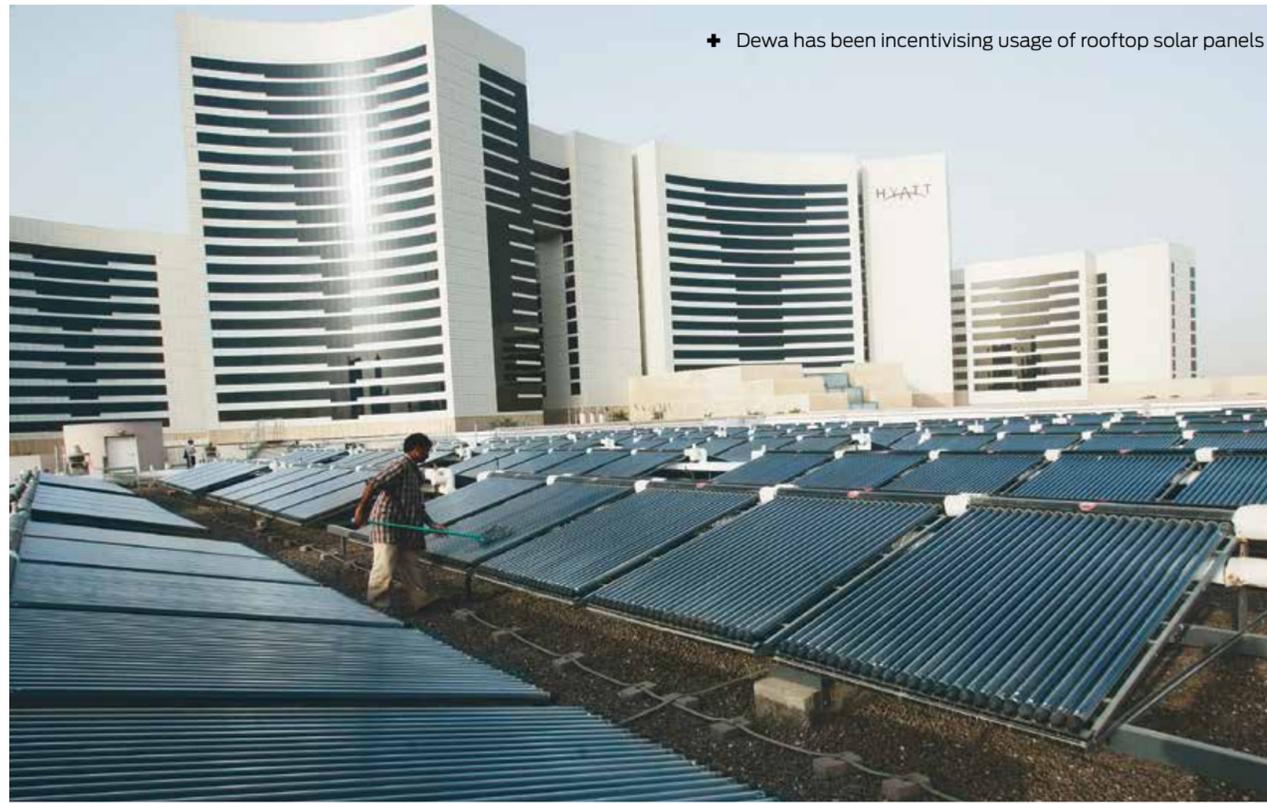


+ The UAE's Vision 2021 places sustainability at the heart of government policymaking

Reuters



+ Dewa has been incentivising usage of rooftop solar panels

Gulf News Archives/Virendra Saklani

Walk the talk

PW takes a look at how Dubai's utility authority's new strategy will bolster the UAE's green vision

By Neha Kaul
Special to PW

Building a green economy is central to the national development strategy outlined in the UAE's Vision 2021. It aims to position the country as a role model and leader in global green economy initiatives.

The Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (Dewa) has aligned its business model with this vision by revamping its processes. Alongside awareness campaigns to sensitise end users to the pitfalls of energy wastage and excess consumption, Dewa has launched a strategy to ensure it will continue to make significant strides towards the UAE's green objectives.

Dewa's Strategy 2021, launched with the theme Dewa at Work: Smarter and brighter energy future for Dubai, is an inclusive strategy document that encompasses a 360-degree approach spanning planning, research

and development and implementation areas. *Gulf News* reported earlier this year that the utility provider plans to spend Dh60 billion on projects and is targeting a 16 per cent cut in emissions. From seizing opportunities to meeting challenges, identifying strategic drivers, goals and priorities and providing a research and innovation road map, Strategy 2021 showcases a commitment to drive value in the delivery of sustainable utility services.

The utility firm's strategic road map gets the ball rolling by providing benchmarked standards for sustainability reporting, says Sougata Nandi, a sustainability development evangelist. "The first and most important impact of the report is knowledge, that something called sustainability reporting in accordance with Global Reporting Initiative [GRI] exists," says Nandi. "Second is the fact that Dewa has utilised such a reporting framework to give documentary shape to its long-term strategy aligning with the Dubai Integrated Energy Strategy 2030 and Dubai Plan 2021.

"The audience of this report and the industry in general will take note that [it] provides substance and structure to sustainability as a holistic initiative, and

takes a giant leap forward from carrying out ad hoc sustainability works."

In recent years, Dewa has revamped its billing slabs on projects and is targeting a 16 per cent cut in emissions. From seizing opportunities to meeting challenges, identifying strategic drivers, goals and priorities and providing a research and innovation road map, Strategy 2021 showcases a commitment to drive value in the delivery of sustainable utility services.

