GOVERN-
MENT

Smarter Governments

The emirates are already witnessing smart infrastructure being built based on the latest and cutting edge technologies, ensuring better efficiency and an enhanced working environment for the tourists, international investors and new businesses before and during the Expo. There will be a need for greater infrastructure planning and businesses will also be required to invest in additional storage and network capacity.

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Over 25 million visitors are expected to visit Dubai for the World Expo 2020, an event that has opened up a number of avenues that will shape the technology trends in the region for the next few years. Recently the Dubai government announced its strategy to transform Dubai into a "Smart City", which has led to a boom in the technology sector.

The Qatar World Cup 2022 will open up similar avenues, as governments and companies continue to invest in IT solutions for smart city infrastructure development, effective data storage and backup systems. With top-down initiatives such as e-Government, m-Government, and now Smart Government, there is a brisk pace of technology adoption, and the good news is that this is not for technology's sake alone. The nation's leadership insists on technology that can transform the lives and experiences of citizens, residents and tourists alike.

As Mohammed Areff, Managing Director –

GCC, Levant, Iraq, Pakistan, Avaya interestingly puts it across, "in most markets in the world, governments are not exactly at the cutting-edge of technology adoption. This is not the case in the UAE, and particularly Dubai. Here, IT companies actually struggle to keep pace with the technology innovation demanded by the government".

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR FOR THE LATEST TRENDS OF TECHNOLOGY-

With the increased focus on mobility, there will be a positive impact on ICT spending especially in the areas of mobile security, CRM, geo-localisation software, mobile enterprise management and mobile content management, amongst others. All of this will require a strong backbone IT infrastructure which is secure and scalable. Hence, we will see increased investment in data centre hosting services and cloud infrastructure as a service which offers scalable infrastructure

on demand at low operational costs enabling faster adoption of online and mobile services.

There is a growing demand for better connectivity. "Telcos, many of which are in part state-owned, have been rolling out 4G, Fiber to the Home and other services that are in line with broader government initiatives" says Taj ElKhayat, Regional Vice President, Middle East, Turkey, North, West, and Central Africa at Riverbed Technology. These also include increasing the availability and usage of eServices and mGov services. "This has resulted in new opportunities for IT providers to address everything from application development to optimization and security" continues Taj.

Maintaining the highest levels of IT security and ensuring relevant compliance and regulatory demands have also become imperative technology requirements. Ensuring the availability of IT systems in case of any disaster is also becoming a key reason for investments in Disaster recovery and Business continuity. In summary, "we believe that the advancement of technology will take a

new meaning in the near future as the UAE aims to transform into a major technological hub not just within the region, but at a global level" says Yasser Zeineldin, CEO, eHosting DataFort .

Regional governments are aiming to adopt solutions for smart city development especially technologies that help integrate key transport and infrastructure systems, utilities, e-government services within aviation and immigration, healthcare and many more. Dubai's Smart City initiative, unveiled last year, has called for 1000 government services to go 'smart' during the next three years.

The Government is spending a large amount on IT infrastructure development for upgrading the country's infrastructure. Government-backed projects to increase the use of ICT in educational institutions, together with regulations in the

healthcare sector that mandate a reduction in paper-based processes, are other major factors driving IT spending in this sector.

In terms of IT solutions and services, government entities will take advantage of managed services and hosted private cloud infrastructure services for building a connected city where everyone has access to data from any location. There are many examples where government sector has implemented technology to transform their IT.

EXAMPLES OF TECH-NOLOGICAL REVOLU-TION IN GOVT. SECTOR ENTERPRISES

Yasser cited an example of one of eHDF's clients – UAE Ministry of Public Works. eHDF

deployed a fully managed hosting environment for the UAE Ministry of Public Works' e-project portal. This enables all departments within the ministry as well as external contractors to view the entire project lifecycle in real time. It ensures highly confidential tender and contracts data is safeguarded against any threats. The eProject streamlines the internal process to reduce operational overhead costs for the government as well as increase the process efficiency.

Avaya deployed the Fabric Network for the Dubai World Trade Centre across their exhibition facilities a year ago. Instead of having to plan and manage the reconfiguration of the network at the access layer, distribution layer, and core layer for each show, DWTC staff can now simply click on a location, select a service and deploy, while being confident that no individual component

MOHAMMED AREFF

MANAGING DIRECTOR – GCC, LEVANT, IRAQ, PAKISTAN, AVAYA

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TAJ ELKHAYAT

REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT, MIDDLE EAST, TURKEY, NORTH, WEST, AND CENTRAL AFRICA AT RIVERBED TECHNOLOGY

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can cause a network outage.

Another interesting example was a deployment that Riverbed Technology was involved in last year. This was for a regional government entity that delivers pension related eServices. Deployment of the Riverbed SteelCentral solution enabled it to conduct thorough analysis of its network, infrastructure and application tiers. The organization can now proactively troubleshoot and mitigate application performance issues even before customers' raise complaints.

STATUS OF VIRTUAL-IZATION IN THE GOVT SECTOR -

The adoption of virtualised IT environments is increasing across verticals including government. Due to the abundance of devices, making a shift to the cloud is necessary to integrate critical IT functions and enhance connectivity between people including anytime anywhere access to

data.

A hybrid model that spans public and private clouds stands out as the most popular. The reason behind this wide-spread acceptance is that cloud has matured and delivered on its promise.

