Perspective on Digital Transformation in Government with Her Excellency Dr. Rauda Al Saadi, Director General, Abu Dhabi Smart Solutions and Services Authority

By Michael J. Keegan

Today's digital economy has evolved significantly since the eras of mechanical and analog electronic technology. This evolution began in the late 1970s with the advent of mainframe computing as a standard practice for leading businesses, accelerated in the late 1970s with the introduction of personal computers, and continues to present day in the form of emerging technologies that include cloud computing and artificial intelligence. Beginning in the 1990s, the Internet ushered in a revolution in the way citizens and businesses share, access, and retain information over open networks. These digital steps forward have led to a significant change in how information technology impacts society, the economy, and government. It has led to a digital transformation in how nations govern.

The Abu Dhabi Smart Solutions and Services Authority (ADSSSA) works across the Emirate's government enterprise to develop smart systems in the delivery of government services. It does this by focusing on the combined experiences of all categories of customers to improve and assist the work of the government services sector.

Her Excellency Dr. Rauda Al Saadi, Director General of the Abu Dhabi Smart Solutions and Services Authority, joined me on The Business of Government Hour to share her perspective on Abu Dhabi's digital transformation strategy and how ADSSSA is changing the way citizens engage with their government.

The Mission of the Abu Dhabi Smart Solutions and Services Authority

ADSSSA is a government entity tasked with overseeing the information and communication technology (ICT) agenda of Abu Dhabi. In general, we are mandated to work closely with all government bodies, helping them by developing smart systems for government services. In line with this, ADSSSA is further tasked with sitting policies, strategic plan initiatives, operational support to achieve government integration of ICT, and enabling government agencies with innovative systems.

Abu Dhabi's ICT agenda—a major part of our focus—is also a key component comprising the government's digital transformation plans. The ICT agenda is geared towards delivering personalized and proactive services, building a business friendly environment, and bringing happiness to our people.

Leading ADSSSA

Being the director general of ADSSA entails many responsibilities. This includes helping achieve our lofty goals and objectives for the Emirate as the CIO arm of Abu Dhabi government. Part of those responsibilities revolves around ensuring that ADSSSA's vision is fully realized through our defined strategy and execution, and then extending excellence in our services with various government entities.

I have always stressed the importance of working with a team, making sure that each member plays out their role to the highest standards and to the best of their abilities. It is also important to explore challenging issues with the staff and to encourage their creativity in finding solutions.

In terms of leadership, one must be well experienced and learn the significance of setting lofty goals—and then chart a path on how to best achieve them, with the key factors being communication, transparency, and leading by example.

Digital Transformation Strategy

In terms of digital transformation, ADSSSA is strongly focused on maintaining close communication ties with the government entities that we work closely with, especially in improving the customer services delivery. These efforts cover the development and drafting of policies, strategic plans, and initiatives. We provide operational support to integrate ICT infrastructure with the government sectors. We also enable government entities to provide their services through innovative systems and legislation.

We are committed to transform and consolidate government processes and services into unified channels and platforms centered on the needs and requirements for all our customers in Abu Dhabi.

Unified Government Services System: TAMM Initiative

The TAMM initiative falls in line with our continuing effort to provide a journey-focused approach to our customers. TAMM reflects ADSSSA's move to establish Customer Service Centers across the Emirate, while also bringing various government entity services under one umbrella for better efficiency.

What does TAMM mean? In Arabic, TAMM means "Done." It represents our promise to customers. The idea of this initiative lies within being proactive for the customer and being able to deliver on our promise even before they ask. I think this is what true service excellence means.

Also, we have found that one of the most successful drivers for TAMM is the power of designing the customer's experience and integrating the most innovative technologies. In line with this, TAMM is focused on turning the service delivery model into a journey-focused approach that takes full use of digital technology in the provision of government services. We have set a target to reach a 90 percent customer satisfaction rate, be listed as one of the top ten countries in ease of doing business, and be one of the top five governments in the United Nations' online service index.

ADSSSA launched the first journey under the TAMM initiative.

Shifting the Service Delivery Model

The major strategic shift is the move away from simply digitizing individual services and toward an end-to-end journey through unified digital and physical channels. IT journeys are defined as those that would serve the priority needs of most people and businesses in the Emirate. Examples include starting a family, building a home, finding a job, starting a business, and exporting products and services.

