

Bahrain Adopts ICT Shared Services To Enhance Government Efficiency and Productivity

Executive Summary

CUSTOMER

Government of Bahrain

INDUSTRY

Public Sector

CHALLENGES

- Need for standardization of ICT
- Need to increase efficiency, functionality, productivity, and competitiveness
- Need for improved technical quality and reliability
- Need for collaboration capability

SOLUTIONS

- ICT shared services to drive standardization, economies of scale, and quality
- \$20 million initial investment for unified communications, voice and video conferencing, and other services

RESULTS

- Projected unit cost at least 10 percent lower than current cost of comparable ICT services
- Improved communication within government
- Reduced downtime, lower security risk

Background

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a business hub that builds its success on openness and forward thinking. Having a smaller share of oil wealth than its neighbors in the Persian Gulf region, Bahrain takes advantage of its human capital and business-friendly environment to maintain a competitive advantage.

The country has articulated an ambitious national economic development master plan called "Economic Vision 2030 and the National Economic Strategy," which aims to improve the standard of living through increased productivity and high-wage jobs. As part of that strategy, the government wishes to optimize information and all aspects of government that include human resources, finance, and information and communications technology (ICT) to achieve and accelerate its vision and strategy. The government called upon the [Cisco® Internet Business Solutions Group \(IBSG\)](#) to identify strategic ICT-related initiatives that could transform Bahrain's social and economic development.

Cisco IBSG first engaged with the government of Bahrain to identify a blueprint for ICT-related projects around efficiency, productivity, and citizen involvement. The government and Cisco IBSG prioritized these projects under four major initiatives: government ICT shared services; a national skills development platform; government customer experience and Web 2.0; and national community centers. These initiatives will have far-reaching consequences in the government's approach to technology, its governance model, financial framework, and human resources policies. Of these initiatives, ICT shared services is the furthest along in implementation.

Challenges

Bahrain's current ICT capacity is improving, but is not adequate to support the reform initiatives called for in Bahrain 2030. Achieving those goals will require new solutions and tools within the government along with changes to the governance structures and ways in which ICT investments are made and services are delivered.



Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG)

The government recognized that expanding ICT capacity within the siloed boundaries of individual ministries and departments would further increase its costs and complicate integration and support. In addition, that approach would not address key challenges:

“We reached out to Cisco and had high expectations in terms of their value-add, having seen how they partnered successfully with other countries. Introducing IBSG has resulted in obtaining comprehensive and innovative views on how to use ICT as a strategic enabler for achieving our vision. The outcome of this collaboration is a great success story for both parties.”

Sheikh Ahmed bin
Atiyatallah Al Khalifa

Minister of Cabinet
Affairs

Kingdom of Bahrain

- **Need for Standardization.** Improved service levels are needed, but are hard to achieve without standardization and digital policies. Different organizations within the government have different ICT procedures, and existing systems have multiple standards for developing front- and back-end applications. A lack of application development standards also causes differences in data structures, reducing the ability to share information.
- **Need for Greater Efficiency.** Government spending is under pressure due to the international financial crisis. This makes it even more important to reduce duplication, increase utilization of assets and services, and increase productivity of public servants and the nation as a whole.
- **Need for Increased Functionality.** While many basic functions are provided today over the network, government departments are increasingly demanding additional functionality to support a more mobile workforce, better remote access for contractors and third parties, and more advanced communications and collaboration tools within and across departments.
- **Need for Productivity and Competitiveness.** Bahrain’s economic vision depends on promoting high-value-add, innovative industries and a productive workforce in both public and private sectors. The government believes a cutting-edge infrastructure, an appealing living environment, and high-quality public services will attract investment in those valuable industries. Top-quality public services, however, cannot be developed without reliable ICT capabilities, integrated services, and an empowered and enabled workforce.
- **Need for Improved Quality and Reliability.** As the government becomes more dependent on its ICT capabilities, quality and reliability become critical. Bahrain wants to strengthen its disaster recovery plans, for example. Many of the environments that host critical government applications and data, however, are not up to standards, posing additional risks to valuable government assets and operational capabilities.
- **Need for Collaboration.** Increased efficiency, productivity, and use of innovation for competitiveness cannot be achieved without tools to facilitate collaboration within government and with the public.

Solutions

Cisco IBSG and the Bahrain government spent more than a year conducting extensive discovery interviews, stakeholder workshops, and executive roundtables to develop a plan to meet the ICT goals of Bahrain 2030. Cisco IBSG and government officials developed detailed recommendations for ICT initiatives

“IBSG’s engagement around ICT in transformational projects, and around government ICT shared services in particular, was extremely valuable. They added value through their international exposure and experience, and helped us develop a comprehensive view on our strategy in this area. We are very satisfied with the outcome of our cooperation.”

