



Digital transformation in the supply chain



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Hicham Nehme, Senior Supply Chain Manager at Vodafone Qatar, discusses the ever-increasing importance of supply chain to the telecommunications industry



odafone Qatar is a member of multinational telecommunications conglomerate Vodafone Group's partner market programme, and is one of two operators in Qatar.

Hicham Nehme is Senior Supply Chain Manager at Vodafone Qatar and has 18 years of supply chain experience. "I've worked in different organisations and industries. Facility management, IT, manufacturing and

for the last eight years I've specialised in telecom procurement. I've been CIPS-certified since 2013 and am a holder of an MBA and business administration system degree." Nehme's work has taken him to a number of countries in the MENA region and he has managed projects in India, Europe, and the United States. It's not just his work keeping him busy, however. "I'm also the father of three lovely, beautiful girls – triplets."

The telecommunications industry is in flux globally, with changes in finance requiring variations in strategy. "Telecom operators around the world are facing financial pressures, due to the shrinking of their profit margins and rising operating costs and investment demand," Nehme explains. "What telecom companies realised is that to overcome many of these challenges it is necessary to reduce costs, and to achieve these goals, we must empower

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We provide Next Gen Digital CX & Back Office services across multiple industries, including Communication, Media & Entertainment, Retail & CPG, Healthcare & Life Science, Banking & Financial Services, Transport, Hospitality & Logistics and Manufacturing & Utilities. Connectivity is the new 'technological evolution', where changes are being driven by Digital Interfaces, IoT, Mobility, Analytics, Cloud, Security and Social Media, making it vital for businesses to be future-ready and acknowledge 'digital' as an inherent part of their strategy, and Tech Mahindra BPS is at the forefront of this technological evolution. Our solutions are based on Next Gen AAC Model i.e. Analytics, Automation and Consulting and delivered through a highly skilled multilingual Human Digital Workforce of +54000 operating from 28 Delivery Centres spread across 13 countries.

Our Achievements

'NelsonHall' has recognized Tech Mahindra BPS as the leading Global BPS research and analysis firm. Also featuring us as a Leader in three key market segments of the NEAT Evaluation: CX Improvement Capability, Revenue Generation Capability, and Cost Optimization Capability. Ivan Kotzev, CX Lead Analyst at NelsonHall, said: "TechM BPS' suite of proprietary tools and platforms, specifically in RPA and intelligent automation, empower true digitization of the contact center. The company's dedicated consulting practice, its UX design agency, and investments in emerging technology are well suited to assist clients on their path to digital CX transformation."

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the supply chain role. The supply chain has become a critical department across any telecom company. Our involvement starts with the planning stage, not just the execution. We can help the decision-makers to build their strategy and to properly put their plans in place.”

Aside from financial flux, the industry has also experienced changes in technology, and Vodafone is at the forefront of implementing one of the most potentially transformative technologies

in recent memory – 5G. “We’re proud to be one of the first operators in the world deploying 5G technology and making it commercially available for customers – an achievement we are really proud of.” Implementing 5G requires upgraded infrastructure, and “Vodafone Qatar is taking the lead to be part of that growth in the coming years,” says Nehme. “The telecommunications industry is critical for any country, and that’s where we play our role in supporting the growth of the economy.”



“We’re proud to be the first company providing 5G for their customers in Qatar”

Hicham Nehme
Senior Supply Chain Manager
Vodafone Qatar

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Hayat Communications Company (HCC) is a market leader and trend setter focused on the communication sector, HCC is an ISO Certified - Public Listed Company on the Kuwait Stock Exchange focused on the communications industry.

HCC provides professional and cutting-edge technology in the design, supply, build and management of diverse spectrum services in fixed line and wireless networks.

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For over 20 years in the region and over 10 years in Qatar, HCC has been focusing on Telecommunications infrastructure & Managed services. 2015 onwards HCC started to expand their business portfolio to provide end to end solutions throughout all the technology stacks, in order to support the region's development ambitions with a special focus on Qatar's 2030 vision.

