

■ FOCUS

 DISTANCE LEARNING / EDUCATION

■ INDUSTRY

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ONETOUCH CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Egypt’s Ministry of Education Selects OneTouch 5 Presentation Server, OneTouch Touchpads and OneTouch On Demand Solutions to Enhance Distance Learning Resources for Thousands of Teachers and Tens of Thousands of Students

THE CULTURALLY RICH, ANCIENT CIVILIZATION OF EGYPT, COMBINED WITH ITS CONTEMPORARY PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, HAVE PRESENTED MANY UNIQUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES FOR THE COUNTRY’S LEADERSHIP.

AS PART OF A NATIONWIDE MODERNIZATION EFFORT PROMOTED BY EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT HOSNI MUBARAK, FIRST LADY SUZANNE MUBARAK AND THEIR POLITICALLY ACTIVE SON GAMAL HUSNI MUBARAK, THE EGYPTIAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HAS IMPLEMENTED A NUMBER OF INNOVATIVE EDUCATION REFORM PROGRAMS OVER THE PAST DECADE.

AMONG THESE HAVE BEEN THE ACCELERATION OF INTERACTIVE PROGRAMS TO EDUCATE MORE NEW TEACHERS, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCING AND MULTIMEDIA DISTANCE LEARNING, AND THE EXPANSION OF ONLINE KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES AND OTHER NEW TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED EDUCATIONAL TOOLS.

THIS SUCCESS STORY DESCRIBES HOW ONETOUCH SYSTEMS AND ITS INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS ARE ASSISTING THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT TO ACHIEVE FUTURE-ORIENTED PUBLIC EDUCATION PRIORITIES.

“As reiterated by President Mubarak many times during his term in office, Egypt needs to develop new curriculum materials and capitalize on modern technologies to reform our education system. Another important step is to improve the training for our teachers, no matter where they are located. We believe that distance learning and interactive distance communications from companies such as OneTouch will support and expedite our progress in these areas.”

Interactive Distance Learning became a top priority for Egypt’s Ministry of Education in 1997, as it set out to implement an educational videoconferencing network that would ultimately connect the Ministry’s headquarters in Cairo with 58 branch centers located throughout the country.

An initial goal of the program was to enable subject matter experts in central locations to remotely train teachers and administrators through face-to-face video conferencing sessions. Later, as many as 30,000 students would gain access to an enhanced system.

“The Ministry wanted teachers in Aswan in upper Egypt to use the same materials and learn the same content as teachers in the capital district of Cairo,” one of the implementation managers explained. “This would assure the educational consistency and time-saving effectiveness that the project was chartered to deliver.”

The Ministry selected one of Egypt’s premier providers of broadband communication systems, Alkan Communication, to supply the infrastructure. Alkan Communication and its parent, Alkan Group, employ over 3,000 people and produce annual revenues exceeding 850 million LE (Egyptian Pounds) or about 140 million US dollars. Alkan in turn partnered with Telecom Egypt, Hughes Network Systems and OneTouch Systems to source the needed hardware and software components and support services.

“Most of the facilities connected to the network were large classrooms or auditoriums that accommodated about 50 people for each video conference session. The size of the rooms and large number of participants made it difficult for the primary instructor to maintain control of the session and answer all of the questions that would arise. We decided that the best solution for this was to install a OneTouch 5 Presentation Server at the central site in Cairo,” the manager said.



"OneTouch technology has allowed us to extend the use of our existing distance learning infrastructure to deliver more educational materials to more people in a more effective way."

"The OneTouch 5 Presentation Server gives our instructors the ability to manage and present all of the materials for a nationwide distance learning session. They can monitor who's out there, track what's said by whom, and then measure the results. The power of this level of interactivity is difficult to imagine until you have experienced it personally."

The OneTouch 5 Suite provides the Ministry of Education with integrated authoring, class management, and results analysis software. Course notes, visual aids, Q&A management tools and real-time participant result analysis are displayed for the instructor on an easy-to-use, touch-activated monitor. This enables the presenter to focus his or her attention entirely on communicating and interacting with remote participants on an individual basis.

"The Ministry of Education also wanted participating teachers in the remote locations to have a direct link back to the course instructor. This would permit them to ask questions on a real-time basis and provide continual feedback to the instructor about the effectiveness of the course materials," the manager added.

Participants communicate in real time with presenters through a OneTouch interactive touchpad. Each touchpad includes a microphone, LCD display, push-button response keys and a call button to ask questions or summon an instructor in much the same way that a student would raise his or her hand in a traditional classroom.

On the screen of the presentation server, the instructor can view all participant names, locations and

call requests and make personal contact as needed. When a one-to-one conversation takes place, every other participant can hear the voices of both the remote student and the presenter.

"The OneTouch 5 Presentation Server allows the instructor to manage an interactive training session like a conductor directs an orchestra," the manager said. "It gives them full control of the materials being presented and allows them to control which participant microphones are live at any given time. This provides a way to keep the session running smoothly even when there's a very large audience."

In the future, these same OneTouch capabilities will be extended beyond the 58 locations where the system is now installed to allow remote individuals to participate in the learning sessions using a desktop PC connected to the Internet and equipped with the OneTouch 5 On Demand participant interface.

OneTouch personnel working closely with the Alkan implementation team have performed OneTouch training sessions for officials and presenters at the Education Ministry in Cairo and at an administrative center located in Egypt's 6th October City. Additional hardware and software support is being provided by the Alkan staff on a continuing basis.



BENEFITS TO THE ORGANIZATION

- The Ministry of Education's existing information and communications infrastructure is being leveraged for more frequent, more effective, more easily comprehended interactive training sessions
- Instructors now have full control of interactive video conferencing sessions with as many as 50 participants in each of 58 remote locations
- Teachers across Egypt can participate in live Education Ministry teacher training sessions that promote nationwide consistency and time-effectiveness
- Educators can communicate with each other live, sharing feedback and suggestions on the value of training sessions
- As many as 30,000 students in higher education programs will have access to enhanced distance learning resources in the future

OneTouch Systems™
40 Airport Parkway
San Jose, CA 95110
tel 1-408-436-4600

64 Perimeter Center E.
Suite 700
Atlanta, GA 30346
tel 1-770-351-9711

120 South Sierra Avenue
Solana Beach, CA 92075
tel 1-858-793-8800

www.onetouch.com

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