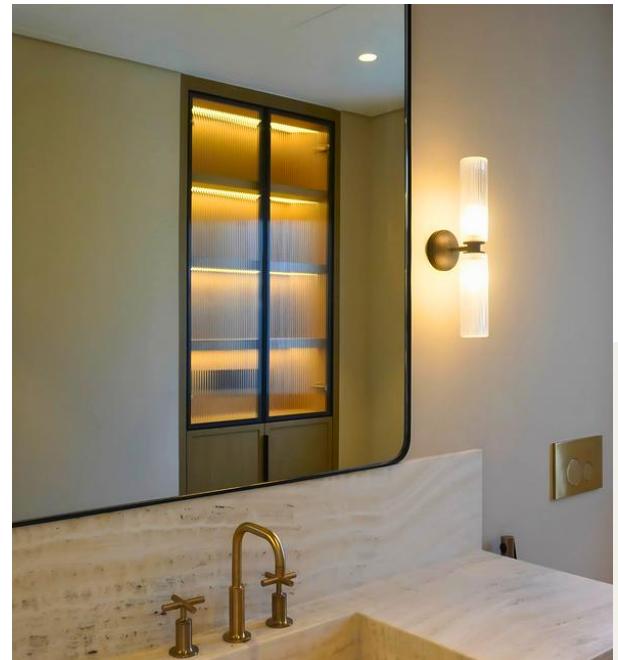


Scope of Work

- Extension works to maximise the villa's livable footprint
- Full replacement of HVAC systems for comfort, energy efficiency, and compliance
- Installation of new glazing to enhance aesthetics and performance
- Complete bespoke joinery throughout, adding personality and functionality
- Rectification of inherited structural and spatial issues

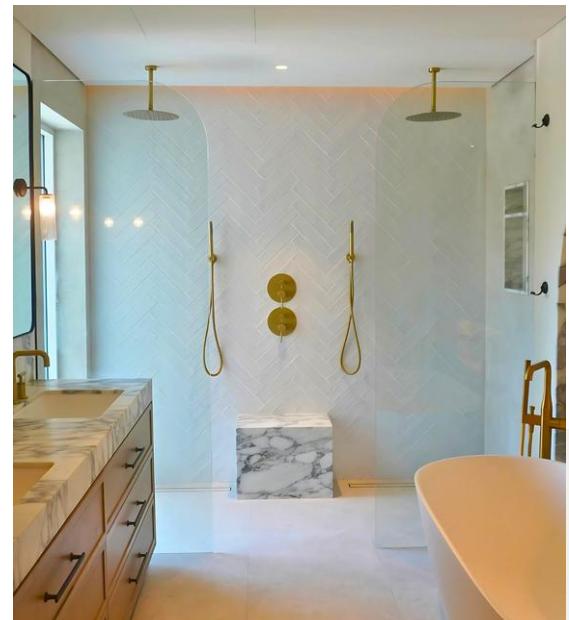
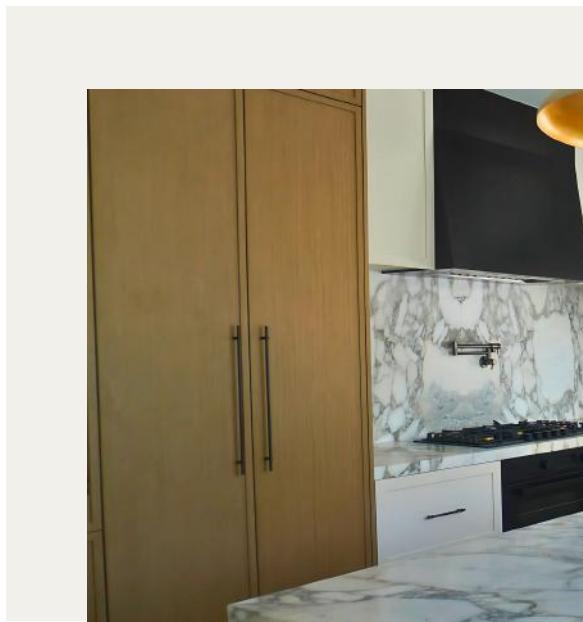
PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: ARABIAN RANCHES

This project began with the kind of phone call no homeowner wants to make. The client had been left stranded after their original contractor went bankrupt, with only 20 percent of the villa build complete. What remained was a shell and core structure, partially constructed and without a clear way forward. That's when Contractors Direct stepped in.



