Dubai Electricity & Water Authority (DEWA) has been the utility company of the Emirate of Dubai since 1992, managing electricity, water and district cooling needs. They currently employ 12,000 people across seven lines of business serving B2B and B2C customers (commercial, residential and industrial markets.) With annual revenues of about US$6 billion and earnings of US$1.8 billion, they are considered a role model in the Gulf Region. The United Arab Emirates, represented by DEWA, ranked first worldwide for ease of getting electricity, as per the World Bank’s 2018 Doing Business Report.

The Challenge

In 2016, aware of the profound industry transformations happening on a global and local scale, DEWA decided to redefine its innovation strategy to remain relevant and position itself as an industry leader creating and expanding new opportunities. They chose the ExO Model and ExO Sprint methodology to propel their transformation.

Their primary goal was to shift from operating as a conventional utility to a digitized, innovation-driven one. The scope involved any and all aspects of the business, including energy, utilities, finance, service and government.

Supported by the Dubai government’s encouragement, DEWA was eager to try out new approaches to spark innovation and a methodology like the ExO Sprint was a perfect channel for this. They were eager to test the ExO Sprint in-house, and all divisions of DEWA were involved. The intention was to transform the industry and the organization.
The ExO Sprint kicked off in Dubai on December 5, 2016 and ran to March 12, 2017.

The first impulse was to expedite the pre-Sprint process by jumping in prior to engagement of the full leadership team and final selection of participant teams. A key learning, however, was that this groundwork preparation is critical to the success of the Sprint. Additionally, for an engagement of this type, it is important to choose a time of the year where most of the employees who need to be engaged in the ExO Sprint have fewer competing demands on their time.

The Journey

The ExO Sprint was a unique opportunity for different divisions to collaborate closely on a common purpose and experience the richness of engaging with a multidisciplinary team. Untapped talent within the organization was also discovered, which opened up opportunities for experimentation.

Key Outcomes

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The teams developed 7 initiatives that together represent a new business ecosystem for the company. They developed these projects on transformative business models combined with exponential technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, water out of air and energy storage.

The team achieved amazing results on multiple levels:

- **Strategic**: DEWA was the first organization in the region to learn the ExO Model. They became an early adopter and received a boost in the right direction of innovation.
- **Cultural**: The ExO Sprint introduced effective collaboration, helped in overcoming cultural barriers and offered a new approach to developing ideas and solutions.
- **Personal**: The ExO Sprint introduced employees to new resources (internal and external) and participants gained a new understanding of where and how they could implement emerging technologies.
- **Ideas**: Some of the ExO Sprint Initiatives were taken on by our R&D department, including the initiative to transform air into water; others were presented to the Dubai 10X program for disruptive innovation launched by the Government of Dubai.
Follow-up

DEWA continues to work with concepts similar to the ones developed during the ExO Sprint through investments in startups it carries out as part of the Dubai Government Accelerators’ program and its comprehensive Research and Development Program.

Their employees gained a heightened awareness of innovative resources and technology, and the culture became collaborative—clear evidence of a shift in mindset.

A goal for the organization was to test a completely new approach for creating value along with a new velocity for decision-making. In the end, not only did they achieve this, but they also experienced significant positive benefits such as increased team collaboration and instituting experimentation and agile exploration of new technologies and trends into all areas of their work.

“"The ExO Model offers a path to convert great ideas into viable business opportunities.”"
ExO Sprint Case Studies
Building Exponential Organizations

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