ADAPTABLE What companies can learn from the animal kingdom

MULTIFACETED Release 12.9 makes BSI CRM modular

SUSTAINABLE Holcim and APG|SGA invest in customer relationships
During my wonderful walking tour through Japan, I stopped by the world’s oldest family-run company Hoshi in Komatsu. This is a traditional, very well maintained guesthouse that was founded 46 generations ago in 718. It’s been rebuilt, improved and renovated many, many times and today offers 100 rooms arranged around a large garden.

It has always been owned by the same family. If there was no suitable successor within the family, someone was simply adopted, or married. The company has always been important, more important than any family dispute, as can happen even in the best families over the course of 1,300 years.

The guesthouse has 17 written rules. One is “Trust is the foundation of life.” Another reads: “Constantly learn from others.” At BSI, we have 18 values, compiled in a small booklet.

There is a risk that comes with fixing values. It can also hinder a company. The value “We won’t sell out”; seek to grow old and remain independent, however, is chiseled in stone.

And yet, it requires constant change, because entrepreneurial strengths enable entrepreneurial freedom. Solid foundations and nevertheless constant renewal? Our answer to this dilemma is: customer proximity and young talent. From the one there is a great deal to be learned, while the other gives the company the strength and courage to change.

Christian A. Rusche
CEO BSI

“WE WON’T SELL OUT.”
We’re not seeking an exit and do not plan to list the company on the stock exchange. Our children will also work at BSI.
Companies can also learn from mosquitoes

INTERVIEW: DOMINIK ROTHENBÜHLER
PHOTOS: DOMINIK ROTHENBÜHLER, ROBERT ZINGG

Charles Darwin already knew: In the animal kingdom, those that are better adapted survive. We talked to Robert Zingg, Senior Curator at Zurich Zoo, about why some species grow to be especially old. Companies striving for stability and sustainability should not just use animal Methuselahs as role models, but also get to know short-lived species.

Dr. Robert Zingg, Zurich Zoo is the only zoo in Europe that has successfully bred Galápagos giant tortoises, an endangered species. Some of these tortoises are known to live over 150 years. In extreme cases, Galápagos giant tortoises live nearly 60,000 times longer than certain species of flies. Why is there such a broad bandwidth of life spans in the animal kingdom?

The objective of any animal is to pass its genes on to the next generation. They can only do this if they live at least long enough to be sexually mature and to reproduce. The time spans until sexual maturity, and the number of offspring created differ widely, depending on the species and the result of their developmental history. Species have specialized in a wide range of habitats and occupy a specific niche in the ecosystems to be found there. The genetic heritage of each species is specifically adapted to the living conditions in these niches. Evolution, in turn, ensures that the genetic heritage adapts to the changing environmental requirements. Of course, there are different dangerous habitats and various dangerous niches. If a species has hardly any enemies in its habitat and, at the same time, has a secure food supply in its niche, then the chances are good that it will live to grow old. This is the case, for example, for the Galápagos giant tortoise.

Do species react to their respective living conditions with different reproductive strategies?

