

## ***World Expert and Regional Director Michel Delifer Talks to LERC***

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2010, LERC, NDU

Reported by Elie Nabhan

Mr. Michel Delifer, a Lebanese of Armenian descent, who currently lives and works in the United States, presented a lecture titled *The Basics of Innovation* to a packed house of students from the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics/ Department of Management and Marketing, under the auspices of Chairman, Dr. Atef Harb.

Mr. Delifer is a Regional Sales Director for Sopheon, a software company that focuses on the space of innovation.

“He is an internationally-experienced executive with a passion and proven ability to help organizations, focused on innovation and NPD..... his 20-year track record of providing value-added enterprise solutions has offered him the opportunity to work with some of the finest Strategy, R&D, Innovation and Marketing organizations in the world,” his biography states.

As part of LERC’s ongoing initiative to document Lebanese migrants’ experiences, audio as well as visual, for its electronic archives, Mr. Delifer spoke about his migration experiences in a biographical interview with Mr. Elie Nabhan, LERC’s Website Editor.



Mr. M. Delifer pictured at the Lebanon Migration Museum at NDU (Oct 2010).

For Mr. Delifer, born and educated in Beirut, the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 hit early and hard, displacing his family within a few weeks. He worked as a

volunteer with the Lebanese Red Cross from 1975 to 1981, but cut short his academic studies to start a new life in the United States.

A cousin in California promised a world of riches and Mr. Delifer started his new life pumping gas at a station in Santa Monica in 1981. With no university degree, new to the country, with basic English language skills and limited practical knowledge of the insurance business, Mr. Delifer, after persistent applications, landed a job with an insurance company on the East Coast of the United States.

“The conversation with a top executive in the company changed the course of my life,” he said recalling the fourteen years he then spent with them.

Asked what he thought about the economic, political and societal situation in Lebanon, Mr. Delifer considered the new generation of Lebanese, wanting to get married but unable to afford a lavish Lebanese wedding or even a new apartment, as having an attitude that is an “economic disaster”. Mr. Delifer suggested Lebanon and its banking sector coming to grips with Micro Finance as a way of easing the ever-increasing gap between the rich and poor.

He felt that the political process and instability had changed little over his 29 years abroad, with the same issues and policies but only with a change of people.

As for Lebanese society, he believes that its biggest problem is that of confessionalism. “I am worried about confessionalism being categorized,” he said. If he could change one thing in Lebanon, he added, religious right and toleration would be the stimuli needed for improvement, growth and success.

Every political crisis and economic impact, he said, leads to a greater departure of emigrants, mostly Christians, and this he feels is a great liability for Lebanon.

Going back to Lebanese traditions, Mr. Delifer’s tough beginning in life and his struggle to achieve meant being well versed in living within one’s means. Huge marriages funded by family members, lavish costumes and designer shoes, he feels are an extravagance, meant to impress people, most of them not even known.

And achieve he did. Lack of a recognized degree meant that life was difficult but now as an expert in his field Mr. Delifer finds himself equal on an intellectual level with any graduate from any university.

He holds his own with successful Lebanese emigrants, bankers and consultants, many decorated by Ivy League, impressive figures that he comes to meet in international conferences.

Asked whether he would return to Lebanon having visited it only twice since leaving, Mr. Delifer said the decision would be one taken with his wife, who was yet unprepared for life in Lebanon.

This trip, however, was to encourage the Lebanese youth not to give up in the face of economic difficulties. He said he was always heartened by news of successful Lebanese

entrepreneurs living abroad who were interested in developing their business in Lebanon. In the age of technology, with businesses linked by the Web, influential ideas and promising ventures could come to Lebanon and vice-versa.



Mr. Delifer with LERC: (from left to right) Mrs. L. Haddad, Mr. E. Nabhan, Ms. B. Abdel Khalek, Mr. M. Delifer, Ms. E. Narciss, Mr. M. Abdallah (Oct 2010).

Mr. Deliver was then taken on a tour of the Lebanon Migration Museum at NDU, and given a presentation of LERC's electronic archives and database.

Visibly impressed with what he saw, Mr. Delifer stated his thanks "for all your efforts in this tremendous initiative."

Mr. Delifer donated to LERC a commemorative plaque from the Business Youth and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, given for his participation in a recent youth business event.



Mr. M. Delifer presents Mrs. L. Haddad of LERC his commemorative plaque (Oct 2010).



Photo of the inscriptive commemorative plaque donated to LERC by Mr. M. Delifer (Oct 2010).