What began as a disrupted and uncertain project was transformed into a high-quality family villa, finished with care, craftsmanship, and attention to detail.

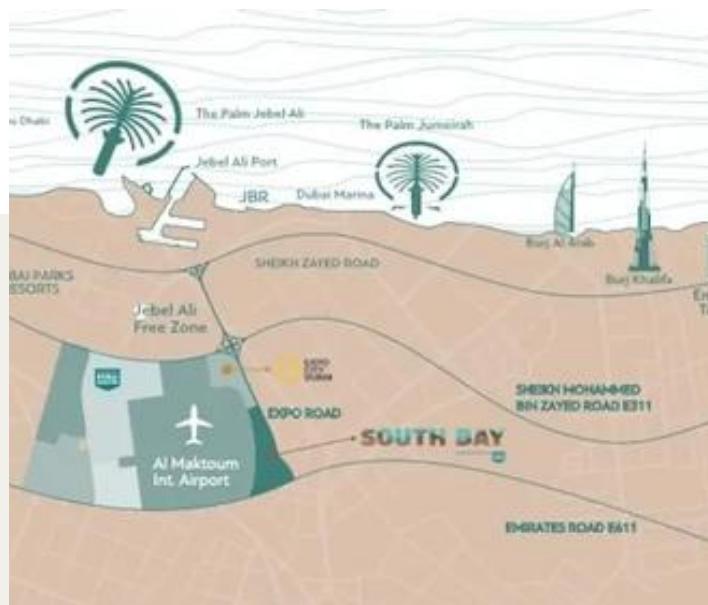
The result is a beautifully executed residence that balances functionality and warmth, with design decisions that reflect the client's goals, and a project journey that proves even complex builds can be brought back to life with the right support.



DUBAI SOUTH: LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

Dubai South is emerging as one of the UAE's most strategically important master planned developments. Anchored by Al Maktoum International Airport and neighbouring Expo City Dubai, the district has been designed to support long term population growth while strengthening Dubai's global position in aviation, logistics and commerce. With clear government backing and phased development plans extending toward 2030, Dubai South represents a future focused approach to city building.

Residential communities such as Emaar South, The Pulse and South Bay are already attracting attention from both investors and end users. These neighbourhoods offer a mix of apartments, townhouses and villas supported by green spaces, schools and lifestyle amenities.



Compared to more established parts of Dubai, Dubai South provides relatively accessible entry points while still benefiting from modern infrastructure and thoughtful community planning.

From a commercial perspective, Dubai South plays a critical role in the city's economic ecosystem. Its free zone and business districts are positioned to serve aviation, logistics, light industry and service based companies. Direct access to cargo facilities, flexible ownership structures and competitive operating costs continue to attract international businesses and regional headquarters to the area.

For investors, Dubai South presents an opportunity to participate early in a district built for scale and sustainability. For residents, it offers the promise of integrated living, employment opportunities and long term infrastructure investment. As transport links expand and new communities come online, Dubai South is increasingly viewed as one of Dubai's most balanced and forward looking growth corridors.



Contractors Direct

Serious About Clarity

Renovation without the drama.



With Contractors Direct, you get crystal-clear communication, vetted contractors, and expert project management; all designed to keep your vision sharp

Sleek process. Smooth delivery. Cool under pressure.

RENTAL PROPERTY INSPECTIONS: THE BIG PICTURE

Regular inspections are essential for maintaining any rental property, ensuring both landlords and tenants enjoy a safe, well-kept living environment.

One of the most important responsibilities a landlord has is ensuring their property is properly maintained and protected during a tenancy. While some landlords only carry out inspections if issues arise, professional property management takes a different approach: regular, preventative inspections. This approach protects your property, reduces costs in the long run, and ensures tenants are living within the terms of their contract.

So how often should inspections be done on a rental property in Dubai? Let's take a closer look.



Guest Article by

EXCLUSIVELINKS
Real Estate Brokers

When a Property Is Not Under Management

If you're a landlord managing your property directly with a tenant, inspections usually only take place as and when required - for example, if there's a reported issue or a maintenance call-out. While this can work for some owners, it often means small problems go unnoticed until they become more expensive to fix.

When a Property Is Under Professional Management

Many landlords rely on professionals to conduct scheduled inspections, document unit conditions, and handle maintenance promptly.

When you appoint Exclusive Links to manage your property, regular inspections are included in your management contract. For our entire portfolio, we carry out four inspections per year - one every quarter.