Yes. And the reproductive strategies have an influence on the age of the species. Those that must quickly reproduce have hardly any natural advantages if they grow old. Mosquitoes and butterflies are examples of such short-lived species. They often live for less than a year and are only seasonally active. Such animals tend to choose a reproductive strategy in which they quickly create very many offspring. They do so “knowing” that most of them will die. Flies, for example, lay large quantities of eggs. Species that have specialized in rapidly changing habitats also choose this reproduction strategy. They can only conquer the briefly available habitat by reproducing very quickly. Humans often unjustifiably view this rapid multiplication involving such reproductive strategies as a plague, but such species are merely taking advantage of the opportunity. This is also because they are non-competitive and are quickly threatened by other, better adapted species in dynamic habitats. Many such reproductive strategies can also be found in the plant kingdom, by the way, including many cultivated plants. For example, cereals grow very quickly and produce large quantities of seeds in the process.
Which reproductive strategies tend to rely on longer life spans in the animal kingdom?
The capacity strategy is one example. It is used by animal species that require a long time to become sexually mature, and that invest a lot of time and energy in caring for their offspring. The survival chances of the offspring increase greatly as a result of the good care provided. That is why small litters suffice to provide the number of offspring necessary to conserve the species. Orangutans are an impressive example of this strategy. They give birth in intervals of 6 to 9 years. This time is used to teach the young animals how to later survive on their own in the rain forest. This is only possible with a great deal of specialized knowledge. While the rain forest is extremely diverse in species, there is hardly sufficient nutrition to support larger animals that can move as a group. This means that the search for food is particularly complex for the solitary orangutan. The capacity strategy is especially used by animals in habitats that only slightly change, because the local ecosystem has reached the so-called climax stage, is stable and can be used to the limits of its capacity. Only in this way can animals so precisely match their progeny to their habitat.

**“THIS MEANS THAT ANIMALS DO NOT WORK STEREOTYPICALLY, BUT APPLY DIFFERENT STRATEGIES DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION.”**

Dr. Robert Zingg

When companies invest a lot in education and the training of their employees, are they then somehow caring for their brood?
Yes, that’s entirely correct. It increases the chances of survival. Without transferring knowledge to the next generation of employees, the mid-term survival of the company is endangered. Those companies that look after their employee’s development, are therefore in the process of matching their own progeny. However, there is a difference to nature: Companies can take suitable measures to employ new specialists at any time and can dismiss dissatisfied employees. This is different among animals. They work exclusively with their own progeny. There is no “hire and fire” in the animal kingdom.

Can we look at the reproductive strategy and capacity strategy of animals from an economic point of view? For example, is it correct that quality and specialization are what are primarily needed in stable ecosystems?
Yes. Many capacity strategists are specialists, because they are the best in very specific niches of the ecosystem and thereby ensure their survival. Their problem is that they can no longer keep up when the surrounding conditions change and are threatened with extinction. Because, in contrast to companies, specialized species have no possibility to constantly elaborate new innovations and thereby prepare themselves for future circumstances. Adaptations occur only slowly. Charles Darwin first noted this in his book, “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life” in 1859.

Do the generalists have any chance at all against the specialists in the animal kingdom?
Yes and no. Not in stable ecosystems, because there the specialists are simply more efficient. This also applies when it comes to feeding. Studies with crabs have shown that they consciously only eat clams of a certain size. They do this because with such clams they need to apply the least amount of energy for each calorie ingested. Such crabs are only that choosy, however, if they need not work too hard when selecting the clams. If the distance covered becomes too long in the process of choosing, then the crabs also settle for other sized clams. This means that animals do not work stereotypically, but apply different strategies depending on the situation. With this example, I also want to demonstrate how efficiently specialized species act within their respective ecological niches. The generalists have the advantage in dynamic habitats; they are more robust and quickly have the advantage over any existing specialists. It might seem astounding, but depending on the market situation, a company should model itself more on the mosquito than the orangutan.

Are animals also able to sense the market? For example, does a predatory cat know when it must change its hunting grounds?
Yes. As soon as the number of prey decreases, has adjusted to the presence of the predatory cat or if a stronger competitor appears, alarm bells go off for any predatory cat. They usually seek their hunting luck in another location.

What other factors influence the different ages of species? Take cheetahs: They only live up to a maximum of 15 years. That’s a blink of an eye compared to the life span of the Galápagos giant tortoise...

To reveal two of these factors, it would serve us here to take a look at the special situation of the Galápagos giant tortoise. The Galápagos giant tortoise is cold-blooded and lives a non-hectic life. Its activities are quite essentially determined by the ambient temperature. If its surroundings are warm enough, it becomes active. If the temperature is too low, its metabolism drops to a minimum. While this lifestyle is unspectacular, it is very sustainable. The low pressure from predators in their habitat represents another advantage. This is much more common in special island ecosystems, such as can be found in the Galápagos Archipelago 1,000 kilometers from the Ecuadorian coast. The life span of the Galápagos giant tortoise would be dramatically reduced in the rain forests of Ecuador.

