



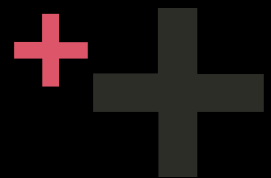
The Marketing Society – UAE Awards 2024

Category: Successful and Effective Partnerships

Nominee: PwC Future50 Net Zero - Middle East team at PwC Middle East

Title: On the road to net zero: Leveraging strategic partnerships for meaningful impact

Summary



The [PwC Net Zero Future50 - Middle East](#) was a year-long initiative to identify pioneering climate tech companies across the region working towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing global warming. Aimed at showcasing climate tech innovations in key emitting sectors, it emphasised the need for increased investment in order to accelerate decarbonisation efforts.

Through our alliances and partnerships with organisations already in the climate industry ecosystem, combined with the experience of our own internal startup accelerator team, we knew the region was home to a significant number of climate tech innovators, and that in order to leverage the power of this homegrown talent, we would need to invest in a plan to bring these entrepreneurs together. And so, the Net Zero Future50 - Middle East was born.

Our partnerships emerged as a cornerstone for the initiative's success, and the right marketing strategy was a critical factor in underpinning the public exposure needed to drive the project forward.

Marketing objectives:

1. Position PwC as the leading consulting firm in the region committed to driving climate innovation and leading the conversation on technology and decarbonisation.
2. Use strategic communications to build a meaningful regional climate tech ecosystem, and partner with like-minded innovators and enablers to 'green' the Middle East.

We achieved these objectives by:

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- a. Leveraging strategic partnerships with stakeholders, such as Microsoft, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week and Masdar to lend further credibility and drive wider awareness of the initiative.
 - b. Using key events in the climate calendar to launch the initiative, first at COP27 in Egypt and then revealing the final 50 innovators ahead of COP28 in the UAE.
 - c. Collaborating with regional climate tech innovators on digital marketing campaigns to drive awareness.
 - d. Partnering with the media to amplify key messages around climate tech innovation across digital channels.
 - e. Creating synergies using PwC's network of communication channels to provide the Future50 innovators a platform to showcase their technologies.

Part 01 Objective



The context:

At PwC Middle East, we believe that climate technology holds the key to reducing carbon emissions and solving some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges. With this in mind, in October 2022, we unveiled the inaugural Middle East Climate Tech Report, a first-of-its-kind Thought Leadership on the investment landscape in climate technology across the region. The report aimed to identify gaps in industries where investors should focus on investing in the most efficient technology and how, as an organisation, we could use our expertise to bridge these gaps and direct investment towards the heaviest-emitting sectors. This pivotal analysis provided a profound insight into the climate tech landscape in the Middle East and highlighted innovative solutions that could revolutionise the approach to reducing emissions in the region drastically.

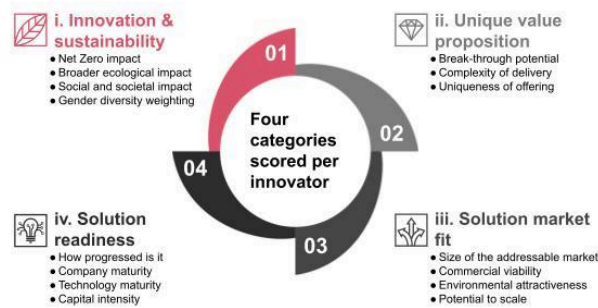
This initial exploration in this Thought Leadership reached a compelling conclusion: By aligning our region's unique natural advantages with targeted research, the right technology and robust funding, the Middle East could play a significant role in solving some of the world's most complex environmental challenges, such as water scarcity, rising temperatures and worsening air quality. **This revelation was the spark that ignited the undertaking of the Future50 initiative.**

What is the PwC Net Zero Future50 and what are its main objectives?

The [PwC Net Zero Future50 - Middle East](#) is a first of its kind Middle East initiative aimed at discovering technologies that reduce carbon emissions in the region. It invited companies

working on decarbonisation technology to nominate themselves and participate in an analysis process that opened their business model to external scrutiny by PwC experts. If selected for the final 50, PwC committed to amplifying their work and to connecting them to the right industry partners and investors. The initiative fostered a dynamic ecosystem of founders, thinkers, and doers, offering a platform for growth for climate tech innovators. Established data and analytics sources were leveraged to uncover as many climate tech innovators in the region as possible, by ensuring a thorough sweep of the market.

