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We like SIs!

Often the unsung heroes of the IT industry, SIs (systems integrators) are the invaluable link between IT vendors and clients with complex projects. Solutions today are rarely simple — they demand technologies from a range of vendors plus skills across a number of disciplines. Large vendors and their services divisions can scale and cope, but the invisible glue of the industry is the band of highly skilled, highly experienced and highly competent SIs.

These are the companies that can help clients scope a project, make recommendations of the right technologies, source the right elements, implement, test and then support — all mostly with major vendors claiming the wins and implementations as their achievements.

In truth, of course, it’s all about teamwork. However, SIs have the real advantage of being able to act as honest brokers, of having the ability to source products and solutions across a palette of suppliers and, critically, being in close touch with clients.

It may not be a widely praised role, but, without it, this region would not have seen the breadth and depth of major ICT implementations over the last 10 years, often leapfrogging in complexity and imagination those in more mature markets.

So we take this opportunity to focus on 20 of the region’s top SIs. We urge you to research them more fully and discover their full capabilities. We guarantee you’ll be pleasantly surprised.
Almoayyed Computers, the flagship division of Almoayyed International Group, Bahrain, offers cutting-edge ICT Solutions to businesses across the region. The SI’s well-defined application, infrastructure and services portfolio caters to a variety of industries and business sectors, including government, financial institutions, educational institutions, real estate companies, trading and hospitality companies, and retailers. Some of the prominent offerings from Almoayyed Computers include ERP, CRM, comprehensive banking solutions, business intelligence solutions, retail point-of-sale solutions, IP telephony, data centre solutions, Six Sigma consultancy, business process outsourcing, property management solutions, and supply chain management (SCM) solutions, to name a few.

ALPHA DATA

Alpha Data is one of the largest multi-disciplined systems integrators in the UAE. Alpha Data works with its clients through a combination of deep-level business and technical expertise, an extensive knowledge of today’s technologies, and a mature, highly capable delivery and services infrastructure. Alpha Data’s offerings help its customers improve processes, reduce data centre and infrastructure costs, manage risk and governance and enhance top-line revenue. Its business approach is based on establishing long-term partnerships that encourage success through mutual benefit.

EMITAC ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS

Emitac Enterprise Solutions a leading systems integrator in the region has been providing end-to-end IT solutions to clientele in multiple industries for over three decades. Its service portfolio, as expected from an organisation with so many years of experience, is one that covers practically all areas relating to enterprise needs. EES’s passion for progress is reflected in its disciplined planning and management process, which enables the systems integrator to anticipate changing economic and industry conditions, thereby putting the company in a position to create value for both its customers and shareholders.

EMW

EMW specialises in end-to-end infrastructure and business enablers, which include various vendor specialisations and partnerships that are best-of-breed across the globe. The SI delivers solutions and expertise with 24/7, 365-days-a-year support. EMW has the agility and the ability to build and customise specific requirements that meet and exceed its customers’ expectations in line with industry standards. EMW is already recognised in the region as the smart convergence and applications expert. It is certified and specialised with several industry leaders, including Arista Networks, Blue Coat, Brocade, BlackBerry, Cisco Systems, Dell, Juniper Networks, MobileIron, Metelco, Microsoft, RSA, Tiger TMS and Teleopti. EMW’s technical staff constitutes 80 percent of its work force and is dedicated to performing challenging and complex projects that require expertise in multi-vendor environments.

GBM

Founded in 1990, GBM is one of the largest IT solutions providers in the GCC, with more than 1,000 employees and over 20 solid strategic partnerships forged with internationally recognised IT solution providers. A spin-off from IBM, GBM is the sole distributor for IBM excluding selected IBM products and services throughout the GCC, except for Saudi Arabia. GBM’s strong momentum was further enhanced in 1999, when the team managed to secure the Cisco portfolio. The systems integrator now holds the highest level of recognition in the region from Cisco, Gold Partner status, in addition to the Cisco Borderless Network Architecture Specialised Learning Partner status.
Mohammed Zameer, General Manager, Al Rostamani Communications
AL ROSTAMANI

Al Rostamani Communications (ARC) is a member of Al Rostamani Group, one of the largest and most respected business conglomerates in the UAE. ARC was formed in 2002 as a merger of two Al Rostamani Group entities, the Telecom Division of the Central Trading Company and Al Rostamani Information Services. After almost a decade of steady growth, ARC is now a leading IT and telecommunication solutions provider and systems integrator, offering innovative, integrated technology solutions and professional services.

ARC takes a consultative approach towards its customers’ needs and requirements. It first understands the specific requirement, then develops the customised technology solution by carefully selecting the right mix of products from its end-to-end solutions, which include IT infrastructure, enterprise communications, networking systems, data centre solutions, IT security, applications, and telecommunication infrastructure. Its core competency lies in its vendor-certified engineering resources that conceptualise, build, integrate, support and manage the solutions across the lifecycle.

Mohammed Zameer, General Manager, Al Rostamani Communications, explains more about what makes the SI tick.

Can you briefly outline your company’s major achievements over the last 12 months?

We executed a major network management system for a leading telecom operator in the UAE. We concluded two supply contracts for CPE equipment with a telecom operator in the UAE, and successfully completed a NetApp storage implementation for two well-known oil companies in Abu Dhabi. We also executed one of the key security consultancy projects with a major oil company, and completed two major hospitality projects covering complete end-to-end solutions like cabling, Wi-Fi networks, data and voice networks, BMS system and IT infrastructure.

What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years?

ICT on cloud, BYOD, LTE and managed IT are the emerging trends that would define regional enterprise IT in the next five years. Currently, enterprises are still clinging on to the concept of in-house IT departments and in-house expertise. Slowly but surely, IT will become part of a managed service done either by a global provider or a local provider.

What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise?

