

How DEWA Increased Efficiencies and Value Using Streamlined Project Management Processes

هيئة كهرباء ومياه دبي
Dubai Electricity & Water Authority



Organization: Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA)

Industry: Utilities (Public Service)

Lesson Learned: Implementing streamlined project management standards and processes across an organization can lead to increased business value and a stronger ability to meet strategic objectives.

Background

Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) delivers world-class services of electricity and water that meet the highest standards of availability, reliability and efficiency. DEWA serves over 800,000 customers across Dubai, a flourishing global city considered as a leading hub of business activity in the Middle East and Northern Africa regions.¹

Since its inception in 1992, DEWA has evolved and grown, measuring and adjusting the ways it serves its customers and integrating project management across the organization.

The Challenge

Dubai has experienced an unprecedented growth over the last two decades that transformed the city and propelled its gradual rise to global business prominence. This growth added complexity to the already daunting task of providing water and electricity services to consumers and businesses in a region with a population that exceeds two million. In 2014 alone, water connections increased nearly 30 percent, rising from 23,350 in 2013 to 30,000. The power demand increased another five to six percent in 2015.²

“To keep pace with this growing demand for water and electricity services, the advent of green technologies, and the push toward renewable energy, DEWA strives to achieve the leadership vision which was translated into the federal and local strategies. These include the UAE Centennial 2071, the UAE Vision 2021, the Dubai Plan 2021, and the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050, ensuring the sustainable development of Dubai, to make it the happiest and smartest city in the world,” said His Excellency Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, Managing Director and CEO of DEWA.³

As more and more projects were initiated, DEWA's leadership discovered that standard project management practices were not being observed across the organization, leading to decreased efficiencies, tempered innovation, redundant data, and an increased administrative burden on employees. At the time, DEWA relied on its 40 employed PMI certification holders to reinforce project management good practices.⁴ The number of certification holders continues to grow. DEWA now employs 60 PMI certification holders. DEWA's leadership knows that adhering to proven project, program, and portfolio management practices reduces risks, cuts costs, and improves success rates.⁵

¹ Global Cities, Present and Future

² <https://www.dewa.gov.ae/en/about-dewa/about-us/dewa-publications/annual-statistics>

³ <http://www.dubaipplan2021.ae/dubai-plan-2021>

⁴ DEWA has since doubled the number of PMI certification holders.

⁵ <http://www.pmi.org/-/media/PDF/learning/pulse-of-the-profession-2015.ashx>

Because project ideas and strategies must be linked with data, workflow, and business processes, and because the complexity within projects is increasing, DEWA needed a way to measure, integrate, and streamline its project processes and ensure consistent practices organization wide.

The Solution

DEWA's leadership established a dedicated team, including senior management representatives, to begin implementing SAP software for its portfolio and project management and enterprise asset management systems.

DEWA launched a multi-phase implementation project that concluded at the end of 2015. The first phase began in October 2009 with a focus on customer services. Phase II followed in January 2012. It focused on procurement, stores, finance and human resources.

The third and final phase comprises enterprise asset management generation, projects and portfolio management for generation, transmission and water, fleet management, business preparation and consolidation processes for the financial department, and a project system for business support projects. Initiated in March 2014 and launched in September 2016, phase III aimed to standardize, simplify, and automate the enterprise asset management and portfolio project management/ project system processes.

Recognizing that active participation and support of employees was a key factor in the successful implementation of the software, DEWA held educational sessions to increase awareness about the project. This would enable employees to more effectively utilize the system, thereby maximizing its benefits.

With the software in place, DEWA is better able to supplement its existing project management efforts, including alignment of capital and operational spending, planning and budgeting, and early identification of opportunities and risks.

"SAP software provides us with integrated solutions that contribute to DEWA's objective to achieve sustainable development, especially as indicated by international best practices," said Al Tayer. "One of our goals is that our processes be world class, yet simple and easy to use."

Achievements

As a result of this implementation, DEWA is now more efficiently managing projects that support its strategic plan and the four distinct perspectives in its balanced scorecard: financial, internal processes, customers, and the support of learning and growth.

DEWA has replaced more than ten legacy systems in its finance and accounts, consumer self-services, procurement and human resources areas. Project highlights include reducing:

- The monthly closure of accounting books from 20 days to five
- Budget checking from three days to one minute
- The number of steps in the utility connection process from nine to one
- The time it takes to move purchase requisitions into the payment cycle from 60 days to 15

In 2012, DEWA won the Bronze Quality Award from SAP for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa in the Large Implementation category. It was recognized for its use of a suite of SAP solutions to improve efficiencies throughout the organization. "This award reaffirms our leadership and our renewed drive toward more achievement and innovation," said Al Tayer.

Through DEWA's commitment to the delivery of sustainable electricity and water services at world-class levels of reliability and efficiency, and its continued appreciation of the value of project management, the United Arab Emirates, represented by DEWA, ranked first in the world for getting electricity in the World Bank's Doing Business⁶ 2018 report.⁶

Conclusion

DEWA continues to make inroads when it comes to incorporating project management concepts and terminology throughout the organization. The SAP software enables DEWA employees to structure projects more consistently, transfer knowledge, and periodically evaluate methodologies to identify improvement opportunities—all of which leads to increased efficiencies, value, and customer satisfaction.

⁶ <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/united-arab-emirates>

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- [Hong Kong Natural Gas Pipeline](#): How *PMBOK® Guide* practices helped project and program managers build a subsea pipeline in one of the world's busiest marine channels.
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Building the Future

As the first organization in Dubai and the UAE to become a Registered Education Provider (R.E.P.) DEWA is well equipped to provide the appropriate educational tools to keep employees up to date with project management standards.

As an R.E.P., DEWA delivers accredited courses and activities directly to its employees. This results in considerable savings.

"We consider our employees the most important pillar of our success," said HE Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, MD

and CEO of DEWA. "We take priority in involving staff in all initiatives and projects."

In addition to PMI courses, DEWA collaborates with other institutions of higher learning to assist students with earning Bachelor's degrees in electrical and mechanical engineering. With an eye to helping build the future workforce for the renewable energy and sustainability sectors, DEWA launched the Renewable Sustainable Energy Programme for high school graduates. As of 2017, 30 students were enrolled—20 at the University of Sharjah and 10 studying abroad.

About DEWA

Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) is the exclusive provider of electricity and water services in Dubai. DEWA was formed in 1992 following the merger of the Dubai Electricity Company and the Dubai Water Department which had been operational independently since 1959. DEWA's 11,000 employees do their best to manage the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity and water across the Emirate.

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