

National Elections in Oman

In June 2003, DRS was approached to implement an e-Counting solution for the national elections to be held in the Sultanate of Oman for the Majlis Ash'shura - the National Consultative Council.

This election was of historic significance to both Oman and to DRS. For Oman, it was the first time that all its citizens over the age of 21 were eligible to vote; for DRS, it was the first time that its e-Counting technology has been used in a Middle Eastern election. Election day was planned to take place only a few months after the original enquiry to DRS. This was a project which only a company with the expertise of DRS could undertake for a number of reasons.

“ The use of a computer in the voting process and the vote counting had greatly helped in speeding up the election process ”

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Ahead of schedule

The complicated nature of the contract required DRS to design, print and deliver to Oman, 59 separate ballot papers; one ballot paper for each Wilayat (the local Omani administrative district). This all had to be completed within just a few weeks from the closure date of the candidate nomination lists. These ballot papers were printed in Arabic script and featured the candidate name and full colour photograph of each of the candidates standing, together with a unique and secure barcode. In total, DRS produced just under half a million ballot papers and provided 59 e-Counting scanners for the election. Using the vast experience that it has gained over the many years working within the international election arena, DRS was able to deliver all the equipment and ballot papers ahead of schedule to Bahwan IT, the local DRS distributor.

DRS also provided a highly skilled team of software and hardware engineers to assist in the smooth running of the election. The huge distances across Oman meant that the only practical way to count the votes was to count them locally in each Wilayat. The DRS range of scanning technology allows for total flexibility, so the most appropriate scanner for each size of Wilayat was chosen before the count began. Those Wilayats with low numbers of voters used handfed scanners, those with medium quantities of voters were counted by automatic scanners and those Wilayats with high volumes of voters were counted by sophisticated high speed scanners.

On polling day, the intensive period of preparation was put to the test. Turnout was excellent and the DRS e-Counting systems helped to deliver the result in just a few hours. The Omani election officials were delighted with the outcome. Speaking after the election, Sheikh Said bin Mohammed Al Braiki, Deputy Chairman of the elections committee, said: “The use of a computer in the voting process and the vote counting had greatly helped in speeding up the election process.”

