



Shaikh Saif Bin Hashil Al Maskery,  
Founder and Chairman of Intertech.

# RISE OF OMAN IN THE DIGITAL AGE

## FASCINATING DEVELOPMENTS

**B**aby Sam Samuel, General Manager, Intertech LLC, says Information Technology has permeated all strata of society globally and Oman is no exception. As the nation celebrates the 45th year of His Majesty the Sultan's glorious rule, a look at the technological advances made by the nation in the past years reveals the rapid reach of internet and internet-enabled devices within the Omani Society.

The population of Oman is young, vibrant and open to new technologies; smartphones, tablets, laptops have already become engrained into the lives of the people in Oman.

The Sultanate of Oman has undergone fascinating developments in the past 45 years. In Human Development Index, Oman stands at 56th position globally, according to the 2014 UNDP report. The ICT indicators also paint a positive picture. The ICT Development Index



(IDI) ranked Oman 52nd in 2013 and listed it as one of the most dynamic countries in terms of the positive change in IDI ranking between 2012 and 2013. Among the Arab states, Oman is one of the top 5 economies in terms of ICT development during the same period. As per the 2014 Global Competitiveness Report, Oman ranked 57 in technological readiness.

The number of internet users in Oman has risen in the last decade from almost four per cent to nearly 70 % of the total population. There were 195,549 internet subscribers by May 2015, as per National Centre for Statistics and Information. A survey by ITA (2014) in Oman reports that as many as 80% of surveyed





Shaikh Saif Bin Hashil Al Maskery established Intertech LLC in 1994. As the Founder and Chairman of Intertech LLC, he is involved in the nurturing and development of the company.

Shaikh Saif Al Maskery is a highly experienced diplomat and professional, well versed with the political affairs and economics of the Gulf region through experience gained over a rich and diverse career. He is also currently the Chairman of Composite Pipes Industry, Trifoil LLC and Deputy Chairman of Oman & UAE Exchange Centre.

His career spanning four decades, includes several diplomatic missions such as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, and specialized offices of International Organizations; Assistant Secretary General for political affairs, Gulf Co-operation Council; and Under Secretary for Ministry of Commerce, Industry for Tourism. He has also donned many hats such as Founder and Director of Modern College of Business Sciences, Founding chairman of Nawras Telecommunications, Member of the Omani Representative for the consultative body of the GCC by His Majesty the Sultan, to name just a few.

households in Oman have access to internet. The WEF, in their Global IT readiness report, states that about 62.7 % of households in Oman have access to a personal computer, with about 60% using the internet. The penetration of mobile subscriptions reached 150.18% per inhabitants by the end of first quarter of 2015 and by May 2015, the number of mobile telephones subscribers reached 6,339,186.

With the initiatives of e-Oman, the technological adoption in government sector has increased rapidly over the past few years. In private sector too, businesses are gearing towards technology. ERP systems, Business intelligence tools, CRM modules, are becoming the norm across Oman. Although the rate of adoption is relatively lower than other developed nations, businesses in Oman are slowly awakening to the realization that to sustain growth and remain competitive, companies must tackle the reality of digital world.

### TECH SAVVY SOCIETY

As businesses are becoming technologically inclined, consumers in Oman too are exploring the power of the World Wide Web. The average citizen utilizes internet for innumerable day-to-day functions like socializing, shopping, banking, making utility payments, availing information, job hunting etc. From traffic fines to mobile bills, from movie tickets to air tickets, e-payment and e-shopping are seeing greater adoption than ever. It is now possible to order a meal or a furniture with just a few clicks, with global e-commerce stores with worldwide shipping making any time anywhere shopping a reality.

Social Media too has seen widespread adoption although Oman is still behind other GCC countries in social media usage. Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube, Twitter, Instagram are some of the popular media in the nation. Local blogs, forums and other support groups act as

sources of niche information relevant to Oman. People are utilizing the power of these social networks to connect with each other and to interact with a global audience. An increasing number of colleges and universities in Oman are extending their activities online, motivating students to avail the benefits of the vast educational resources to be found online.

Businesses across Oman are gradually opening up to the power of social media and social marketing and are leading their customers through their brand's digital journey. As more and more people are turning online for transactions and purchases, Omani businesses are eyeing the digital sphere as platforms for e-commerce. Mobile applications too are gaining prominence with corporates leading the way with applications tailored for the Oman market.