This schedule provides peace of mind that:

- Your tenants are maintaining the property correctly.
- The terms of the tenancy contract are being respected.
- Any small issues are identified early and addressed before they become costly repairs.

What To Inspect

During each quarterly inspection, our team carefully reviews the property to ensure it is safe, compliant, and being used responsibly. Checks include:

- Internal and external lighting and electrical supplies.
- The air conditioning system and whether servicing is due.
- Water supply, pressure, and bathroom functionality.
- Signs of damp, leaks, or wear and tear.
- Evidence of pests and whether pest control is required.
- The general upkeep of the property's interiors and exteriors.
- Security of doors, windows, and entry points.
- Ensuring the number of tenants matches the contract (to prevent over-occupancy and misuse).

Detailed Property Reports

After every inspection, we issue landlords with a comprehensive written report. This includes:

- Notes on any issues found.
- Recommended maintenance or servicing (e.g. AC, gardening, pest control, window cleaning).
- Photographic evidence where appropriate.
- A clear plan for resolving issues, including any warranty claims still covered by the developer.

This transparent reporting process ensures landlords know exactly how their property is being maintained and whether any corrective action is required.

Preventative Care vs. Costly Repairs

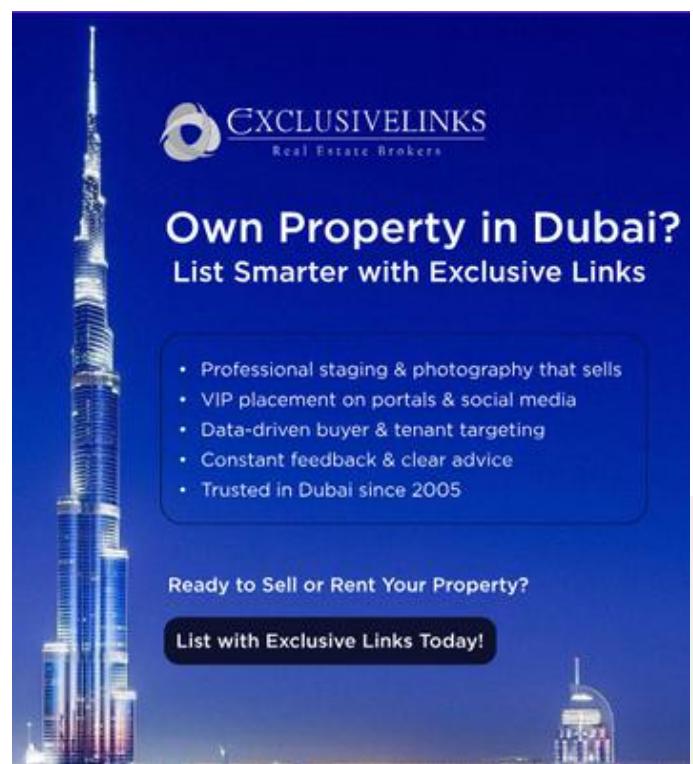
I always tell landlords: prevention is better than cure. By identifying and correcting minor issues early, you avoid major problems later. Regular inspections also keep tenants accountable, reducing the likelihood of misuse or neglect.

This proactive approach:

- Extends the lifespan of your property.
- Reduces vacancy periods by ensuring your home is always market ready.
- Protects your ROI by keeping long-term repair costs down.

Final Warranty Inspection

For new builds, we also conduct a final warranty inspection before the developer's warranty period expires. This thorough check ensures any outstanding defects are reported and rectified at no cost to the landlord, a critical step that protects you from paying out for developer-related issues once the warranty lapses.



EXCLUSIVELINKS
Real Estate Brokers

Own Property in Dubai?
List Smarter with Exclusive Links

- Professional staging & photography that sells
- VIP placement on portals & social media
- Data-driven buyer & tenant targeting
- Constant feedback & clear advice
- Trusted in Dubai since 2005

Ready to Sell or Rent Your Property?

List with Exclusive Links Today!



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: HUSPY

For Huspy's new Marina Plaza headquarters, the challenge wasn't just design. It was scale. The team needed to fit 100 dedicated workstations, multiple meeting and quiet zones, a podcast studio, and a fully functioning café into 7,500 sqft, without compromising comfort or flow.