First, we had a "Moving to a New Home" citizen journey, which was launched earlier this year. It looks toward developing an integrated smart services system for Abu Dhabi. The goal is to fully transform and integrate government services for moving to a new home in Abu Dhabi. We want to make it a smart and smooth journey for all residents—and to facilitate their prosperity and increase their quality of living.

Next, we had created a journey for the business trade license process, based on the TAMM initiative. Through this platform, a business trade license can be issued to investors even without visiting any government entity. Using TAMM will enable a customer to complete the process without the need to go back to other government entities to obtain required approvals. It is important to note that today 90 percent of these approvals for investors can be issued instantly.

In addition, ADSSSA will soon be launching the new medical journey that encourages investors to establish businesses and invest in Abu Dhabi. It opens opportunities, while offering proactive, fast, and efficient processes in terms of license approvals, building completion, staffing, and health audits to start the business.

Our mandate, directed to us, is to work closely with various government entities and departments. ADSSSA believes that cooperation remains an essential component to our success. The move to always collaborate and partner with these entities allows us to develop and enhance service delivery mechanisms, provide a unique customer experience, utilize the latest technologies and digital innovations, and help improve the quality of life in local communities.

Benefits of Journey-Mapping Citizen Services

Today we are taking citizen service to a whole new level by completely redefining government services from the customer point of view. We have consolidated more than 1,600 services into 80 end-to-end journeys focusing on the customer experience.

As you know with that, we are transforming the face of Abu Dhabi's government and delivering at scale. The primary objective is to deliver a seamless personalized and proactive experience for more than three million citizens and residents as well as visitors and businesses in the Emirate.

Additionally, the transformation would significantly improve the economic environment and boost government efficiency.

We already offer the benefit of being one government, focused on a customer experience.
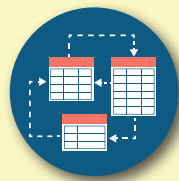
Abu Dhabi Connect (AD Connect) initiative aims to improve the customer experience by reducing the requirements of government documents. This initiate will provide integrated government services and facilitate the exchange of important data. As we know too well today, data is the era's new oil.

AD Connect was established by the ADSSSA to drive the integration of digital documents across all government

The First Phase of AD Connect

Upgraded the efficiency of 500 government services that provide more than 5 million transactions annually

Transformation of 9 important government documents into digital data

Digitize more than 80% of total required documents in Abu Dhabi Government services

The project is a key pillar of Abu Dhabi Government services and a first in the region

Saved over 80,000 working days for government employees in the Emirate

Saved 50 thousand tons per year in carbon dioxide emissions

Saved over 9 million client visits on an annual basis

services in the capital. This initiative is aimed at creating a system that enables government entities in Abu Dhabi to digitally exchange government documents of individuals and companies through secure channels.

AD Connect is expected to complement the TAMM initiative, which reflects our continued commitment toward improving and facilitating better service across the government sector. This initiative has saved more than $20 million for customers, and more than $40 million for government agencies. At the same time, it benefits the environment by reducing the carbon footprint, among the other positives.

Improving the Quality of Government Services Using Data

Data is an essential resource for organizations. The success of an organization is affected by the quality of the data used within its business processes. Effective data management is the key to maximizing the quality of data and allowing the organization to deliver high quality services.

Industry experts have been promoting the important role that data plays. As such, there's a need for effective data management to maximize benefits and deliver high quality services. In line with this, Abu Dhabi government has already implemented the necessary steps needed to create a government-wide data management program, which seeks to improve both data management functions and data storage within the Abu Dhabi government. Owning and using high quality data

is a strategic enabler for the Abu Dhabi government in its journey to become a world-class city.

Working with the Private Sector

Our mission is to ensure that both the government and the private sector work in a close partnership—and are fully capitalized—on today's digital platforms and various emerging technologies, which we have put in place for business to run efficiently within the Emirate. We seek to ensure that our citizens enjoy a customer experience that is based on world-class high quality services. We cannot do this by ourselves, and as such, ADSSSA maintains key partnerships with leading companies.

We are looking to set a new benchmark in adopting the technology that government can share with our citizens. In fostering a safe environment to drive innovation, we hope to test new boundaries and enable future generations to continue our journey with the tangible impact already made. By adopting a customer centric approach, Abu Dhabi is on its way to revolutionize the way government thinks and delivers services.

You can listen to the complete version of my interview with Dr. Rauda Al Saadi, Director General, Abu Dhabi Smart Solutions and Services Authority on *The Business of Government Hour* at businessofgovernment.org.