



BORN WITH AN INSPIRATION TO CONSTANTLY INNOVATE

Iraqi automotive pioneer's digital boost empowers employees and enhances operations

What began as simple trading of transportation vehicles in the 1960s, grew to become the leading group in the automotive sector in Iraq. Sardar Group Companies, in a bid to boost business via digital transformation, implemented Microsoft Office 365 E3 three years ago, overhauling operations to better serve its customers and employees. The bid paid off, as Sardar Group not only boosted operational performance, it also increased employee engagement while enhancing data security. Combining the most advanced IT techniques with the values of a family run business based on sustainable growth, compliance and positive social impact, Sardar Group has managed to preserve a company culture that embraces innovation, open-mindedness and employee empowerment while also transforming itself into a corporate organization whose top priority is to secure customer data and protect the interests of a wide variety of stakeholders.



Customer

Sardar Group

Website:

<https://sardargroup.com/>

Country: Iraq

Industry: Automotive

Customer size: Medium
(50 - 1000 employees)

Customer profile

Born with an inspiration to constantly innovate, Sardar Group Companies represents world-renowned automotive brands and heavy construction equipment and machinery in Iraq, Jordan and Dubai.

Software and services

Microsoft Office 365 E3
Microsoft Azure

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Mohammed Ali Al-Ghaithi,
IT & DMS Manager,
Sardar Group

Digital transformation is sparking up all over the Middle East and companies in the region are increasingly leaning on their IT teams to drive this revolution. Yet, for digital transformation to become sustainable, explains Mohammed Ali Al-Ghaithi, IT & DMS Manager of Sardar Group, it is not just about investing technologically, it's about developing a strategy, processes and skills matched by a vision that empowers the whole company, from management to end user.

Improving operations with centralized data

With operations expanding across 5 different cities in Iraq, Jordan and the UAE the Iraqi automotive leader quickly realized its pressing need to streamline communication and centralize data, facilitating collaboration and accessibility while bolstering security. "Our employees were having big problems with their emails: trouble accessing their emails and files everywhere, synchronizing over different devices, and encountering server issues during peak seasons like Christmas day. We needed a very robust and stable system that was also scalable given our expansion. The initial decision to go with Microsoft Office 365 was prompted by this problem. But we realized how Office 365's other solutions could also considerably ease our operations. It solved our problem and provided additional flexible solutions," says Al-Ghaithi.

Creating the conditions for successful adoption

Implementation followed a two-phase process, "The first step was to explain Office 365 tools and offerings to the senior management; not just as an email server but as a range of features including Teams, SharePoint and OneDrive, facilitating communication, collaboration and security. It's an all-in-one package with the highest quality and C5 compliance certification," explains Yad Rashid, CEO of Avesta, Microsoft partner and systems integrator.

The second phase focused on adoption throughout the company. After carefully analysing and calculating the benefits of having centralized data and determining its effects on operations and security, the solution was introduced one product at a time. "We held several meetings early on and provided training sessions. We had a technical team present and worked together with Sardar IT teams at each step, so if users found any difficulties, we were ready to assist them," details Rashid.

Enhancing data security

OneDrive in particular was a game-changer. The company moved its headquarters to Baghdad in 1990s and today its operations span across Basra, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Duhok and Dubai. With OneDrive, data became more available and accessible, facilitating collaboration. As the company continues to expand operations, and higher and higher volumes of data from different systems are being centralized, the question of data security arose.

OneDrive offers the data protection Sardar Group needed. Sardar Group states, "Through the authentication of the data, the management now controls the authorizations and access of data in terms of relevance."

Company ownership and control of data that come with Microsoft's solution addresses the company's high data security demands. "The moment that Avesta offered the E3 products, we were convinced we'd improve security with Microsoft Secure Score, Microsoft Security and Compliance Centre, data loss prevention and threat analytics," underlines Sardar Group Management. "We represent some of the world's most prestigious automotive brands, so we are held to the highest international standards, and expect a solution that not only satisfies our needs but meets security requirements of the brands we represent. This is one of our key concerns."

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Engaging employees and empowering IT

As the tools are being used every day, every minute and throughout the business, employees are satisfied to be able to access their files in one centralized place regardless of whether they are on their laptop, tablet or mobile. "If a device gets lost or damaged, none of the data will get lost. On management's side, this is a huge reassurance. The data never leaves the company," explains Al-Ghaithi.

Always connected to their own data, employees are also more easily connecting with the rest of the teams, as "multi-team meetings are increasingly taking place on Teams, facilitating communication and real-time sharing of information," highlights with Sardar Group understanding.

IT used to be perceived strictly as a problem-solver, helping employees find their emails, retrieve data or figure out how to synchronize it. Since introducing Microsoft Office 365, these issues have dropped by about 50%. "Now our employees call upon IT to learn more about the features and how they can accomplish more to make their daily lives easier," describes Al-Ghaithi. "They've gained skills, time and autonomy. And our IT department is grateful for the workload lift and to be able to focus on higher value tasks where more honed expertise is required, and to consider what new features to implement next."

Towards a paperless future in the cloud

The next step for Sardar Group is to keep extending its use of Microsoft tools, namely workflow automation and cloud technology. "We're discussing with Avesta how best to use Microsoft flow. Our plan is to implement more tools such as Microsoft Azure Information Protection and Microsoft Azure Active Directory to further increase security and authentication," says Al-Ghaithi based on the Corporate Vision. To honor its environmental mission to go green, Sardar Group aims to end all paper-based processes. "We don't want paper anymore and need the latest technology to be a pioneer on the market. We want to be the first people to be able to raise our hand and say, 'We have it'," he adds.

"If companies want to pursue digital transformation in a responsible, sustainable way, you need solutions that bring stability and security to lift your business to a higher level, but also, and more importantly, that empower your employees; adoption is key," stresses Al-Ghaithi, "As it's your employees, not your tools who drive your performance and build your reputation in the eyes of the customer."

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Partner

Avesta Group

Website: <https://www.avestagroup.net/>

Avesta Group specializes in helping small and mid-sized businesses solve their business issues and make better decisions through effective use of technology.

Digital transformation to:

- Empower employees
- Optimize operations