

Microsoft Services

Microsoft Services implements   
BI for Airline for an anticipated operational savings of several millions

Microsoft Services

Microsoft Services is a global team of professionals who are dedicated to helping customers maximize the value of their investment in Microsoft software. Microsoft Services touches customers more than 715 million times a year, helping them plan, deploy, support and optimize our technologies. They also work closely with Microsoft Partners by sharing their technological expertise and product knowledge on a regular basis.

For more information about  
Microsoft Services, go to: [www.microsoft.com/services](http://www.microsoft.com/services)

Customer: Saudi Airlines

Website: www.saudiairlines.com

Customer Size: 44,000 employees

Region: Middle East

Industry: Transportation

Customer Profile

As the largest airline in the Middle East, Saudi Airlines offers domestic and international flights to over 90 destinations. Nine subsidiaries operate under the holding company, including Saudi Cargo, Saudi Catering, and Saudi Ground Services, totaling over 44,000 employees.

Software and Services

* Microsoft Consulting Services
* Microsoft SQL 2012
* Microsoft Windows Server 2012
* Microsoft SharePoint 2013

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Muhammad Ali M. Albakri, CIO and CFO, Saudi Airlines

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Situation

Beginning in 2007, Saudi spent five years on a major overhaul of their IT infrastructure to automate and integrate the airline core planning, scheduling, marketing & sales, operations, back-office, including cargo, catering, ground services, and maintenance. They needed a consolidated approach to the critical business information spanning these multiple systems across functions, necessitating a data warehouse and business intelligence solution that could provide Saudi an integrated view across their operations.

“We had scattered information everywhere. We had many different Business Intelligence and incentive solutions, separate training, and no standard platform to run all of the environments. With so many isolated solutions, we really needed to build a comprehensive enterprise data warehouse solution,” said Abdullah Alamoudi, System Manager IT Application, Saudi Airlines.

The airline needed to consolidate systems and data sources within various departments that supported all of their critical business functions including Human Resources, Operations, Sales, Maintenance, Customer Relations, Safety, and Revenue Accounting. They also needed to improve manageability of the BI architecture as well as the consumption of information by business stakeholders through flexible,   
self-serve reporting that could be made available quickly.

“Executives were requesting information from IT in many different areas. And everyone wanted it fast,” said Alamoudi.

Saudi IT had issues with run-time from two systems, Revenue Accounting and Corporate Performance, with reports taking up to two weeks to provide. Delays in getting accurate, actionable data and information was costing the company business opportunities and information that was presented after the fact became of lesser value if they could not use it to make real-time decisions. Saudi IT needed to accelerate the delivery of reports, improve the accuracy and richness of data available, and provide flexibility for the leadership team to manipulate the data to get what they needed.

Saudi Airlines began a thorough evaluation of several competitive technology options, including Microsoft, Oracle and SAP, in order to acquire first-hand knowledge of what the companies could provide in terms of data manipulation, analytics, and the services required to bring a solution to life.

Solution

Microsoft Services stood out by showing an authentic understanding and articulation of Saudi’s pain points at both an operational and executive level. With an unmatched Proof of Concept and demonstrated BI experience and expertise, Microsoft Consulting Services was selected to deliver the new BI architecture and data warehouse that could meet the airline’s three biggest needs: fast time to business, enhanced system performance, and flexibility to support better decision making.

Microsoft Consulting Services began the engagement by running a series of working sessions that covered short term needs to mine data, as well as long-term considerations, such as the need to scale and integrate new data sources over time. They also met with key internal groups and stakeholders, in order to better understand their unique requirements and challenges in regard to a platform solution that would meet the needs of all parties, and that could be delivered quickly and efficiently.

Microsoft Consulting Services immediately became an extension of the Saudi team, and got the attention of executives as they showed flexibility in quickly accommodating very specific Saudi requirements.

“They wanted to make this a success not only from a technology point of view, but from an overall business perspective. Microsoft Services understood that this was very much an essential business tool and their ability and commitment to this objective was noticed right from the beginning,” said Albakri adding, “This was not just a technology discussion. It was a business discussion first, and then a technology discussion.”

Insights into data

“The new BI platform maximizes the value of information coming from multiple operational systems. We’ve started to run analyses and provide valuable results to different executives and operational levels throughout the organization. We can provide them with the necessary information to help them anticipate trends and react quickly and proactively,” described Albakri.

Microsoft Consulting Services was able to help deliver data insights to the business via three reporting types: Dynamic Dashboards, Enterprise Reports, and Custom Reports.

Dynamic dashboards were made available for executives to give them the ability to drill down to whatever subset of information and level of detail they require.

“We call it ‘managed self-service BI’. Where a user can actually get the information themselves instead of relying on IT to provide it,” said Zamil Alossaimi, General Manager Applications Development & Integration Services for Saudia IT. “They can get the information instantly the way they want it. They can mix and match   
data and sources to calculate whatever they want and all of the information is at their fingertips.”

“Overall, Microsoft Consulting Services has helped Saudi to minimize the dependency of business users on IT to produce reports so they can spend their time focused on business, and IT can focus on IT,” finished Alossaimi.