Is it true that, among mammals, larger species live longer than smaller ones?
Yes and no. Not in stable ecosystems, because there the specialists are simply more efficient. This also applies when it comes to feeding. Studies with crabs have shown that they consciously only eat clams of a certain size. They do this because with such clams they need to apply the least amount of energy for each calorie ingested. Such crabs are only that choosy, however, if they need not work too hard when selecting the clams. If the distance covered becomes too long in the process of choosing, then the crabs also settle for other sized clams. This means that animals do not work stereotypically, but apply different strategies depending on the situation. With this example, I also want to demonstrate how efficiently specialized species act within their respective ecological niches. The generalists have the advantage in dynamic habitats; they are more robust and quickly have the advantage over any existing specialists. It might seem astounding, but depending on the market situation, a company should model itself more on the mosquito than the orangutan.
However, there are exceptions. This is because the previously mentioned reproductive strategies influence age more powerfully than the size of the species. Clearly, for mammals there is a critical lower limit at which life becomes nearly impossible due to the increasingly disadvantageous ratios of surface area to volume. The Etruscan shrew – which can be found in Ticino in Switzerland – is the real frontier worker here. They weigh hardly two grams and eat twice their body weight every day. This is a very strenuous and energy-draining lifestyle. With a heart rate of up to 1,000 beats per minute, the Etruscan shrew lives a maximum of one to two years.

This is an impressive performance considering their apparently very strenuous lifestyle. From a scientific perspective, isn’t it inappropriate to compare the greatest age of various species and to rank them? Doesn’t an Etruscan shrew have a faster biological clock than an orangutan? Does a “shrew second” therefore essentially differ from an “orangutan second”? That’s correct; we must measure the life spans of animals with different parameters. No species aims to live as long as possible. It is always a matter of ensuring the survival of the species. If a small mammal has reproduced after a year, then it has completed its duty. An orangutan can only do this after 7 to 8 years at the earliest. Therefore, its “second” is correspondingly up to eight times longer than that of the Etruscan shrew.

Cellular researchers have discovered that life spans are also limited by damage to organs. Such damage occurs when the mitochondria in the cells are attacked by aggressive chemicals. Such attack tend to increase as animals grow older. And this is equally true for humans as it is for nearly all species. Apparently, there is also a connection with nutrition in this regard. Those who eat a low-calorie diet with sufficient fruits and vegetables tend to live longer.

Corresponding studies have been conducted with apes, rats and fish, among other species. What do you think of such findings? I am not a cellular researcher and can only comment in a limited capacity. The conclusion that healthy nutrition prolongs life seems very plausible to me. That’s why we also pay particular attention to the species-appropriate feeding of our animals. For example, for our primates and spectacled bears, we removed many fruits from their diet and replaced them with vegetables. This was necessary because fruit cultivated for people has a sugar content that is too high for most mammals. Many of our monkeys were in danger of having a weight problem. The switch to vegetables was difficult for the affected zoo residents, however, and we only managed it with the support of specialized veterinarians and the excellent care of the zoo personnel.

What can companies learn from animals if they seek to survive for a long time in the market and become a successful traditional company? That would certainly include the constant striving for efficiency. Yet, equally important is the ability to apply different strategies and approaches depending on the situation. This versatility is essential for the survival of animals. A company that seeks to survive in the market for many years or even decades must also learn from different animal species. A rapid and ambush-like “insect strategy”, such as used by mosquitoes, is certainly an advantage in dynamic markets. A concentration on core abilities is recommended in stable markets, which means deciding to be specialists, as modeled by many highly developed mammals. Dancing at many weddings is rarely successful in stable markets in the face of strong competition. Let me put it in other words: A company does not necessarily do business in a constant and sustainable manner if it continuously acts like a lion. Depending on the situation, it would be better off emulating an orangutan, a crab or a mosquito.