The relevance of a good SI is always very important to any IT project in an enterprise. Only very few large corporate houses and enterprises can boast of very good in-house design resources to design and conceptualise IT requirements based on the latest trends in the industry. Moreover, all aspects of the project, from design, build, project management, compliance, testing and handover, are specialised skills which are generally not available with the enterprise. However, a good SI is used to doing these exercises for many different environments and customers, so the expertise of its resources will be much more experienced in all the components of a project.

What are the points that end users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project?

The cheapest proposal need not be the most cost-efficient — this point is generally ignored during a bid process. We have seen many bids which have been won by SIs that do not have the relevant skill set but are cheaper in price, or a project being awarded because of the reputation as a big player in the global market. The most important point of evaluation in any bid is the enterprise’s business need for the new IT project. Secondly, you need to know the “operational lifetime” of the proposed solution. Then comes the technical evaluation of the solution proposed and matching it with the business need. This is followed by bidder evaluation and resource commitment and finally the pricing structure.

What are the most common end-user mistakes that endanger a project’s capacity to deliver on its goals?

A detected requirement study in line with business needs, and, secondly, focus on the cheapest supplier. For a project to be successful, it is important that a detailed requirement study is performed by competent consultants, and that these requirements are aligned with business needs. Also the responsibility is awarded to a SI that has good credentials of having successfully implemented similar projects.

How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?

Our approach to any project starts from a consultancy perspective. This is why our customers are very happy with our service, as we define initially why they need the project and all the questions are answered and documented. As far as the customer is concerned, we are the front end for the entire project. We take the responsibility to get international partner tie-ins or local subcontract works for the entire project.

Define your company’s strategy for the next 12 months.

To increase the overall size of the business through the services revenue stream.

Al Rostamani Communications
PO Box 39420
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We are also proud of our ability to continue to attract and retain top talent. We have a strong core workforce that allows us to be lean, flexible and capable of dealing with projects of any size and complexity. Eighty percent of our employees are technical experts, which is more than most companies of our kind.

**What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years?**

One of the biggest — and most exciting challenges — of 2013 will be Big Data. Whether it is mining social media sentiment, drawing on machine sensor readings to operate in a more sustainable fashion, forensic search engine trend analysis to prompt business decisions — or all of the above — the ability to tap into the power of Big Data is becoming a must.

However, no value can be gleaned without a meticulously planned, cutting-edge IT architecture that can collate and store enormous amounts of unstructured, file-based data. Big Data demands scalability and efficiency, and business leaders in the region need to radically rethink their approach to storage if they are to cope and derive true value.

**What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise?**

A good SI can, and indeed should, be the beating heart of an IT project in the enterprise. They understand how the project needs to be delivered, the key players needed to make it happen and the ongoing support required to ensure optimal performance.

**What are the points that end users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project?**

End users should choose an SI with strong local resources and an understanding of all aspects of a project. They need an SI that doesn’t just behave as a reseller but is able to efficiently integrate all project components and bring them to fruition.

**What are the most common end-user mistakes that endanger a project’s capacity to deliver on its goals?**

The most common mistake end users can make is putting a project out to tender and buying on price from the lowest bidder. Inevitably, you will get what you pay for. It is also important that end users do not treat the SI process as outsourcing. They need to be involved in shaping the project, particularly in terms of defining their business objectives and expectations.

**How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?**

The key to our success is to engage customers through a precise consultative approach that truly gets to the bottom of what they need. Our involvement spans design, implementation and comprehensive post-sales support, including 24/7 cover and a 30-minute response time, which is unmatched and unique to the region.

**Define your company’s strategy for the next 12 months.**

The next 12 months will see us strengthening our offerings in data protection and availability. In particular, we expect an upsurge in demand from clients to help them transition toward the private cloud and truly embrace the potential of virtualisation.

Many are already well on their way to reaping the rewards of cloud computing, often without realising it. Our job is to break down the issues and ensure they aren’t distracted by unnecessary hype and jargon. Solutions need to be relevant to their specific needs and deliver a genuine return on investment.

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Visionaire has successfully productised its more than 18 years of technology deployment and integration experience into a business model called ‘technomics’ — a proven single-integrated-system (SIS) approach. This demonstrated integration model provides organisations the ability to achieve perpetuity in transformational ICT by focusing on customer and business needs to gain market share and meet revenue objectives, rather than succumbing to single vendor-centred strategies and rely on vendor rebates and end-of-year handouts. Its mission is to work for the customer’s benefit rather than over-engineer the customer’s trust by making wasteful or vendor-lock-in proposals. Aneeta Gupta, President and CEO, explains more.

Can you briefly outline your company’s major achievements over the last 12 months?
With the technomics approach, we were able to penetrate new market segments with a focus on enterprise, education and hospitality in 2012. For example, we were able to provide substantial technomics value and progress to key projects such as the design, build and operations of the UAEU Campus, valued at Dh178 million, the Zayed University Khalifa City campus, valued at Dh69 million, the successful deployment of the Network Operations Center at RTA Dubai, and the completion of an end-to-end ICT design consultancy project with Qatar University.

What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years?
Technomics has identified that the four Cs for CIO success are cloud, connectivity, communication and converged services, which translates to integrated technologies for data centre,
OUR PRODUCTS & SERVICES

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cloud computing, mobility (BYOD), Big Data, extreme collaboration and telepresence. This will come about by driving performance through integrated, less-complex architecture, CAPEX planning, and by lowering operating costs and making decisions of true strategic advantage. Gartner defines this as the “nexus of forces” — the topmost transformational technology focus for the CIO needs to be about how they can impact business transformation and achieve their true opportunities.

What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise?

Working closely with customers across a variety of industries in more than 40,000 commercial and public sector venues has given us a unique insight into the operational and business challenges faced by enterprises today. Right now, many of our customers are balancing the ongoing challenge of reducing operational costs and making smart investments to help them transform their business in readiness to react to improving economic conditions. A professional SI can play a pivotal role in supporting the customer’s strategic objectives and future development, by reducing the total TCO of your ICT estate and eliminating unnecessary tiers and CAPEX sprawl.

