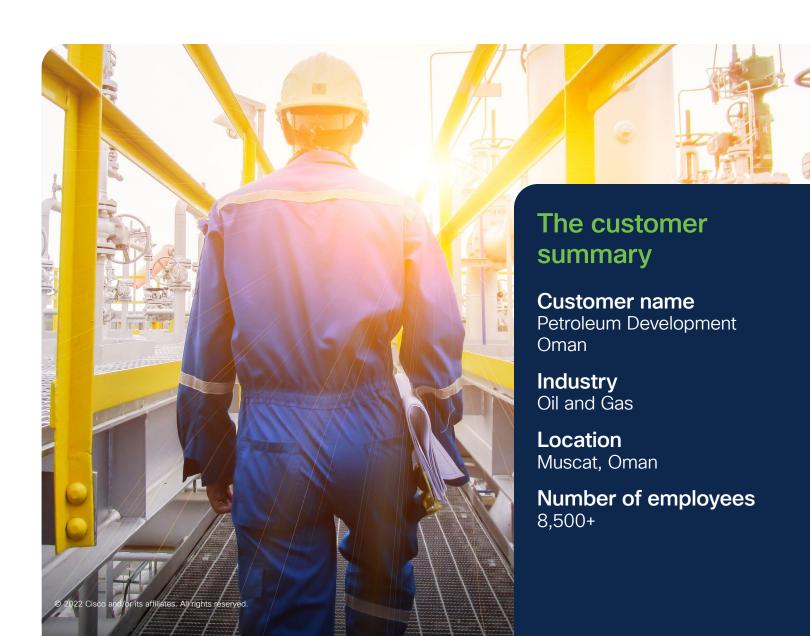cisco
The bridge to possible

Petroleum Development Oman

PDO Energizes Its Transformation

Cisco Performance IT establishes secure and agile infrastructure architecture on which to accelerate energy leader's digital transformation

The customer summary

Customer name
Petroleum Development Oman

Industry
Oil and Gas

Location
Muscat, Oman

Number of employees
8,500+

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CISCO

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Challenge

- Network segmentation requirements
- Coordinate multiple transformation projects
- Provide visibility over entire network

Solution

- Cisco® SD Access
- Cisco ACI® Anywhere
- Cisco Secure Workload

Results

- Innovation through a scalable, secure, and unified architecture
- Accelerated automation to drive IT efficiency
- Enabled flexible working

Transforming a critical piece of national infrastructure

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) is the leading oil exploration and production company in Oman. It is majority state-owned, a critical piece of national infrastructure, and a driver of the economy.

The business is in the process of digital transformation. This will support cost optimization, strengthen business continuity, and deliver new business value. In a region with competing energy producers, it will also reflect on the wider ambitions of Oman.

"Digital transformation will help us in many ways," says Abdullah Rashdi, PDO's Head of Digital Strategy and Integration. "It will accelerate our move into renewables, allow us to integrate with start-ups, optimize production and exploration, and change our workplace culture."

This has required a corporate restructuring within the IT function. The IT function was expanded to include a digital transformation team, which currently reports directly to the CEO. There is recognition that different pockets of innovation need to be coordinated. "We've identified twelve initiatives that we believe will drive the most value from our digital ambition," says Rashdi. "Digital must help PDO meet its strategic goals."

> "We now have a very clear network architecture —an architecture where the different components work together. Cisco Performance IT has given us a clear roadmap for digital transformation over the next three to five years."

Abdullah Rashdi
Head of Digital Strategy and Integration, Petroleum Development Oman

The challenge for PDO is to coordinate this transformational effort. A principal goal is to ensure that the correct infrastructure and architecture are in place to support a range of use cases. A basic requirement is that this infrastructure be secure and scalable. And PDO needs to figure out how to do this while in-house resources are tied up keeping the business running.

"This is a foundational moment," says Rashdi. "We need to make sure we have the right infrastructure components in place before we even start to think about making these changes."

