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# BEYOND SECURITY

**Waqar Mohamed** of G4S UAE talks about the firm's successful soft services expansion, and leveraging G4S' security relations to fuel new avenues



# LEVERAGING RELATIONS

G4S UAE'S **WAQAR MOHAMED** TALKS ABOUT THE COMPANY'S FOCUSED APPROACH ON SOFT SERVICES AND GROWTH AVENUES BY USING ITS EXISTING RELATIONS

WORDS NIKHIL PEREIRA PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY RAJESH RAGHAV

**O**ver the last 18 months, G4S UAE's FM division has grown "from scratch". Waqar Mohamed, MD aviation, facilities management & First Select Employment Services for G4S UAE says the company has grown 20% over the last 12 months, having added key contracts in soft services and cleaning.

Mohamed says, that the company "woke up in January 2017" with aim to get back in to the soft services and FM space. "It has, since then, gained steam making it the most successful business unit within G4S — which includes our FM and aviation operations," Mohammed says.

Prior to January 2017, the general FM and aviation side of the business was up and running, but the cleaning discipline had been scaled down to zero. It was only towards the end of 2016 that G4S decided to test the waters and broaden its scope of services offered in the market. "Our highest profile cleaning win was with City Walk, and on the back of that we have won around 12 contract for cleaning and soft services," he says.

In terms of service offering, G4S UAE

isn't challenging in the hard services space. According to Mohamed it's the company's strategy of weighing up the right opportunities. "We have not gone into what people would traditionally understand as IFM. We are a soft services FM supplier — we are not directly involved in HVAC and MEP," he reveals.

"I'm not ruling out that G4S will integrate hard services in to our offerings. But we are an integrated company in terms of the services we offer — we supply FM, cash, electronic services and manned security to our clients. We also offer white collar and executive level services through our sister company First Select. So without offering hard services, we still have clients that opt for more than one service line making us an integrated FM company."

While Mohamed admits that MEP is considered as a core service of integrated FM, G4S's global strategy doesn't regard it as so. "We offer those services to clients through our network of preferred partners," he says adding that the mandate is not set to



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**Waqar Mohamed**, MD aviation, facilities management & First Select Employment Services for G4S UAE.





The company has focused on growing its FM and soft services divisions.

change overnight. G4S will continue to operate on its current model because the company “hasn’t been setup in a manner to take on hard services, but it could change in the future”.

Globally G4S’ in-house MEP service offering is a small operation. However, the company’s Saudi Arabia

operations have evolved into a serious hard FM player. “Saudi Arabia can be singled out as the one country that dominates hard service contracts. The Saudi FM operations is the biggest in the G4S global catalogue, and in that hard services is a crucial component.”

Closer to home, Mohamed speaks of its largest client – Dubai Airports, which G4S UAE has been working with for more than seven years. There the firm is responsible for operating the ‘May I Help You’ service at the Dubai International Airport terminals, forming its largest contract to date in the UAE.

Recently G4S UAE deployed more than 100 staff to man the airport’s smart gates that were installed at all terminals. Mohamed says that G4S UAE are constantly adding more personnel to the site, while also lengthening the duration of the contract.

“Meanwhile, Fly Dubai continues to grow from strength to strength. We had introduced a brand new customer service concept about 12 months back for Fly Dubai, which has grown along with our other services. Meanwhile, our other most high profile client in aviation in Etihad Airways, and again we have managed to maintain and surpass operation excellence for them,” Mohamed states.

G4S has also won contracts and

entered into new areas of operation. A contract with e-commerce firm Jollychic has already commenced, with G4S providing the firm with warehousing staff – packers and loaders. “Jollychic has good expansion plans going into next year and we are tied in with them to deliver those,” he reveals.

Contracts with FMCG manufacturer and supplier Unikai and construction firm Arabtec were also signed over the last few months. “For both these clients we are supplying general helpers,” Mohamed says.

He feels, however, G4S needs to leverage its connections from within the group and target the hospitality and retail segments with its FM and soft services offerings. “Our manned security services division is strong in retail and we are looking at leveraging that clout. We have immense capability through the overall G4S brand, which is not fully maximised,” he says adding that there is plenty of scope moving forward and it’s ultimately up to G4S to change that market perception.