What are the points that end users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project?

Gartner published a piece of research called the Vendor Influence Curve to help enterprises determine how much they allow vendors to influence purchasing decisions. Using research of its customers to better understand the model in relation to real-world applications, Gartner found that most companies end up being highly influenced by manufacturing vendors, leading to the vendors’ advantage in dictating the technology. In the Middle East, this influence has also led to the vendor influencing how the SIs — generally the vendor’s most favoured partners — choose to execute the job. We call it the Gold Partner Exclusivity Syndrome, where a vendor mandates that only his Gold Partners should even be invited to bid for the RFP, thereby locking the bid to the disadvantage of the customer. There are also examples of a manufacturing vendor becoming the design consultant on a project, which leads to a conflict of interest, and the vendor selfishly takes advantage of the situation by writing specifications that lock the bid to their own technology. So instead of the CIO or procurement decision makers making the decision, the vendor becomes the exclusive or primary influencer of the technology decision as well as which SI will be chosen for the job.

What are the most common end-user mistakes that endanger a project’s capacity to deliver on its goals?

Enterprises that don’t segment their network infrastructure could see higher costs and increased vendor lock-in. Enterprises must address users’ insatiable demand for real-time and on-demand video and multimedia applications, and they must do so within significant IT budget and personnel constraints. IT organisations are struggling to keep pace with exponential traffic increases and the shift toward mobile access to video and business content. Industry-relevant research and Visionaire’s technomics approach to ICT projects has proven that a single-vendor source is no longer the best approach to building and maintaining a next-generation ICT infrastructure.

Bringing in multi-vendor, best-of-breed architecture will help introduce technology innovations that can deliver real business advantages in our experience, as well as save up to 30 percent in CAPEX and as much as 60 percent in OPEX, significantly impacting TCO. The true SI’s role is to be a trusted advisor to his customers and to ensure that it is dedicated to the customer benefit without letting vendor influences affect the choices and implementation strategies.

How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?

Today, Visionaire is a business that is able to implement and support its customers’ entire ICT environment — both their front and back office — from design, to build, to manage. We offer a complete portfolio of professional and managed services that enable our customers to optimise and extend the lifetime value of their ICT investments. By building close working relationships with our strategic partners, we have become leading experts in achieving business transformation through ICT. By investing to attain the highest level of partner accreditations, we have become masters of today’s technologies and we are often one of the first to test and then prove emerging technologies.

Define your company’s strategy for the next 12 months.

Our strategic goal is to establish Visionaire as the ICT partner of choice for customers in education, hospitality, enterprise and government. As we pursue our goal, we shall continue to seek and adopt innovative technologies and services that will transform the organisations of today into the organisations of tomorrow. Cloud computing, BYOD, telepresence, streaming video, immersive collaboration and next-generation services are just a few of the concepts, solutions and services that Visionaire is working on today to enable its customers to work more effectively and profitably tomorrow.
People in Saudi Arabia use governmental, educational, and banking systems, and these systems use SBM’s solutions

Get in touch with SBM today and give your business a competitive edge.
Nanjgel is a fast-growing service provider that offers business and IT solutions, services and training in the region. Its three-dimensional portfolio — processes, people and technologies — delivers business value to its customers through a combination of process excellence, quality frameworks, and service delivery innovation. Nanjgel partners with several hardware and software vendors, Internet service providers and subcontractors to provide one-stop-shop IT integration services. Jude Pereira, Managing Director, takes us through the SI’s talking points.

Can you briefly outline your company’s major achievements over the last 12 months?

The biggest achievement we had is we were given the responsibility of completing a data loss prevention (DLP) project for the Crown Prince Court (CPC) in Abu Dhabi. The project consisted of nine technologies. It was the complete network-based DLP, not endpoint-based DLP, so the complete end-to-end DLP — the email gateway, Web gateway and PKI solution, which is very complicated because now the CPC has the capability to issue its own PKI certificates internally. That is also validated by an external CA (certificate authority), which is GlobalSign, so they’ve got their certificates validated and can go ahead and issue certificates with third-party organisations at a government level as well. We also completed a Web application firewall for them within the same project. That was the one that kept us really busy over a period of time.

What are the emerging technology
trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years?
The biggest one that is influencing the Middle East is mobile device management (MDM)/bring your own device (BYOD), which is kind of confusing a lot of people. As far as I'm concerned, this technology is still not matured, and has a long way to go. Then it's Big Data, and finally the cloud.

What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise?
From a MDM/BYOD and Big Data perspective, the SI definitely has got a major role to play because it's very important to understand your start and stop points. Typically, we see that the customer starts off by saying they need a NAC (network access control) requirement, and then they say they don't only want to manage their internal devices, but BYOD as well. Then, when they talk BYOD, they go to MDM as well. Now, the customer fails to realise that MDM and BYOD, even though they sound the same, are two independent technologies. So it's key and vital for the SI to understand the capabilities of a technology and to educate the customer to know what they can achieve within this, and the rest can be achieved with the latter half of the technology.

It's the same with Big Data. Big Data may not necessarily mean high-power computers, huge storage and being able to collect data and generate reports. Big Data, in today's world, is about how fast you can collect huge volumes of data, how efficiently you can correlate it — whether it's from a business perspective, security perspective or analytic perspective — and how efficiently you can report from those huge volumes of data. That's what is missed out very often.

What is the points end users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project?
The most important thing is the experience of having deployed similar projects in the past. The competent resources is another — just because an engineer is certified doesn't necessarily mean he has the experience to deploy. Certification today is kind of taken for granted, and is easily achievable. It goes beyond certification — the experience of the guy handling similar domains of technologies, and similar implementations, is more important.

What are the most common end-user mistakes that endanger a project's capacity to deliver on its goals?
Not defining the scope of work clearly end-to-end. It is very common. What lot of grey areas where the customer assumes they will get certain things, so the SI has to be very clear in defining what the customer is going to get for what they have purchased.