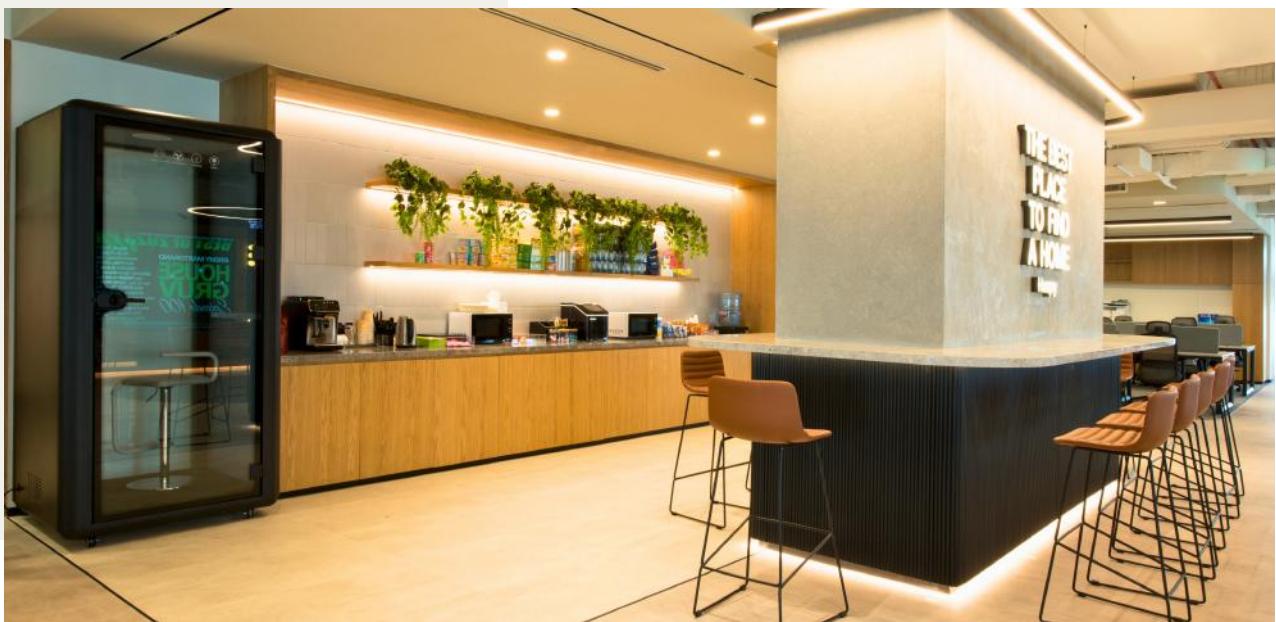
The brief was bold. The client wanted a visually impressive office that would help attract top talent in Dubai's competitive real estate sector. It had to reflect the company's fast-growing status while also creating an environment that felt modern, uplifting, and uniquely Huspy.

Contractors Direct matched the client with a contractor who could deliver a turnkey solution, complete with:

- Two large LED screens promoting live development launches and performance updates
- A dedicated townhall space for company-wide gatherings and leadership announcements
- Integrated audio systems across the open-plan layout
- A purpose-built podcast studio, acoustically treated for high-quality recording
- A custom coffee bar with a full-time barista, creating a hospitality-style welcome zone

Beyond aesthetics, the space had to work hard. It needed to seat more people than a typical office of its size, all while housing meeting rooms, conference facilities, a reception lounge, and recreational areas. Despite this complexity, the layout remained open, spacious, and easy to navigate.





WALLACE AND COMPANY FINE FRAGRANCES

The Directory x Wallace & Company Exclusive Giveaway

Wallace & Company create bespoke scents for some of the city's most iconic hotels, including the signature Vetiver Cedar fragrance of Address Hotel JBR.

Now, their luxury range is available for your home, with candles, diffusers, incense, and room sprays.

Bring Luxury Home

One lucky reader will win a Vetiver Cedar Gift Set – the exclusive fragrance crafted for Address JBR.

To enter, simply email your name and contact details to letstalk@wallaceandcompany.me



KNOW SOMEONE PLANNING A RENOVATION?



Become a Community Champion

Because the best recommendations don't come from ads. They come from you.

When it comes to renovations, trust is everything. That's why we have initiated a community champions program, which benefits you and your neighbourhood. A straight-forward system that is designed to benefit both yourself and the person you referred to us.

It's simple. If you refer someone to Contractors Direct, and their project is awarded through our platform, you receive **AED 2,000** as a thank you. Just make sure your friend mentions your name as a Community Champion when enquiring.

Even better, your friend, neighbour, or colleague will also receive AED 1,000 cashback on their project. Everyone wins.

