

Success Story



STADLER

Company
Stadler Rail Group

Sector
Industry

Number of locations
Bussnang, Altenrhein,
Winterthur und Prag

Customer since
2005

Services in use
- Connect LAN
- Connect Internet

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“Our philosophy is to solve things as simply as possible”

Many opinion formers have long since written off Switzerland as an internationally competitive work location. However, entrepreneurs like Nicolas Hayek and Peter Spuhler demonstrate just how much industrial power this land still possesses. A perfect example is Stadler Rail - a company that is achieving astronomical levels of growth. Thomas Kündig has been experiencing this dynamic company as IT Manager since 2005.

Mr. Kündig, some of the economic news going around at the moment is quite frightening, but we are only hearing positive things about Stadler Rail. What's more, the company is in an industrial sector that has been written off for quite some time now. Do you have an explanation for this wonderful success story?

One possible explanation is the corporate culture, which is characterised by a high level of employee dedication. And despite the swift growth, the company has remained firmly on the ground. This down-to-earth approach manifests itself in simple processes and direct communication.

The company had 18 employees when it was taken over by Peter Spuhler in 1989, who was 30 years old at the time. The company now has more than 3,000 employees around the world and a turnover of more than 1 billion Swiss francs - 80% of which is generated in Switzerland. You have been with the company for five years now. How have you experienced the latest growth phase personally?

When I came to Stadler in 2005, there were five servers and around 180 PCs at this location. We now have nearly 800 computers and more than 75 servers in operation in Bussnang, which are distributed across two redundant data centers. Such developments are obviously exciting. We are facing challenges in all areas and pursuing targets ambitiously. That makes the work here interesting.

The general public knows the CEO and main shareholder Peter Spuhler due to his role as National Councillor of the SVP. You know him personally as a boss and entrepreneur. From



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business

Zur Person



Cédric Schwartz, 39, is Head of IT and Processes for the Sun Store and Amavita pharmacy chains, which are part of the Galenica group (Galenicare Management SA). A specialist in administrative and back-office processes, he joined Sun Store in 2000 and took over the management of the group's administration, finance and IT. He has a number of important achievements to his name, including the implementation of a cost accounting system with inventory management, the implementation of a new IT system for managing points of sale, and the creation and further development of a large range of key performance indicators. Originally from the Jura region, Cédric Schwartz studied finance in Lausanne. He is married with three children and enjoys diving, judo and skiing.

“ I know Peter Spuhler as a passionate businessman who works with heart and soul. ”

the perspective of a companion - which special qualities characterise this graduate businessman?

The things I said about the corporate culture before also apply to the boss. Peter Spuhler is down-to-earth, direct, honest and open. The expectations that he places on his employees he also places on himself - and he expects a lot. I know him as a passionate businessman who works with heart and soul. He really is what you would call a personality.

Two years ago the SBB ordered 50 six-compartment double-decker trains from Stadler Rail for the S-Bahn network in Zurich. Order volume: approx. one billion. The first trains are due for delivery over the next few months. Will commuting in the financial metropolis of Zurich now be a real pleasure - thanks to an industrialist in Thurgau?

That's something the commuters will have to judge for themselves. These vehicles are the third generation of S-Bahn trains in Zurich, whereby the first and second generations were not from Stadler. We are of course very pleased that the SBB has chosen to rely on the Swiss quality of Stadler Rail for the Zurich S-Bahn network. We've obviously built a good product. The acceleration of the new Stadler trains will also be noticed favourably...

As IT Manager, you will probably appreciate the fact that technology and engineering play a key role in the company. Does this technological affinity within the company simplify or complicate your job as IT Manager?

It makes it more complicated. The company wants to get the most out of its existing infrastructure. The philosophy of the IT department at Stadler is to solve things as simply as possible. We don't simply jump on board the latest technology train. We check whether we can master the new challenges smartly first of all, and this ensures we are always facing plenty of challenges.

Such dynamic growth places particular demands on IT. What course have you set at the strategic level?

From a strategic perspective, we are following a four-part plan that includes an infrastructure strategy, an application strategy, a sourcing strategy and an innovation strategy. I could tell you a few exciting things about that. However, let's keep it simple - we follow a number of basic principles. For example: we only purchase brand products, no "no names"; we want uniform systems; updates and new releases are only implemented if really necessary; the environment must run stably; the IT resources must be flexible and include reserve capacity; sufficient computing power must be available to cover the specific requirements; the security requirements are high and the security systems are redundant; there are clear rules of conduct for the users.

How does the IT park work in your internationally active company?