How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?
Right from the initial stages, when we engage with the customer and come down to a POC, we have a proof-of-concept document which clearly defines the goals of the project, the business case, and what are the different KPIs to say that this solution or technology is successful and meets their business requirements. Then, if the project is awarded to us, we have a project design document (PDD). In that PDD, you see everything: the scope of work; snapshots of the kind of reporting they're going to get; how we map the business needs over the help of technology; the complete product implementation cycle; the role play between the SI, the customer and the vendor; the prerequisites that are needed prior to beginning the implementation; and the complete responsibility through the product cycle matrix.

Define your company’s strategy for the next 12 months.
We still have a long way to go as far as security management is concerned because the attacks are going by the day. The good thing is that new technology is coming. We want to focus more on how solutions can help customers mitigate threats and attacks in real-time, rather than just detection and protection.
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SAUDI BUSINESS MACHINES (SBM)

SBM offers integrated technology solutions and, in optimising processes and facilitating transactions, empowers its customers with the right systems to compete in business. It is the leading solutions provider for key companies and governmental organisations, in a multitude of industries across the KSA. Being a witness to the early success of IBM in the Kingdom in establishing the first information-handling system for the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), the Juffali Group recognised the need for technology solutions in a rapidly growing economy and spearheaded this task in 1981, when it established SBM as the nationwide general marketing and service representative of IBM. Since then, its pool of strategic alliances has grown to encompass, among others, Cisco (its largest partner in the Kingdom), SAP and Lucent Technologies. SBM wished to present its place in this year’s top 20 Systems Integrators (SI) list.

Business needs
The Ministry of Justice had an urgent need to enhance its availability to citizens across the kingdom and simplify public access to the ministry. To achieve this, it was necessary to expedite the process to deliver judicial service and improve the service standards to all parties.

To deliver high standard of services, it became incumbent on the ministry to address the impending need to upgrade the legacy systems, remove the technical constraints and limitations, enhance security, minimise cost, propagate ubiquitous reach, and provide state-of-art services to citizens, employees and government partners.

The Ministry of Justice assigned SBM to lead a complete technological transformation in its IT infrastructure with an added requirement to deploy several new Internet-based services: a website as an information and interaction tool; a public-facing domain name system (DNS) server; active directory domain controllers and DNS servers for name resolution within the ministry; and a database server running client applications for the internal use of ministry employees.

Business challenge
The IT infrastructure of the ministry was overburdened with an ever-increasing demand to register and service new cases in thousands of hearing rooms across the Kingdom. SBM was required to look at this issue from a long-term perspective and ensure that scalability of the solution will be able to keep up with the needs of the future. An existent system was built on multiple technologies at different locations, adding to the cost of maintenance, complexity and hindrance in delivering standard services to the entire organisation.

Data centres were also limited in their capacity, facilitating only the regional and local offices of the ministry in the Kingdom, some of which were running on outdated networks while remote locations remained untapped. Security practices remained fragmented owing to rapid growth and changing technologies within the network. Plans to introduce new Internet-based services to ministry employees and citizens added to the challenge.

The solution
SBM employed a layered approach in architecture design. The layered approach is amongst the best practices used in some of the largest data centre implementations in the world.

While designing the architecture of the data centre, SBM kept flexibility on the forefront of design to ensure deployment of new services and applications in the shortest time frame that could result in a significant competitive advantage. Such a design required SBM to put its best minds in solid initial planning and thoughtful consideration in the areas of port density, access layer uplink bandwidth, true server capacity, and oversubscription.

Results
The Ministry of Justice transformed into a more unified, efficient and innovative public entity that is capable of attending to citizen needs immediately, addressing the cases closer and more collaboratively, and serving the nation more efficiently than ever before.

Employees of the Ministry felt the technological transformation in their day-to-day work. SBM network architecture and data centre solutions support staff to deliver on their responsibilities in a more effective and timely fashion, making the Ministry of Justice an excellent place to work.

The economic and energy footprint of the Ministry of Justice became more sustainable with state-of-the-art technology that SBM used in the data centres, key infrastructural components and operations support system.

Ali Al Dulaim, CEO, SBM

Ali Al Dulaim, CEO, SBM
One of the region’s leading systems integration, IT solutions provider and managed services companies, CNS offers a host of turn-key IT solutions supported by a collaborative network of IT professionals and services to help its clients improve IT processes, optimise, and reduce data centre and infrastructure costs.

Founded in 1987 by the Ghobash Trading and Investment Group, CNS has steadily built a reputation for delivering quality, professional services alongside an innovative, enterprising approach. Its revolutionary new methods of defining and deploying technologies have been designed to align with the end user’s needs, while remaining progressive and dynamic in every sense.

CNS currently has offices in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Muscat, as well as strategic
partnerships with leading IT brands and best-of-breed OEMs across the region. Its offerings are increasingly focusing on optimisation through innovation, and it keeps itself updated by monitoring trends and partnering with OEMs that are ahead of the development curve.

Can you briefly outline your company's major achievements over the last 12 months?
Over the last year, CNS has been actively involved in several disaster recovery projects, helping companies protect their IT environment in the event of a system failure or downtime. Moreover, to ensure IT operations function seamlessly and facilitate higher tolerance, we have implemented numerous replication and data management projects, as well as virtualisation projects.

What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years?
New breakthroughs in technology are taking place as we speak. However, some of the major trends that are affecting global and regional industry IT environments include cloud computing, mobile anywhere, Big Data and data management, high availability and business continuity, and IT security.

A massive pool of resources that are shared by different companies, and cloud computing helps control costs to a great deal as well as improve efficiencies. In today's organisations, a mobile workforce is also a vital asset. Mobile anywhere ensures seamless business on the move, letting professionals access things like files and apps from anywhere. Furthermore, organisations tend to gather a mountain of data that is ever-growing — Big Data and data management is a suitable solution to store, archive, and protect this data.

