Agenda

1. Syrian Computer Society in brief.
2. ICT in Syria, Profiles and Indicators
   - E-readiness.
   - E-opportunities.
3. ICT SMEs challenges in Syria.
4. The ICT Incubator.
   - Programs
   - Activities
   - Case studies
   - Action plan
Syrian Computer Society (SCS)

- **founded** in 1989 by the late Dr. Bassel Al-Assad.
- 4000 senior members and 6000 associate members.
- **Mission:** introducing the ICT culture in the Syrian society, and helping shape and regulate the ICT market in the country.

**Activities:**

- Organizing conferences
- Symposia
- Seminars
- Lectures
- Exhibitions
- Training courses nationwide.
- Incubation facilities for the youth.
- Promotion of digital content and services.
- Transferring and localizing information and communications technologies.
Syrian Computer Society (SCS)

Participation in international events:
- World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)
- Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

New projects and initiatives:
- Rural development
- Online education and training
- ICT measurement...

Partners and stakeholders:
- The academia
- The industry
- The civil society
- Regional and international organizations

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ICT in Syria, Profiles and Indicators

E-Readiness

Connectivity and technology infrastructure
Business environment
Consumer and business adoption
Legal environment
Social and cultural environment
E-services

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ICT in Syria, Profiles and Indicators

**E-opportunities**

- Skilled ICT graduates.
- Need for new ICT services.
- New niche markets.
- Outsourcing, software exporting.

Enrolled Students at Syrian IT faculties in state universities

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ICT SMEs challenges in Syria

- Lack of organizational & administrative structure.
- Inability to build their own capacities.
- High transaction costs.
- High cost of information technology.
- Lack of financing organizations.
ICT SMEs challenges in Syria.
Financing ICT SMEs

Banks reluctant to lend: the usual SME financing problems, but more severe..

- High risk profile
- Informational asymmetries
- Lack of tangible collateral

Financing Gap

Amount

Time

- Early Stage
- Development
- First Expansion
- Second Expansion

Problem areas: banks do not lend and money required too small for VC

Mixed picture: limited seed financing but sometimes amounts compatible with existing sources

No major constraint: banks start lending and VC are willing to invest

THE FINANCING OF SME IN THE ICT/ICTE SECTOR
Findings from an infoDev Study

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ICT SMEs challenges in Syria.

SME Growth

Source: Cardullo, 1999.

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What is business incubation?

Business incubation is about nurturing start-up enterprises to grow and become sustainable competitive companies.

Incubation intends to:

• Increase commercialization of ideas

• Encourage business start-up by reducing the risk and cost of starting a new business

• Increase the survival rate and competitiveness of promising start-ups by building capacity and networks
ICTI First ICT Incubator in Syria

A study proposed by ESCWA 2003

Research on incubators in several countries in the region
- Tunisia
- Jordan
- Morocco

ICTI: the first ICT incubator established in Damascus 2005.

A pilot project for a series of incubators throughout Syria.

A first step towards building science and technology parks.

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Cooperation and Partnerships

Private sector

academia

Government organizations

NGOs

International organizations

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Our Incubation Program

Pre-incubation: 4-6 months

- practical training and working on prototype.
- Limited but free services
- Working on business plan
- Preparing for incubator admission

Incubation: 18 months

- Full equipped office space
- Facilities
- Consulting (technical, legal, financial,...)
- Access to funding resources
- Marketing.
- Business training, mentoring and couching.

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Some Activities

Innovative university project competition.

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Some Activities

Exhibitions

- Sh@@m 2007
- WebIT

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Some Activities

Promoting Uses of Information and Communication Technologies that Deliver Environmental, Social and Economic Benefits.

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SMEs incubated @ ICTI

- Crows Animation
- 4 sham e-real estate
- Voila web solutions
- Easy Books
- Accounting solutions
- Industrial Control Solutions
- TechnoGate
- Consulting & Training
- GET WAY
- Students E-society
- Creative Arts workshop
- Think
- level09 studios
- Web 2.0 solutions

Web solutions.
Technical Training and consulting.
Accounting solutions.
Graphic solutions.
3D animation.
Industry control solutions.

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Case studies

Digital Arabic Content @ ICTI

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Crows Animation

What We See, Becomes Alive

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Crows Animation

- high quality computer generated films and television series.
- culturally appropriate and socially responsible 3D-animation
- Targeting film and television production companies and networks in the Arab region, with special focus on the international market.
- assembling a team of professionals who have the capacity to create high quality 3D animation movies, programs, shorts and television series.
Crows Animation

- Amer Abdulghani and his two brothers in August 2006.
- At the moment (April 2008), there are 8 permanent employees on the payroll and 14 subcontracted workers excluding subcontracted companies.
- Crows Animation is willing to grow to 50 employees and $10 million in revenues in 2012.
Crows Animation @ ICTI

- Started incubation May 2006.
- Training and consulting.
- Basic technical infrastructure.
- Developing first marketing show case.
- Signed first contract on 169- minute long 3D animated television series to be aired on a major television channel in the Arab region.
The Team


HIGH QUALITY ARABIC TEXT TO SPEECH USING SEMI SYLLABLES

Afaf al Shalaby,
Alia Dreresh
Suzan Mohammad
Lara Mansour

Supervised by : O. Al-Dakkak, N. Ghneim,*
ATTS

- Fikra Award winner 5000$
- Research and graduation project at Damascus university, faculty of IT.
- Supervised by HIAST researchers.
- Permission to develop it into a product by the winning students, will start @ ICTI May 2008.
Arabic Text-to-Speech System

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Training on business planning and feasibility study.

Now working on the enterprise structure.

Product prototype.

Preparing marketing plan.
Action Plan

- Incubators in Homs, Aleppo, Latakia.
- Regional workshop on entrepreneurship.
- National workshop on Incubator management training.
- Starting new entrepreneurship programs at universities.
- National network of entrepreneurship programs and incubators.
Thank you
Rima Shaban
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