



## Mohamed Naceur GHARBI - Design El Mahdi

Sidi Bouzid

Located in the city centre of Sidi Bouzid, Design El Mahdi offers a wide range of engraving services for carpenters and retailers from the region. Mohamed Naceur Gharbi, the business founder is busy working on his numerical control machine (CNC), finetuning the latest details for the design of a wooden front door, before overseeing its tracing and engraving. His two workers will take over the finishing stage before managing the delivery to the client.

Mohamed has been interested in furniture, whether its design or functionality, since childhood. After high school, it was a natural step to study industrial design. "These five years passed very quickly," he says enthusiastically. "I graduated from the Institute of Arts in Sidi Bouzid in 2015, and I completed my studies with a Master's degree in Sfax with the same specialty in 2017."

"It's in Sfax that I developed the entrepreneurial spirit, with my classmates," he explains. "After classes, and during the evenings, discussions were often focused on the opportunities offered by our curriculum, and on the technical possibilities of product design."

Back in Sidi Bouzid, after completing his studies, Mohamed decided it was time to launch his own design studio. And like many young entrepreneurs with no professional experience, he was advised to contact the business center in his region. In January 2017, he took part in the CEFE training.

This is where he was recommended to subscribe to HP LIFE e-Learning, the entrepreneurial training of Mashrou3i, a project financed by USAID, the Italian Cooperation and the HP Foundation, implemented by UNIDO.

Thanks to this support and after several exchanges with the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS), Mohamed negotiated a bank loan of 66,000 Tunisian Dinars to secure the purchase of a CNC machine for cutting and engraving wood and metal.

Since the launch of Design El Mahdi in October 2018, Mohamed has taken his role of entrepreneur very seriously. He tells us how he actively applies the concepts and tools he learned through Mashrou3i and HP LIFE, especially in marketing, to develop his company.

Understanding the importance of market research, Mohamed diagnosed the market needs in his region, carefully targeting clients for his quality services. Today he has a growing customer base, made up of fifty percent carpenters who require customized doors and decorations, but also retailers, cafes and even individuals, for the decoration of storefronts and facades.

Mohamed has a piece of advice to motivate young graduates like him. "Working a craft is a noble activity that enables you to create, to appreciate your surroundings and to generate your own income. It takes time to build a solid reputation and achieve success," he says with a smile.