IT organisations are increasingly facing challenges in protecting critical applications and IT infrastructure against various causes of downtime. Finally, security investment in applications and IT infrastructure remains a top priority for the IT department. However, there has been a big change in IT security strategies that has come about due to new initiatives such as cloud and virtualisation.

What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise?
The systems integrator plays a key role in structuring the IT architecture of an enterprise. The SI's task begins with the process of understanding the enterprise customer's needs and structure, then offering tailored solutions to meet those needs through comprehensive project management, and overseeing the implementation of the best-of-breed technologies and solutions produced by market-leading partners and vendors.

What are the points that end users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project?
As with any solution or service company, end users should bear in mind what they need, and which partner can best meet those needs. An SI should possess a proven track record, an experienced and professional team, and a strong sense of business ethics, including commitment to clients and timelines, creativity in approach, and innovative in implementation.

What are the most common end-user mistakes that endanger a project's capacity to deliver on its goals?
Identifying the goals and objectives is the first and most important step that end users often neglect or show less focus on. Once you know where you want to reach, getting there is the next step. Also, management has to be prepared to be flexible and change processes when required.

How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?
As outlined before, a successful IT model requires a thorough understanding of the end user's needs and current structure. Through CNS! Select, we take the time to diligently understand these requirements before designing a solution. Moreover, we ensure a proper discussion with enterprise management to align our goals and objectives. We then design the solution, review and finalise it, before proceeding any further. Then we take the management through the process changes and methodology that requires updating before the deployment.

Define your company's strategy for the next 12 months.
Our organisation aims to continue on the past successes, by investing in human resources, identifying talent, retaining them, and training staff to keep them updated on the latest trends. Moreover, we look forward to continue partnering with more leading-edge technology companies and vendors, and improving project management, along with implementing measures to enable management flexibility and the correct methodology changes.

"The SI's task begins with the process of understanding the enterprise customer's needs and structure, then offering tailored solutions to meet those needs through comprehensive project management."
Paladion is going through an exciting phase currently. The last two years have seen a strong shift in how the enterprise perceives IT security. Paladion attributes a “metamorphosis” of IT security into information security and subsequent realignment of its scope, objectives and business relevance. Overall this has resulted in enhanced business returns for quality providers in the field. But a few factors like “first mover advantage”, the only Gartner-rated pure-play security provider in the region, a security-only strategy, and the introduction of innovative services and solutions to market, has helped Paladion emerge as one of the largest information security providers in AsiaPac.

Can you briefly outline your company’s major achievements over the last 12 months?

2012 was the year of innovation and excellence for Paladion. We were able to integrate analytics into the core of our service as well as solution offerings. Conceived with the objective of making IT security proactive, the results of this initiative was telling, and widely approved by our clients and analysts alike. While we introduced a number of new offerings in this period, we also re-engineered existing services to take advantage of our new security analytics engine. Two of our analytics-enhanced products bagged Global Excellence Awards by Info Security Products.
Guide in Feb 2013. Gartner meanwhile upheld its rating of our MSS services as positive in its MarketScope for AsiaPac. We have also invested heavily on enhancing our geographic reach across the Middle East and East Asia in the last twelve months. To cater to the growing needs of the region, we’ve also opened our second office for the UAE in Dubai, and commissioned new offices in Thailand and Indonesia. Currently in the Middle East, we have our presence across the UAE, KSA, Qatar and Oman. We also work with partners to address the markets in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan.

**What are Paladion’s offerings for the Middle East market?**
Paladion takes pride in being a full spectrum, specialised information risk management partner. We started our operations in the Middle East in 2006 and, as I said earlier, our interest and focus on the Middle East market is intense. It is one of the few markets where we have introduced our full bouquet of services and offerings that we provide across markets like the US, UK and India. We are a one-stop shop for all the information security risk related services in West Asia.

Having said that, what I believe makes us truly unique is our drive to become specialised. While Paladion can provide our clients with all the IT security services provided by a regular vendor, there are a few services and offerings which only Paladion can offer in the region. They include; advanced fraud intelligence services, specialised risk management services for the banking and oil and gas industries, comprehensive ERP security, and an automated risk defence platform.

**What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT and security in the next five years?**
Today we are in the midst of what can be termed as “data explosion”. The amount of data churned out by organisations has grown exponentially. It is imperative that this data is used both by the organisation, as well as its partners, to provide competitive edge in the market place. But this calls for a paradigm shift in how SI providers see themselves in delivering value to their customers. Today SIs are limited to managing equipment. In a near future I strongly feel that the market would demand them to play the role of managing information. This would bring technologies like analytics and integration tools to the forefront.

In security specifically, I feel that the Middle East will start adopting managed services with greater vigour. The benefits of a well-managed security programme are hard to ignore. With newer technology advancements and improved IT maturity, this would definitely enhance the IT risk protection of an organisation. I also believe that MSS will become specialised operations as well as the local strengths of the vendor. Size of the vendor is also important, but organisations need to seek the right balance while evaluating the vendors based on this parameter. The crux is to find a large yet nimble provider with a good match. Fourthly, is the vendor providing SLA-driven service guarantee? And finally, what are the IT and security certifications that the vendor has acquired?

**How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?**
We call ourselves a “specialised information risk management partner” and the term "partner" is a key ingredient in our value proposition to the customer. We are convinced, based on 13 years of experience, that no solution, unless customised, can provide adequate protection. It is here where the relevance of “partnering” comes through. While we have worked with almost all the large banks in the region, as well as both the telecom players in UAE, our approach remains rooted on two principles; “customer above all” and “technology agnostic security programme development”. In simple words, we focus on developing security programmes that fit the customer.