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**"The development
that's happened
to this country in
the last 10 years
is magnificent"**

—
Hicham Nehme
Senior Suopply Chain Manager
Vodafone Qatar

To ensure the efficiency of the supply chain in an evolving industry, Nehme has highlighted the importance of having a clear strategy. Nehme emphasises that "to build a successful strategy we need to depend on a number of essential factors. First we need to understand our core business, future objectives and goals by analysing our procurement and spend reports. We also monitor financial and political changes in the world and forecast the direct or indirect effects of any new technology to understand

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Hicham Nehme

Hicham Nehme is an experienced Procurement professional. Having worked for 18 years in Procurement and Supply across different industries, Hicham is responsible for oversight of the procurement operations, strategic sourcing and digital transformation in supply chain. Hicham was instrumental in developing procurement policies and procedures and implementing procurement strategies, managing projects in the MENA Region, Europe and USA. Hicham is CIPS and CPPM Certified, with a BA in Business Administration Systems, and a father of three girls.



how this might influence our strategy. Based on the outcome of these analyses we can build our strategy. The main pillars of any procurement strategy are global sourcing, risk and supplier management and digital transformation. The main objective is to focus on cost reduction without impacting the quality of the service or the products we are procuring.

At Vodafone, we are fortunate to have Vodafone Procurement Company (VPC) - one of the largest procurement organisations in Europe,”

Nehme adds. “This helps us to build a clear strategy for the supply chain, achieving our goals and objectives in the long and short term. VPC’s role is to maintain a level of world class procurement, giving us access to a landscape of advanced tools and robust processes to smoothly facilitate the interaction with our suppliers. They help us to work faster, more securely and more simply.”

The supply chain’s influence has also expanded beyond its usual remit to take a seat at the decision-making



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Senior Supply Chain Manager
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Mannai Trading Company WLL ("Mannai") is a subsidiary of Mannai Corporation QPSC, a Qatar Stock Exchange listed company. Mannai ICT Division is Qatar's leading Systems Integrator.

Mannai InfoTech, a leading information & communication technology solutions provider in Qatar, is a department under Mannai ICT. From Application Implementation, bespoke Application Development, Systems Integration, Mobility, Master Data Management, Cyber Security, Enterprise Information Management, Data Warehousing, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) using on-premises and/or cloud architecture, hardware and networking, we enable our clients to create and build strategies for their digital transformation.

Driven by a team of innovators and differentiated by extensive experience in diversified existing technologies, we harness the power of computing and automation to help our clients successfully adapt to the digital world. Through a comprehensive portfolio of end-to-end services, we are committed to enabling a smart and connected society leading to national growth and sustainability.



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table. "Companies, and telecom companies specifically, must work on cost efficiency and how to manage their spend by using proper sourcing and negotiation plans, and planning ahead in collaboration with all other stakeholders and departments," says Nehme. Thanks to its involvement in an early stage, Vodafone Qatar's supply chain team can more easily align its strategy with the company's overall goals and objectives. "We assess what the company needs to develop

our strategy – first planning is vital for the supply chain," Nehme emphasises. "We collaborate with our partners and suppliers from outside and internal stakeholders. What is the best form of planning to do? What can we optimise for our three and five-year plans? This is the key part of any successful procurement strategy."

At the same time, another important factor to consider is risk mitigation. "Risk is critical for supply chain management, in all terms," Nehme says.





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“Supplier risk, fraud risk, bribery risk, delivery risk. Even managing risk in contracts is important. Coordinating with the legal department to achieve decreased risk or payments, all of this impacts supply chain decisions.” Another risk is spending outside the normal procurement policy, which Nehme refers to as ‘dark purchasing’.

“We successfully managed to reduce this by helping internal stakeholders realise the importance of aligning with SCM and avoid this type of purchasing.”

