

Success Story

Telecommunications carrier sunrise uses HR portal to ensure efficient business processes

Swiss full-service provider optimizes HR management with IMG's support



The Swiss-based full-service provider of telecommunications services, sunrise, has bidden farewell to the mountains of paperwork which its HR operations invariably entailed. In their place, the service provider has recently introduced an SAP-based cross-company portal – a professional tool for the management of all HR-related business processes. The aim: to optimize all processes, from master data administration and time management to reporting which meets the company's specific requirements. The Information Management Group (IMG) provided sunrise with support and assistance during the planning and implementation stages of the project.

The telecommunications service providers diAx and sunrise merged on January 23, 2001 to form TDC Switzerland AG, operating under the new joint brand name «sunrise». At present, just under 2.2 million customers enjoy the benefits of sunrise mobile, fixed network, and internet services. The nationwide GSM dualband network provides cutting-edge mobile services to over 99 percent of the population. A wide range of top-quality voice and data services are provided via a high-performance fiber optic network with a total length of more than 7500 kilometers. As a founder member of the Starmap Mobile Alliance, a partnership of leading European mobile radio carriers, sunrise provides its customers with access to first-class services – even when they travel abroad.





By introducing a portal for so-called «Employee Self Service» (ESS) and «Manager Self Service» (MSS) last year, the group had paved the way for the restructuring of its internal HR business processes. Thomas Flammer, the full-service provider's HR Project Manager, explains the reasons behind the large-scale reengineering project: «sunrise came into being as the result of various acquisitions. In the course of time, this development resulted in corporate processes which were neither transparent nor efficient.»

In view of the company's history, the problem was not difficult to pinpoint. Particularly affected by the mergers and restructurings of the past six years was the group's Human Resources (HR) department, which had been plagued by time-consuming processes, uncontrolled growth, and unsatisfactory checks and balances for a wide range of inhouse HR processes. Besides which, company personnel had no tools with which to manage their own data or the services that were subject to surcharges. And the company's management required a platform for efficient HR management. Thomas Flammer's response: «It was high time to reengineer these processes.»



The manager cites a trivial example to illustrate the urgent need for change. Applications for vacation or other periods of absence had to be downloaded from the company's intranet and filled out by each employee manually. Then they had to be signed by the superior, before being forwarded by inhouse mail to the department responsible for processing these requests. The next stage was the transfer of the application to the HR department which re-entered the document in the system. Thomas Flammer of sunrise: «This tortuous procedure was repeated on average 50 000 times a year for a staff of 2400!». To this total can be added almost 3000 amendments to standard personnel data, such as addresses, telephone numbers and bank details, plus changes to several thousand time reports and approximately 32 000 wage and salary slips each year. All these transactions had to pass through the inhouse mail service – a time-consuming process.

Unacceptable, and yet typical, working conditions in the HR departments of many present-day enterprises! By the beginning of 2005 the Zurich-headquartered high-tech group had decided to put an end to this unsatisfactory situation once and for all by introducing a professional SAP-based portal for a large proportion of its HR processes. Thomas Flammer recalls: «We therefore planned consolidated data management for our HR processes and provided our personnel and executives with a unified process arena with a workflow tool for all HR processes.»

In order to undertake a project on this scale, sunrise enlisted the services of The Information Management Group (IMG), St. Gallen, as its strategic partner for the development of the concept and the implementation of the portal strategy. Project Manager Thomas Flammer comments as follows: «With its



Thomas Flammer,
Project Manager, sunrise

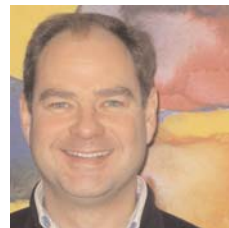


attractive offer and its wide-ranging technical and strategic know-how, IMG was the ideal choice for us.» What convinced management of the telecommunications service provider was the fact that IMG «ticked all the boxes» in a questionnaire which contained individual wishes and requirements with regard to the functionality of the portal and which sunrise had submitted to all prospective consultancies during the call-for-bids phase.

The initialization phase and the creation of the draft concept on the overall scope of the project were followed, according to Thomas Flammer, by the definition of the individual processes and the provision of the necessary hardware. IMG expert Pierre Schmidt remembers the start of the implementation work: «In parallel with the detailing of the processes in the HR sector, the portal software was installed and implemented on the basis of the existing SAP milieu.»

The trickiest hurdle to clear was sunrise's request of a multilingual solution. Because the company employs people from about 60 countries, it was a must to make the HR portal «customer-friendly» and to make it available in German, English and

French. In addition to the portal menu being trilingual, the complete workflow – from input by the employee to digital storage of the process in the archive – had to be backed up, in IT terms, with variables in German, English and French. The sunrise manager explains: «Basically, the challenge was to synchronize the sender and the recipient to the same language within the system.» This also entailed translation of the roughly 60-page documentation for the future HR portal. According to Thomas Flammer, a further challenge as regards the implementation of the portal strategy – which was closely linked to the multilingualism of the system – was the so-called change management, which sunrise undertook autonomously for the most part. The telecommunications pioneer organized some 80 training courses and presentations for company personnel in order to familiarize them



Pierre Schmidt,
Project Manager,
The Information Management Group





with the new system and remove any apprehension about using it. IMG Project Manager Pierre Schmidt points out that the initial outlay on support in connection with change management was not to be underestimated. According to the changeover from analog to digital workflows has a strict logic of its own. Experience has shown that users need a certain amount of time to become familiar with it. He also insists that the flexible configuration of exception handling is indispensable – whether for reorganization or for the management of special cases. Pierre Schmidt: «The real work only begins after the go-live of the Portal.»

The benefits of the changeover became apparent within just a few months. Now sunrise is able to provide all its employees with a unified portal for HR requirements on the basis of a consolidated dataset. This includes the professional registration of work periods involving additional charges. Another special challenge was that no positive time management could be set up in SAP. As sunrise manager Thomas Flammer explains: «IMG developed a solution which detects deviations from standard working hours automatically. This reduces the number of incor-

rect entries substantially.» All processes – from input by the employee to clearance by the superior – take place online within the portal. A special authorization concept ensures that personnel can only register working hours which are in accordance with their work contracts and in compliance with the terms of the respective business units.

The portal offers management not only different functions and views but also extensive reporting. In this way, information of relevance for decision-making on employee, team and organizational level can be retrieved from the portal easily and speedily. For example, managers can keep track of internal departmental matters relating to the business units of individual employees, including their position in the corporate structure – or even borrowings of notebooks, mobile phones and work equipment for technicians and engineers. Thomas Flammer concludes: «All users are assigned a role according to their function and as soon as they log on with their individual passwords they receive a specific view of the information and functions that are relevant to them. Future expansion of the portal capabilities is planned, so that transparent data relating to individual employees can be obtained.

A measurement mechanism which sunrise already uses in a completely different way. For in terms of return on investment the interim assessment of the telecommunications carrier is a positive one: «Whereas the processing of an application for vacation used to take several days, approval from a superior can now be obtained within hours or even minutes.» And the system has no problems dealing with the complexities of the Swiss calendar, with different public holidays in the different cantons and so-called «half-day» holidays. By and large, sunrise employees are positively impressed with the new HR portal: «10 percent regard the system as very good, 50 percent as good, 30 percent as fair and 10 percent as unsatisfactory – and, according to our surveys, this is simply because of the rather uneven look-and-feel of the user interface.»

But for the ambitious IT team in the imposing sunrise Towers on Zurich's north side, this is just another challenge which they will no doubt tackle successfully in due course.

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