Dr. Mohammed Al Amer

President, Central Informatics Organization

Kingdom of Bahrain

on national skills development, government customer experience, and national community centers.

On Cisco IBSG’s recommendation, the government decided to move forward with ICT shared services as the best tool for driving standardization, economies of scale, and quality, along with other shared-services initiatives spearheaded by the government.

ICT shared services refer to the central development and delivery of specific ICT functionalities and capabilities to a wide range of government departments. Such services include capabilities around telephony, voice and video conferencing, email, voicemail, shared workspaces, security, remote access, mobility, authentication services, and other functionality as required. An extension of this initiative would include tools to shorten the software development cycle and promote standardization.

Services will have strong support, simple pricing models, and be offered with several service levels.

The government is expected to allocate approximately US\$20 million over the next few years to implement the first wave of ICT shared services for 10,000 government employees distributed over 100 sites. The government is also expected to spend more than \$25 million over the same period to revamp its data network and build a national data center. This investment will establish a scalable platform for many central ICT services, eventually including ICT shared services for 20,000 skilled workers in the government.

The first wave will include infrastructure services such as end-to-end network security, an integrated directory, and end-to-end quality of service (QoS), as well as unified communications and basic collaboration services.

More sophisticated services to follow will include a full-fledged collaboration platform and telepresence, data services, and software development services. Ultimately, the Bahrain National Skills Development Platform will itself be a shared service.

The government also is developing a shared-services policy framework to address the new budget centralization/allocation and interdepartmental chargeback. Government human resources policy will be revisited through the Civil Service Bureau to allow the movement of human resources and skills required by the shared-services strategy.

Results

ICT shared services will allow government departments to enjoy more advanced capabilities at lower per-unit costs than they could afford on their own. They also will receive technology support, freeing them to focus on their core businesses. This approach will provide the best use of scarce specialized resources (security experts, for example) and will enable improved client-centered services through increased integration and interoperability across departments.

Projected results include:

- **Increased Efficiency.** Acquiring the target ICT capabilities using a shared-services scheme (as opposed to a siloed development and maintenance approach) is expected to result in a unit cost more than 10 percent lower than the current cost of comparable ICT services. Efficiencies will increase over time as operations are better streamlined and more users and sites are included in the scheme, providing better utilization of the infrastructure and platform investment.
- **Enhanced Functionality.** More advanced network features and capabilities, along with more function-rich communications and collaboration, will be provided under the ICT shared-services scheme. Improved features and functionalities long pursued by departments will now be justified by the new model's economies of scale.
- **Promoted Collaboration.** Replacing basic and expensive switch-based telephony, for example, with more advanced unified communications and collaboration tools will not only yield cost savings, but also will create a new dynamic of open communications and collaboration within and across government departments. Use of communication services is expected to increase significantly under this scheme, which will have a positive impact on employees' productivity and end-customer satisfaction. This will prove critical in facilitating the government's move to a more scalable, collaborative, and effective governance model.
- **Improved Quality and Reliability.** The new model will allow for easier support, maintenance, and integration, resulting in improved quality and greater responsiveness to user needs and issues. Increased reliability provided by better facilities and standards, as well as improved security, will reduce downtime and risks. This means that important government information and ICT facilities will be more secure, increasing the government's overall resiliency.

Next Steps

The next phase will be shaped by implementation of the ICT shared-services priorities recommended by Cisco IBSG and establishment of the ICT shared-services function and governance model as part of a central ICT organization. In addition, the next phase will include:

- Expanding the government shared-services agenda to include a more comprehensive ICT shared-services offering, and also to address administrative shared services such as those around finance and human resources, and customer-care shared services across government service channels.

- Establishing a government body responsible for the customer-facing and customer-care functions of government work, and consolidating the governance of customer-care capabilities. This body will adopt the new national community-centers strategy, which calls for targeting specific community segments with a mix of services according to specific social and business themes.

Cisco will continue to support the Kingdom of Bahrain in its execution on these ideas and other initiatives around education, e-government, and community centers.

More Information

Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), the company's global consultancy, helps CXOs from the world's largest public and private organizations solve critical business challenges. By connecting strategy, process, and technology, Cisco IBSG industry experts enable customers to turn visionary ideas into value.

For further information about IBSG, visit <http://www.cisco.com/go/ibsg>.



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