



## Confectionery Company Moves into Cloud to Cut Costs and Boost Collaboration

**Customer:** Gandour  
**Website:** <http://www.gandour.com>  
**Customer Size:** 3,000 employees  
**Country or Region:** Saudi Arabia  
**Industry:** Food & Beverage  
**Partner:** Consolidated Telecoms

### Customer Profile

Saudi Arabia-based confectionery company Gandour, formed in 1857, has 3,000 staff and sales in more than 50 countries, including factories in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt and India.

### Software and Services

- Microsoft Office 365
  - Exchange Online
  - Lync Online
- Yammer

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Mohamad Tomelieh, Enterprise Architect and IT Strategy Manager, Gandour

Gandour is one of the Middle East’s biggest confectionery companies, with four factories and sales in more than 50 countries. The Saudi Arabian company switched from its long-standing e-mail system Lotus Notes (now IBM Notes) to Microsoft Office 365 and Microsoft’s private social network Yammer. The result was easier, faster and more flexible communications internally and externally, easier administration and a 38% cut in communication costs.

### Business Needs

The e-mail system Lotus Notes (now IBM Notes) had been used by Gandour for 13 years and, although it was stable, it was slow, its administration was not simple and it did not support well the company’s expansion or its need to fend off international and local rivals.

“The Lotus Notes infrastructure was quite inflexible,” says Mohamad Tomelieh, Gandour’s Enterprise Architect and IT Strategy Manager. “It didn’t allow us to scale up properly.” Setting up small offices, for example, was problematic and required additional equipment, he says.

“We were looking for something that would enable agility within our business, that would accelerate our business

processes and expansion within certain regions where we didn’t have enormous facilities and so required smaller offices,” he recalls. Gandour has factories in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt and India and sales in more than 50 countries.

Lotus Notes was also expensive and outdated compared with latest systems, says Tomelieh. Many new Gandour employees found it hard to adjust to the user interface, he adds: “Lotus Notes required a very high IT literacy for you to do the simplest tasks.” It was also difficult for the Saudi Arabian company to find IT administrators knowledgeable about Lotus Notes.

“We were searching for something much simpler. We were looking for a unified

communications platform," says Tomelieh. It wanted mobile access to e-mail for its constantly-travelling executives, instant messaging and to be able to keep in touch easily with employees, typically so that it could spread messages better about Gandour's vision and strategy, sales successes, staff appointments etc. The plan also had to take account of most employees' lack of strong computer literacy. "We are not an IT company," says Tomelieh. "We produce chocolate, chewing gum and confectionery."

## Solution

Gandour considered the five-year cost of installing its own local infrastructure and private cloud and came up with "some scary numbers", says Tomelieh. "That left us with only one solution; to go to the cloud." The options were in reality Google and Microsoft. Gandour had been using Microsoft products such as Excel for about 20 years, says Tomelieh: "We didn't want to make a significant change in the interface." Choosing Microsoft would allow integration with existing software and make financial sense through modification of the existing Microsoft Enterprise license. Gandour chose the cloud-based Office 365 set of tools, including e-mail, for 500 of its 3,000 employees, and Microsoft's private social network Yammer.

From local Microsoft partners, Gandour chose Consolidated Telecoms (Ctelecoms), which helped to refine Gandour's strategy and to shorten the timetable. "We managed to cut the time down significantly," says Tomelieh.

Ctelecoms is an expert in Microsoft cloud technologies — its migration strategy for Gandour provided appropriate training while minimizing the downtime and avoiding user problems.

From the beginning of 2013, the plan was sold to the Lotus Notes users, who were naturally reluctant to abandon the established and stable system, especially if the switch disrupted their work. Senior executives were shown Office 365 in use elsewhere and told that it would improve planning, marketing and other functions, make meetings more efficient, provide information about staff activities and speed up decision-making.

Yammer was chosen largely because Yammer's interface is similar to that of the locally very popular Facebook. "It was an instinctive move," says Tomelieh. The two-month installation, from November 2013, was smooth, with downtime of only about a day. Technically it required little more than cleaning up the active directory a bit. Yammer's installation "was extremely fast, it was painless".

## Benefits

Office 365 and Yammer cut communications operating costs by 38%. Migration was simple. E-mailing through Outlook was faster, meetings more efficient through Lync, business information available faster and IT management easier. Staff communication improved and end-users were very satisfied.

### • Costs cut

Lotus Notes was expensive to run and Gandour had 16 IT administrators at four sites. The number was cut to two. "Lotus Notes administration was quite complicated and required people to have six months of training," says Tomelieh. IT operating costs were cut by 38%, thanks partly to modification of an existing Microsoft licensing agreement.

### • Pain-free migration

As existing Microsoft software was up-to-date, user-client migration of 30–50 people/day was straightforward with no disturbance. No new hardware was needed. "We were expecting it to last much longer and expecting additional difficulties, which we didn't see," says Tomelieh.

### • Easier administration

Administration interfaces are simple, with little need for programming skills in PowerShell management framework or for advanced knowledge to move active directory users to the cloud. For end-users, familiarity with other Microsoft products meant that training was needed only for Lync and Outlook. Yammer was accepted easily because of familiarity with other social networks.

### • Staff satisfaction

"Everyone became very happy with the acceleration of their day-to-day work," says Tomelieh. By cutting out the previous e-mail hub, messages, including those to mobile devices, began to be transmitted without delay: "It was instantaneous. They were extremely happy." Lync is used extensively and has reduced telephone use.

Yammer, relatively new in Saudi Arabia, is used daily. "It has enabled internal branding, awareness of what is available on the market, etc. That enables quite a bit of change within the organization," says Tomelieh.

He sees enormous long-term potential in the cloud: "The future role of the fully-integrated platform is mouth-watering."