SI VOWS TO ACQUIRE AND CONQUER

There are two ways to grow your presence and portfolio of solutions in the region's services market. One is develop breadth by opening satellite offices and hiring as many qualified technicians as you can. The other is perhaps less time consuming: buy into the markets and skillsets you desire. Optimiza is one such proponent of this option.

>> Prior to the recent global financial turmoil, many vendors and resellers were heard lauding the growth potential of the Middle East IT solutions market on countless occasions. The only problem facing systems integrators — who operate in a field in which margin deterioration is rarely a concern — was how to maintain growth and keep a level footing with the perceived pace of the market. Jordanian systems integration and consulting specialist Optimiza has not only kept up with the market pacemakers, but, thanks to its aggressive acquisition policy, massively broadened its portfolio of offerings and firmly established itself on the regional IT stage.

"When we looked at the potential of the Middle East market in the sector of systems integration consulting we realised that there has never been a successful regional company that has evolved and developed similar to the companies that exist in many of the markets around the world," said Hazem Malhas (below, second left), CEO at Optimiza.

Over the past few years Malhas has been busy strengthening Optimiza's capacity by overseeing a series of purchases, the latest of which involved snapping up a 70% share in Saudi integrator and developer Royah for US$13m earlier this year.

It has also bought G-Tech, a KSA-based reseller specialising in Dell solutions, and Jordanian human resources solutions development firm MenalTech during the past year or two.

The controlling stake in Royah is particularly noteworthy, as not only does it significantly boost Optimiza's overall service capacity, it represents another step towards dominance in the region's most prolific IT market, Saudi Arabia.

As the publicly-listed firm rapidly expands outside of its home territory, Malhas confirms that Optimiza has no plans to deviate from its current purchasing path.

"We qualify the opportunity in the market by finding and highlighting the correct synergy between our companies," he explained. "We are currently working on three to four deals which are in the pipeline and by next year we hope to complete at least three of these."

The culmination of Optimiza's acquisitive actions over recent years now means the company can offer solutions across a wide variety of industry verticals, including the government, banking and finance, small to medium business and education sectors. It has also amassed partnerships with most of the dominant vendor names in the market such as HP, Oracle, Cisco and Microsoft.

However, it is not solely systems integration that forms the company's current focus. As a result of another recent purchase — that of Advanced Training Company — the firm has also established an IT solutions and business skills training arm called Optimiza Academy.

"Even though the two complement each other we have kept our training business separate from our systems integrator business because we want it to grow in its own right," explained Malhas. "We have some great plans coming up in training. We are bringing some very high calibre programmes in management training and soft skills training in addition to many other courses," he said.

Nobody can accuse Optimiza's strategy of not working. A quick glance at its financial results reveals the company increased net profit by 73% year-on-year to US$686,000 during the first half of 2008, while revenues expanded sixfold to US$25.8m.

Optimiza

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VENDOR PARTNERS:
Acer, Cicso, Citrix, Dell, IBM, HP, Symantec, Oracle, Microsoft, Captaris, Polycom, Internet Security Systems, NetApp, SAS

MARKET FOCUS:
Systems integration services are a major focus for Optimiza. The firm also offers IT solutions and business skills training. It has rapidly expanded its coverage outside of Jordan thanks to an aggressive M&A policy.

WEBSITE:
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