

Communicating change in the Emirates

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THE BEACH -- The weather report in the United Arab Emirates is always the same. On weather.com it just have a yellow circle every day. Sunny, sunny, sunny. In the more conservative The National, which I have been reading today, it's more circumspect. It says 'mostly sunny' every day.

But the weather here this week hasn't been cooperating. It has been cold and sunless today. It rained on Friday and Saturday.

And the economy hasn't been doing what it's told either. Today there are reports of 500 people being laid off by the state property development firm Nakheel. That's 15% of the workforce. And they have also acknowledged the delay of some big development projects: with names like Trump and Jumeirah in them.

Local branches of western banks are also announcing layoffs. And that may just be that they are a bit more transparent than some other organisations that operate here. So people are starting to get uneasy. People under the age of 30 have never known anything but boom. It could be hard.

Like most things they have faced though, I am confident that people in this part of the world can manage their way through changes. There will probably even be mergers, acquisitions and other new, new things for these new, new entrepreneurs. We're doing 41 change programmes right now. But I am sure we could still learn from businesses in the Gulf.

One of the quotes from a business that was facing lay-offs, that I read this week said all the

right things. the audience I spoke to on Sunday seemed to know instinctively what had to be done.

It will be interesting to watch.

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