PwC Net Zero Future50 - Middle East scoring and assessment framework



Above: PwC Net Zero Future50 - Middle East scoring and assessment framework

Why is this initiative important to our business?

It's important in three distinct ways:

1. This initiative reflects our organisation's commitment to sustainability and innovation, positioning us at the forefront of conversations around global climate challenges and enhancing our brand appeal. As a result of this initiative, we are not merely starting to tap into new revenue streams (critical to the growth of our business); as we stand at the start of Q2 2024, we are advancing into phase two - the commercialisation of the Future50 project. This means supporting the business by crafting a compelling client value proposition and identifying the right clients to take this to - with Marketing playing a pivotal role in its development and roll out.
 2. We recognise the need amongst our client base to be able to access emerging climate technologies - critical for the protection and future of their own businesses - and are proud to be connecting the dots here. It's important to our business that we show continual value-add to our clients and there are fewer more important reasons to do this than those that have the protection of our regional environment at the heart.
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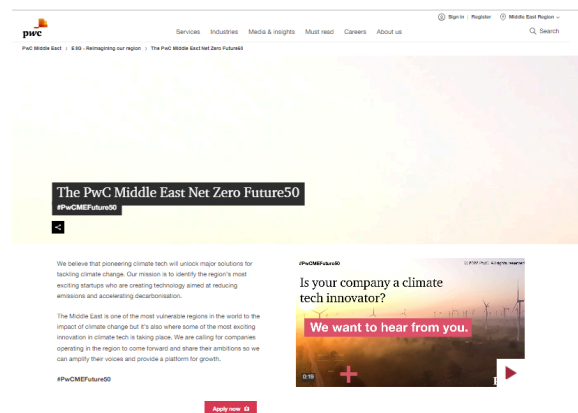
- This initiative transcends a mere marketing campaign; it has had a significant impact in the world of climate technology in our region. We have nurtured a vibrant community of innovators, provided them with a platform to thrive, showcased their groundbreaking technologies, and cultivated a strong sense of unity. Feedback gained from our Future50 finalists is a clear indicator of our success: We have not only facilitated the growth of climate tech innovators, but enabled them to play a significant role in greening the region - aligning with PwC's global goal to contribute to the decarbonisation of the economies in which we operate.

Part 02 Approach

A range of multidimensional strategies were employed, including leveraging critical climate partnerships to guide the marketing efforts of PwC's Net Zero Future50 initiative in the Middle East.

Partnership #1: Microsoft

A key alliance was formed with one of PwC's global technology partners, Microsoft, at COP27 - a deliberate and strategic decision that blended the principles of sustainability with technology in the region. A select group of emerging climate tech innovators were invited to the COP27 launch event with Microsoft to discuss the importance of highlighting regional climate tech innovations and were encouraged to formally nominate themselves for the Future50 initiative. Announcing the call for Future50 nominations at the Microsoft theatre during COP27 maximised our existing alliance with Microsoft and ensured the right target audience was reached.



Above: Creative asset for the call for nominations to innovators used during the launch at the Microsoft theatre at COP27 in Egypt, and the PwC nomination page where innovators could register their interest to participate.

Partnership #2: Connecting the dots with regional climate tech enablers

We collaborated across the PwC Startup/Scaleup network to identify and directly invite innovators to nominate. We also contacted more than 80 ecosystem enablers in climate tech regionally and globally to amplify our call to innovators, such as accelerators, venture capitalists and Sovereign Investment Funds, many of whom are now key stakeholders in our Future50 ecosystem.

Partnership #3: Delivering Our *Climate Tech Insights* series with select Future50 nominees

Climate Tech Insights was a four-part video series we produced and promoted on our social media channels, where we spoke to entrepreneurs from the regional climate tech ecosystem as well as industry experts about startup valuations and growth strategies. The mini series showcased climate tech innovators from the Future50 initiative, continuing to drive the climate tech discussion and generate buzz for the upcoming launch announcement of the final 50.



Above: The four-part mini series, *Climate Tech Insights*. Please click on the images to watch the videos.