Does this mean that, for the same reason, you do not recommend a steady “tortoise” or “elephant” strategy if the goal is to become a traditional company? Without a doubt. Markets in the global economic field are far too dynamic. Companies that act stereotypically die off. Perhaps 30 years ago, the markets offered some companies stable and secure situations like the ecosystem on the Galapagos Islands offered the giant tortoises bearing the same name. Today, however, there tends to be a pitiless battle for survival in the business world that is more like the African savanna. Entrepreneurs aiming for stability and sustainability should be sure to consider this in their approach.

“TODAY, HOWEVER, THERE TENDS TO BE A PITILESS BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL IN THE BUSINESS WORLD THAT IS MORE LIKE THE AFRICAN SAVANNA.” Dr. Robert Zingg

Dr. Robert Zingg, 58, has worked as a curator at Zurich Zoo since 1994. While he was first in charge of mammals and birds, today, the senior curator’s area of responsibility includes the great apes, gibbons, elephants, and rhinoceroses. Robert Zingg already knew he wanted to be a zoologist back when he was in primary school. Living with his family right next to Zoo Basel, certainly influenced this desire. Robert Zingg studied Ethology and Wildlife Biology at the University of Zurich. He worked as an assistant in the Ethology and Wildlife Research departments at the Zoological Institute of the University of Zurich from 1980 to 1985. In addition to his independent activities in nature conservation, he also took on teaching positions in the ’80s and ’90s at the University of Zurich and – to the present – also at the ETH Zurich. Robert Zingg received his Ph.D. in 1994 with fieldwork on hedgehogs. He is a thematically broad-based zoologist who is interested in amphibians and insects, as well as mammals and birds. Robert Zingg has appeared numerous times on Swiss television, such as on the “Horizonte” program. The Zurich Zoo’s great ape department, run by Robert Zingg, has achieved national renown, partly due to a multiple episode documentary broadcast by Swiss television about life in the zoo in 2004. The main protagonist, “Djarius”, an especially charismatic male orangutan, still lives at Zurich Zoo.

“A COMPANY THAT SEeks To SURVIVE IN THE MARKET FOR MANY YEARS OR EVEN DECades MUST LEARN FROM DIFFERENT ANIMAL SPECIES.” Dr. Robert Zingg
There are many advantages to the customer focus we apply on a daily basis. It enables us to understand our customers and their needs, to have our finger on the pulse of the times and to learn a great deal about today’s challenges. Our task is to translate this technical and process understanding into software. The market experience that we have built up over time confirms that, while our vision for BSI CRM is complex, it is entirely realizable:

"BSI CRM is a comprehensive CRM used at all customer interfaces: Sales, Marketing, Multi-Channel Contact Center, Self-Service and Point of Sale. In addition to client, it’s also usable on the Web, smartphone and tablet. It’s well-integrated, easy to operate and at a reasonable cost. The use of open technology (J2EE/Eclipse) guarantees efficiency, individuality and future security."

Not only is the core of BSI CRM further developed with every release, but the industry solutions derived from it, such as BSI Insurance, also benefit from minor and major industry-specific adaptations: e.g. the improved household view, the claims view, the external contracts display, an adapted sales controlling, and electronic addresses. Additional rulebooks also help with all repetitive tasks, offer more automation, such as the use of business rules, archiving or correspondence steps. Added to that are the seamless integration of ticket and business cases as well as many other minor improvements, including more reports on the Dashboard, which are completely configurable for teams and departments by mouse click.