Whether you've just finished a villa makeover, helped someone launch a new space, or simply want to recommend us, your voice matters. And when you share your story, people listen. So if you've had a great experience with us, or just heard of us, don't keep it to yourself. Share us in your WhatsApp & Facebook groups, neighbourhood chats, or over coffee.

We'll handle the hard part. You just keep being the expert your community trusts.



For more information contact:
community@contractors.direct

EX DIRECTORY

OUR FEARLESS
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FREELANCE
FEATURES
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CONTRIBUTING IN
EXILE FROM AN
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SURVIVING AS A
WRITER OF
FORTUNE.

IF YOU NEED A
HOT TAKE. IF
NOBODY ELSE
CAN HELP. AND,
IF YOU CAN FIND
HIM. MAYBE YOU
CAN HIRE...
HANNIBAL

New year, new me? Or, why I've abandoned new year's delusions

Every January in Dubai it's the same.

The city wakes up from its long festive stupor, brushes the Christmas glitter off the carpets, shakes the sand out of the Santa hats and collectively decides that this year - *this. year* - we shall become better, fitter, cleaner-living, more productive human beings. We shall eat kale. We shall run 10K before sunrise. We shall not spend half our salary on Saturdays featuring free flowing champagne and a live saxophonist.

It's adorable, really.

Because by the end of January, most people in this city will have abandoned their New Year's resolutions with the same enthusiasm with which they embraced them. And then there's me.

I don't make New Year's resolutions.

Not because I'm some enlightened, stoic monk who rises above such trivialities.

It's because I can't even plan what I'm having for lunch, let alone commit to twelve months of self-improvement. Also, as anyone who has ever tried to 'escort' me to the gym will tell you, it is like trying to baptise a cat. Lots of injuries, lots of screaming. Lots of sweating, and that's before we get inside.

OPINIONS IN THIS ARTICLE ARE NOT COVERED BY A WARRANTY...

And it's not just me. We live in a dynamic, fast paced city, where planning is like playing Jenga during a mild earthquake. The intention is strong. The execution is tragic. The outcome is inevitable.

Try planning to leave the house at 8 a.m., and suddenly there's a sandstorm thick enough to exfoliate your car.

Try planning to save money, and a mall you've never heard of before will email you about a once-in-a-lifetime sale on things you won't need in this lifetime.

Try planning a quiet weekend, and a friend you haven't seen since the Great Brunch Incident of 2019 will message you: "Mate, I've got a table at Papillon, come."

Every January, we sit down with earnest expressions and write lists of things we want to change. “Get fitter.” “Eat healthier.” “Learn Arabic.”

Last year, for instance, I decided (foolishly) that I would become one of those people who meal-preps.

I envisioned neatly labelled boxes of quinoa, perfectly portioned proteins and steamed seasonal vegetables, like something you’d find in a Scandinavian’s fridge.

So I went to the supermarket, bought a week’s worth of ingredients, and spent three hours cooking what I can now only describe as beige sadness. I stacked the containers in the fridge, proud of myself, ready to embrace my new life as a real person.

Then, on Monday morning, I woke up late, sprinted to the kitchen, and discovered that I had carefully organised and refrigerated six containers of food I had absolutely no desire to eat. Not then. Not ever.

I grabbed drive-thru coffee instead, and the entire week’s healthy meal plan ended up in the compost bin while I ordered a shawarma and passionately argued that hummus counts as a vegetable.

The Only Resolution That Ever Works

There is one resolution I have successfully kept for years:

Stop making resolutions.

Because here’s the thing: life is unpredictable, especially in a city like Dubai where a simple trip to buy milk somehow ends with you test-driving a new SUV.

A Better Idea

Instead of mapping out your entire life because the calendar says reset, here’s a radical suggestion:

- Do the things that make you happy.
- Improve what genuinely needs improving.
- Don’t wait for January.
- And stop guilt-tripping yourself when life inevitably interferes.

The best plan is to remain flexible and keep your expectations at a height where they cannot be injured by falling.

Closing Thoughts from Someone Who Has Given Up Trying

I’ve made plans that collapsed faster than a Dragon Mart ironing board. I’ve tried productivity systems, time-management apps, and even a personal trainer who eventually gave up and moved to Australia.

None of it stuck.

None of it ever will.

And that’s fine.

Because the beauty of a new year isn’t in the resolutions we abandon, it’s in the stories we accidentally create while failing at them.

