



Picture Credit | Gulf News, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Used with permission.



# Gulf News: Getting Back to Standard and Reducing Incidents by 80% with SAP® Custom Development

Gulf News had so customized its implementation of the SAP for Media solution portfolio that it could not easily integrate new features or migrate to a newer release of the software. SAP® Custom Development services helped Gulf News **get back to standard**, migrate to current software releases, gain new functionality, and reduce incident tickets by more than 80%.

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# Executive overview

## Company

Gulf News

## Headquarters

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Industry

Media – publishing

## Products and Services

*Gulf News*, the leading English-language newspaper of the Arabian Gulf region, published by Al Nisr Publishing LLC

## Employees

1,800

## Web Site

[www.gulfnews.com](http://www.gulfnews.com)

## BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

### The company's top objectives

- Revert a heavily customized deployment of the SAP for Media solution portfolio to enable a smooth upgrade to the current release
- Reduce custom development and costs of maintenance and system incidents
- Ease integration of this customized solution with the SAP® ERP application
- Gain flexibility to take advantage of new functionality in response to business opportunities

### The resolution

Implementation transformation using SAP Custom Development services

### The key benefits

- Got “back to standard” and then updated SAP for Media solutions to the latest release
- Raised productivity and cut incident tickets and maintenance costs
- Gained insight into using SAP software to support critical business needs without customizations

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## TOP BENEFITS ACHIEVED

**54%**

Reduction in customized software

**97%**

Reduction in reported incidents

**2.1 years**

To recoup investment costs fully

See more metrics ►



“This was an enormously complex undertaking, so to complete it in just 12 months was fabulous!”

Marclino Fernandes, Business Applications Manager, Gulf News

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**Company objectives**

Resolution

Business transformation

Future plans

# Gulf News: Overcoming obstacles in order to move forward

With a daily circulation of over 120,000, Dubai-based Gulf News, part of the Al Nisr Group, is the largest daily English-language broadsheet in the Arabian Gulf region, as substantiated by BPA Worldwide, the largest media auditing organization in the world.

Since 2005, the Gulf News organization has relied heavily on the media-focused business solutions delivered through the SAP for Media solution portfolio. Advertising sales, circulation management, distribution, returns – Gulf News used SAP for Media solutions to support all these activities.

Increasingly, though, the software used by Gulf News was looking less and less like the standard deployment of SAP for Media solutions. Between 2005 and 2010, more than 725 customizations had been layered on top of the solutions to enable functionality that Gulf News personnel and business units had requested. In many cases, these customizations replicated functionality that was

already present in SAP for Media solutions, but had never been enabled. Rather than enabling these features, though, the company supporting Gulf News persuaded it to adopt a customized solution to deliver the precise functionality that had been requested.

The downside of this approach eventually became clear: the SAP for Media solutions at Gulf News were so thoroughly customized that they could not be easily upgraded to any later releases. And as Gulf News eyed integrating these solutions with the SAP ERP application, which it was deploying for the first time to replace an aging JD Edwards solution, not being on the latest release posed a serious problem.

Gulf News needed to get back to standard in order to move forward.



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# Back to standard with SAP Custom Development

Gulf News walked away from the company that had prevailed upon it to embrace these extensive customizations and turned instead to SAP Custom Development. Both business and technical leaders at Gulf News understood that their deployment of SAP for Media solutions did not need further customization; the customizations needed to be reverted so that they could get back to a deployment that could be upgraded to the latest release.

At the same time, Gulf News decision makers recognized that they could not simply disable all of the functionality that the customizations had enabled. Too many business units relied on those features. So while they wanted to eliminate as much custom code as possible to get the deployment as close to standard as possible, they also needed to enable the standard functionality in SAP for Media solutions that had been ignored in favor of the custom objects. The business units would be able to continue taking advantage of the features they were accustomed to using, but going forward they would use the functionality native to SAP for Media solutions.

