

Egyptian Government National Education Program Transforms Small Businesses

Executive Summary

CUSTOMER NAME
Egyptian Government

INDUSTRY
Public Sector

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

- Improve business and ICT skills among SMEs to foster global competition
- Transform education via coordination between private and public sector organizations
- Develop a management and ICT curriculum and infrastructure to deliver content to SMEs

SOLUTIONS

- Work with IBSG to gain project management and change management guidance to coordinate activities across the initiative
- Enhance and localize existing management and ICT course
- Develop nationwide delivery infrastructure for education

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Daily training for Egyptian professionals
- Business Essential program to generate up to 3,000 new trainers
- Training reaches professionals at all levels nationwide

Business Challenges

Modernizing its workforce to compete in today's knowledge-based global economy has been a challenge for the Egyptian government. Egyptian businesses historically have trailed other countries in the use of information and communications technology (ICT), impeding the growth and development of the country's private sector. With few qualified IT teachers and little available content for business and IT education, the level of management and ICT skills among Egyptian businesses—especially small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs)—is limited.

Recognizing the need to improve education and skills among businesses and students, Egyptian leaders, in partnership with the World Economic Forum (WEF) and other multinational private and public organizations, launched the Egyptian Education Initiative (EEI) in 2005.

The EEI contains four education tracks: preuniversity education, higher education, lifelong learning, and e-learning industry development—the latter supports the first three tracks. Given the initiative's scope and ambitious goals, delivering the government's vision posed a monumental task. EEI's leaders needed to encourage cooperation among private organizations and public institutions, as well as create a framework to coordinate activities and deliver the desired results. The lifelong learning and e-learning industry development tracks in particular required a business management and IT curriculum to meet the needs of students and SMEs.

Solutions

The Cisco® [Internet Business Solutions Group \(IBSG\)](#) was asked to lead the project, contributing curriculum from both Cisco's [Networking Academy®](#), an e-learning program that provides students with Internet technology skills, and [iExec](#) business management training programs, which help EEI deliver ICT-related education to thousands of SMEs across Egypt.



Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG)

Cisco had prior relationships with WEF on ICT developments in other parts of the Middle East and Africa, and with the Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology on creating e-learning content for Egypt's E-Learning Competence Center (ELCC). This gave Cisco an advantage in helping EEI implement a Web-based, e-learning and management system—ELCC had been developing business and IT education content and training instructors since 2004, including piloting the first release of the iExec Business Essentials education program.

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Yasser Kazem, Director
E-Learning Competence
Center; EEI Strategic
Coordinator

The fact that Cisco also had 10 years experience creating e-learning content through its Networking Academy programs appealed to EEI leaders. In addition, “Cisco's contributions to the ELCC proved the company's seriousness in supporting the government's plans,” says Yasser Kazem, director of ELCC and EEI strategic coordinator. “Cisco integrated very easily with the EEI, and we believe this partnership is very successful.”

In addition to IBSG, Cisco acquired input from its other internal organizations including Corporate Social Responsibility, and the Public Sector and Middle East and Africa sales groups. Together, they created a framework that:

- Provided project management and change management guidance to help coordinate activities across the EEI program
- Enhanced and localized the Business Essentials course, creating a comprehensive business management education curriculum for SMEs
- Developed a nationwide infrastructure to deliver educational content
- Initiated the rollout of hundreds of new Cisco Networking Academies to train the next generation of Egyptian ICT workers

Cisco worked closely with EEI program leaders on the lifelong learning and e-learning industry development tracks, bringing knowledge and experience gained from working previously with ELCC. The team partnered with the Accenture Development Partnership (ADP) program to implement an Arabic version of Cisco's Business Essentials course to effectively serve Egyptian learners. Staffing a team of two experienced learning specialists, ADP supported the effort over six months and played a crucial role in both building capacity at the ELCC and developing the localized e-learning program.

“We cooperated with Cisco and ADP to develop and localize Cisco's education content, and then piloted the new version to SMEs,” says Kazem. “The results were excellent.”

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The overall curriculum was one part of the project; delivering it was another. Without an effective delivery model, content would not reach the broad, targeted audience—from students preparing to enter the workforce, to young businesspeople working at SMEs, to young entrepreneurs, to older SME business owners least likely to possess these skills, to university professors. “To provide this training, we developed many different scenarios and delivery channels,” says Kazem.

IBSG and the Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology laid the groundwork to expand the capacity of the ELCC, including producing more trainers who could reach out to SMEs and professionals at all levels nationwide. In addition, Cisco worked with the ministry to increase the number of Networking Academies in Egypt by identifying IT clubs at universities, and other groups throughout the country, interested in IT, and certifying trainers.

Business Results

The EEI initiative is beginning to transform the Egyptian education system and businesses. The Networking Academies are helping EEI leaders develop a new generation of skilled ICT workers to support Egyptian businesses. The program has trained and certified dozens of IT instructors, and nearly 100 Networking Academies are in place at schools, universities, and other organizations across Egypt. One thousand academies are planned in the next few years.

The Business Essential program is also seeing results, graduating a large number of delivery partners and trainers due to expansion of the ELCC’s capacity. These graduates are training other businesses. By 2010, the course is expected to reach 10,000 Egyptian SMEs. Egyptian Education Initiative leaders believe the program now provides a comprehensive business and IT skills curriculum that is preparing Egyptian businesses to participate and thrive in the modern, global economy.

“The Business Essentials curriculum we created has all of the components that need to be acquired by any startup company or SME,” says Kazem. “It provides the fundamentals of using ICT in business, how to develop strategies for using the Internet and IT, and how to make a business case for technology. At the end of the class, each student even creates an ICT business case or proposal for the student’s business.”

The course is already benefiting graduates. For example, Yehia El Zaeem, owner of Osheen, a manufacturer of dry cleaning equipment, gained a new perspective on his business that caused him to cancel plans to leave the country. Instead of moving, El Zaeem realized that by improving his management skills and taking advantage of ICT, he could improve efficiency and profitability. “Seeing numerous benefits that can be added to my business by applying different business strategies I learned during the course gave me great hope.”

Through the Business Essentials course and other delivery channels, EEI leaders believe they can reach SME stakeholders at every level across the country. “Most of our SMEs are family businesses with a father who owns the business and a son who has joined the organization and is looking for ways to modernize it,” says Kazem. With this methodology, Kazem says the younger generation is gaining the skills it needs to manage their businesses better, while at the same time, the younger generation is sharing its knowledge with older business owners.

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Next Steps

Cisco will continue to work with the Egyptian government, WEF, and other industry partners to create ICT opportunities for SMEs. Cisco is also helping EEI leaders establish a professional development program to train and evaluate IT instructors nationwide. From a global perspective, curricula will continue to be expanded to other emerging markets in the region, while the Business Essentials course will be used to help small businesses throughout the Middle East and Africa develop skills to thrive in the global economy.

The Business Essentials course and the iExec education program have been incorporated into the new Cisco Entrepreneur Institute (CiscoEI) program, which is rolling out to several emerging markets countries. CiscoEI is forming public and private partnerships with governments, nongovernment organizations, and educational institutions to deliver entrepreneurial education; build a community of support across new and existing businesses; and connect participants with mentors, lending organizations, and peers using network technology.

More Information

The Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), the global strategic consulting arm of Cisco, helps Global Fortune 500 companies and public organizations transform the way they do business—first by designing innovative business processes, and then by integrating advanced technologies into visionary roadmaps that improve customer experience and revenue growth.

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



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