HOW MOBILE IS THE MODERN GOVERNMENT-

Creation of mobile engagement environment is a key milestone across government departments. While these have matured and been built across the board, the challenge now is to integrate them and drive that investment to deliver a holistic experience to the people of the UAE. Another aspect is to ensure Mobile engagement environments are truly engaging every member of the public. Avaya has recently introduced an app for individuals with speech and hearing difficulties; this sort of innovations is getting a lot of attention and we're proud to be part of its roll out. Mobile engagement environments in the government

sector are also touching the traditional customer call centers. The country is going through a wave of call centre transformation towards smarter, mobile and social enabled customer experiences.

BIG DATA- CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GOVT

This is a very exciting area that the government is looking into, especially with the concept of IoT, big data and analytics becomes essential in delivering value and building smart services. The government is looking however at the foundation that will drive IOT related analytics. Avaya is all set to extend the fabric technology beyond the data center, something that no other vendor has done yet. What this means that, managing networks, provisioning applications and adding devices to the edge of the network is going to be simple and fast, as plug-and-play. "We'd like to look at SDN Fx as the smart foundation to Smart

GAUTAM CHAKRABARTY
VP – SALES, OPTIMUS

"The advantage, we bring to the table, is the combination of complementary product portfolio along with our value added services to enable the most optimized offering to the sector"

anything, smart X" quotes the confident Areff.

NO DIRTH OF SOLUTIONS

The Government sector is a very strong growth area for Avaya, particularly in their Global Growth Markets region, which comprises some of the fastest-growing nations in the world. Governments, like businesses everywhere, are constantly challenged to be more efficient in the delivery of their services and operations, and have to innovate for newer ways for their audiences to interact with them.

"Across the world, we are working with government entities to build mobile engagement environments to deliver not only government but other services like banking, education and health-care to remote areas of the country and India and China are great examples" says Areff. They are working on different projects to transform government to citizens' experiences through digital transformation and enablement of engagement

on different channels. More recently, they've been working on a number of initiatives to build smart foundations. "Our promised outcome is that with a smart foundation, smart cities can be built to deliver effortless transformation and to be the right structure for true social and economic value creation".

In the channel ecosystem, Avaya works with a number of partners for government sector, but our prime consideration is that they should understand outcomes and work with our customers accordingly. Areff clarifies, "Gone are the days of technology sales by shifting boxes and cut-throat competition– we are in the business of addressing customer challenges, and the technology implementation should be the building-blocks in addressing the broad vision of the outcome".

eHDF being a managed hosting and cloud infrastructure services provider, offers an array of customized solutions that enable government entities to outsource some or all of their IT infrastructure management. This includes servers, networks, storage, back-up and security, monitoring, etc. which are all backed by SLAs required for high availability, reliability, security and redundancy.

They have been in the managed hosting business since 2001 and are one of the oldest Data Centre and Managed Hosting SPs in the region. "Our work with the government sector over the years reflects their trust in our services and solutions. We have implemented complex and innovative cloud computing, managed services and disaster recovery projects for both government and private sector organizations. These implementations have attracted a number of highly esteemed and reputed clients in the government sector such as Dubai e-Government, Emirates e-Government and Ministry of Public Works to name a few" comments Yasser.

The Riverbed Application Performance Platform enables the complex and 'hybrid' government bodies to the latest technology trends and initiatives, so that business objectives – not technical constraints – drive how applications and data are delivered.

The Platform comprises three key solutions: SteelHead, SteelCentral, and SteelFusion. In addition, open APIs and developer tools, known as SteelScript, are part of each platform component to facilitate programmability, interoperability, and intelligence across the government infrastructure, Riverbed platform and partner ecosystem. This enables our government customers to automate the analysis and resolution of performance issues across their IT infrastructure, customizable for their unique sector needs.

Optimus, works closely with vendors as well as channel partners to offer the best products and solutions to the Government Sector. This involves not just product availability but also enhancing the offering via consulting services, bundling of complementary technologies and enterprise applications. They provide customized solutions for this sector in the areas of enterprise applications, data center solutions as well as SLA driven infrastructure enablement. "The advantage, we bring to the table, is the combination of complementary product portfolio along with our value added services to enable the most optimized offering to the sector" says Gautam Chakrabarty, VP – Sales, Optimus.

OUTLOOK 2015 FOR THE GOVT. SECTOR

More government entities are expected to gravitate towards the cloud in 2015. "Backup-as-a-service (BaaS), Software-as-a-service (SaaS) and Infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) platforms will see increased uptake. From all the industries that prioritize cloud as a critical IT requirement, 39% are governments or public sector bodies and over the next few years, more public sector officials will adopt Infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS)" comments Yasser.

An increased update shall also be seen in virtualisation, Big Data and Security solutions in the government sector in 2015. Areff says, "More specifically, based on IT adoption trends we are seeing among our Government clients, the year will be all about the personal touch. A number of routine tasks will continue to be automated. Customer-facing roles, however, will still remain human."

There will be increased M2M (machine to machine) communication, which can reduce the number of touchpoints that humans need to be involved with. An increased number of connected devices in the publics' hands, and a higher commitment of Government departments to opening newer avenues of communications for their audiences, can see a higher number of automated transactions.

FINALLY…

2015 has been declared by the UAE as the year of innovation. 'Smart' will continue to permeate every aspect of the UAE in this year, but as mentioned earlier, this is not about technology for technology's sake, but about the outcomes it can bring. 'Smart' is not just about technology, but is largely about processes and people. The more considered, inclusive and involved the migration to 'Smart', the more sustainable and effective it will prove to be. ↖