Supplier relationship management (SRM) is undoubtedly one of the most

important tasks for a supply chain department. “Making suppliers and business happy is the key to success for any supply chain expert or professional,” Nehme explains. “The partners we have locally and internationally are why we are successful. We build relationships with suppliers in different industries, focusing on encouraging local suppliers to invest more in the telecom industry. Mannai is a strategic partner in IT, lately they have been chosen Best Oracle Partner at Oracle Open World in Dubai. We also have suppliers in the

telecom industry like Hayat whom we count on for a lot of projects. HATCOM is another strategic partner working across many projects from our side. Tech Mahindra is one of the international suppliers that you will always find when you need them.”

Alongside the external implementation of 5G, internal technology transformation has also been a focus. “We changed our enterprise resource planning (ERP) system recently and moved to Oracle Fusion,” says Nehme. “That, I think, is a big step for the company. We used to use many software systems to manage our

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—
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Senior Supply Chain Manager
Vodafone Qatar

PARTNERS

Tech Mahindra

“Tech Mahindra offers innovative and customer centric IT experiences, enabling enterprises to develop their technological capabilities and deliver tangible business value. I visited Tech Mahindra in

India and saw the importance of the human factor and how they invest in creating a professional business environment for their employees. As a supply chain expert, I always look for partners like Tech Mahindra”.

operations across different functions, some of which involved paperwork. But we’ve decided that, by June 2020, the supply chain at Vodafone Qatar will be completely paperless. We’ve digitalised all our processes and procedures. Supplier prequalification, supplier evaluation, supplier proposal evaluation, e-auctions, e-sourcing. These are all tools linked to the ERP, helping us to change the way we manage procurement activity within the organisation.” The introduction of new technology tends to require a process of change management, and in this case it was no different. “It was a little bit difficult to explain to someone who was used to using the same system for a long time how this move from a system they’d been using for the last 10 years was going to change their life and make it easier,” Nehme remembers. “But we worked to simplify the process and procedures to ensure that the delivery was successful from our side. ERP was our first step in digitalisation, and it was a critical step. Any organisation needs to have a proper ERP system to manage their processes, ensure

PARTNERS

Hayat Communications

“Hayat Communications’ service and products are the benchmark for quality and security. As a partner, Hayat maintains a high quality of professional service and integrity. Health and safety is a critical concern for Vodafone,

and Hayat have successfully managed to keep a clean record over the years despite the high-risk service they provide. We consider Hayat communication a key player in our operations.”



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transparency and make sure that everything is streamlined.”

While the ERP was the first step, going forward Nehme sees technology playing an ever-more crucial role in the supply chain. “Operators across the world are investing more and more in the supply chain,” Nehme concludes. “We’re closely monitoring, for instance, blockchain and the impact it’s having on our industry and others. In the future, we’re going to be using innovative tools and technologies like blockchain in the future to improve the role

supply chain plays in any organisation – I believe digital transformation is the future of SCM.”

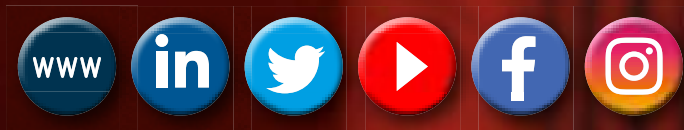
Qatar’s growth is also something Nehme has had a hand in, having previously worked on a number of large projects in the country. “I’ve been working in this part of the world for the last 13 years, mainly in Qatar. It’s been growing at break-neck speed. People here are really welcoming and they’re closely tied to their culture. It feels like home. I’ve participated in a lot of projects, and when I’m driving passed and I know



“The supply chain has become a critical department for any organisation”

—
Hicham Nehme
Senior Supply Chain Manager
Vodafone Qatar

that I was involved I feel very proud. The development that's happened in Qatar over the last 10 years is magnificent. I'm proud to have played a small role in this and wish the very best for this country.” ■





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