"From international best practices to building a green economy to providing world-class services that add value to the happiness of the people and health of the nation, Dewa is committed to ongoing efforts to establish it as an exemplary sustainable innovative utility," says Saeed Al Tayer, Managing Director

and CEO of Dewa. "Dewa's Strategy 2021 will serve as an active reminder of our pledge and will help guide our process and operational planning towards achieving these milestones."

Vertika, a Dubai-based HR professional, says Dewa's aggressive campaign towards educating people about saving water and energy ultimately benefits end users like her. "[There are] impactful adverts on all radio channels to keep air conditioning at 24 degrees, and huge hoardings in malls and other key spots encouraging people to switch off lights at home for an hour and not to let water run when not required."

"We should do our bit in conserving energy and water at home and educate our children to do the same. Every bit counts."

The Dewa report provides a clear management approach to the utility firm's triple bottom line impact areas, and also measures its own performance against a KPI, explains Nandi. "Most importantly, Dewa is sharing this information and statistics through the public domain, bringing transparency and energising other industry players to do the same."

Apart from updating consumers, stakeholders and partners about its sustainability practices, initiatives and performance, the report also provides examples of operational excellence and performance management that are essential to create a sustainable, innovative and world-class utility.

Boosting awareness

"The second edition of our Sustainability Report provides our stakeholders and partners with an update on our practices, initiatives and performance," says Al Tayer, adding that the report also features case studies on the impact of Dewa services in the economic, social and environmental spheres.

"[It] is a comprehensive document that assesses our implementation and impact across key sustainability areas. These can help to serve



Saeed Al Tayer
Managing Director and
CEO, Dewa



Sougata Nandi
Sustainability
development evangelist

The sustainability equation

Problem

Key risks for the UAE:

- Rising sea water temperatures
- Rising sea levels
- Adverse fluctuations in the hydrological cycle
- Changes in rainfall level

Solution

The things that can be done from the supply side:

- A CO2 emission reduction programme that will bring down the carbon intensity of electricity and water production
- Implementing innovative solutions to improve supply-side efficiency
- Reduce transmission and distribution losses (smart grid initiative)

From the demand side:

- More efficient power and water generation, transmission and distribution
- Introduction of renewable energy in the grid
- Reduce production waste
- Diversify the fuel mix
- Optimising power generation and efficiency
- Compulsory use of energy-efficient products

From the demand side:

- Enabling stakeholders to reduce consumption and ultimately save cost
- Apply demand-side management initiatives
- More aggressive energy-conservation campaigns
- Reduce wastage in consumption

the rapid scale-up of sustainability projects that are badly needed today.

"Thus, while Dewa's Sustainability Report can certainly excite the industry, how much it will energise remains to be seen."

Striking a balance

Meenu, a Dubai resident, feels responsibility also lies with individual users like her. "Given the pace at which Dubai is expanding, it is imperative that the push towards sustainability is led by Dewa," she says. "Its efforts in efficiency improvement for water and electricity would inspire other organisations in the UAE to follow suit. We all owe it to our future generations to conserve our natural resources, starting at home."

The utility firm is trying to strike a balance between supply and demand through initiatives such as rationalising the use of natural resources, minimising environmental footprint, diversifying the energy mix with solar, nuclear and clean coal, and reducing overall demand by 30 per cent. Dewa has also added renewables to the energy mix and implemented a green procurement programme, under which only environmentally compliant products are used.

There are also various demand-side initiatives launched by Dewa to control consumption. These include awareness campaigns such as community outreach activities; energy audits for high-volume commercial customers to help them reduce their consumption lev-

as models for other organisations [that are] keen to adopt a sustainable approach to their businesses."

Nandi believes Dewa is in the next phase of a mission to provide impetus to the economy, albeit in a sustainable manner. "Dewa is focusing on the environmental and social sustainability of its operations, thereby targeting a holistic approach," he says. "It is now endeavouring to deliver the same services with the least amount of carbon emissions."

Efforts by the utility firm notwithstanding, overconsumption by households and businesses remains a key area of concern, although concerted awareness campaigns by Dewa, the government and private organisations have helped change practices to a certain degree.

"The biggest stumbling blocks towards accelerated implementation of sustainability initiatives are lack of public awareness and knowledge as to what can be done and the deep desire to put sustainability on a priority agenda by businesses and decision-makers," says Nandi.

"For me personally, unless the decision-makers put sustainability at the top of their agenda and fast-track implementation, no amount of reporting will energise

the introduction of a slab tariff structure in 2008 and a surcharge system in 2011 to control demand; promoting eco-friendly home appliances; embedding e-services and smart technology such as green bills and multiple payment channels in its infrastructure; and implementing smart meters and the rooftop solar programme, both of which have huge potential to revolutionise demand-side efficiencies. The utility firm is also looking at incentivising power- and water-efficient consumers.

Nandi applauds Dewa's efforts, but points out that end users play a greater role in resolving the sustainability conundrum. "The methods and KPIs to measure progress in this direction will depend on individual households and businesses," he says. "For example, if Dewa continues to generate electricity from fossil fuels, end users cannot become carbon-neutral, but they can reduce their carbon footprint by optimising consumption."

"In addition, when Dewa generates a bulk of its electricity from solar, end users by default will be partially carbon-neutral, but they still need to reduce their individual consumption."

Similarly, warehouses and businesses with large exposed rooftops will be well advised to install solar-based power generating systems, for which Dewa has launched regulations. Thus, end users have to really assess how they can create a positive impact." ■



Corbis

+ Earth Day in Dubai