

## Enriching the People

Throughout the past year Ooredoo continued its strive to maintain a very strong people culture. While the Customer Service team ensures external relations with the people who interact with Ooredoo, the HR team ensures the internal staff remain the greatest ambassadors the company could have.

A major milestone 2017 saw the implementation of a leadership development programme aimed at people managers. Called Qadaa, meaning 'leader' in English, the objective of the programme was to have a constant leadership standard across Ooredoo. Comprising of modules such as general leadership practices, leadership management, team vs individual management, career development and performance management, competency based interview, Qadaa involved aspects of coaching, feedback and culture. The programme was an initiative borne of an employee engagement survey in which staff asked for a consistent standard in people management across all departments and leadership levels. As a result, the managers were all subject to the same benchmarks and employees are seeing a resulting consistency in the way they are managed; the Ooredoo way, not an individual's way.

One of the milestones that was carried over from 2016 was the completion of a competency framework that linked staff to their job descriptions, a major task that was completed within the framework of other ongoing initiatives. In light of the digital focus of the business, this competency exercise helped adapt resources and talents for the continuing shift away from traditional channels and their continued preparation.

The executive committee was bolstered with the additions of two Omani members, namely Badr Al Hashmi as Chief Audit Executive and Sultan Al Wahabi as Chief Business and Wholesale Officer. Along with extensive employment of Omani talent across the company, the Omanisation level has reached 90%, slightly ahead of the target of 89%.

Talent in the body of employees below senior management has also been targeted with a leadership development plan that targets learning. This programme continually assesses staff and identifies the strengths in which they can be encouraged to prosper. Also ongoing is an initiative in which the transfer of knowledge across departments is encouraged. Particularly in light of the transfer to digital, this initiative assesses and develops the internal capabilities of individuals and a series of lectures and training sessions are implemented. These have become invaluable to growth and the development of a cohesive culture, particularly inter-departmental. Talents within departments are also continually supported in their development.

Top staff across all departments and levels are recognized and rewarded at events, regular moments of levity and appreciation that engender the staff culture that is endemic to Ooredoo's success in staff retention. These cross-functional events engage employees on Sundays and Thursday to bookend the week and have themes based on strategic paths such as digitization. Activities

related to the theme are organized, all of which help to increase the buy-in amongst teams.

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Corporate Affairs remains a key area of the company and continues to successfully build relations with the government officials alongside the Business Affairs and Regulatory teams. The Corporate Affairs team in 2016 led the launch of one of our most successful CSR initiatives with the government – the Springboard programme. This programme sees Ooredoo partner with ministries to train their female employees in entrepreneurship and equip those employees with the skills to gain their business independence.

As ever, the annual Ooredoo Goodwill Journey took place during Ramadan of 2016 and, between the 12th and 26th of June, traveled over 5,000kms. This year the journey focused on fostering sustainable development and growth through the empowerment of women and youth. With a journey mapped out to include 13 Wilayats it was another successful initiative that took Ooredoo into the community to provide invaluable equipment supplies and educational material in the true spirit of the holy month of Ramadan.

Initiated in 2004, the Goodwill Journey continues to go from strength to strength with the fasting volunteers traveling long distances the length and breadth of the country to support charitable organisations and associations.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

CSR is an important pillar of Ooredoo Oman and part of its vision and mission. In 2017 the Company organized its very successful 13<sup>th</sup> Goodwill journey, one of the largest annual CSR initiatives to support the community. The Journey distributed essential equipment, supplies and materials to charitable associations, organisations and groups as well as conducting vocational skills training workshops. It also continued to establish more Ooredoo incubator programmes in collaboration with the Omani Women's Association. These would empower local women through a series of intensive workshops, equipping them with essential skills training in a variety of disciplines to enhance their skillsets and provide them with a valuable opportunity to be part and parcel of the burgeoning Omani entrepreneurial community. Besides this, there were support initiatives around the National day and Quran reciting competition, as well as supporting the Oman Association for hearing impaired.