At the FM Expo 2017, Mohamed spoke to *fmME* about the launch of its consumer service. It was also a way for the multinational to announce its FM business, as it looked to alter market



G4S is looking at making the most of its connections in the manned security space.

## HOW WILL AUTOMATION IMPACT JOBS

Waqar Mohamed says that AI and automation doesn’t worry G4S much, as it looks at itself as a technology service provider. “Right now the impact isn’t as much, and that’s because in what we do, you need people as part of the service. Even within ‘May I Help You’ technology has already been part of the offering, which has differentiated us from other suppliers, and it will continue to be so.

“However, it would be ignorant of me to say that AI and automation will not affect jobs. From a business perspective if you sit and watch the train go past, and don’t get on it, that’s your problem. We have to be part of that journey and grow with the market needs. If we don’t we will be left behind.”





→ **Waqar Mohamed** says working with understanding clients makes it a lot more easier to manage challenges

perception of G4S as a manned security and cash services player.

“People are comforted in the knowledge and are positive to learn about our FM operations. The G4S brand name takes the surprise element out of people’s mind. And of course it’s a value add that comes with a consolidated service provider,” he says.

Mohamed makes no secret that the biggest challenge is centered on cost efficiency and best possible quality to clients. “From a customer’s point of view, they are faced with various market pressures, it’s a country wide issue. So our customers, while expressing an intent to continue working with us, negotiate on the price. At the same time, there are pressures internally given we are a multinational company,” Mohamed opines.

In this catch 22 scenario Mohamed

says that the client has to always come out on top. “The brand [client] is far more superior to any FM business in the UAE. We are custodians of that brand, and we have to ensure that the level of service never diminishes on the back of cost pressure. I take the challenge of managing internal expectations, but our clients can’t suffer at any cost.”

Clients also play an important role when the going gets tough. Mohamed says G4S’s clients fully understand the situation, and that’s when they become partners. “So they don’t want to see us suffer and they will have open and supportive dialogue with us to say ‘We know what we would like, but that would only damage you in the end, and ultimately we will suffer together’. So they are aware, and that’s why they are leaders in their own rights because at

“// THE BRAND [CLIENT] IS FAR MORE SUPERIOR TO ANY FM BUSINESS IN THE UAE. WE ARE CUSTODIANS OF THAT BRAND, AND WE HAVE TO ENSURE THAT THE LEVEL OF SERVICE NEVER DIMINISHES ON THE BACK OF A COST PRESSURE, OR ANY OTHER PRESSURE FOR THAT MATTER. I TAKE THE CHALLENGE OF MANAGING INTERNAL EXPECTATIONS, BUT OUR CLIENTS MUST NEVER SUFFER. //”

the end of the day we are an extension of their own family,” he adds.

Citing an example of Dubai Airports, Mohamed adds that G4S maintains a “brilliant relationship that is never take for granted”.

He adds: “We are an integrated partner with them because we have both had our sets of challenges.

“The team takes all the plaudits, but its part down to the solutions we have found for our clients in the most cost effective way. Every customer we have, has come back to us and said that they like working with G4S because we deliver what they want, and more. As cliché as it may sound, it’s a genuine market sentiment. We may not be the least expensive supplier, but people trust our compliance and brand reputation.”

Looking at the next 16 months, Mohamed is confident of the proposition of adding to existing client’s scope of work remains alluring. “Over the next 12-16 months, we have already secured a further 20% on top of the 20% growth in business. The money isn’t quite in the bank but the work is secured until December 2019,” Mohamed concludes. ■

## G4S CONSUMER FM

G4S UAE launched its consumer FM arm 12 months ago at the FME expo 2017. Waqar Mohamed says G4S has been “relatively successful” since the launch, but the market is extremely tough. There is plenty of demand and there is no shortage of suppliers either. “It’s not going to be taking over our business, and it won’t be our principal business. It’s a great addition to the portfolio of services.”