PLANS IN DUBAI ARE ABOUT AS USEFUL AS A CHOCOLATE TEAPOT. PLACED ON A DASHBOARD. IN JULY.

Your untouched gym membership?
That's not failure.
That's a donation to the fitness economy.

Your quinoa turning grey in Tupperware?
That's a science experiment.
Educational, even.

Your decision to "cut down on going out" followed by six consecutive brunches?
That's supporting the hospitality sector. You're basically a philanthropist.

So go ahead.
Make resolutions if you must.

Just don't be surprised when February rolls around and your gym card is still pristine, (the only thing that is in great shape) your chia seeds are untouched, and your WhatsApp is humming with messages saying, "We're at the bar. Where are you?"
You know where you'll be.

Right there with them.

Happy New Year, Dubai.
May your goals be ambitious, your expectations realistic, and your brunches bottomless.

P.S. Life finds a way - my Arabic is coming along nicely; I have nailed almost all the expletives...



SAFETY FIRST?



YOUR LETTERS

Behind every fit-out is a story worth telling.
Send us yours: the good, the bad, and the
hilarious

People keep telling me that Dubai is surprisingly affordable, which sounds to me a bit like saying a lion is surprisingly cuddly. If you approach it from the right angle maybe. But let your guard down, and there's a very real chance it'll bite you in the ass.

Yes, you can live here cheaply. I know a man in Deira who claims he spends only AED 18 a day. Impressive, until you realise his diet consists mainly of the samples they hand out at Carrefour.

I once tried to be sensible and track my monthly spending. Day one looked promising: breakfast from a local bakery, AED 6. Day two: fuel for the car, AED 180. Day three: accidentally wandered into a mall, blacked out, and woke up owning a cordless Dyson.

But affordability is all relative. At one end of the scale, you have the person who insists Dubai is cheap because you can get a full meal for 12 dirhams. At the other end, you have a man in Dubai Marina filling up his 84-foot yacht with fuel for a snip. Me? I feel the pain when parking hits AED 10 an hour.

And let's not forget rent. Estate agents love showing you bargains, which apparently means a studio where the shower, washing machine, and fridge share the same electrical socket. Open plan, they call it. Openly dangerous, would be more appropriate.

Still, for all the jokes, Dubai does have one financial advantage: it teaches discipline. Not by choice, of course. But after paying for groceries, rent, utilities, parking, brunch, and whatever fine the RTA has gifted you that week, you simply must be disciplined. There's nothing left to do except stay home, hydrate, and hope your bank card stops smoking.

All that said, it is possible to live affordably here. Just avoid malls, delivery apps, taxis, restaurants, supermarkets, cinemas, beach clubs, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Easy.

Yours,
Overdrawn in Dubai Marina

Disasters, triumphs, or surprise fountains... we want to hear it.
Email your story to directory@contractors.direct

TURNKEY & TRIMMINGS

A CONTRACTORS
DIRECT PODCAST



The go-to podcast for anyone who's ever tried to renovate, build, or fit out a space... and nearly lost their mind doing it.

In this episode, the lads dive into the full property buying and renovating cycle, and focus on budgeting, fees, and costs. Project design and delivery models are reviewed, and we learn about issues with timelines, variations, and delays.

🎧 Watch it. Laugh. Learn. Avoid disaster.
Now streaming on YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts.

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PROJECT
PEOPLE

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MANAGEMENT PARTNER



Winner Competition



5i FIVE IRON GOLF
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS



A few shots from our recent competition winners enjoying their day out a Five Iron dubai.



Let's Go Girls

**Win a 30-Minute HIT
workout for you + a friend**

Courtesy of 30 Minute Hit, Motor City

Time to pull on your favourite Lululemon leggings: this one's just for the girls.

We're giving away a 30-minute session at 30 Minute Hit, the women's-only studio in Motor City that's all about empowering you through movement.

Whether you're training for strength, stress relief, the gram, or just a good sweat and a laugh, this is your perfect reset.

How to Enter

Head to our Instagram and find the giveaway post.
Like and tag a friend you'd bring along.
That's it!

Deadline to enter: 30th February 2025
Winners will be contacted via DM.

Contractors Direct

When it comes to renovations, every minute counts.

With Contractors Direct, you get punctual, vetted professionals and expert project management that keeps everything ticking like clockwork.

No more chasing updates, no more wasted hours, just a streamlined process that respects your time.



Serious About Timekeeping...



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