Furthermore, Ooredoo gave special attention to various events in order to enable children and others to enjoy benefits, such as the Oman School League for football and Khareef Salalah and Muscat Festivals.

## **Enriching the Customer Experience**

Whilst the shift to digital has increasingly been the focus of Ooredoo as a company, the customer service team has proactively adapted to the changing needs that have arisen. Remaining at the forefront of the Ooredoo experience, their determination to ensure Ooredoo is the first choice for people remains as strong as ever.

Although 2017 saw a concerted push in digital, customer services have been making the transition since 2014, with those initial small steps becoming increasingly bigger. According to a survey of business and consumer customers there is a distinct preference for having digital access to customer services whilst being in their homes, in their offices or on the move. The concept of calling an agent and being on hold is becoming a thing of the past and concerted steps have been taken to make the transfer to digital channels.

The key channel for this digital transfer is through the Ooredoo App that gives users access to almost 100% of the services they require. Feedback for the app has been positive overall with any and all feedback being processed and integrated into the app when it leads to a positive development for customers. Customers have been encouraged to shift from traditional to digital by the customer service team who guide them through the app and the benefits it gives them. For those who need further assistance the 'Live-Chat' facility is there for them, though even through that channel customers are talked through the transfer to using the app for all services.

The IVR (Interactive Voice Response) channel was also opened, with 70% of all calls being directed to it. Customers liked the ability to activate or deactivate services, pay bills, increase data and a whole range of other services through it.

An Ooredoo App is being developed which targets the business sector, and will compliment the consumer app. It is currently being tested with advances being added constantly, making it as streamlined and effective as its counterpart. Overall, customer satisfaction levels are high and the investment of time and finances to make the digital transfer is one that is seen to be paying off.

As with the front-end, customer facing side of operations, staff also had to adapt to the digital arena at the back-end also. An entire change of environment has been implemented with new training methods that encourage buy-in from customers to adapt the new tools such as the app. There was also a shift needed in the way in which staff spoke to customers to convey the changes to digital. Incentives were also introduced which encouraged staff to adopt many of the services Ooredoo offers.

Staff have also been encouraged to lead innovation from within, based on the feedback they gain from interacting with customers and picking up on their needs.

Although the app has been one of the primary tools that have driven the customer experience, social media has continued to be key indicator of customer opinion and experiences.

Feedback is an increasingly important part of improving the customer experience and, even through the transition into digital dependency, customer services has continued to invest in the voice of the customer, be it business or consumer. At either a digital or physical point the customer is always sent a message requesting feedback on whether their experience was a positive one, and how the experience or service could have been improved. This feedback is then analysed by the team and relevant actions are taken. If it is a key change needed, it is taken to an executive level.

As a profit centre, the customer service department has encouraged outbound calls to promote the increased range of services to customers. Targeting the services accessed through the app, the team has monetized their services to contribute almost OMR 500,000 through sales to year-end.

The number of outlets across Oman also increased through 2017, giving the customer services teams the challenge of ensuring that the service experience remains analogous throughout the network. Almost 50% of the outlets are franchise owned and operated, 25 franchise stores compared to 26 own-stores, though standards are consistently seamless across all outlets.

## **Enriching Technology**

For Ooredoo's ever-expanding technology team, the increased shift to digital has seen the consolidation of initiatives implemented over the past few years with fresh, innovative thinking.

To support the digital initiative, a rollout of more than **1,400** 4G data sites has expanded the data reach into more corners of Oman and increased coverage. Since 2016 the population coverage for 4G data has increased from 54% to 85%, a substantial increase on target with the team's expectations.