Partnership #4: Working with our media partner of choice

We collaborated with CNN Business Arabic to showcase sustainability innovation in the region and promote the launch of the PwC Net Zero Future50 - Middle East report. This included the creation of digital assets such as podcasts and interviews to highlight the Future50 innovators and showcase our commitment to amplifying the voices of those behind technology working to combat climate change. Together with CNN Business Arabic, the collaboration strategically promoted our sustainability narrative in the market and our firm's sustainability practice

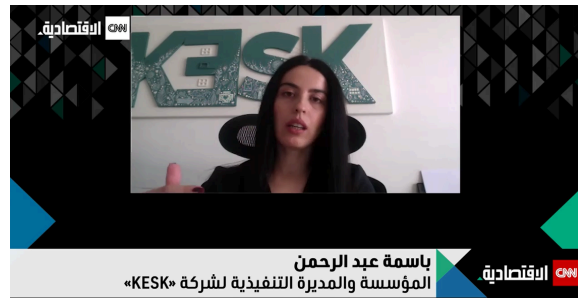
leaders, the [Middle East State of Climate Tech report](#) and the [PwC Net Zero Future50 - Middle East report](#).



Above: Podcast and video assets developed by CNN Business Arabic, ft Dr Yahya, the PwC Middle East Sustainability Platform Lead, discussing how innovation drives the Net Zero transition in the MENA region. Please click the image to listen to the podcast and to watch the video.

Spotlighting female climate tech entrepreneurs

One of the key findings in the Future50 Thought Leadership was that our region appeared to be bucking the global trend when it came to the significant role of female founders in the Middle East's climate tech landscape - a domain usually dominated by men. To highlight this finding, a special interview with female Future50 innovators was featured on CNN Business Arabic, showcasing leading women entrepreneurs in climate tech innovation. Additionally, interviews were conducted with key media outlets who attended our Future50 media launch event ahead of COP28.



Above: Interview with female Future50 innovators, featured on CNN Business Arabic. Please click the image to watch the interview. .

Thought Leadership launch at COP28: Our partnership-led media and showcase events

As climate tech was at the forefront of COP28 discussions, we published our Future50 Thought Leadership at an event in our Dubai Client Experience Centre a week before the climate summit began. The event was attended by all 50 of the final innovators, and featured a panel discussion with key climate tech eco enablers from Masdar, Venture Souq and Microsoft, and was moderated by CNN Business Arabic.

In total, we hosted seven Future50 related engagements at COP28, several of whom we hosted alongside strategic alliance partners such as Microsoft, Dar Al Handasah and Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. These included an interactive showcase of the Future50 finalists at our PwC Dubai Experience Centre on the opening day of COP28 for industry investors.



Above: Images from the PwC Net Zero Future50 - Middle East report media launch event, moderated by Mustafa Al Rawi, editor in chief, CNN Business Arabic





Above: PwC Global Chair, Bob Mortiz, with a selection of the Future50 finalists at the Future50 showcase day at the PwC Client Experience Centre in Dubai.



Above: Key speaking engagements for PwC Middle East featuring Future50 at COP28 activations, with Microsoft and Masdar.

Part 03 Risks



Risks of independence and non-bias

We prioritised impartiality and objectivity towards all innovators in the report, ensuring no favouritism towards any company.

Reputation at stake

We implemented a rigorous judging and verification process to accurately assess innovator information and mitigate reputational risks by carefully selecting viable and uncontroversial innovators for the Future50 list.

Corporate vs. startup risk

We approached startup collaborations with caution, as these ventures introduce risks not commonly encountered in traditional large corporate settings.

Due diligence & a rigorous pre-screening process

We employed a meticulous pre-screening and assessment process, utilising a unique framework to narrow down over 500 climate tech innovators to a final list of 50, and identifying an additional 23 with high potential, while transparently communicating the scope of due diligence. We conducted one-on-one interviews with 100 shortlisted companies, to ensure their operational status, legitimacy and seed funding.

Compliance with Risk and Quality (R&Q) standards

The final 50 were vetted by PwC's R&Q and Independence teams against strict compliance standards for official clearance before public announcement.

Market scanning

The initiative faced market scanning risks, including potentially insufficient identification of climate techs, regional bias, and criticism from unselected or non-participating notable regional climate techs.

Stamp of approval

The Future50 showcase required careful innovator selection to avoid implying endorsement, ensuring fairness, equal merit and balanced exposure opportunities without favouritism.

