



Transforming Gulf Air's Digital Presence with Open Source and Cloud



Gulf Air, Bahrain's national carrier, is a leading ICT innovator in the Gulf. The giant opted for an end-to-end digital transformation of its online presence and services. They entrusted their long-term ICT partner, LINK Development, to implement and manage an Open Source (Drupal 7) portal built on the Microsoft Azure platform.

Under stringent quality and delivery measures, Gulf Air enjoyed a new portal and a set of revamped services that created excellent brand exposure, user experience and business focus. The Bahraini airline also witnessed, first-hand, the significant cost reduction and ease of scalability when augmenting Open Source with Microsoft Cloud.

Customer	Gulf Air
Industry	Aviation
Country	Bahrain
Technology	Drupal & Azure

Gulf Air, Innovation Meets Excellence

Gulf Air is one of the first commercial airlines established in the Middle East. The giant is an international hub serving 43 cities in 24 countries in three continents with a strong fleet of modern aircrafts. The airline operates one of the largest networks in the Middle East, with double daily flights to over 10 regional cities, from its hub at Bahrain International Airport.

Gulf Air is committed to being an industry leader and developing products and services that reflect the evolving needs and aspirations of its passengers. The company is [multi and consecutive award winner](#) for ICT and innovation solutions with a recent win of the iTech 2016 Awards, its second iTech award recognition.

Technology Transition; a Necessity

Gulf Air's on premise old portal was a hit at the time of deployment few years back. Driven by innovation, excellence and customer satisfaction, the giant needed to relaunch their digital presence and online portal to provide the most-up-to-date user experience and the most competitive airline branding and services on the international landscape.

The airline decided to replace the old portal with a new richer and more impressive website using Open Source technologies.

They wanted to move away from physical hosting of the portal which consumed a lot of effort, time and cost in IT environment management and maintenance.

Besides moving into the cloud, the new portal was to be built on latest and most efficient technologies, personalized per passengers' segments.

It should be easily scaled to provide current and new services with zero tolerance for slow response while meeting the seasonal surges of booking without any risk of downtime. With too many customer information at stake, security of the solution is also critical to uphold.

Partners in Digital Transformation

LINK Development, a long term ICT partner to Gulf Air, recommended that the new Open Source portal should run on Microsoft Azure Platform.

LINK is a certified Microsoft Cloud Service Provider (CSP), a Gold Microsoft Cloud Platform Partner and Gold Microsoft Cloud Productivity Partner; and an expert in developing portals on Open Source.

In the span of few months, LINK has delivered Gulf Air the new portal in one of the largest Open Source implementations on Azure in the Middle East.

Innovative International Hub

Using the cost-effective, extensible, and flexible Drupal 7, LINK delivered a new, fast, efficient, personalized portal.

LINK team provided cutting-edge, visually appealing and unique design, user experience and user interface. All information and services were developed to be easy-to-find, intuitive in navigation and fast in response.

As an international hub, the SEO ready and social media enabled portal acted as a multilingual gateway providing a superb, consistent experience in the Arabic, English, German, Russian and French languages.

Built to adhere to Responsive-Design standards, the portal and its fantastic parallaxes worked seamlessly on visitors' desktops, tablets, and smartphones.

The whole experience was personalized to create a platform for more engagement, upselling and brand loyalty. Portal visitors were able to find relevant information, services and targeted-promotions per visitor country and language.

Managed Services over Azure

LINK is running and managing Gulf Air's new official website on the Microsoft Azure platform. With Azure, the portal deployment was swift with secure access and tight control on customer information. The portal capacity amplified to accommodate about 2.5 million requests daily with more than 24000 unique visits per day.

At any point in time, the solution is able to be scaled to accommodate new, extended airline services with zero tolerance for slow response and meet any seasonal surges of booking or enquiries without any risk of downtime.

The Benefits

Whether in internal operations or in servicing their customers, Gulf Air is an ICT innovator adopting and providing the latest technologies. They are among the leaders in the regional airlines to run Open Source Drupal 7 on Microsoft Azure.

Outstanding Business Results

The portal capacity amplified to accommodate about 2.5 million requests per day. The number of website average daily visitors increased to over 24,000 daily hits. Solution concurrent users as 1000 users. Number of sales/booking has increased with the new setup.

More Business Focus

The IT team has more business focus on core business with LINK managing the solution setup, updates and operations.

The readiness and interoperability of the Open Source: Drupal and Azure helped meeting the airline's specific and stringent objectives of usability, security, speed and scalability.

The portal is up and running 24x7 for customers around the globe in the languages they speak; meeting the digital experience expectations and inducing increased brand loyalty.

The overheads and operational expenses were significantly reduced in comparison to the old on premise server solution.

The move from physical hosting to the cloud helped the Bahraini airline to reduce their operational costs and overhead while having LINK Datacenter managed services enabled the airline to dedicate more business focus on their core operations and ensure maximum reliability, availability and efficiency.

Omnichannel, Integrated Services

Although working with multiple applications, revamping few, and connecting to different systems in the backend, LINK integrated with different airline engines and operations, such as the booking application, the Falcon Flyer points system and others, so that users and business partners can find all services at the tip of their fingers without feeling the transition between different applications.

In addition to finding information about regulations, policies, rules, visa FAQs, blogs, destinations, special offers and others, website visitors can book flights, check flight status, manage their frequent flyer accounts, file missing baggage reports, submit baggage claims, accept offers and promotions, subscribe to services, apply to a job, check-in flight through web and do multiple other functions. They can also find rich add-ons that boost portal usage such as weather gadgets, millage calculators, travel alerts and others.

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We now run a more digitally productive business. Our Open Source portal is a cutting-edge digital hub for online bookings, promotions and many more services.

Our business focus has amplified as the portal runs on Microsoft Azure with stable and secure 24*7 Managed Services.

In general, Gulf Air digital capacities significantly grew thanks to the stronger online presence, more captivating customer experiences and more scalable infrastructure. Simply, LINK Development and Link Datacenter, have done a great job!

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Dr. Jassim Haji,

*Director of Information
Technology, Gulf Air*

Technologies

- Cloud: Microsoft Azure Platform
- Web Server: Nginx + PHP-FPM
- File Sync: Lsyncd (Live Syncing Daemon)
- DB: Percona MySQL (Master/Master) replication.
- Open Source CMS: Drupal 7
- DB Testing Tools: InnoTop
- Scenario for workloads: Linux lift & shift/Mainstream Linux VM