biography  Mr. Merehbi was born in Tripoli, Lebanon in October 1937. He entered the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture at AUB in 1959 and graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Civil Engineering in June 1963.

Mr. Merehbi’s civil engineering career began in 1963 working on three projects for the Orient Construction Company in Lebanon: the extension of the IPC refinery; the grande couverture, Tripoli International Exhibition Centre; and the Maison d’Artisan in Beirut. He started his own business in Lebanon with two projects: the American Life Insurance Company Building and the Abu Au River General Construction Works.

In late 1967 Mr. Merehbi left Lebanon for Abu Dhabi where he, in partnership with Taha Mikati and Anas Mikati, started the Arabian Construction Co. [ACC]. Since that time offices have been established in Syria; Saudi Arabia in 1975; Doha, Qatar in 1976; the office in Lebanon reactivated in 1989; an office was established in Cairo, Egypt in 2002; an office was established in Erbil, Iraq in 2005; and in 2007 an office was established in Amman, Jordan. Between 1983 and 1985 the company worked on limited number of projects in Pakistan and Yemen.

The Arabian Construction Co. has been active, since 1967 and is currently considered a major player in the modern construction industry of the region. During the forty one years of operation under the leadership of Mr. Ghassan Merehbi, ACC has steadily grown with increasing standards of quality and value. In 2008, ACC registered an estimated ten digit figure turnover for the year.

Mr. Merehbi was the Chairman of the Tripoli International Fair from 1994 to 1999; and he has been an advisor to the Board at Banque Audi since 2004.

abstract  Contracting is one engineering practice that has never been appropriately valued as it should, although it constitutes approximately ten percent of the world’s GDP. Contractors have always been the scapegoats; if something goes wrong, the contractor is the one to blame. However if a project is successful, the genius behind it is rarely attributed to the contractor.

Being an engineer by profession and a contractor by practice, I will briefly point out some of the basic requirements of a successful contractor.

Challenges faced in the construction industry are great. When we think of contracting we may think of it as a business like any other, but contracting is a tricky and difficult business. Your technical engineering background will not carry you very far. To be a successful contractor you have to know people and understand cultures, and you have to be able to make yourself understood. You have to be familiar with finance, accounting, procurement, and banking. You have to know how to assess risks and how to mitigate them. You have to be aware of all the logistical elements of a project: what is needed and when; how to move people from one location to another; how to shuffle equipment from one place to another and when; and you have to do all this while avoiding unnecessary cost. And you have to know how to gain and retain the confidence of clients and bankers.