



Research Report

The 13th Annual eGovernment/eServices Report

Executive Summary

Dubai, UAE – The big news at the 13th Annual eGovernment/eServices Forum, held in Dubai during the final week of May, 2007, is that attendees are planning to form a “user group” in order to foster greater collaboration between GCC eGovernments. Conference host Datamatix, led by the company’s international advisor Joe Clabby, will work together to help structure and build this GCC eGovernment user organization (GCCeGOV – a temporary name until the new organization chooses a permanent moniker).

The goal of GCCeGOV is to increase collaboration between GCC eGovernments on a number of fronts, including:

- Strategic planning research advisories;
- Real world GCC eGovernment experiences (case studies, lessons learned);
- Citizen services (government to citizen – G2C);
- Government to business (G2B); and,
- Government to government (G2G).

In previous eGovernment Forums, attendees had called for greater collaboration – but no action was taken. When the topic of greater collaboration came up again – Datamatix was prepared. Joe Clabby held a special session – an open forum – attended by over 200 guests. Ideas regarding how to form GCCeGOV were shared; the GCCeGOV charter was discussed; and Joe Clabby/Datamatix took the action item to start a GCCeGOV dialog with all conference attendees who are interested in helping form a GCCeGOV user group.

Datamatix and Joe Clabby also opened the floor to take suggestions from attendees on topics for next year’s event. Suggestions included creating separate track for technologists and government executives. Requests were also made for more eGovernment status reports, as well as for more Arabic language content.

Overall, conference feedback included mixed reviews by conference attendees:

- First time attendees loved it – the forum featured a variety of industry experts who could share first-hand experiences in building government systems and dealing with citizen interaction and employee satisfaction; and,
- Experienced forum attendees loved the many case studies that were presented – but called for Datamatix to “freshen” next year’s event with new speakers, new topics, and more interaction by the attendees with the speakers and with each other.

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The remainder of this report reviews what transpired at the 13th Annual eGovernment/eServices Forum. All-in-all, this was a successful event — an event that will likely be even better next year due to the formation of GCCeGOV).

The Conference: A Macro View

Clabby Analytics attended days 1 through 3 of this event. Our macro view of this event is that experienced attendees were right — a refreshed approach is in order for next year's event. There were several excellent sessions, particularly the case studies. But several themes were repeated from the previous year's event — and should be removed from future forums.

Session topics can logically be divided into 4 session types: case studies, advisories, status updates, and panel discussions. Further, there were three quantitative analysis sessions.

On the positive side, the case studies were excellent. And there were several case studies including:

- *ADCCI Portal: GCC eServices and How the Government and Business Decision Makers Can Ensure Its Success* — by Mr. Mohamed A. Alneaimi;
- *Prime Ministers Diwan, Saudi Arabia* — by Dr. Saud Bin Abdurahman Al Muqbil;
- *Oman's Ministry of Higher Education's Online Application System* — by Mr. Khalid Alzadjali; and,
- *eGovernment Innovation at Dubai Municipality*.

There were also several "advisories" — real world perspectives from respected speakers on eGovernment strategic planning, project management, and the like. These sessions included:

- *Strategies for Integrated eGovernment: A Perspective from Qatar* — by Mr. Chan Meng Khoong;
- *Developing a Citizen-centric Multi-channel Service Delivery* — by Mr. Bill Edwards;
- *Application Integration for Successful eGovernment Initiatives* — by Dr. Robert Herzeele;
- *Global Standards and eFrameworks for GCC eGovernment Initiatives* — by Mr. Jose Manuel Alonso;
- *Building Successful GCC eGovernment Portals with eDIWAN Framework* — by Mr. Issam M. Ali;
- *Key Aspects While Planning for a Government eService Project's IT Architecture* — by Mr. Raed Hillis;
- *Government eServices Strategies, Architectures, and Impact* — by Dr. Taha Khedro;
- *A Holistic Approach to Govern, Manage, and Secure an eGovernment Platform*; and,
- *Measuring the Success of GCC eGovernment and eServices Projects* — by Mr. Salem Khamis Al-Shair.

There were also two status/update reports, including:

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- *e-Oman, eGov Initiatives in the Sultanate of Oman* — by Dr. Salim Sultan Al-Ruzaiqui; and,
- *The Implementaiton of the Saudi eGovernment Action Plan* — by Mr. Ali bin Saleh Al-Soma; and,

Further, panels included:

- *Why the Promised Building of eKnowledge by eGovernment and eServices Authorities Never Happened* — chaired by conference organizer, Mr. Ali Kamali;
- *The Problems I See with Middle East eGovernment Initiatives* — by conference leader, Mr. Joe Clabby; and,
- The open session between the whole audience and Joe Clabby to discuss next year's agenda suggestions as well as to begin planning for a GCC eGovernment user organization.

