



Saudi Telecom Case Study:

A Unified Framework for Connecting Digital Ecosystems to Support Revenue Beyond Traditional Wholesale



About Saudi Telecom Company (STC)

Saudi Telecom Company (STC) is the leading telecommunication services provider in the Middle East & North Africa. They are the largest operator within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and have an international presence that extends to 9 countries. STC leverages its expertise to operate in growth markets, domestically and regionally, driving adoption of mobile and broadband services. Their innovative solution delivery serves customers across fixed, mobile and data products. The STC vision is 'to be recognized as the ICT leader, providing comprehensive innovative services and solutions, earning customer trust and enriching society'.



What was the challenge?

As STC plays a key role in the Middle East and worldwide through their interconnect and wholesale telecom business, they wanted to respond to new market challenges – such as introducing multiparty settlement (B2B2C and/or B2B2B) supporting faster entry of other non-telecom partners and expanding their business models and revenue opportunities beyond traditional wholesale business.

STC also wanted to increase its internal and external value visibility and operational efficiency while reducing OPEX costs related to manual handlings and processing. This created demand for converging settlement operations for simultaneously handling interconnect partners, STC's OPCOs, clearing houses, and STC's MVNOs.

For many years, STC wholesale and IT departments tried to converge and automate wholesale billing, settlement, payment and collection confirmation processes into a unified software platform. The isolated pieces of legacy systems, interrupted process flows and excessive human dependency within the processes created unwanted costs, delays and

overhead. Fast-changing market demands necessitated a shortened timeframe to get an automation project completed.



Meeting Expectations with a Phased Implementation & Short Delivery Timeframe

ZIRA was initially called in to fill in the gaps of the islanded processes that STC had been doing manually for quite some time, including a software solution for interconnect CDRs reconciliation and interactive exchange of the relevant CDRs to support settlement of disputed amounts. But soon, ZIRA was discussing with STC the replacement of their entire wholesale billing and settlement legacy system. The project scope included the replacement of 5 legacy systems and the deployment of ZIRA's system modules to cover recurring charges, billing period management, billing, dispute management, settlement, roaming management, financial management, reporting and end-to-end integration. ZIRA's full scope delivery was scheduled in two 4-month phases.

The first phase included 40% of the full project scope, with the purpose of proving ZIRA's solution functionality when integrating it into STC's landscape. STC's management was impressed with ZIRA's ability to meet the short allocated timeframe, specifically in comparison to an earlier experience with a different vendor for a similar project.

In December 2014, ZIRA began the second phase, of finalizing delivery and end-to-end integration testing. In the middle of March, 2015, though faced with additional challenges due to the huge amount of data migration, User Acceptance Testing (UAT) by STC's Wholesale Business was successful. STC was impressed with both the feature-rich ZIRA system and ZIRA's service performance with expedited delivery.

This was a huge and highly complex project as it involved several of STC's business

departments, (rather than just the STC wholesale business), it needed to be delivered in a very short timeframe and it was expected to fulfill more than 700 functional requirements. Within 8 months, ZIRA was able to help STC converge their wholesale and partner business into one, including recurring traffic and roaming. Previously, STC utilized 5 different systems to achieve these processes. ZIRA created 'digital bridges' between all the internal businesses and by creating one unified platform they broke the silos to provide true automation and business insight.

After only 3 months, STC accepted the ZIRA system and it was in production. The agile delivery was well received and STC contracted ZIRA's Agile Delivery Team (ADT) to help meet STC's growing business demands. Currently agile projects continue to be successfully organized in short timeframes, as often as weekly deliveries.



Results

- Delivering and packaging data for ERP which, in the old system took 6-7 hours, now takes STC less than 40 minutes with their new automated systems. The users now expect this simplicity with every system!
- Before ZIRA's system implementation, STC would print out every document and report needed to review or share with colleagues and personally hand deliver them for review and/or approvals. Today, automated document approval is all handled through the system. All wholesale documents edits, reviews and approvals are completed through the system and managed electronically.
- For any type of a dispute to settle with another carrier or Clearing House, STC can now simply pull detailed reports immediately – giving them an upper hand in negotiations. It used to take a long time to settle disputes, now they have instant access to all relevant information so they can settle

in minutes vs days.

- STC now has a true sub-ledger. They no longer need to go into various multiple systems to see if and/or when something was paid.

Successful completion of the project optimized STC staff's operational efficiencies, reduced human interactivity, dependency and delays, streamlined concurrently handled settlements, shortened settlement cycle completion and time to collection. Full convergence for all wholesale services (voice, data, roaming) managed with the unified software solution, provide data accuracy and consistency and end-to-end wholesale business insights and analytics for an in-depth understanding of each STC partner, their behavior and value.

STC is also now able to fully control and maintain consistency over paid/collected vs. unpaid/uncollected portions of disputed invoices. The ability to settle telecom and non-telecom (Content Providers, Internet of Things, etc.) data into a unified (or revenue share) invoice represents one of the key market directions today and for the future.

STC now has the capacity to support the entrance of global corporations, expand their digital footprint through partnerships and other channels, and identify new streams of revenue - all aspects of a sound plan to maintain its global leadership position.

Transforming the vision of a unified digital ecosystem into reality, STC unified their ecosystem of customers, end users, suppliers, alliance partners, developers, data sources, internal organization, and back office systems. This future-proof digital ecosystem helped STC overcome technical and commercial challenges to capture new revenue streams within the growing wholesale marketplace. This allows STC to go beyond traditional wholesale business by increasing value contribution, efficiency and performance visibility to support diversified revenue share and growth further into Internet of Things (IoT).



Why did STC choose ZIRA?

01 Agility

ZIRA's commitment to meeting a short deadline and expedited responses to STC's requests resulted in a delivery time within 2-6 weeks. With another system/vendor they recognized approximate losses of \$50K per month and still couldn't get their problem solved. STC now utilizes ZIRA's dedicated agile team and are organized in as short as weekly deliveries (300+ custom reports, 50+ custom workflows etc.).

02 Customisation

STC expected that all of their custom requirements were included in new standard releases in order to avoid redundant payment each time an upgrade would take place. Due to in-depth system modularity, all STC customizations are included in ZIRA's standard releases. ZIRA proved their position as leaders in technology and fully implemented this into their modular systems.

03 Modularity

STC wanted to continue using some of their legacy systems, such as their rating system for what they considered of worth to STC. They didn't want change it due to the excessive time and expense it would take to replace. Other vendors could not support this modular approach and only sold their systems with their rating system. ZIRA took a different approach by protecting STC's legacy investment.

04 Roadmap Functionality & Delivery

STC required a set of functionalities for delivery (i.e. not to wait for them according to ZIRA roadmap) and even some functionality (e.g. VBR) that related to and was packaged within ZIRA Rating delivery. ZIRA proved its focus on protecting STC's interests and responded with added functionality without any additional costs for its repackaging or pre-delivery.



About ZIRA

ZIRA has been successfully delivering BSS solutions for 25 years to 50+ telecommunication operators across 22 countries. They work closely with customers to implement fully integrated and modular solutions that support legacy investments for customer, revenue and risk management across all business domains (wireline, wireless and IP). ZIRA is committed to helping customers prepare for the future by driving agility, improving insight and reducing complexities in business operations. Customer trust, commitment to exceptionally short delivery time and an innovative approach are what ZIRA is well known for and is confirmed by their long-term relationships and their customer's business excellence.

For more information, visit:

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