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**Paladion**
628, Business Village
Tower B, Deira, Dubai
Tel: +9714-2595526
Fax: +9714-2595539
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Sheik Abdeen, Country Manager, Paramount Computer Systems

Can you briefly outline your company’s major achievements over the last 12 months?
Paramount has won several multimillion-dollar security infrastructure projects in the region. These include one of the largest identity and access management projects in the UAE for a top transportation company, a SCADA DCS infrastructure security project for one of the largest oil and gas companies, as well as two projects with regional telcos — one a large intrusion prevention system project, and the other a big email security project. The last 12 months also saw Paramount partner with Courion for identity and access management, Forescout for network access control (NAC), and Avecto for privilege access management.

Furthermore, Paramount has won the Dubai SME 100 Award (9th in overall ranking), the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Business Award, the Great Place To Work For Women award, and got a CSR label from Dubai Chamber of Commerce.

What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years?
Two of the biggest trends we see are BYOD (bring your own device) and Big Data. We see the majority of our enterprise customers adopting BYOD initiatives. All major new and existing applications will have to support the BYOD initiative. Security is a big concern for IT teams when they see personal smartphones and mobile devices at work. Although this region is slow in adopting Big Data, we see that this will change significantly in next 18 months. Now the paradigm has shifted much more heavily in favour of consumers telling companies what they want, not the other way around. Companies that have implemented Big Data solutions have a much clearer picture of who could be a potential customer and can therefore focus their time and energy to reaching those prospective customers, and not trying to figure out who they are, thereby making businesses far more productive in customer acquisition.

What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise?
We strongly believe that any IT project cannot deliver its true potential unless and until it is executed with the right combination of technology, process and people. Paramount, being in the information security industry for last 13 years, has built strong technology, people and processes around projects.

What are the points end users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project?
One is specialisation. Is this company specialised in the areas of their interest? Do they have expertise to deliver in this project? Another is implementation methodology. Anybody can bring about a few reference names, but they can never show you a convincing implementation methodology unless they have gone through the grind of implementing similar projects by themselves. You can buy same the technology from multiple SI partners, but you will see a huge difference in value from each of them based on the implementation methodology adopted by each one of them. We at Paramount believe more or less all competing technologies are similar in many respect, but what matters is who implements it and how it is implemented.

What are the most common end-user mistakes that endanger a project’s capacity to deliver on its goals?
The biggest mistake customers make in this region in choosing the SI partner is selecting purely based on their commercials. There are desperate companies out there that will do anything to grab the project without considering the execution requirement. They can become cheap by cutting corners and even win the projects, but they usually run into issues like compromised quality, expectation mismatch, project delays, and inferior resources.

How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?
As an information security company, we believe in getting as much information as possible early on during the engagement, like customer requirements, customer environment, project milestones, and deliverables expected. Based on the collected information, we accumulate a scope of work and project deliverables, a project plan and timelines, suitable resources for project execution, customer dependencies, and a project implementation methodology. This ensures that we all are in the same page right through the project execution phase.

Define your company’s strategy for the next 12 months.
We plan to scale our international operations in places such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, and take the company to new geographic territories.

Anas Al Nakhai, Sales Manager, Paramount Computer Systems

Paramount Computer Systems FZ-LLC
PO Box 23703
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
P: +971 4 391 8600
F: +971 4 391 8605
www.paramountassure.com
Since its foundation in 2004, help AG has achieved on average an 80% year-on-year growth rate, and 2012 was not an exception to this. It is now a $20 million-plus company, which is commendable given that its focus is only on IT security and not on other forms of IT solutions. Last year, it also managed to double its staff strength and most of its new recruitments were for technical positions.

Can you briefly outline your company’s major achievements over the last 12 months?
Help AG established an office in Qatar in 2011 and we saw excellent revenue growth in the country through 2012. In our first year alone we managed to win 24 customers in Qatar from both government and private sectors, including Qatar National Bank, MOFA, Qatar Exchange, MOI, Qatar University and ICTQatar.

In May 2012, help AG signed an agreement with Excitor to distribute the company’s revolutionary enterprise mobility management platform DME. This will help us cater to the growing BYOD demands in a safe and secure manner. Another partnership agreement came with Verdasys, the leading provider of Enterprise Information Protection (EIP) solutions for the Global 2000, in August 2012, and we were also signed on by HP Enterprise Security for distribution of their entire enterprise security portfolio with a focus on ArcSight, Fortify and Tipping Point.

In 2012 we closed F5’s largest project for an enterprise customer in...
the UAE, which was for $1.3 million. Also, for the largest government organisation in the UAE, we closed Blue Coat’s largest project in the country at $1.2 million dollars. We secured a number of large or $200,000-plus projects for Palo Alto Networks, and received its ‘Reseller of the Year’ award for a third consecutive year because we are assisting and enabling customers to move from ordinary statefull inspection firewalls to next generation firewalls. Last year, we completed the biggest data loss prevention (DLP) and desktop encryption project in the region for Symantec with over 8,500 users.

We also closed a $500,000 project for a university in Qatar, which was one of the major wins for Riverbed in 2012, and implemented a full-fledged application delivery control (ADC) solution for one of the largest airlines in the UAE and indeed globally. The ADC from help AG was a comprehensive solution which addressed all aspects of availability, performance and security.

What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years? While cloud-delivered services and BYOD will no doubt dominate IT discussions well into 2014, there are other technologies that are worth looking into. Of these, data centre consolidation and advanced application delivery architecture are key technology trends that we intend to focus on. By advanced application delivery, we mean the delivery of the infrastructure and security supports needed for the efficient and secure delivery of applications.

What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise? Quite simply, the SI can easily make or break a project. There have been many instances wherein good technology solutions have not been utilised to their full potential solely because the SI managing the project lacked the competence to carry out a successful implementation. Help AG has on many occasions been brought in to fix such issues.

Another important role of the channel in the region is that of trusted advisor. Unlike in Europe and the United States, vendors simply do not have the resources necessary to assist customers though every step of the planning, design and implementation process. Channel partners on the other hand have the technical capabilities and they must step in to bridge the gap.

