

Start-Up Nation: Sharing Israel's success story

Chinese version of book 'Israel Valley' has sold more than 50,000 copies

• By EYTAN HALON

Almost a decade after Dan Senor and Saul Singer published their seminal best-seller *Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle*, providing readers with an insight into Israeli innovation, there still remains plenty to be discussed.

The desire to learn firsthand about the country's entrepreneurial success brought more than 110 delegations from across the globe to Israel this week for the DLD Tel Aviv Innovation Festival, Israel's largest annual hi-tech gathering.

Alongside the investors and innovators were a number of experts anxious to share the story of Israel with those eager to learn.

Edouard Cukierman, chairman of Cukierman & Co. Investment House and managing partner of Catalyst Investments, last week published a second edition of *Israel Valley*, co-written with Prof. Daniel Rouach.

Written in French, his book has been translated into Italian and Chinese, and an English version is en route. The Chinese version has sold more than 50,000 copies.

"The idea is to illustrate the key success factors of the Israeli hi-tech industry," Cukierman told *The Jerusalem Post*, stating that he has identified seven key factors in Israel's transformation into a hub of start-up activity and success. These include the role of government, investment in defense, Jewish education, and mandatory military service.

Telling Israel's story, Cukierman said, is a form of "economic Zionism." Even for a successful businessman and former soldier in the IDF's spokesperson unit, selling Israel's success story through its hi-tech achievements is simpler than discussing its military or geopolitical situation.

"Whether in venture or investment, there are many who like to help Israeli companies and invest in the success of Israeli hi-tech. When we speak about Israeli hi-tech and its global impact, that's an easy way to speak positively about Israel."

Despite being proud of Israel's success, Cukierman said he wouldn't want any other country to endure the conditions which led to its achievements.

"I explain the role of the military and the experiences of the Jewish people. I wouldn't wish those upon any other country in the world. The Israeli eco-system is very unique."

Israel should serve as a model to other countries, Cukierman added, but a unique replica of the elements of Israel's success is neither possible nor entirely desirable.

Sophie Shulman focused on 70 types of innovation in her Hebrew-language book *Reinventing Every Day*, co-authored with Galit Hemi, to mark 70 years of Israeli independence.

Rather than focusing on the technology itself, however, she focused on the personal stories behind the innovators and the laboratory of life in which failure is a stepping stone to success.

"Most of the entrepreneurs failed, they almost never succeeded on their first try," Shulman told *the Post*, stating other countries should learn from Israel that encouraging students to attempt to succeed, even if they fail, is a necessary part of innovation.

"Let people ask questions. Countries need to think about the help they can provide to those who know how to fail, to those who know how to ask questions," she said.

Speaking earlier in the day at the DLD conference, Shulman said Israel's founding prime minister, David

Ben-Gurion, was also Israel's very first innovator.

Shortly after the establishment of the state, with Israel running low on rice supplies, Ben-Gurion ordered the Osem food company to produce a rice substitute, now known as "Israeli couscous" or "Ben-Gurion's rice," to prevent the country going hungry.

Two decades later, the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology opened a micro-electronic institute in Haifa after French President Charles de Gaulle imposed an embargo on Israel following the 1967 Six Day War, depriving the country of essential semiconductors.

For Cukierman, Shulman and many others attending the conference, Israel's entrepreneurial eco-system, with its ingenuity and innovation, is also proof of the proverb that "necessity is the mother of invention."

For many participants coming to Tel Aviv to learn the secrets of Israeli entrepreneurial success, the unfortunate element of necessity may be the hardest to imitate.

EDOUARD CUKIERMAN (left) and Prof. Daniel Rouach, co-authors of 'Israel Valley.' (Courtesy)



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