Entrepreneurs, SME's and start-ups could greatly benefit from going digital and can create unique brand value through innovative digital strategies. As opposed to conventional marketing, digital branding could be an economical solution for new ventures with budget constraints. While a website is a primary requisite in establish an online address, other digital tools like social media, online advertising, e-commerce portals, SEO, mobile and web based applications etc. can aid in reaching target audience, gaining customer insight and promoting the products or services.

Special emphasis had been placed on developing ICT and R&D as part of Oman's Vision 2020. In line with the Vision 2020, Oman adopted the Digital Oman Strategy in 2003 with an aim to transform the Sultanate into a sustainable knowledge based society. Currently the areas of focus are enabling IT industry development; enabling society and individuals; e-government and e-services. As Vision 2040 is being readied, and the next areas of focus strategized, the plan for the next 20 years will take into account the analyses of





Intertech Group Photograph

the current national environment with regards to science, technology and innovation policy along with the global trends and outlook. It stands to reason that a greater focus will be placed on ICT as the way of the future.

## BIGGER PICTURE

According to Baby Sam Samuel, the technological advancements of recent years, often made at breakneck pace, have drastically altered the world we live in and the way we live. The number of mobile devices worldwide now exceeds the number of people on earth. It has grown from zero to 7.2 billion in merely three decades. For people, perennially glued to digital screens, smartphones, laptops and other devices have become integral to the smooth functioning of their daily lives.

The ubiquitous digital media spanning web, social media and mobile has converged with the traditional media, blurring the boundaries of each and revolutionizing the media environment. Social networking now accounts for more than a quarter (28%) of the time spent on the internet each day. In 2016, it is estimated that there will be around 2.13 billion social network users around the globe, up from 1.4 billion in 2012. In a similar vein, more than half of the time spent on digital media is through mobile applications, as a significant amount of digital media consumption now takes place through mobile apps.

This explosion of mobile devices and digital media has created a multitude of digital touch points through which brands engage and interact with their customers. These touch points are ever evolving — in number and quality. So is brand engagement and customer

interaction.

## GLOBAL ICT TRENDS

Since 2005, ICT industry has gone through a period of “creative destruction” wherein the old industry model is replaced with a new platform for growth and innovation. Today, the new computing platform known as the 3rd platform comprising of Cloud, Mobility, Big Data/Analytics and Social business is driving transformation worldwide with billions of users and millions of apps. 3D printing, Cyber security, Internet of things too are at the forefront of discussion. It is estimated that 50 billion devices and objects will be connected to the Internet by 2020.

Social and mobile media are hardly “new” media in 2015 but these still dominate the digital marketing landscape. As the major social media players increase sales functionality across their platforms though “social media wallets”, “buy” buttons and other tools, social selling, social commerce and mobile commerce are gaining momentum like never before. In this constantly changing digital space, staying ahead of the competition requires businesses and brands to make sense out of the information overload and create seamless touchpoints for the online audience. In order to harness the power of Big data, the focus is therefore being shifted from ‘Big’ to streamlined, “Intelligent” data.

## INTERTECH

Founded in 1994, Intertech began with a focused IT solutions objective. Since then the organization has grown, along with the nation Oman, in leaps and bounds and has now firmly established its roots as one of the top IT solutions companies in the Sultanate. Presenting a wide range of IT products and services, the brand Intertech enjoys a legacy of



Baby Sam Samuel,  
General Manager, Intertech LLC.

more than two decades.

Intertech offers a host of business solutions under the segments IT Infrastructure, Business Consulting and Professional services. Some of these include - business continuity and disaster recovery solutions, back office and business applications; Business process blueprint and reengineering, IT audit, outsourcing and system development, to name a few. Intertech brings to Oman turnkey IT Solutions including Enterprise Resource Planning, HCM, Digital Enterprise management, Warehouse Management, Campus Management, Datacenter, Hardware & Software, Document Management Solutions, Networking equipment, Voice Solutions, RFID, Barcode, POS, Call Centre Solutions & Disaster Recovery Solutions. The reach of these technology is far and spans all sectors and all verticals.

