

Cisco's Investment in Palestine

Cisco's three-year, \$10 million investment aims to create a sustainable model for job creation in the Palestinian Territories.

Zika Abzuk

This is a story that started with hesitation and doubt. But once we made the leap of faith it became a story of determination and stubbornness. What made us stubborn was the belief that the investment in the people, our neighbors, is going to turn into a good business investment.

Yoav Samet

Last year John Chambers visited the region, and Cisco announced a \$10 million commitment to invest in a model for job creation and economic development in the Palestinian Territories.

Sabri Saidam

It was then when we told our ICT community, "Yes, you should win confidence, yes, here is confidence. Yes, here is John Chambers, one of the big names in the ICT field. He's here in Palestine to back you and to support you and lead investment."

Yoav Samet

Immediately thereafter, the management board of Cisco's Israel site volunteered to take part in this initiative.

Ala Alaeddin

It was a milestone in the ICT sector. It opened the door for international and multinational companies to come in. And also, it opened the door for the Palestinian ICT sector to start looking beyond the borders of Palestine.

Murad

The best thing to help the ICT sector in Palestine is generation of employment, transfer know-how of high-tech and methodologies, and interaction with international companies.

Kfir Waldman

We wanted to turn the initial funding by our CEO, Mr. Chambers, to something that would be sustainable going forward, would be a win-win situation for both of us.

Ala Alaeddin

And this makes a very big difference between taking money as a donation and taking it as an investment. Investment means that this money will be, in the end, put into business.

Gai Hetzroni

So right from the start we worked very closely with the Palestinian IT association of companies, PITA, and they were very instrumental, helping us in engaging with the companies.

Yoav Samet

We did find several companies that had good management and a track record in the outsourced development sector.

Hanna Bullata

So the first time I went to Netanya, I remember the day before, my colleagues were very stressed out and they were thinking, "How are we going to talk to Israelis? Can we have normal relationships with them?"

Mirel Sprung

I, like most Israelis, don't have opportunities to interact with Palestinians in my daily life.

Hanna Bullata

Immediately, actually, the barriers started to go down.

Mirel Sprung

The atmosphere was very good right from the beginning. We meet at least twice a month and gradually learn about each other's life.

Muhammed Shaheen

We enjoy being with the guys, we enjoy working with them, we learn from them.

Gai Hetzroni

So within two months we built a secure line between ourselves and the offices in Ramallah that we are working with.

Jonny Rabinowitz

We operate through the computer network and we work online and we probably don't always... we're very rarely conscious about any of the barriers that may exist.

Hanna Bullata

And since then, things are booming.

Kfir Waldman

The enthusiasm and passion that we saw was amazing. We hardly saw it elsewhere.

Danny Karpati

We are amazed at the experience working with them. The ramp-up process is much faster than we thought. The guys there are brilliant.

Kareem Shehadeh

At Cisco, the decision was made to transfer from a social responsibility to an ongoing business relationship, because it made sense from the business point of view.

Tareq Maayah

So basically now we're no longer covered by the CSR part. And, in addition, they're asking us right now to expand the team so that we have a larger team working for the Cisco outsourcing.

Rana Khalil

You're a team member. I mean, you go under my manager, you see me and you see the guy in Netanya, we're equal. So that's a whole different world. I can then go anywhere else and say I was a Cisco employee.

Doron Avisar

I will recommend to my colleagues in the industry to work with the Palestinian IT companies, I think it's a big advantage for us, we are close to each other, and it's better than working with someone that is across the sea.

Ramzi Qaabar

Here in Palestine we have very talented people, especially in high-tech. They need the opportunities to show what they have.

Ihab Jabari

For each new job we create in the IT sector, there are two supporting jobs over here in the Palestinian economy as a whole. So there will be three new jobs created as a result of this. So imagine how many jobs could be created in the economy.

Anat Geffen

In Cisco, we say that we are the best company in the world and for the world. And this project, absolutely, is for the world.

Yoav Samet

And part of our challenge is not only to show the success and prove the success factors to ourselves, but also to bring in other partners in the companies like us to participate in this kind of initiative together with us.

Kareem Shehadeh

In Palestine you don't get too many chances, and once you have a chance, you want to grab it with everything you can. We have a chance with Cisco now, to prove to ourselves, as a start, and to the whole world that Palestine is a good place to invest.

Sabri Saidam

To us, ICT was hope. ICT was peace, and will continue to be. Bringing people jobs, bringing people hope, bringing people some sheer fact that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, is what we were hitting.

Zika Abzuk

What started as a corporate social responsibility investment, has turned into a good business investment in every way possible. We proved that it works. So now the ball is in your court, and those who come in first have the most to gain.