What are the points end users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project? At the initial phases of any project, there is always a technical and commercial discussion between the customer and the SI. The customer needs to be convinced that the SI is technically compliant before they can move to the commercial stages. To make a project successful it is a necessity to understand the technical capabilities of a SI from a project management, implementation, and support services capabilities point of view.

The important questions that the customer needs to ask are: what is the experience of the SI in the specific area? Who are his reference customers? How many similar projects have been successfully implemented? What is the utilisation of the resources? What is the project management methodology? Is there any local 24/7 technical assistance centre in place? And how can the SI guarantee the SLAs?

How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require? Help AG has one of the strongest and most technically skilled teams in the region. We assist our customers through every phase of the project from consultancy, planning, implementation and 24/7 post-implementation support. Beyond this, we have incorporated a number of innovative programmes and measures to ensure that we address the core difficulties they face. For example, we addressed the issue of not having demo equipment by partners and vendors by introducing the concept of the help AG Lab, which carries test equipment of every focused technology supported and deployed by help AG Middle East.

We conduct the ‘Security Spotlight Forum’ on a quarterly basis to raise awareness about the latest security threats in the region. We also introduced our ‘Learning Lab’ sessions, which is course material developed and delivered by help AG. These training courses are delivered by help AG security professionals and have been extremely well received by the customers who have been looking for vendor neutral and unbiased description of technical problems without the focus on pushing technology solutions or boxes.

"At the initial phases of any project, there is always a technical and commercial discussion between the customer and the SI. The customer needs to be convinced that the SI is technically compliant."

Define your company’s strategy for the next 12 months.
Help AG is focussing on value added services to assist our clients in building their information security strategies and to implement solid future proof IT security solutions to increase their security posture accordingly. We will maintain our very focussed and selective approach which will lead to a larger number of customers seeing us as their trusted advisor.
All initiatives follow our company’s strategic objectives of Customer Satisfaction and Quality Delivery.

Help AG
12th Floor, Office 1208
Arjaan Office Tower
P O Box 500741
Tel: +971 4 4405666
Fax: +971 4 3636742
www.helpag.com
As a security solution provider, SecureTech has always expertly managed to provide cutting edge technology and solutions — be it software based or be it physical security. This Abu Dhabi-based ICT service provider is recognised in the industry for constantly scaling the limits of today’s technology so that its clients never have to choose between saving money and acquiring the capabilities they need to be successful. ST partners with industry giants to create the most efficient and cost-effective solutions optimised for their needs, and to deliver and support them all across UAE.

Can you briefly outline your company’s major achievements over the last 12 months?

We have enhanced our business in various sectors like government and defence, oil and gas, and hospitality by proving our capability as a system integrator throughout the UAE. We achieved 100-plus percentage of business growth in terms of volume and revenue and our resource pool increased more than 100 percent as well.

We delivered around 40 petabytes of storage for various clients and successfully delivered large-scale projects for disaster recovery, cyber security, information security, data centre and security systems solutions.

We are continuing high-level and fruitful partnerships with leaders of the industry like Dell, EMC, Cisco, Fortinet, Microsoft, DDN, Bosch, Sony, Symantec...
What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years?

We have noticed rapid changes in technology trends in the last couple of years. By analysing very closely, we have listed a few that will be influencing the regional IT below.

Big Data will be a major driver for IT spending. Organisations can benefit from Big Data solutions for advanced information management and analytics to improve their business process and efficiency. Big Data solutions will replace traditional data warehousing and integration technologies.

Also, a new era of computing has begun, the era of the cloud which offers anything as service where users will store content and access personal, business and government services.

Cyber and information security will play a major role as the threats are increasing day by day. New and advanced technology solutions will replace traditional network security systems to enable active defence solutions to prevent zero-day attacks and also to protect their intellectual properties.

And the importance of integrating physical security systems with ICT systems will be one of the other main trends in regional IT, as both play a vital role in today’s and tomorrow’s enterprise.

What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise?

A professional systems integrator master-plans the complete solution and undergoes the process systematically. It will assess the needs — architecture, design specification, implementation, support and maintenance, evaluation of performance — following agile methodology, which helps to custom-make the solution. It also makes sure about the involvement of the client in each phase of the project, resulting in knowledge transfer. It is necessary to have a professional team on board to deliver the project on demanded timeframe.

What are the points end-users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project?

End users should look for an in-depth technical expertise, and make sure the SI is trained, certified and has an experienced resources pool.

Also look out for a strong references list, and have a clear understanding of the role of the SI — the SI should act as a true business partner.

Of course, the SI should have good industry knowledge, and the right level of partnership and accreditation with whichever vendor he is work with.

The ability to conduct project management, with solid integration methodology, is highly important, as is accountability.

What are the most common end-user mistakes that endanger a project’s capacity to deliver on its goals?

Unrealistic timelines and expectations, a lack of knowledge about the project and technologies, and frequent change requests and additional requirements.

How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?

SecureTech engages with its customers from the initial days of the projects to derive their requirements and make the appropriate solution designs. Also we always study about the nature of business and process to propose new technologies and products to make sure that our client is getting all the possible business benefits from the deployed project.

Define your company’s strategy for the next 12 months.

We are a customer-driven company and always make our strategy aligned with client needs and goals. As a systems integrator, we are focusing to integrate physical security solutions and ICT security solutions into one platform to address all levels of security-related threats in the enterprise IT environment. One of the main strategies for the coming year will be to focus on virtualising the existing IT infrastructure by introducing private cloud and Big Data solutions for our enterprise clients. Also cyber security, information security and digital forensics will come under our main technology focus.

Considering our growth strategy, we are expecting another 50-percent increase in headcount of our technical resource pool and a 150-percent growth in revenue. In revenue strategy, our focus will be to increase the share from services and support against product selling.
Can you briefly outline your company’s major achievements over the last 12 months?

We have achieved 30 percent growth over the last 12 months and have moved to our 23rd year of performance with the support of our customers and partners. We look forward to a lot of ideas and suggestions on areas to improve and provide new technologies required to move towards a more partnership-oriented model, wherein we can work together and make Intertec an extended arm of our customers.