Laying agile and collaborative foundations

Cisco is a key partner in PDO's transformation. Cisco Performance IT is helping design and deploy a series of IT modernization projects across PDO. These include head office Wi-Fi, data center automation, and application security. Individually, these projects will improve efficiency. Together, they will create a business that is more agile and collaborative.

"We know Cisco works with some of the biggest players in the oil and gas industry. They understand our issues. They have the expertise and experience of delivering the transformation needed by this industry," Rashdi explains.

The engagement with Cisco Performance IT was intended to bring a fresh perspective to the work needed. It did not matter if this assessment proved uncomfortable listening, Rashdi says: "We needed to understand how far we are from the leading companies in the world. We recognized that our network infrastructure could not keep up with the realities of business today."

One obvious "new reality" is the ability to work from anywhere. PDO's plans to create a wireless workplace experience pre-date COVID; the pandemic has underlined the importance of having a plan in place. Cisco Performance IT helped plan and coordinate working from home, HD video capability, an entirely wireless head office in Muscat, and the ability for teams to join meetings and access corporate resources from anywhere.

"We found the whole Performance IT experience engaging and structured," says Zuwaina Ghanami, Engagement Lead, PDO. "There have been multiple workshops, involving different parts of the business, from security to service management to senior leadership. The right expertise has been brought to bear on the exact challenges."

"Digital transformation will accelerate our move into renewables, allow us to integrate with start-ups, optimize production and exploration, and change our workplace culture."

Abdullah Rashdi
Head of Digital Strategy and Integration, Petroleum Development Oman

Establishing a coherent network architecture

Cisco Performance IT has established the blueprint for a modern approach to networking, capable of delivering agility with cost efficiency, stronger security, and less complexity.

"We now have a very clear network architecture–an architecture where the different components work together," says Rashdi. "Cisco Performance IT has given us a clear roadmap for digital transformation over the next three to five years."

The workplace mobility project (Maktabi) is arguably the most obvious difference to PDO today. Employees can now securely and seamlessly connect to the corporate network whether at home or working from different PDO locations. This proved business critical during the early stages of the pandemic, but will deliver long-term change. There will be fewer commutes and a better work-life balance, and PDO underlines its reputation as a modern, progressive employer.

"It moves us towards our goal of on-demand connectivity, where users can connect to the cloud services they need, wherever they are," says Rashdi.

The use of Cisco Application Centric Infrastructure (Cisco Cloud ACI) is central to simplifying PDO's data center operations, automating network connectivity, and establishing consistent policy management. The common operating model will drastically reduce the cost and complexity of managing the data center network infrastructure. It provides a single management console to configure, monitor, and operate the environment.

It means PDO is more agile and efficient. In-house IT spends less time on low-value manual work. It is quicker and simpler to deploy new services. Again, this will have long-term implications: the PDO IT culture will look towards deploying the new, rather than fixing the old.

"Most importantly, the data center modernization project means we are more secure," says Rashdi. "We can separate different lines of business, strengthen security levels for the most sensitive work, or ringfence new acquisitions."

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Zuwaina Ghanami
Engagement Lead, Petroleum Development Oman

All of this is managed automatically, with policy-based segmentation. It means PDO can move ahead with third-party collaborations, allowing access to certain corporate resources without risking exposure to others. With sensitive data being passed around the business, including video, maintenance updates, or exploration data, and with cross-team collaboration encouraged, PDO is in better shape to accelerate new, digital ways of working.

"We are one of Oman's most critical national assets," Rashdi continues. "We have consistent security controls in place from the data center to the endpoints."

With a network architecture in place, and the core addressed, the next challenge will be to scale. There is a calendar of digital projects to be addressed in phases; PDO also wants to encourage new ideas and to challenge teams to consider what might be possible. This will be more of a cultural challenge than technological, Rashdi admits: "Digital transformation can change our business, but it can also change our employees' lives. We must encourage them to see the potential."

Product list

- Cisco SD Access
- Cisco ACI Anywhere
- Cisco Secure Workload

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