

Information Technology Report

The 2009 financial year has been characterised by the bank's achievement of a series of phenomenal landmark milestones, with the Information Technology division providing the integral support component of its operational and technological hub.

The implementation of technologies outlined below are strategically geared towards improving operational efficiencies, enhancing a high-level of customer service, targeting medium to long-term cost reduction strategies, continuous improvement in systems and security standards which are in line with global practices, whilst pointedly contributing to the bank's competitive edge.

Significant developments and implementations include the relocation of the bank's head office, and both Durban's corporate and retail branches to our iconic new premises at Kingsmead Office Park. This mammoth undertaking involved migrating the contents of the computer data centre, as well as all end-user computing systems to the new premises, whilst concurrently upgrading the national data network from the older frame relay technology to the newer MPLS (Multi-Protocol Labelling Switching) network with its higher capacity.

The office relocation marked a further turning point with regard to a number of technological advancements which, after several months and in some cases years of planning, were realised in tandem with the relocation process. The introduction of certain concepts and technologies, such as virtualisation and rationalisation were factored into the process as part of the bank's technological roadmap.

Technologies implemented during this period included a state-of-the-art computer data centre with virtualised servers, high-capacity power generator and UPS devices, advanced access control and CCTV security systems, a high-performance gigabit local area network, utilising fiber-optics, globally recognised intelligent routing and switching devices, integrated public display and audio-visual systems and Voice-Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephony.

On the electronic banking front, we introduced the much-anticipated new debit card product, coupled with the launch of Al Baraka Bank's own ATMs and internet banking services. By utilising the very latest in technologies, the bank now enjoys high levels of security and service delivery mechanisms, comparable with some of the leading financial institutions in the market. Since mid-2008, the bank has been actively working on replacing our Core Banking Systems with

a view to enhancing business technologies and addressing a number of objectives, such as improved branch automation and customer service, consolidated reporting, flexible development and product expansion capabilities, anti-money laundering monitoring and the like. The project, dubbed 'M2E,' representing the bank's 'Mission to Excellence,' showed significant progress during the review period, with user acceptance testing, the fine-tuning of system enhancements and migratory processes and organisational-wide roll-out planning.

The ensuing period is envisaged to be a year of consolidation, streamlining and improvement of cost and operational efficiencies, without losing sight of strategic projects, such as the core banking systems replacement, electronic business and corporate banking services, continued rationalisation and business process re-engineering.

Furthermore, local regulatory and industry trends have prompted organisational introspection, which Al Baraka Bank subscribes to, with the emphasis on corporate and IT governance, as outlined in King III, with a view to harnessing and recognising IT value as an integral component of business. In addition, the bank seeks to research the feasibility of implementing a local disaster recovery centre, coupled with high-availability solutions to sustain its core business environment on a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week basis as a part of its technology roadmap for the future.

