

Procurement process automation provides a competitive edge and additional value for HCT

Customer Success Story - Higher Colleges of Technology

The pandemic accelerating HCT's digital transformation

The Higher Colleges of Technology, the largest applied higher education institution in the United Arab Emirates, developed its transformative HCT 4.0 strategic plan in line with the future aspirations and vision of the UAE's leadership.

In 2018 HCT set itself a strategic mission to bring upon a "revolution in procurement", led by **Mahmoud Salem Al Alawi**, Director of Procurement and Contracts. As we speak in 2021, the world has changed dramatically, thanks to the further digitalisation of procurement and the seismic ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The strategy that we put in place has really started to show results," says Al Alawi. "The pandemic accelerated and helped achieve our strategy, especially when we talk about digital transformation.

Procurement, as a function, is evolving all over the world and, at HCT, the Procurement Department has grown significantly, developing and maturing exponentially to where it is recognised as a vital strategic function.

"We work in a very dynamic organization and a very dynamic country. The decisions here can be made within a minute. Leadership has a very clear strategy about where they want to go, where they want to be and so the implementation should be done with no time to spare, with good quality. It's a big challenge for us, as procurement, to match this triangle - the quality, time, and to give the proper cost," explains Al Alawi.

"When the pandemic hit, management needed us to be ready within a week, to work from home and to support the whole business 100%, without any disruption."

Naturally, the Procurement Department found itself receiving an extensive list of requirements from internal

business units, essential to maintain a seamless continuity of operations. It needed an ERP system but doing so within a single week is a challenge that even the greatest procurement leaders will admit is practically impossible. But that wasn't part of Al Alawi, and his team's, lexicon. Al Alawi and his team were able to source temporary, alternative solutions to support a digital transformation remotely. Even so, Al Alawi knew this was a short term fix.

"Very early on we began customizing our portal to receive, for example, the technical and commercial pieces through an online portal," he says. "For companies who had ERPs, it was easier mainly because the system was already there and they could use it. But for us, we were still handling this part of the process manually until the day they called for the lockdown. So, within a week, we came up with the solution. We worked hard with IT, day and night to get this part done because this was the most critical part."



Mahmoud Salem Al Alawi
Director of Procurement and Contracts



“We told Cloudia what our requirements were, and they were more than excellent with us in implementing the system. Within two weeks, to a month, we had the system live with the basic functions that we needed.”

- Mahmoud Al Alawi

Sourcing system to handle both internal and external sourcing with vendors

Once this new solution was in place, the work was only just beginning for HCT, as it needed a sourcing system that could handle both internal and external sourcing with vendors. Once again, time was everything and so it needed to find a solution with a quick implementation period and at a price that was fair. It is here where HCT entered into a key partnership with Cloudia.

Initially, this system was only required for sourcing and commercial evaluation. HCT's biggest concern was centred around tenders, and commercial and technical evaluations within the system itself to maintain control of the process.

"We told Cloudia what our requirements were and they were more than excellent with us in implementing the system. Within two weeks, to a month, we had the system live with the basic functions that we needed," he says. "But once we went through the system, we pushed it to do more."

This involved solving challenges around its document management systems and, by collaborating with another vendor, HCT was able to create an E-Procurement Committee (EPC).

By digitalising each step of the process (sequence, quality control, procurement director and procurement committee secretary) it made for quicker, and more effective, approvals and move towards the authorized signatory stage before final closure.

"I'm very proud to say that today, we have the only solution in the UAE government that has end-to-end approval for the Procurement Committee," beams Al Alawi. "The Procurement Committee is fully automated."



"This database is something that we are very proud of and together with the digital procurement system from Cloudia, our lives are now easier," he adds.

This acceleration of digital procurement, together with the key relationship with Cloudia, has done an incredible amount to add further cachet to what Al Alawi and the Procurement department are doing for HCT.

Al Alawi continues: "We are very lucky to have Cloudia with us as a partner. After we finished the sourcing, we expanded with them. So, now we have the Annual Procurement Plan completed on the system and instead of planning annually, now we have a three year plan."

"We can see the project, and the bigger picture. Through a solution, called the Big Data solution, we link Cloudia with our PR and PO system and our document management system to create a holistic system, which operates as a more effective ERP system because now we have everything that we want customized, based on our requirements."

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Contact us and we'll help you create your own success story!

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