Not to be overlooked, quantitative analysis was provided, including the following sessions:

- *Top 10 Predictions for ASIA/PACIFIC Governments in 2007* — by Mr Raphael Phang;
- *Next Generation Telecom Infrastructure for GCC Services* — by Dr. Abdullah Al Musa; as well as
- *The GCC's eGovernment Standing* — by Mr. Abdulilah Dewachi.

On the negative side, some of these presentations were not understood by *Clabby Analytics* (more specifically, by Joe Clabby) as well as members of the press due to some translation problems. Translators will be provided next year according to Mr. Ali Kamali — the conference organizer. But overall, the feedback on almost every session was positive.

The Conference in Review: A Micro Critique

Attendee feedback included:

- "We had no idea that our own government had such an efficient document management system in place" (regarding Mr. Saud Bin Abdurahman Al-Muqbil's speech);
- "Dr. Kehdro's speech on eServices strategies and architectures was excellent — he provided an in depth roadmap on how to link the two";
- "We've gone from nothing a decade ago — to one of the most modern telecommunications infrastructures in the region" (regarding Dr. Abdullah Al-Musa's speech). "I am quite impressed";
- "We've had several speakers who have indicated how important the marketing of a service is. We have no money in our budget for marketing — and probably should"; and,
- "We need more case studies and fewer strategic advice sessions".

Many other positive comments were relayed to *Datamatix* and to *Clabby Analytics* — but the above mentioned sessions seemed to really stand-out.

As for this research analyst's micro-critique, *Clabby Analytics* believes that:

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- Only one session was repetitious (we heard the U.N. perspective last year). Notice that themes such as eProvisioning and eTransaction handling were minimized — we have covered those thoroughly in previous forums;
- There is a strong need to cover more “futures” — technologies that are coming that could affect the way datacenters are designed and servers are used, as well as new Web technologies (Web 2.0 and software as a service [SAS] that should be explored in greater depth; and,
- There were probably too many advisory sessions covering infrastructure design.

The Lessons Everyone Should Have Learned

As an impartial observer, *Clabby Analytics* can take an outsider view of this conference. And from a high level perspective it should be readily obvious to many attendees that many governments are building the same thing over and over again (we say: “they’re reinventing the wheel” every time).

There is a vast amount of eGovernment code and best practices that can be shared by GCC eGovernments throughout the region — but this sharing is just plain not happening. And this situation needs to be corrected.

To fix this sharing problem, *Datamatix* and *Clabby Analytics* have undertaken an effort to foster GCC government intra-company collaboration. Efforts to structure a user group that can foster collaboration as well as put together agendas for future meetings are currently underway.

Because *Clabby Analytics* is writing this report, we also get a chance to reemphasize another theme that I brought to the conference this year: energy conservation. One message that must reach the top of each government’s leadership is that your governments are wasting a tremendous amount of energy (and therefore, a tremendous amount of money) in your respective datacenters.

Informal polls at these events show that few government datacenters have undertaken consolidation efforts; they have not virtualized their resources; and they have not automated management functions. The GCC may be wasting the equivalent of half-a-billion dirham in energy costs annually.

Summary Observations

This year’s event provided new information on content management systems, energy usage, application integration, on linking digital signatures to content management, and on eGovernment progress throughout the region. This information should help regional governments model new services — and, if the energy message is observed, this information should help regional governments to reduce operations costs.

Probably the most exciting aspect of this meeting was the prospect for greater GCC eGovernment cooperation. The topic of collaboration has been brought to previous audience’s attention — but nothing transpired thereafter. With *Datamatix* stewardship, and with *Clabby Analytics* initial investment of time and effort to help build inter-government collaboration, we all stand a shot at opening the communications channels between regional governments.

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We will need community participation to make this effort work. We will need attendees to become active contributors to helping make future eGovernment conferences more meaningful – and to making them more useful through inter-government collaboration.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our attendees at this most recent *Datamatix* eGovernment forum – as well as the speakers. We have a huge opportunity to fix many of the regions eGovernment problems through collaboration – let's not miss that opportunity.

Sincerely,

Joe Clabby

President, *Clabby Analytics*

Clabby Analytics
<http://www.clabbyanalytics.com>
Telephone: 001 (207) 846-0498

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