What are the emerging technology trends that you see influencing regional enterprise IT in the next five years?

Regional companies are looking for cost-effective solutions which will help them deliver better, faster and secure response to their customers. This leads to many areas of business, including mobility, private cloud, e-compliance, BI (business intelligence) with analytics, security, end user experience, and software-as-a-service. Intertec has partnered with quite a few solution providers as well as developed its own IPR to deliver in most of the solution areas.

What is the relevance of a good SI to a successful IT project in an enterprise?

A good SI has a very important role to deliver a successful project over a non-SI. An SI expected to understand the business needs and work out an optimal solution to meet the business goals, as well as keep provision for the future growth. To deliver this, an SI has to have internal technical capabilities on multiple technologies and solutions, so he can integrate them and provide a seamless solution to a customer to meet their business objectives. An SI will take complete ownership of delivery of the solution by using PMI or Prince project management methodology.

What are the points end users should keep in mind when choosing an SI to work on a project?

End users must check on a variety of things including the project track record delivery (on time and within the budgeted cost), PMI-certified project managers, case studies by the SI, the local team size for post-sales support, certified persons for the technology to be delivered, and company credibility and reputation. Over and above this, end users must visit the SI office to see its capabilities to deliver, as well as take customer references.

What are the most common end-user mistakes that endanger a project’s capacity to deliver on its goals?

End users that do not get a detailed SOW from the supplier and agree the deliverables in writing have been a major cause of failure of projects. Further, when end users change the scope in the middle of the project, which impacts delivery, and many a time they do not delegate a full time person responsible from their side to accept the project on each stage basis. Some end users also make a big mistake in going just by price without validating the aforementioned considerations.

How does your company work with clients in order to ensure that their projects give them the business benefit they require?

At Intertec, everyone in the sales and business team uses the mission statement of the company to help in their planning, and focus on customer business needs and what the critical success factors are. Based on this, an initial understanding document is prepared, followed by an SOW with business benefits. At Intertec, there is an investment in a large pre-sales team for various solutions, supported by technology persons to build the customer requirement and agree the same. Once this is agreed, a detailed SOW is prepared and signed off before the start of the project, and then the same is transferred to the delivery team, which is followed with regular project meetings until the project is complete.

Define your company’s strategy for the next 12 months.

The next 12 months are very critical due to current market dynamics. We plan to develop market segmentation deeper, and create consulting practice around the solutions Intertec wants to take to market. We will also develop two to three IPRs in niche areas, which will help customers manage and analyse their business better, and increase revenue or decrease cost. The objective is to grow by 50 percent year on year.

Naresh Kothari, Managing Director, Intertec Systems

INTERTEC SYSTEMS

Intertec Systems
P O Box 27130
Dubai, UAE
Tel: +9714 -2221338
Fax: +9714 -2274937
www.intertecsys.com
INJAZAT DATA SYSTEMS

Injazat Data Systems is an industry-recognised market leader in the region for information technology, data centre and managed services delivered from the region’s most sophisticated and advanced facility, a Tier IV-design certified premier data centre. Injazat serves a diverse range of customers and has developed a broad portfolio of capabilities to successfully address any organisation’s most pressing technology challenges. Injazat supports customers in achieving their vision and allows them to focus on their core business.

As a joint venture between Mubadala Development Company and Hewlett Packard (HP) Injazat draws on its local expertise and presence combined with a global technology partnership network and over 50 years HP global and regional experience, Injazat continues to develop market leading services to meet the dynamic needs of the organisations today and in the future.

www.injazat.com

ITQAN

ITQAN is one of the UAE’s leading systems integrators, known for providing enterprise clients with world-class solutions addressing their local business needs. With a multi-national team of more than 150 IT professionals, the company has offices located in major UAE cities and several business partners across the Gulf. The company has offices located in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Al Ain. Recently, ITQAN also launched its new office in the Western Region.

ITQAN is a pioneering force in the market, and prides itself with many firsts attached to its name ever since its inception.

www.itqan.ae

SEVEN SEAS COMPUTERS

Seven Seas is a leading system integrator and an ICT solution provider in the UAE. Seven Seas Computers is an ISO 9001:2008 certified company since 1983 and a tiered partner to all major technology vendors and are the pioneers in delivering technology solutions and services in enterprise compute, data networking and security, voice and telephony, Microsoft licensing and solutions, value-added services, business continuity and disaster recovery, data centres, audio visual, access control, CCTV, video conferencing and above all outsourcing and managed services.

With over 300-plus trained and certified ICT professionals, Seven Seas Computers delivers cost effective and efficient design, project implementations, maintenance contracts to further provide the customer with highest level of service in all industry verticals such as large and medium enterprises, conglomerates and airlines, government, oil and gas, banking and finance, hospitality, healthcare and education sector.

www.sscomp.ae

STME

STME has over 30 years of experience in delivering high end integrated solutions in the MENA region. We are one of the longest running ICT companies in the industry and our expertise is hard to match.

STME has been the first system integrator deploy a lot of new technology to the Middle East over the years including the robotic tape library and automated backup and archives systems.

STME has operations in 10 countries with 14 regional offices covering GCC, KSA, LENA and Pakistan areas. It is also a platinum partner for 5 major technology market player in area of storage, backup and security including HDS, Symantec and NetApp.

www.stme.com
SecureTech, since inception has helped its customers build, sustain and secure their businesses with cutting edge ICT and Physical security solutions. To know more about our offerings, please visit our website or speak to one of our customer service representatives, who would be glad to assist you.
THIS IS NOT AN iPAD

It is an exit. Uncontrolled exit point for your corporate data. Secure your business with HelpAG. HelpAG is an information security services and solutions provider. Known for its unmatched technical expertise and support services, HelpAG understands the correlation between technical and strategic information security and brings you the best solutions available on this planet.

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