

ITWorx Delivers a Hosted and Virtualised Arabic e-Learning Solution in Maarif Data Centre in Riyadh, KSA, Based on ITWorx CLG (Connected Learning Gateway)



Country

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Industry

Education

Customer

Maarif for Education and Training

Executive Summary

Being one of the leading educational and training companies in Saudi Arabia, Maarif for Education and Training decided to take the lead by establishing e-learning as a base for its K12 education. ITWorx supported Maarif's efforts by hosting and virtualising the Maarif Learning Gateway, a customized solution, based on ITWorx CLG (Connected Learning Gateway) platform, in Maarif data Center in Riyadh. The e-learning solution helped serve 15 Manarat schools with 22,000 users and injected fun, interactivity, and collaboration into KSA's K12 education community.

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Contributing to the development of this community through a generation that can think critically and who masters the latest technologies of the modern information society, comes at the heart of our mission at Maarif. ITWorx has been a great partner helping us host a customised, bilingual e-learning solution in our data center, in a very short period of time, to serve 15 of our Manarat schools with more than 22,000 users in KSA while integrating students' emails with Live@edu.

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Ashraf ElGuindi
Chairman of the Executive Board,
Maarif Education & Training
Holding Co,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Customer

Maarif, the Saudi education and training company, is the owner of some of the major and oldest educational institutions throughout the Kingdom, like Manarat Schools and Faisaliah Islamic School Al Khober. The company targets being a pioneer in private education, taking it to a different level all over Saudi Arabia, thus; contributing to the accomplishment of the country's 2020 vision. Maarif presents students, parents as well as teachers with a unique favoured environment that makes education an experience in its very own.

The Challenge

To fulfill its strategy for growth and achieve its corporate goals, Maarif wanted to create a learning gateway for its network of schools and stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, school management, school administration, etc). The gateway would provide schools with e-learning tools helping them in making the educational process more fruitful, yet at the same time easy and fun. It is tantamount to a digital community and a pool for shared information and various effective tools keeping everyone connected anytime and anywhere.

Maarif wanted this gateway to have two indispensable qualities; to be cost effective and to be bilingual (English and Arabic) in order to serve the mother tongue of KSA education. They aimed at building an interactive e-learning environment, in a very short period of time, based on a secure scalable user-friendly bilingual platform.

Accordingly, Maarif's choice settled upon ITWorx, a Microsoft Gold Certified and Strategic Education Partner, to take over the mission of bringing together its network of operations under one umbrella solution that provides advanced collaborative tools for e-learning.

Technologies and Software

- ITWorx CLG (Connected Learning Gateway)
- ITWorx AuthorExpert
- ITWorx ExamExpert
- ITWorx Attendance Expert
- ITWorx Catalyst
- Microsoft's Office SharePoint Server 2007
- Exchange Server 2007
- Active Directory 2008
- SQL Server 2008
- Windows 2008
- Microsoft Live@edu
- ILM (Identity Lifecycle Manager) Server 2007 FP1
- Hyper-V Windows 2008 R2

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The Solution

After being directly contacted by Maarif to shoulder this strategic project, ITWorx set out the Maarif Learning Gateway, a customized, bilingual solution built on the MOSS 2007-based CLG platform.

Based on CLG and its add-on products: AuthorExpert, ExamExpert, AttendanceExpert and Catalyst, all hosted within Maarif data center, Maarif Learning Gateway tears down the longstanding dividing lines between the teaching and learning. The gateway serves 15 Manarat schools with more than 22,000 users facilitating the educational process by providing various teaching, learning and administrative tools, in addition to promoting cross communication between students, teachers, parents and school management.

ITWorx has relied on CLG Catalyst Suite which has helped significantly in the accurate yet swift and automated deployment of all of Manarat network of schools and users. The Catalyst suite has slashed down provisioning time from weeks to few hours and ensured data consistency on complex technological environment.

On the other hand, ExamExpert and AttendanceExpert have allowed teachers to electronically manage attendance, assignments, exams and grading. Furthermore, AuthorExpert has enabled teachers to create and share interactive e-learning resources and teaching material, and with rich questions banks teachers could choose among a multitude of question types and difficulty levels.

Moreover, Maarif's Saudi authentic characteristics are all conveyed through the gateway. The user-interface has been customized to reflect the school's brands -logo and name. A Hijri calendar has been also introduced to match the Islamic calendar, which is adopted by the entire Saudi education system. Teachers, students and administration staff can easily connect in their own native language through the Arabic dashboards provided by the gateway.

To save costs, ITWorx optimized the data center technological infrastructure by using the latest virtualisation technologies, Hyper-V Windows 2008 R2 and Microsoft Clustered Shared Volume Technology for Live Migration Machine. ITWorx also provisioned students email accounts on Microsoft Live@edu. With single-sign-on access from Maarif's Learning Gateway, students could see all their Live@edu emails and appointments.

In addition to the successful delivery of the Maarif Learning Gateway, ITWorx has also completed a one-month adoption and training program to ensure optimal usage of the platform. The program has been set up for system administrators and content authors, to guarantee they have digested all of the CLG value-added benefits and will be able to utilize its tools in delivering an exciting rich e-learning experience. Together with Maarif, ITWorx has also planned and delivered walkthroughs to parents explaining how to login and access the monthly grades of their students; encouraging their active participation in the e-learning process.

The Benefits

Technology-enhanced education

Maarif Learning Gateway enhanced the quality of education presented to Saudi students, helping them to unleash their full potential. Through the gateway, Maarif has contributed to the development of this community via a generation that knows how to think critically and masters the latest technologies of the modern information society. Additionally, Manarat now relies on an educational process that is student-centric leveraging the newest e-learning tools, functions and activities provided by the gateway.

Making a joy out of learning

With Maarif Learning Gateway, Manarat students depend on visual and audible tools and online access to Microsoft Office files to easily study their lessons and take assignments anytime and anywhere. They also enjoy full and rich interaction within their education community via online discussions, forums, blogs, and messaging with full access to the e-learning environment at any point in time. Also Parents can always access their customized dashboards to collaborate with teachers and to monitor and follow up on the performance of their children.

Cost-effective and scalable solution customized to school needs

With the help of ITWorx, Maarif has managed to establish a creative e-learning environment that saves both time and money. Maarif Learning Gateway allows for easy enrollment of new schools and users in 90% less deployment time. With integrating students email accounts on Microsoft Live@edu, Maarif has saved the a lot of cost while enabling students to see all their Live@edu emails and appointments with single-sign-on access from Maarif's Learning Gateway.