TOP OF THE CLASS

ARABIAN COMPUTER NEWS' ANNUAL LIST OF THE TOP IT MANAGERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS NEVER AN EASY TASK. IT TOOK HOURS OF DEBATING AMONGST THE TEAM AT ITP TECHNOLOGY PUBLISHING TO COME UP WITH THIS YEAR'S LIST. OVER THE FOLLOWING PAGES, WE PROFILE TEN OF THE BEST IT MANAGERS IN THE REGION; INDIVIDUALS THAT HAVE EXCELLED IN THEIR PROFESSION AND TRULY HARNESSED THE POWER OF IT TO DELIVER TANGIBLE BUSINESS RESULTS DURING 2011.

1 LAMYA ALTABTEBAI

Executive Manager, Information Technology

Kuwait International Bank

The fact that Lamya Altabtebai has completed the double – walking away with both the CIO of the Year, and IT Manager of the Year – is an achievement that shouldn't be underplayed.

The last 12 months have been a culmination of her efforts over a long career that saw her start out as an IT auditor for the Kuwaiti government, through to her heading up the IT strategy for one of the largest banks in the Gulf state. One of the key reasons for her topping the IT managers of the year list was not only her achievements during the previous 12 months, but also the level of admiration she has from her colleagues.

Her ability to drive forward projects, combined with her polite and gentle nature means she has achieved what few managers – in or out of the IT space – ever truly achieve: the mutual respect of their employees.

In terms of her impact at Kuwait International Bank, her previous overhaul of the core banking system has continued to have a hugely positive impact on the operations of the bank. However, rather than sit back and rest, she has used the momentum established during the overhaul to drive through a new approach to IT service provision that sets objectives aligned with the bank's wider strategy.

She has also overseen the training and enrichment of her staff when it comes to imparting the lessons she has learnt during her career.

All of these points together, along with a history of innovation and evolution, to why Lamya Altabtebai has earned her place at the top of the IT Managers of the Year list this year.

2 ARUN TEWARY

Vice President (IT) and CIO

Emirates Flight Catering

Arun Tewary has a reputation for being staunchly anti-cloud. At this year's Arabian Computer News Conference, he was among the CIOs that believed cloud computing in its current form is little more than hype.

Some have cast his stance as him being behind the times, but the success of the many IT projects Emirates Flight Catering has achieved stand testament that that statement couldn't be further from the truth.

This year alone, the company – under the leadership of Tewary – has completed no less than 10 major projects. Some have helped the company, which supplies around 110,000 meals a day, and works with many of the world's top airlines, cut invoicing time by 60%, and helped to achieve a greater control of its stock. Not only have his and his team's actions led to a reduction in invoicing time and less food being thrown out due to its spoiling, he has also achieved the automation of the company's finance and inventory systems, reduced purchase order time through the smart use of IT, and integrated the IT resources of HR and finance to enable the company to fund payroll later, while still arriving on time.

He has also overseen the introduction of a real-time online inventory, which has allowed the company to optimise the stock it carries at any one time. This is especially important for Emirates Flight Catering as large amounts of stock spoil quickly. The online inventory is so detailed that it allows those who need access to such information the ability to see how much stock is in, right down to different branded items of the same food stuffs.

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ABDULLAH AL-KHEDHER

CIO

Saline Water Conversion Company, Saudi Arabia

2011 has seen Saline Water Conversion Corporation step up its eTransformation plans, as it looks to cement its place at the forefront of using IT. While the programme is a government directive, its rapid implementation since 2006 has been thanks to the stewardship of its CIO Abdullah Al-Khedher.

As the corporation responsible for supplying most of Saudi Arabia's desalination infrastructure, it plays a large part in helping ensure the rapid growth of the desert Kingdom can be maintained.

Key to his success has been the

utilisation of basic business principles, and their adaption for use by information technology professionals. Much of this has been achieved through his comprehensive – yet simple – road map.

This process started from the very beginning. By the company's own admission, it had "minimal utilisation" of IT when Al-Khedher joined

the company in 2006. In addition to bringing the company up to speed when it came business process management, he also introduced a range of new technologies including cloud computing, while introducing service orientated architectures through the use of enterprise service bus.

However, his impact hasn't just been felt on the IT side of the business. Everything from services, through to the supply chain have been overhauled through Al-Khedher's actions.

With 2011 as the five year mark, it's not surprising that the total transformation of the company into one of the leading IT-based companies in the Kingdom has secured him a place in this year's list of top IT managers in the Middle East.

6

BAS WIJNE

Director of IS-IT

Orbit Showtime Networks

As the man in charge of IT at the region's largest pay-TV network, Bas Wijne has a lot of responsibility resting on his shoulders. Though the majority of the work following the Orbit and Showtime Networks was completed last year, Wijne and the IT team OSN has continued to strength the company's IT infrastructure; both internally, and externally.

One example of this is Wijne's decision to outsource the company's

regional network management to Orange Business Services. The decision not only reduced the impact on staff availability when there was a network issue, it has also seen a substantial increase in service availability and reduction in operations costs.

His decision to utilise the merger and introduction of high definition services to roll out new set top boxes that are resistant to the piracy methods that had been plaguing both companies for years is another example of his ability to combine the demands of both the business and technology.

In addition to the roll out, he has also introduced a number of new mobile workforce tools, including the

ability for OSN's service employees to authorise and install boxes at new and existing customers through Black-Berry devices.

With 2012 just around the corner, he is also hard at work ensuring that the company will be able to meet its target of broadcasting all of its channels in high definition, and subsequently managing the shutdown of its standard definition feeds before the end of the year.