Project managers from SAP Custom Development reviewed the customizations and identified more than 400 that could be replaced by functionality that is standard in the SAP for Media solutions. Some of the remaining 300+ customizations would have to be refined to comply with best practices supported by SAP; but once this was accomplished, they would no longer constitute a barrier to an upgrade to the latest release of the solution portfolio. That release could, in turn, be integrated smoothly with the release of SAP ERP that Gulf News was planning to deploy.



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# Standardization, not customization, enables transformation

SAP Custom Development worked in partnership with Gulf News for a full 12 months to facilitate the complete transformation of these mission-critical business solutions. To find the right solution, teams from Gulf News and SAP collaborated both in person and virtually to identify the customizations that could be replaced by functionality already present in SAP for Media solutions. They worked with Gulf News as well as the SAP Consulting team deploying SAP ERP to create an orderly back-to-standard project plan and then executed the plan to facilitate the desired transformation while minimizing business downtime.

In the end, despite the elimination of more than 400 customizations, Gulf News lost no critical functionality. In fact, Gulf News ultimately gained access to features and functionality that had not been accessible in the past, including functionality related to security, credit card processing, deferred value calculation, rebate management, and more.

## KEY BENEFITS

### 54%

Reduction in customized software

### 2.1 years

To recoup investment costs fully

### 400+

Customizations replaced by standard functions

### 97%

Reduction in reported incidents

### US\$1.9 million

Projected 10-year cash flow savings



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Resolution

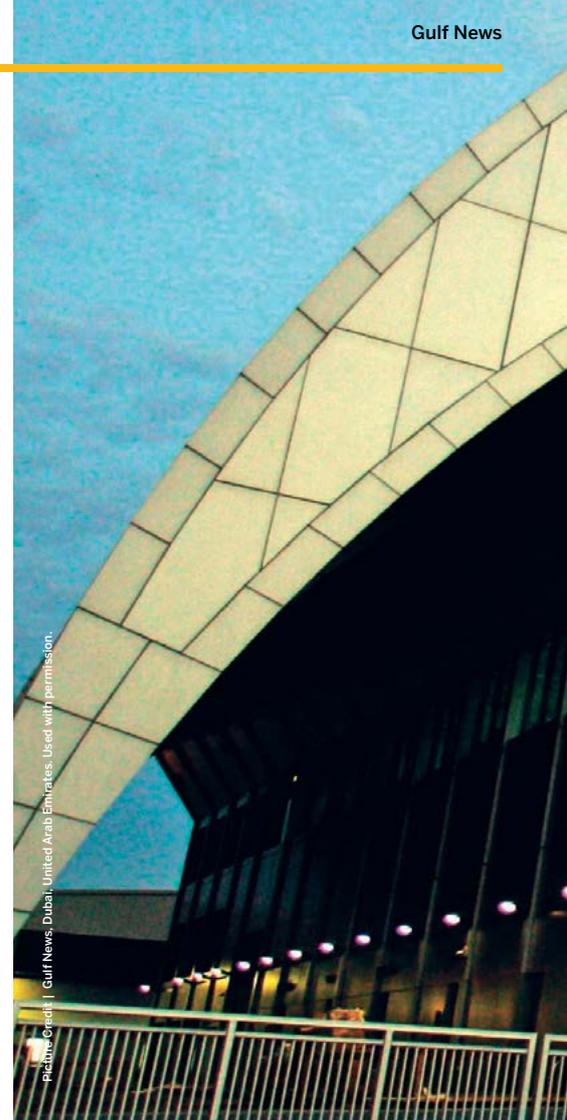
Business transformation

**Future plans**

# Expanding reach and functionality going forward

With an integrated business solution from SAP – one that extends from the core financial and business management features of SAP ERP to the industry-specific features found in SAP for Media solutions – Gulf News is well positioned to compete more efficiently and effectively against other media companies both in the region and around the world. Because it is using the latest releases of SAP software, Gulf News can operate more nimbly and with greater agility than ever.

At the same time, because it has decided to avoid making customizations to the standard deployments of SAP ERP and the SAP for Media solution portfolio whenever native functionality will provide the required support, the company's day-to-day operating costs are lower than what they used to be. The money it saves by avoiding costly customizations can be put to work in other areas to improve content and service delivery.



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