There are no onsite IT departments. All end devices are completely installed in Bussnang and then sent out from there. The second and third level support for Poland, Hungary and Prague is also handled via Bussnang. The entire IT infrastructure was built up over the last three years under my supervision. We can therefore guarantee efficient, smooth, high quality support at all times.

The locations in Altenrhein and Berlin manage their IT themselves.



Zurich S-Bahn, third generation: starting in June 2010, the first of 50 six-compartment Dosto vehicles, which have been ordered for the Zurich S-Bahn network, will be delivered to the SBB.

“ There are no onsite IT departments. All end devices are completely installed in Bussnang and then sent out from there. ”



Flirt railway vehicles for the S-Bahn in Helsinki.

Stadler Rail Group

The Stadler Rail Group manufactures railway vehicles with a focus on the regional and sub-urban traffic segments, light S-Bahn traffic and trams. The company has offices in Switzerland (Altenrhein, Bussnang and Winterthur), Germany (Berlin-Pankow and Velten), Poland (Siedlce), Hungary (Budapest, Pusztaszabolcs and Szolnok), the Czech Republic (Prague), Italy (Merano) and Algeria (Algiers). The Group has approximately 3,000 employees, 2,000 of which are located in Switzerland.

The most-well know vehicle families from the Stadler Rail Group include the GTW articulated railcar (501 sold), the Regio-Shuttle RS1 (404), the Flirt (547) and the double-decker Dosto train (73) in the railway vehicles segment, and the Variobahn (264) and the newly developed Tango (142) in the tram sector. Stadler also manufactures passenger coaches and twin-axle locomotives and is the world's leading manufacturer of cogwheel railway vehicles.

Infos: www.stadlerail.com

How big is your team, and who do you report to?

I report directly to the CFO, and my team has ten members. External support is sometimes used during larger projects.

CAD systems play a key role in your application environment.

Do you also develop your own software?

We have an internal engineering software department, which develops and programs train control systems.

How important is the availability of IT resources in an industrial manufacturing company?

The availability of IT resources at Stadler Bussnang is extremely important. Not a lot works here without IT. The core business - manufacturing - would continue to work. However, a stoppage of more than one day in the engineering, procurement, logistics, administration and documentation areas would be serious. Our security measures, which should ensure that a total breakdown in the data center cannot paralyse the entire company, are therefore accordingly high.

How important is the data network in your IT concept?

The WAN plays a really decisive role. All CAD data is replicated between Altenrhein, Berlin, Prague and Bussnang. Our branch offices access the central ERP system in Bussnang via a Citrix platform. The WAN connections must therefore be stable and easily available.

How important is the infrastructure of a data service provider for a company with peripheral locations?

In order to be able to deal with growth successfully, companies must also be able to access powerful data networks outside of their central locations. And optical fibre represents the technology of the future for data communications. There are only a few providers that can offer fibre optic connections outside of the city centres - and these companies obviously charge high prices for this. upc cablecom, on the other hand, was prepared to connect all four Stadler locations within Switzerland to its national fibre optic network for a fair price. And we have noticed that upc cablecom, just like Stadler Rail, has invested a great deal in its infrastructure over the past few years. Something which the companies in the rural areas, above all, will benefit from.

How do you perceive the partnership with upc cablecom?

We've had a lot of good experiences over the last three years: stable connections, good performance, a high level of reliability. The cooperation is very pleasant, and the client advisors are responsive to our needs.

“ We’ve had a lot of good experiences over the last three years: stable connections, good performance, a high level of reliability. ”

The Stadler Rail Group also has manufacturing locations abroad. How have you integrated these locations into the company network?

Prague was the first location to be connected to the MPLS network at the end of December. upc cablecom implemented this connection together with its partner Interoute. And we have not experienced any failures since the connection went live in December 2009. The other foreign locations currently only communicate with our data center via an Internet VPN connection.

Do you see any analogies between the two companies?

An owner-managed manufacturing company cannot really be compared with the subsidiary of an international concern based in America. However, I do see certain similarities. Both companies invest a lot of money in the local infrastructure in order to achieve outstanding market performance. And both companies are reliant on innovations, which are practicable and affordable, in order to survive.

In what direction will you continue to move with the development of your IT concept?

Which IT trends are relevant for your company?

I think that we will remain true to our principles in the future. We will monitor all trends carefully, but refrain from experimenting. Our main task is to provide the resources that are needed to run IT operations securely and efficiently. The IT organisation and the IT processes must be optimally aligned with the requirements of the business. And in a company that is growing rapidly under its own steam, there’s never any lack of challenges in these areas.

Mr Kündig, thank you very much for the interview.

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



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