Intertech is one among the few system integrators in the Sultanate who are quality assurance certified and adheres to rigid quality standards. One of the milestones achieved by the company is the prestigious ISO 9001:2008 certification received in 2014. It enables a process driven business model as opposed to people driven one thereby furthering the company vision of being synonymous with trust, excellence and innovation.

In the two decades since inception, Intertech has served almost all major government bodies, educational, health, financial & banking, oil & gas, service, manufacturing companies in the Sultanate. The company currently has 1000 plus active clients – a proof of its standing in the technology industry. Just as with clients, it enjoys long standing associations with world-class business partners. The organization has recently partnered with NEC Corporation – a Fortune 500 company and one among the world's 100 innovative companies, to offer world class business critical applications.

Intertech is a frequent presence at the globally renowned technology exhibitions including CEBIT-Germany, Infosec-London, Computex-Taiwan, Gitex etc as also conferences organized by the global IT giants like Microsoft, where cutting edge trends in technology are introduced, discussed and showcased. Keeping abreast of the latest developments in the IT industry ensures that the Sultanate stays at par with global advancements while the solutions offered are fine-tuned to local needs. A key strength of the company lies in its ability to offer solutions that balance technological advances with the requirements that are specific for the region.

## INTERTECH IN DIGITAL OMAN

Digital is the way forward – for businesses in Oman and nation at large. Oman is slowly

and steadily opening its doors to technology in everyday life which is why Intertech complements its marketing strategies with digital media that includes an updated responsive website that is built upon the latest technologies, SEO and social media like Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media is utilized not only to reach out to the company's existing and potential clients but also as a means of reaching and engaging their employees and aligning them with the latest developments within the organisation and the industry. Intertech, riding the new wave of digital media, is allocating a significant amount of marketing budget towards social media & marketing in 2016 and will continue to do so in the coming years.

With a view to promote digital transformation of businesses in Oman, Intertech offers solutions like digitalization services that will enable all kinds of organizations whether large, medium or small, regardless of the type of business, to become digitalized thereby increasing efficiency in management and operations.

In a novel initiative, Intertech is in the process of releasing a mobile and web based application focusing on customer service whereby the clients can track the service status, delivery timeframe etc. from their mobile device or web. To be launched in first quarter of 2016, this would be the first of its kind in the service industry in Oman. This would be a brave move in the IT service vertical leaving the competition no choice but to follow this initiative. This would eventually eradicate or at least mitigate customer grievances and increase customer service and satisfaction.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

Information security is an area that is gaining importance each day. 2014 was dubbed "the year of the breach" due to sensitive data leaks. Cyber security skills being now a global priority, will be a point of focus with Intertech

in 2016 and the years ahead. In a bid to meet the challenges in cyber security in Oman, the company has partnered with renowned IT players to bring in unique solutions that ensure highest safety and security of digital information. From the process, to consultancy, to products and solutions, Intertech will cover every aspect of IT security and assures business continuity.

Digital media and IT are serving as harbingers of change – of transforming Oman into a knowledge based, empowered and connected nation. Intertech shares this vision and the innovative solutions brought forth for the society by Intertech contributes to its greater safety, security, efficiency and equality.

## SUCCESS STORY

Baby Sam Samuel is a Management Consultant, seasoned by more than 15 years of experience in the various facets of senior management, nine of which are based in the picturesque nation, the Sultanate of Oman.

In mid-2013 he assumed the role of General Manager of Intertech LLC, Oman, involving complete organizational management, with key focus on General Management; Turnaround Management; Tactic & Strategic Management; and Rebranding and Business Development. Since taking over the management of Intertech in 2013, Baby Sam has been instrumental in bringing about a magical turnaround of Intertech's finances.

As an Entrepreneurial Executive his core expertise is in brand recognition, business development, turnaround & crisis management, gained through the cross cultural experience amassed across various sectors, particularly IT.

Based in the Sultanate of Oman, Baby Sam is currently involved in diverse entrepreneurial activities. In addition to being the General

Manager for the IT Company Intertech, Oman, he plays the role of a Business Advisor and organization mentor for a few start-ups and is an innovative investor in new business ideas. As Vice President of the renowned volunteer organisation Knowledge Oman, he is involved in the initiative to spread knowledge and impart education. He offers voluntary services to Oman's leading volunteer organization in terms of branding, organisational strategies & project management.

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