Although 4G and 4G+ are a deep commitment by Ooredoo, the technology team is already looking ahead to future developments and started testing 5G capabilities during the Khareef Festival in July 2017. They trialled the 5G technology successfully; a major benchmark for the company as it became the first company in Oman to do so. As a result of the successful trials, the Ooredoo management is currently lobbying the TRA to allocate a frequency so the cross-section of spectrums can be tested and full 5G services can be launched to the public. Whilst the 5G testing has been an effective exercise in future-proofing the Ooredoo offerings, it won't see a practical rollout until, possibly, 2019.

Although the 4G data sites and the 5G testing have been major achievements for the technology team in 2017, it is the Ooredoo Oman app that has been the main focus and the main success story. The app has given customers the autonomy to select their own services and products thereby saving them time and making sure they have access to the full suite of Ooredoo services and customer benefits, on-the-go.

Although big changes have taken place in the eye of the customer, they are minimal compared to the changes that have been made behind the scenes. With the concentrated shift to digital there was a need to change the back-end strategy and look ahead to the possibilities of 4G and move on from the confines of 3G. 4G+ is also an area of importance as Ooredoo moves forward. As a method of advanced carrier aggregation it shifts Ooredoo to the next level whilst remaining in line with the rest of the group markets.

Ooredoo's Superfast Fibre Home Broadband also saw a strategy-shift, as there is an ongoing move to free the company from the dependency of OBB and focus more on developing a native network. With this self-developed network, Ooredoo will bridge the gaps currently seen between competitors, all to the benefit of end-users.

A massive undertaking also saw an overall IT revamp to ensure end-to-end digital readiness to supply an uninterrupted service from stability to availability. To maximise the efficiency of the revamp, an extensive assessment was undertaken, alongside the corporate group office, to monitor the maturity level and analyse the gap analysis to recommend any changes. This IT revamp has

ensured the readiness for the shift to digitisation across the board, from sales and servicing to HR and logistics.

Without a doubt, the biggest step to digitisation has been the development, release and implementation of the Ooredoo Oman app. Although the app was released prior to 2016, the past year has seen a huge uptake in the number of users resulting in substantial investment from the need to increase education in both the benefits and use of the app. As a result of the dedication to development of the app in the early days, it has moved ahead of the market and it has become the aim of the company move people ahead as opposed to slowing down to the market level. A one-year cycle is anticipated in which to have Ooredoo and the market working alongside each other. This strategy has been developed based on research which shows that there are a large number of early-adopters, all of them fitting into the younger end of the subscriber spectrum, who are pushing the drive forward at the current pace.

The more mature side of the market sees the need for the shift to digital and understands the concepts being introduced, though the need for education is there. A campaign has been initiated that will educate those users on the number of channels available to them and develop their trust in online account management, particularly when it comes to online payments.

Over the course of 2017 there has been constant discussion over the imminent arrival in the market of a third operator. The technology team saw this as an opportunity to make sure that Ooredoo has the best suite of products and services as defined by the public users in Oman. The anticipation of a third operator saw much internal discussion that concluded with the launch of the Tahhadi programme. The high-level action points generated through Tahhadi have driven change not only throughout the company but also for very specific actions in the technology team.

Ensuring stability and engendering trust in B2B clients who depend on Ooredoo for their cloud back-ups, the data centres have also seen constant standards upgrades. Five data centres form the heart of the Ooredoo network with one of them, in Bausher, having been the technology leader until the inauguration of a duplicate site in Sohar. Tests were carried out to switch between data centres to test seamless switching in the event of a crisis, natural or otherwise. 2017 has seen major progress in a new data centre in Duqm being brought online during 2018; another fail-safe option.

As Oman continues to grow, so Ooredoo has been growing alongside and keeping pace with residential and commercial needs. While roads are built, houses are constructed and factories come online, so Ooredoo has been placing new towers and base stations. In the past, a 2G network was initially installed and upgraded at a later date. Whereas now a minimum of 4G is installed from the outset, to give fast data coverage.

In all, 2017 saw the technology team consolidating many of the developments of past years whilst establishing new strategies going forward.