

Success Story



Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz 

Company
Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz

Sector
Humanitarian organisation

Number of locations
9

Customer since
2006

Services in use
- Connect Internet
- Connect LAN

Account Manager
Roberto Taibo
Name Account Manager
Tel. 043 343 65 77
michael.buettler@upc-cablecom.ch

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"A real benefit to customers"

The Swiss Red Cross is Switzerland's most important humanitarian organisation. Its federalist-based structure presents ICT Management with special challenges. The SRC branch in Bern has created an attractive offer for the cantonal Red Cross associations and associated organisations. Benno Stucki, head of ICT Services comments that combined with the upc cablecom services, the offer is a "real business enabler".

Benno Stucki, how is your team integrated in the SRC's organisation and what is its brief?

As a specialist department we are affiliated to the accounts/human resources/services department at headquarters. We function as a cost centre, in other words our operational departments purchase our services at an internal costing price. Our brief is to provide high-quality ICT services at top level performance and availability.

Who are your customers?

We primarily provide our services for our customers at headquarters and for the secretariat of the cantonal SRC associations in Bern and Wabern. Because we have consistently centralised our services on a Citrix terminal server platform, we can also offer our services to all Swiss Red Cross organisations in the ASP model. Today we serve various cantonal associations like Bern, Aargau, Lucerne, Basel-Landschaft, St.Gallen and Zug. Some of these associations have outsourced all their IT to us, others just use certain applications. Because of the federalist structure, the cantonal associations are autonomous and can act independently in choosing their service partners. We are delighted that other cantonal associations have indicated that they want to acquire certain services from us in the future as well. SRC search and rescue organisations and institutions, as well as affiliated organisations, are also entitled to purchase IT services from us. At the moment, for example, the SRC blood donor service management, the Blood Stem Cells and Swisstransplant Foundations, as well as the Swiss Organisation for Aid to Refugees use our ICT service portfolio.



upc cablecom
business

Profile



Benno Stucki, aged 47, has worked in computers since his business admin training. He has almost 30 years of experience in IT and originally worked on software development, later in analysis and then in project management. He gained business expertise at a management school. His computer expertise was the result of a business IT school and several IT courses. He has worked for an electronics company, a major bank, a wholesalers and the Swiss Federation. In 1995 he joined the SRC headquarters where he took over as head of ICT services.

Stucki lives with his wife and two children in Emmental. Today, the licensed private pilot prefers to fly model helicopters and enjoys his spare time outdoors.

“The network is the key to everything. As the basic service it has to be 100 percent reliable and efficient.”

What services do you offer your customers?

Our services start with the Office portfolio and extend to an ERP system with special modules right up to the complex CRM solution. For several years we have also been maintaining a modern VoIP telephony system that is fully integrated into MS Office and the business applications. Communications systems like mail and telephony are our most important tools. Another area includes special applications for the healthcare sector which we deliver to some partner organisations. And finally there are of course numerous websites that our webmasters manage and host. Some of these websites have complex interfaces to our ERP systems.

What sales pitches do you use for your offer?

Those in charge of smaller cantonal associations are also aware of the strategic relevance of IT. Several directors found out the hard way that the failure of an IT system can paralyse operations for hours at a time. This raises a question: is it worth it for an operation with five to ten employees to run several redundant or cluster-based systems? Even if smaller operations run their own mail server with professional protection against spam and viruses, this is a debatable luxury. The cost and benefit are disproportionate. The purpose of consistent outsourcing is to help our customers concentrate fully on their core business again.

What services are currently most popular? Where is the trend heading?

Spontaneously I would say our two core applications ERP and CRM. Specific SRC modules were added to our ERP system. These special modules include services that are provided by our cantonal associations, for example the SRC transportation service, the SRC emergency call system for older people, the respite and supervisory service for sick people and children and the SRC courses department with extensive course administration.

Our CRM system supports our marketing specialists in managing our huge donor database which includes millions of addresses. Our fundraising specialists use this data and these addresses for targeted donation activities.

The cantonal associations are now seriously thinking about whether to purchase commodity applications such as mail and Office. As our ERP and CRM systems interact significantly with the Office package, the cantonal association using them effectively has the Office programs as an interface application. Therefore, it is pointless installing the entire Office package again on the local PC and having to manage it there too.

What special advantages can you offer your customers?

