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**Opinion piece: Salah Abu Shaar, CEO, STME**

## **The right IT investments is key to sustained success of Middle Eastern enterprises**

Many companies throughout the world have been forced to drive down their IT budgets as part of their cost cutting measures which were required following the financial constraints brought upon by the global economic downturn. But while the rationale of controlling costs to keep the company afloat is very understandable, are lower operational expenses worth exposing critical corporate IT functions to risks such as security leaks, lesser data protections and reduced availability? Sectors such as education and government continue to adopt advanced IT solutions to maximize their productivity, so why should enterprises do the reverse and hesitate on important technology investments?

Over the past decades, IT has become embedded within corporate operations and businesses,, and IT business alliance governs most of the technology investments. IT investments have become essential to gaining a competitive business edge through optimized efficiencies and increased focus on core activities. This is why all IT-enabled enterprises are in agreement that budget cuts should not be dealt to the extent that an organization would be deprived of essential IT functions such as availability, data protection and security.

Experts and market research predict a 30 to 60 per cent annual growth for the enterprise data segment within the coming years, echoing general expectations that the downturn will not slow down corporate demand for IT solutions. IT has become the lifeblood across all Middle East industries, from financial services and oil and gas to telecommunications and logistics. The slew of latest innovations in information management and virtualization promises to elevate the role of IT in organizational efficiency even higher, which is why system integrators such as STME are constantly assessing new technologies and how they can be deployed to provide value-added services to enterprises.

STME brings to the Middle east markets modern and new technologies that can serve the Middle East enterprises to meet the needs to enhance their IT systems availability and provide more protections to their Data storage and archiving; Adopting the right technology and solutions with the right investments will highly improve the It infrastructure without the need for too high and costly investments. It is mostly a matter of determining the right mix of solutions and partnering with a reliable provider. Moreover, the chosen tools should be able to deliver in terms of minimizing expenses, increasing operational efficiency and manpower productivity, proactively identifying problems and providing solutions, enhancing management, facilitating high-level data security and protection, and supporting easy access and seamless integration, among others.

Founded in 1982, STME has been at the forefront of matching IT frameworks with the Middle Eastern brand of business. As an established regional data storage and IT solutions and services provider, the company has formed partnerships with global technology providers such as, Symantec, Hitachi Data Systems and NetApp , Cisco and others to deliver solutions geared to meet specific client needs. Through its strong presence throughout the Gulf region, Egypt, Levant and Pakistan, the company has been designing and integrating innovative solutions to its portfolio of over 400 enterprise customers.

IT support providers such as STME will continue to emphasize the value of technology investments that complement rather than compromise the viability of Middle Eastern businesses. A fundamental rule in technology is that whatever can be done, will be done; organizations thus simply cannot afford to pass up the numerous benefits of IT platforms and functionalities in favor of squeezing out more from corporate finances.

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