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Under inspection

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There are an estimated 300,000 organisations in the UAE. According to national legislation they each have to be inspected twice a year. If an inspector could do four inspections a day, that task would require a 600-man team.

A similar sized team would be required to handle ad hoc requests for visa inspections or late salary payments, expired labour cards, health and accommodation issues, ignoring sun-breaks during the summer, to name but a few.

Then there are all the other ministries, municipality departments and organisations responsible for compliance activities, public health, education, licensing and certification processes. It all adds up to an army of inspectors armed with an arsenal of regulations and requiring the logistical support and planning of a major campaign.

Someone who recognised that here was a job for IT was Jerry Norris, president and chief executive officer of Jadian Enterprises whose 18-year involvement in ISO 9000 consulting and business process improvement and re-engineering has resulted in an IT-based solution designed to make the massive task of compliance management easier for regulatory bodies. He was in Dubai recently finalising a partner agreement with Intertec Systems, which is to market and support Jadian's solution to governments and authorities throughout the region.

Norris started to bring his long-term development, used primarily to support his own ISO 9000 consulting and training business, to market five years ago. Rewritten in .NET as a generic compliance management solution it was designed to manage the whole inspection process.

Called Enterprise Quality Manager, it can automatically identify which entity, based on past performance and records, is a high risk organisation that needs to be



Norris: Focusing on high risk organisations makes inspection management much easier.

inspected or audited, while ignoring those companies that have historically performed well and kept their records clean.

The solution also manages the outcome of the inspection and the next steps that need to be implemented such as enforcement, warning, fine, closure or rating.

"When you have all these inspections that have to be done and you have limited resources you have to optimise inspections. So you want to focus on the high risk areas, not the low risk. So our system optimises inspection resources; it schedules inspections automatically based on past history; and it will download this to some sort of handheld or notebook," says Norris.

Reports on violations can be written on site, citations printed and data fed to the back end where the next inspection can be scheduled. It can also be integrated with a fine management system.

The region's first user is Dubai Municipality's environmental protection and public health departments. This was one of the reasons US-based Jadian decided to expand into the Middle East before even tackling European markets with its extensive compliancy regulations and EU directives.

"We were not in this market (Middle East) before Dubai Municipality found us via our website. They said they were looking for suitable software to manage inspections and had literally gone around the world looking for such software. We were the only one they could find," says Norris.

While there are a couple of competitive systems in the US from niche players similar to Jadian, there is little global competition currently for what is seen as a massive and growing market.

"We came to the region two and a half years ago with Dubai Municipality and now we've found a good partner (Intertec) to help us deploy throughout the GCC.

"The market for our solution is growing everywhere. My biggest competitors are large companies with an IT staff that wants to build this sort of solution themselves. They spend years and years trying. I've been working on this product for 18 years and our model is pretty well refined. So there is not a lot of competition out there," says Norris.

It was the company's status as a niche player that attracted Intertec Systems to the partnership. "As a company, we have this strategy of focusing on the government sector and this is where we saw us and Jadian having a strong fit. We believe we will be able to grow very clearly in this market.

"Specifically, it is a very new and niche area where there is little or no competition. I'm not going into an area where there are 20 other people competing," says Naresh Kothari, managing director, Intertec Systems. "This sort of solution is something that



Kothari: A niche market addressing government needs is where he wants Intertec to be.

not many people are providing. This is why we partnered with Jadian."

Intertec is now establishing an office in Bahrain and is also investigating the feasibility of opening one in Qatar to be able to market and support solutions in the region directly, though it still plans to work with existing partners wherever possible to give it the geographical spread it needs. The company is also developing additional resources to provide implementation and ongoing support regionally.

"At the end of the day the customers need local support," says Kothari, adding that the company has secured its first customer, the UAE's Ministry of Labour, whose Labour Inspection Department will be using the solution to check compliance of the labour and occupational safety and health laws.

"This is our first customer as the Intertec partnership. The first contract is to implement a complete compliance for all establishments in the UAE. The immediate need is to make sure the group visa compliance is met," says Norris.

"They are also creating risk analysis as they want to manage those companies where there are high physical risks so that they can do more rigorous inspections. They want to follow those companies that they identify as high risk - chemicals or high rise construction - in which case they might do several inspections of those companies in a year."

The Ministry has completed its initial training programme and is now in discussion with Jadian and Intertec to roll out a pilot project, the success of which over the next few months will determine whether or not the Ministry decides to roll out the complete system.