Benefits

The new data and analytics capabilities provided by Microsoft Consulting Services have addressed Saudi’s biggest pain points. The Microsoft solution provides faster, higher performance reporting and has empowered employees and executives to be more pro-active as they look forward with a clearer, more predictive lens.

Within days the airline was realizing business benefits of the new data warehouse solution implemented by Microsoft Services.

Fast deployment provided high ROI and saved up to three years of IT resources and costs

Microsoft Services implemented Saudi’s new data warehouse solution in just 90 days, providing fast payback time to recoup the investment.

“With Microsoft Consulting Services,   
we had a team that understood the technology and was able to bring it to life quickly, instead of us trying to learn the technology first, then apply it. We saved a minimum of two and a half to three years on the process,” said Albakri.

The CIO/CFO was very impressed by Microsoft Consulting Services as they demonstrated their ability and vast expertise by completing the project within an expedited timeframe.

“We needed them to have it in place, and in production in 90 days, and from what I know in the industry, this had never been done before,” added Albakri.

While ultimately delivering a competitive advantage in a highly competitive industry, the quick deployment allowed Saudi Airlines to identify significant cost savings and new business opportunities.

Unique solution delivered through deep expertise and collaboration

By sharing previous experience, product knowledge, and the ability to apply their knowledge to the very unique needs of Saudi Airlines, Microsoft Consulting Services brought immeasurable value to Saudi.

“We were impressed by their command of the technology and of the business intelligence and the data warehouse concept and techniques. We had the best of the Saudi knowledge and intimacy with the airline business combined with the best of Microsoft expertise when it came to products and technologies.”

The Microsoft Consulting Services team immersed themselves in Saudi’s business to gain intimate knowledge that they could then apply to every aspect of the solution so that it would be relevant to the airline. They delivered a solution they knew would work based on the unique business dynamics within Saudi Airlines.

“They really worked with us to customize the solution based on our unique needs,” finished Albakri.

Significant knowledge transfer

As a part of the implementation process, Saudi gained additional value from Microsoft Consulting Services through significant knowledge transfer to their internal IT team. The close partnership between Microsoft Consulting Services and Saudi IT enabled consultants to share best practices, product expertise and data warehousing knowledge throughout the entire project.

Anticipated operational savings of several millions

The increased access to high quality data and information consolidated across several complex source systems has improved operational functions such as maintenance and fuel management and has increased Saudi Airline’s overall efficiencies globally by up to 2%.

“To put it on a scale for people to understand, when you are spending a Billion Saudi Riyal on maintenance annually, 2–3% translates into huge amounts of savings. The same would go for fuel, the same would go for crew utilization, and how you schedule your flights, and so on and so forth. That translates into savings of hundreds of millions that we can now take and invest back into the airline to improve our products and services and therefore expand our market,” explained Albakri.

Unprecedented business visibility   
for leadership created competitive advantage and increased certainty   
in decisions

With highly flexible, rich information now readily available, Saudi has clear visibility into everything going on within their business, with their customers, and in the marketplace, giving them a strong advantage over competitors.

“To Saudi, the new BI solution is like turning on the headlights of a car on a curvy, dark road. Without it, it really would be a sort of guessing game for how to tone our marketing or determine our pricing strategy or our service offering. So for Saudi Airlines it is a competitive advantage, it is a valuable tool. We will of course protect it because it gives us a valuable edge over other airlines in the region and in the world,” said Albakri.

In addition, through the new data warehouse solution and flexible reporting tools, Microsoft Consulting Services has given Saudi employees increased certainty when it comes to making operational decisions. As Albakri explained, “not only did it defeat a lot of myths and theories that existed, but it gave us the ability to see the business the way it is—with actual facts, figures and numbers. So business divisions and executives would not have to rely on their gut feeling or estimates when making decisions.”

Prior to engaging Microsoft Consulting Services, every division of Saudi created their own analyses using their own data, and therefore had their own, individual perspective and interpretation that part of the operation. Now, using Microsoft’s custom BI reporting and tools, all divisions and subsidiaries are sharing correlated information and can make decisions based on a consistent point of reference across the organization.

Enhanced IT Credibility

With the support of Microsoft Consulting Services, Saudi’s IT team gained credibility as an IT service provider to the airline and its sister companies. The fast and efficient deployment process combined with high end-user satisfaction and empowerment gained through the new reporting tools has enhanced the overall trust in IT’s ability to deliver fast, accurate and valuable business solutions to the airline.

An investment in the business

“This project and engagement with Microsoft Consulting Services has strengthened our eminent belief in Microsoft’s ability to deliver and add value to Saudi,” said Albakri.

Microsoft Consulting Services gave Saudi the ability to access comprehensive data to better inform decision making for mission critical aspects of the business that ultimately impacts their ability to compete and to be profitable as an airline.

The CIO/CFO does not consider the engagement to be a cost to the company saying, “We actually consider it an investment because it has brought a lot of added measurable business value. They have helped us improve our efficiency and effectiveness and tune up our business operations. It is money well invested.”