

## CASE STUDY

# UAE'S LEADING CONSTRUCTION COMPANY MIGRATES TO RED HAT ENTERPRISE LINUX

Arabtec pioneers adoption of open source software in the Middle East

**Arabtec Construction LLC (Arabtec) is the leading construction company in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Established in 1975, the company has undertaken a substantial program of construction projects, including high rise developments, hotel interiors, residential complexes, office blocks, airport developments, offshore oil and gas installations, cinemas, and entertainment facilities. The construction company's current projects include the Dubai Tower (the tallest tower in the world), The Dubai International Finance Centre, and the Conference Palace in Abu Dhabi.**

## CHALLENGES

As a large developer engaging in leading-edge construction projects for clients worldwide, technology is at the heart of Arabtec's business. Arabtec boasts a large, multinational workforce in excess of 24,000, of which 3,200 are administrative staff. Email is critical for communication within the company and with Arabtec's clients and partners.

"Our use of technology is based upon production tools, such as business specific software like AutoCAD, and email, which we consider the backbone of our business. We rely on it for most of our communications and coordination with clients, partners, and staff, therefore we can't afford any downtime," said Muttia Marwan Al Khayat, IT manager at Arabtec.

Arabtec's email service was previously hosted and maintained by a third-party international service provider based in the United States. Simply sending an email between two adjoining offices at Arabtec involved sending data all the way to the US to be processed by servers and then sent back to Arabtec in the United Arab Emirates. Problems with this email process quickly became evident as the construction company encountered poor performance, increased costs from unnecessary bandwidth use, reliability and speed issues, and security concerns over the possible exposure of

sensitive data. With these issues in mind and the desire to be able to maintain the systems in-house, the IT department decided to perform a review to establish potential alternatives.

## RED HAT CHANNEL PARTNER OPENNET MEA OPENS DOOR FOR OPEN SOURCE

During the review process, Al Khayat first heard about Linux and Red Hat. Arabtec discussed its needs with OpenNet, Red Hat's master distributor in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) market, and identified a number of potential benefits ranging from lower costs to improved control and management if an open source solution was considered for the construction company.

With the help of its local channel partner eComputers, OpenNet advised Arabtec on the benefits of deploying an open source solution like Red Hat Enterprise Linux in terms of cost, security, reliability, and the direct impact these would make on reducing the total cost of ownership.

As a Red Hat master distributor, OpenNet provides a full range of consulting and professional services and assists organizations and companies such as Arabtec with the assessment, design, and implementation of professional Linux solutions. OpenNet MEA's mission is also to educate its channel partners, including eComputers, on Red

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Hat’s offerings, and to assist them in demonstrating to their clients the added value of Red Hat solutions. Whereas OpenNet is responsible for the consulting and training of Red Hat solutions and services, eComputers sources and installs the hardware required for the Red Hat Enterprise Linux deployment.

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## **SOLUTION**

After performing an initial assessment to ensure that the migration would not affect the existing production IT systems, eComputers installed a server running Red Hat Enterprise Linux to handle Arabtec’s mail system.

Red Hat Enterprise Linux currently runs on the email server in Arabtec’s head office, as well as the DNS, proxy, and firewall servers in the company’s remote sites. Red Hat Enterprise Linux sits on an HP Intel Xeon architecture with SCSI hard disk driver and RAID hardware, and the company is currently using a total of 15 servers with Red Hat Enterprise Linux. In addition to the Red Hat Enterprise Linux deployment, Arabtec also subscribes to the Red Hat Network, allowing its IT department to centralise and control patch management internally. At the moment, the company has opted for the hosted architecture that connects with Red Hat Network via the Internet and exchanges packages and information from the central Red Hat Network servers.

There are plans to move to the satellite model, including the Proxy Server as an add-on for the Satellite environment, which will move the Red Hat Network functionality on to Arabtec’s network. This change will provide even greater functionality and customization in the future.

## **BENEFITS**

Since installing its first Red Hat Enterprise Linux server in March 2005, Arabtec has seen reduced costs, recognized at least a five-fold performance gain, and already experienced approximately 35 percent total cost of ownership improvement. The company is currently investigating the possibility of migrating all of its file servers, backup systems, and desktops to Red Hat Enterprise Linux.

“We were amazed with the seamless process of migrating to Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Not only do we have more reliable, secure, and high-performing email service, we realized a terrific cost-savings,” said Al Khayyat. He admitted that at first he was anxious regarding the reaction of his mainly Microsoft-trained staff to such a move. After an intensive Red Hat

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training of the IT staff by OpenNet and seeing the impressive, immediate benefits of running the first Linux project, he became even more encouraged to stay on the open source route.

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<http://www.arabtecuae.com/arabtec/index.asp>

<http://www.opennet.ae/index.php>