



Riyadh Exhibition Centre News

By Noel O'Donnell



The 1998 Exhibition season kicked off at the end of February, with the Saudi Computer Exhibition. Reflecting the high level of interest in IT in the Kingdom, 130 Exhibitors participated in the exhibition which was attended by over 68,000 visitors. The two most notable trends to be highlighted at the show were firstly that exhibitors were focusing more on providing customers with total solutions, rather than attempting purely to sell individual units and secondly that there were large numbers of companies displaying products related to the Internet, in anticipation of its introduction to the market.

The influence of the Internet could also be seen clearly at the Saudi Communications Exhibition which took place from 9-12 March. Demand in Saudi Arabia for Telecommunications products and services is rapidly expanding. The on-going TEP-6 program is the largest Telecommunications project ever undertaken in the region, whilst Saudi Arabia is also one of the fastest growing mobile phone markets in the world.

Saudicom 98 attracted well over 100 exhibitors and nearly 20,000 visitors. As one would expect, all of the leading international Telecoms Companies such

as Lucent, Alcatel, Ericsson, Siemens, Nokia and Motorola, participated alongside local companies such as Bugshan, AEC and Binladin. Having recently announced the privatisation of telecoms services in the Kingdom and their transfer to the newly formed Saudi Telecommunications Company, The Saudi Ministry of PTT was also a notable exhibitor at Saudicom 98. This major change in the structure of the industry and the opportunities it may bring was a subject that was debated during Saudicom 98.

The next major exhibition at Riyadh Exhibition Centre is Saudi Furniture and Interiors 98 which takes place from 24-28 May 1998. This show provides a clear example of the importance of Governmental funding for exhibition participation. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) provides financial support for UK Companies to participate in overseas exhibitions and the scheme is regarded as one of the best and most cost effective of its kind in the world. With the DTI's support, we attracted 33 UK Companies to last year's Saudi Furniture Exhibition. Sadly, this year, without DTI's support, we won't have any exhibitors from the UK. The DTI has limited budgets and as Exhibition Organisers we understand this, but it is, at the same time frustrating, having started to build a momentum for UK Furniture Suppliers last year and not being able to build upon it in 1998. Whilst at present there is unlikely to be any UK participation at this event, there will be group participations from a number of countries including Italy, Germany, Greece, Mexico and Cyprus, as well as a complete range of suppliers from Saudi Arabia and the surrounding region.

We have just produced our latest Exhibitions Calendar, which lists all of our events up to and including the year 2000. Please call, fax or e-mail me and I would be happy to send you a copy.

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