



Pushing construction forward

Etisalat by e& and Sobha building together

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For construction and real estate giant Sobha, the company's "Pushing construction forward" slogan is not just a catchy tagline. As one of the largest organisations of its kind operating across India and the Middle East, there is immense pride in delivering the highest quality standards with no compromise. Starting business in 1976, Sobha Group has undergone rapid growth, crossing borders and different sectors. As a firm believer in backward integration, the company's business units include: real estate development, contracting, construction, metalworking, manufacture of construction materials, architectural and engineering design. The firm's Engineering and Contracting unit was formed in 1995 and today, the team's hardhats tackle everything from hospitals to hotels, schools to housing developments.

New connections

Every gleaming new skyscraper, school or hotel development starts out as a levelled area of land with a single portacabin serving as an on-site office. Construction companies like Sobha are required to be responsive and able to launch quickly when a project bid is accepted, because failure to meet strict milestones can result in costly penalties.

Effective communication is vital in this industry and each new site urgently needs phone links and internet connectivity to interact with project stakeholders – the on-site office needs to organise logistics, procurement, IT and all other aspects of the development. Sobha has a long tradition of partnering with technology and as soon as the in-house IT team works out a job's specific requirements, etisalat by e& steps in to provide innovative infrastructure and technical support to move construction forward at each stage.





Solid foundations

To get a new development up and running, etisalat by e&'s engineers created a temporary phone and internet connection using mobile data packages and portable modems. With this quick-fix solution in place, Sobha Engineering and Contracting company staff have instant mobile phone and Wi-Fi coverage until a high-speed connection to the main network is established.

While this solution works in the short term, it's important to provide reliable, speedy and stable coverage as soon as possible so a site can operate at full capacity. Etisalat by e& engineers assess each development and install industry-leading telecoms infrastructure to bring a project to life. Cabling is laid to connect the site to the nearest network junction point, which is made easier if there is one nearby. Fibre optic cabling allows 100 times faster download speed than the temporary set-up to keep progress buzzing. Sometimes, obstacles need to be overcome, such as other utilities blocking the cable's path, and in more remote areas engineers use wireless antennas to link the site to the network.

To function effectively and safely, Sobha relies on a mix of state-of-the-art broadband, project phone lines and customised mobile packages. Arun Prakash Memgain, Technical Senior Manager with Sobha Engineering and Contracting explains: "Etisalat by e&'s sophisticated communications package has revolutionised the way we approach a project and helped us become much more efficient. Our success depends on fast, effective communication and without reliable, high-speed network coverage we wouldn't be able to operate in real-time as we do currently".

Quick response

Using this framework, Sobha Engineering & Contracting has enjoyed much improved communications, saving time, manpower and lowering operating costs. Customised data packages that run on the main etisalat by e& network have enabled the team to assimilate WhatsApp into its work practices as a central communications tool. The social media app is governed by an in-house user policy, with a separate group set up for each aspect of the job: construction progress, quality control, health & safety, procurement, project management and more.

In the days before the app could be supported, it took longer to notify the relevant people about construction issues and to bring about an effective solution. If an employee spotted a health and safety breach or quality control problem on site, it would be manually red-flagged and logged. Phone calls and emails were sent to the concerned engineer, architect or head of department, who needed to visit the site, find and inspect the problem, then provide a solution to remedy it. Any delay in responding would cause a domino effect that held up construction.

Now, high-speed connectivity allows staff, contractors and stakeholders to keep in touch with each other in real-time. Through WhatsApp, the project problems are dealt with immediately and progress followed by all members of a relevant group. Once an issue is identified, it is photographed and shared with all interested parties, then attended to immediately, causing minimal disruption to the construction timeline. A fix that used to take a day can now be done within an hour or two and there is an ongoing record of each conversation stream from start to finish: every message, what was said, what was due to be actioned and if the outcome was satisfactory.

As well as speeding up the building process, better communication has also helped Sobha's already enviable safety record. "The etisalat by e& network gives us the capacity and ability to speak directly to everyone on a project or specific groups within the team. This helps to communicate health and safety issues faster and raise awareness of potential dangers on the site where employees are working. By acting smarter, we can also plan ahead to minimise disruption: for example, receiving advanced warnings of

high winds allows us to hoist more building supplies on site before extreme conditions prevent the cranes from operating," says Mr. Satpal Garg, Vice President of Projects – Sobha Construction & Engineering.





Building excellence

Dubai's skyline has experienced rapid development in a short space of time and contains a number of instantly recognisable iconic structures. The city's progress is testament to the skill, dedication and professionalism of companies like Sobha that play a core role in the development process. In the fast changing world of construction, it's essential to stay ahead of the game. Working together with etisalat by e&, Sobha Engineering & Contracting Company continues to deliver high-quality developments that uphold its reputation for excellence. It's a partnership that shares the common values of reliability, continuity and speed, turning today's construction sites into tomorrow's landmarks.