Our and upc cablecom's services represent real benefit to the customer. What could be more reassuring for a director of a cantonal association

than to rely on a professional team looking after his IT environment round the clock? He has just one single point of contact - our central service desk. Service and network technicians work in the organisation and they keep our redundant systems going in two geographically different locations. Experienced IT project managers and software developers round off the full-service package. They know how to implement customers' wishes and needs appropriately, quickly and cost effectively.

How generous is your budget?

Our budget is relatively small. With ten computer specialists and a trainee my department supports around 600 users. Our customers can expect modern resources and reliable ICT systems that perform well. We are thus endeavouring to consistently update the server and network infrastructures. As a non-profit organisation, we are in the fortunate position to



SRC employees currently working in Haiti.
Photo: SRC

Swiss Red Cross

The Swiss Red Cross is Switzerland's most important humanitarian organisation with almost 50,000 volunteers and 500,000 members. As the only national Red Cross society recognised by the Swiss Federation, the SRC today is part of the global Red Cross movement. The headquarters in Bern provide professional and tailor-made services at home in the health-care and integration sectors and abroad in disaster relief, reconstruction and development work. The headquarters are also a centre of competence and service provider for the whole SRC group with cantonal associations, search and rescue organisations and institutions. The ICT services department is affiliated to the Bern headquarters.

Infos: www.redcross.ch



One of the Red Cross's seven principles is its universal approach: "A duty to provide a humanitarian response applies all over the world". Photo: Lars Büchi, SRC

receive special conditions from many suppliers and manufacturers. The savings made can be used for humanitarian projects.

We very much adopt a needs-based approach to purchasing external services and always ensure that expertise is transferred as best as possible. We strive to make our operation as autonomous as possible, because this is the only way of producing cost effectively.

What demands does your IT concept make on internal and external data communications?

We provide our services using a powerful Citrix terminal server farm that is located in two separate data centers. The customer requires relatively little, just a PC with a Citrix client. Data connections from the customer to the data center are very important because any service we offer will draw heavy criticism if no stable and efficient network is available. Our customers will not accept low response times or annoying delays in displaying characters when typing. The network is the key to everything. As the basic service it has to be 100 per cent reliable and efficient.

The SRC has been working with upc cablecom for eight years.

What advantages does this partnership bring?

It offers two advantages: first of all high-quality WAN services and secondly services that we can afford.

What has been your experience of upc cablecom?

When I look back, we have consistently had good experiences. Employees are very friendly, open to customers' needs and do not want to offer standard products. The company's innovative spirit is what always impresses me personally. I was particularly struck by the solution found for the fibre optic connection project for our two data centers which are located about five kilometres apart. In this case, upc cablecom offered a solution that competitors could not have improved on in terms of quality and price.

And finally: if something has gone wrong, upc cablecom identifies the cause, talks to the customer and solves the problem swiftly and unbureaucratically to the satisfaction of all concerned.

“ Combined with upc cablecom business’s communications services, our carefully co-ordinated ICT services are real business enablers for us. ”

How do you help your customers select the right communications solution?

Our customers have the choice of accessing terminals from the Internet or from upc cablecom’s MPLS backbone. Initially small cantonal associations opt for cost-effective connections from other providers. When best effort is suddenly no longer sufficient and the focus is on guaranteed bandwidth and availability, the customer is connected with our data centers via the upc cablecom backbone.

What support do you receive here from upc cablecom?

upc cablecom supports us in advising the customer locally and in project planning, creating and commissioning the new data connection. upc cablecom also provides active support with after sales.

Concerning the partnership with upc cablecom, what do you hope for considering the future requirements and demands from headquarters?

Combined with upc cablecom business’s communications services, our carefully co-ordinated ICT services are real business enablers for us.

Even the Swiss Red Cross is not part of a protected market, but has to prove itself each and every day with many other humanitarian organisations. Only by constantly optimising our cost-benefit ratio can we remain credible vis à vis our donors, patrons and project partners. This is also the only way we can maintain our status in the future as a totally reliable service provider that helps the disadvantaged and people in need at home and abroad.

We are delighted to have found a reliable partner in upc cablecom and appreciate working with this supplier on a basis that almost approaches camaraderie. We hope it continues to stay that way for a long time to come.

Benni Stucki, thank you for talking to us.

Interview: Guido Biland, alphetext.com
Photo: Daniel Hager, photographer, Zurich

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