Part 04 **Results**



A snapshot of our measurable impact:

High response to nomination call:

- **183** – the total number of companies who responded to our Marketing campaign - through social media, our website and in-person partnership networking events.



Successful promotion and engagement:

Promoting the initiative across key regional tech platforms, such as LEAP (KSA), C3 Accelerator (UAE), Flat6Labs (Egypt), and KAUST (KSA), through our PwC Ventures team have expanded the project's reach and strengthened participation:

- **+207.8mn** - projected media reach across the 12-month campaign.
- **+150** - media mentions across Tier 1 outlets (ie. Forbes Middle East, Economy Middle East and Arab News).
- **+2000** - views generated over a two-month campaign for *Climate Tech Insights*, our climate tech video series.

Web traffic and engagement:

- **+3000** - unique web page views, compared to an average of 2,200 per general campaign launch.
- **+250** - report downloads in just three weeks, and these remain some of our most popular downloaded content today.
- **+11,000** - PwC Middle East clients who interacted with our digital content via Salesforce Marketing Cloud emails and our monthly [PwC Middle East LinkedIn newsletter](#).

Social Media penetration

- **+44K** - social media impressions and **1.8K** social media engagements.
- **+150** - mentions/tags on social platforms, including mentions of #PwCMEFuture50.

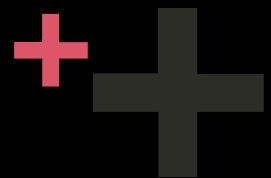
Developing a social media toolkit for Future50 innovators also raised the initiative's visibility and engagement on wider social platforms.

Community and client engagement/impact:

- **+200** - number of clients and alliance partners who attended Future50-themed events during 2023.
- **+90** - members on a dedicated WhatsApp chat for daily engagement and collaboration.
- **Secured our first commercial Future50 win** with [nybl](#), a Dubai-based enterprise AI platform for whom we facilitated a merger with Basserah, a data automation firm, to help expand their regional reach into Saudi Arabia.

Part 05

**How we impact
reputation/importance of
the marketing industry**



The power of Marketing in building relationships:

- This initiative was transformative in terms of lending genuine credibility to, and improved perceptions around, the power of Marketing - for stakeholders both inside and outside our organisation.
- The relationships our Marketing team sought out and nurtured with Marketing peers in some of our most important alliance partners actually became the door openers for client-facing colleagues at PwC Middle East to build meaningful connections with key decision makers within those alliance partners that hadn't previously been made.
- The framework of collaboration and working together for a common purpose - in this case, the elevation of much-needed climate technology in our region - was established by those early, Marketing-led relationships.

“PwC’s commitment to identifying and supporting pioneering climate tech companies has been instrumental in driving the conversation and tangible action towards scaling clean technologies and decarbonisation efforts in the MENA region. The Future50 initiative has successfully filled a critical gap in the market, providing a platform for collaboration for both innovators and corporates in the region.” *Oisin Commane - Head, Thought Leadership and Programing, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week.*

A human-led approach

- Our Marketing approach throughout this initiative anchored on human touch-points that physically - and virtually - brought our alliance partners together with other influential stakeholders in the climate tech ecosystem, as well as our client-facing colleagues at PwC Middle East.
- Our events were interactive, exciting and promoted networking to allow relationships to flourish beyond peer-to-peer marketers, enabling those more commercially-focused conversations to develop.

“Being part of the PwC Future50 has given us the opportunity to amplify our mission and vision as well as network in new and exciting ways.” *Jane Galvin, Founder, Distant Imagery.*

“We are so grateful to the PwC Middle East team for its unwavering support for start ups, female founders and for always valuing innovative ideas. Not only did we get to work with exceptional teams we also feel lucky to have shared the journey with inspiring innovators!” *Nawel Mahmoudi, Founder, ValueGrid.*

Marketing ‘for good’

- What started as a Marketing opportunity to position PwC’s brand as a leading voice in the climate conversation, has quickly developed into a revenue-generating opportunity for our organisation which has, in turn, significantly enhanced the reputation of our Marketing team and the perceptions around the power and reach of our work.

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- On a societal level, this was a genuine example of marketing 'for good'. Using our skills and expertise as Marketers to engage the right people - through the right partnerships - to create a sustained drumbeat around climate innovation at a time when our planet needs it the most.
 - We are proud, as Marketers, to have played a leading role in this initiative's ongoing achievements.
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