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Progress in automation at NBP

As the world continues to transform into a global village, information and services have surpassed the traditional ways of being accessed. With the exploding demand and supply trends of smart phones, cell phones, tablets and their accessibility to content over the internet, the conventional model of service delivery has extended its spread to consumers, making information available on diverse platforms.

This brings on a massive challenge for enterprises, especially the banking industry, to upgrade their existing trends to keep up with the competition as well as to achieve customer satisfaction. Information & Communication Technology tools equip a bank's I.T to serve its internal and external users swiftly. They are presented with multifold challenges to support a spectrum of applications ranging from traditional banking application, integration with legacy applications, integration with external partners, financial services, alignment with the direction of economy and capacity for continued growth, automation of regulatory policies, disaster recovery, back office, foreign currency and so forth.

Banks in Pakistan have undergone major reforms since last two decades, embracing technology as a core component of their business planning. National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), being the premier bank of the nation, is one of the largest government financial institutions. NBP prides itself for having a footmark across Pakistan with 1277 branches and have an international presence in over 22 countries including Central Asia, GCC, & Far East.

The extensive spread of the institution enables NBP to function as a public trustee and have been entrusted by State Bank of Pakistan for currency management in 280 locations, and serves the government employees with payroll and pension services. In addition, NBP helps the government to increase its tax revenue through its tax collection arm that is designated for collection of over 40 different types of taxes. With the changing economic climate and major reforms being introduced in international banks, NBP has made a transition from being a public sector organisation to a modern commercial bank by expanding its service spectrum to debt equity market, corporate investment banking, retail and consumer banking, agricultural financing, treasury services.

The diversified business portfolio has in-turn enabled the premier bank in attracting more customers as well consumers. NBP also realizes the potential in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and is keen to promote Pakistan's SME sector by offering customized plans to entities in the within the SME community.

National Bank of Pakistan has developed a wide range of consumer products, to enhance the business and cater to all classes of the society. These include NBP Karobar, NBP Advance Salary, NBP Saiban, NBP Kisan Dost and NBP Cash n Gold. It has taken various measures to facilitate overseas Pakistanis to send their remittances in a convenient and efficient manner.

Over the years, a number of initiatives have been taken pertaining to institutional restructuring, changes in policies and procedures, in internal control systems profile with special emphasis on corporate governance, adoption of Capital Adequacy Standards under Basel II framework, advancement in the technology infrastructure and developing human resource pool.

The restructuring has led the way of reforms, aligning its business processes with technological insight, stressing upon automation and I.T service delivery in particular. Enhancement in technological scope of the bank has helped in assisting internal customers in achieving their corporate objectives and providing greater business stability through service excellence.

Technology leaders at NBP work relentlessly investing a considerable amount of time in planning out technological advancements based on resource planning and allocation, while constantly reviewing the milestones against the deadlines set mostly at the beginning of each year. The realization of such milestones becomes very challenging with varying regulatory & compliance policies, continuous growth of business, emerging information security threats, evolving technology trends and above all, due to the geographical spread of the premier bank!

With businesses spreading beyond domestic boundaries, entities' need support in most remote part of Pakistan. NBP has established an extensive network of support centers and branches across the country to provide services and support to enable its clients to meet their mission critical business goals.

Our nation-wide footprint attributes NBP as one of the few banks, which has standardized COSO/ COBIT policies for implementing technology, in Pakistan which can develop responsive support services in major cities and reach out to distant areas of country equally well and provide highly skilled pool of technical experts where no IT support is available.

NBP enjoys the pride of having a network close to 1100 online, securely interconnected branches across Pakistan, while the objective is to achieve 100% online branches within the first half of 2012 enabling our nearly 6 million customer to withdraw or deposit from any branch/location as well as avail the ATM/ Debit card facilities. This translates into enhancement in managing payments for its customers carrying out business transactions safely to even the remotest areas with minimum latency.

No business can survive without customer satisfaction. To achieve superior customer gratification, NBP has taken an array of initiatives to keep in par with the competitive ecosystem of the industry. In this context, 260+ ATMs have been deployed and are operational until now, while installation of another 300 ATMs project, Internet banking, SMS alerts and Mobile banking is still in progress.

NBP has also established a comprehensive customer service center in form of call center operations that is managed and supervised by NBP, serving on an average of 500 calls a day ranging from inquiries related to ATM, account balance, Remittance, General/ Loan information and so forth.

NBP recognises that the Core Banking Application (CBA) serves as the "nervous system" of a bank, and hence, taken a leap towards automating its core banking operations by roping in the world's leading vendors FIS to implement the core business applications in which centralized banking system, SAP for HR and finance, Reuters' Kondor+ for treasury, Origins by Theta for loans application processing and workflow will be implemented.

Phase I of this project will be completed by end 2012 and phase II for all 1277 branches will be completed by 2014. By automating core banking processes, it is aimed to automate various branch banking instruments such as, over the counter transactions, inter branch payments, PO & DD issuance, internal funds transfer, clearance inward & outward, inter-city clearance and so forth. The automation plan is not limited to domestic branches in Pakistan, but the same has been envisioned for overseas branches which contribute a significant pool of customers to NBP's clientele.

Employees are an invaluable asset of any organization, and NBP recognizes the efforts and devotion of its employees. Besides providing a congenial working environment, it has been striving hard to equip its bankers with a hi-tech toolset to carry out their day to day operations. To begin with, the leading SAP HCM solution ensuring smooth payroll processing has been implemented throughout NBP in turn warranting an on-time arrival of employee remunerations'.

This frees up the Human Resource department from manual work load and allows them to focus on development of employee friendly policies and organizational development, to nurture employees' candidature in turn benefiting its' individual and corporate goals.

Technology has now become central to banking at NBP and has become the business driver than just being a business enabler. In a manner NBP-being the early adopters of any new technology-defines the roadmap for future technology adoption.

Given the spread of the premier bank and the customer base who continue to entrust NBP with their financials, this sketches a highly competitive business case for the technical team at NBP, who comprises of top of the breed technical experts, management consultants and the executives. For over the two decades, NBP has been strengthening its operations and clientele serving on projects of national significance. Our well deserved wins have furnished our team with greater challenges & responsibilities ahead, and we strive to live up to the standards set by ourselves.