- **Uniform inbound communication:** The separation of channel handling and process management enables the handling and visualization of multiple, different customer enquiries from a single communication.
- **Multitenant-capable service lines:** Contact center agents can process customer enquiries for multiple, different lines of business. With multitenancy, the agent has different processes available to him/her depending on the service line chosen, while different SLAs – hence, reaction and processing times – apply.
- **Correspondence steps:** The output channel requested by the customer in the inbound communication ("please send me an e-mail"; "please call me back"), is predefined in the correspondence step. For written communication, BSI CRM also offers a simple text editor for MS Word, which is especially used in the browser solution.

### New address logic and more rulebooks

The new address logic of release 12.9.2 will be introduced in the summer of 2013; it will be optimized for international use and the separation of postal and electronic addresses. Additional rulebooks also help with all repetitive tasks, offer more automation, such as the use of business rules, archiving or event-driven marketing – thus, tasks that run in the background, like the calculation of customer values. Additional functions for marketing managers are currently being discussed in the course of product development. You can expect a refurbished Marketing module at the end of 2013.

### Outlook: POS and Self-Service

Integration of the next two touch points to customers will be completed by the end of the year. The POS (Point of Sale) and Self-Service modules are the logical expansion of the multi-channel strategy. Employees at the branches receive intelligent customer information at the point of sale from all other sales and communication channels, and enrich the customer data.

The Self-Service module contains Web-based portals that offer customers an overview of all positions: open orders or complaints, delivery or billing addresses and more. Customer processes intersect, which directly set up a business case in BSI CRM and are then further processed internally.

The BSI CRM Product Development team is starting the year off with a show of strength: Both releases 12.9.0 and 12.9.1 will be completed by the end of May. This establishes the technical foundation for release capability and extensibility and includes the upgrades in the Contact Center.

### Minimizing costs with database independence

The program code is being detached from the database to enable the operation of multiple SQL database systems. The new "Hibernate" intermediate layer translates the codes into a language that is understood by multiple databases: e.g. Oracle, DB2, MySQL or SQL Server. With Hibernate, BSI CRM users can work with open source databases and thereby reduce license and maintenance costs.

### Future-proof through modularization

The application’s comprehensive modularization, based on a “domain model”, offers two essential advantages: improvement of the release-capability and extensibility. Company-specific individual developments are now clearly based on the standard model components. Industry templates, such as BSI Insurance, are outsourced to plug-ins and expand the standard using the “domain model”. The core of BSI CRM remains “read-only”, hence, untouched. This in turn makes the customer solution release-capable.

### Upgrades in the Contact Center

We have rolled out BSI CRM in the contact centers of ten companies over the past five years and more than 6,000 agents throughout Europe now use BSI CRM for customer contact. Much know-how flows back into product development from this work, and hence, release 12.9.1 is totally dedicated to customer service.

The upgrading of the Contact Center module provides improvements in process controlling, a uniform inbound communication, multitenancy for service lines, and new correspondence steps. Added to that are the seamless integration of tickets and business cases as well as many other minor improvements, including more reports on the Dashboard, which are completely configurable for teams and departments by mouse click.

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### Meet the future

**BSI CRM 12.9:**

A technical and functional heavyweight

Text: Catherine B. Crowden

The Product Development team is making great progress in the evolution of BSI CRM. New innovations will be launched in each quarter of 2013: database independence and modularization, an upgraded Contact Center, updated address logic and new POS (Point of Sale) and Self-Service modules.
BSI Christmas Dinner 2012

In early March, over 200 BSIers from all six locations gathered, together with their guests, in Zurich for the traditionally late BSI Christmas Dinner. Under the motto, “Festa Ticinese”, we ate polenta, listened to Italian music and, of course, enjoyed plenty of gelato.

The winners of the internal Eclipse Scout contest were crowned after dinner. Later on, the cabaret artist, Markus Linder, staged a performance of the new BSI Arbeitsbuch. And plenty of people shook loose their dancing legs until early in the morning.

Nicolas’ Apps
Software Engineer, BSI

The Photo Cookbook (iPhone & iPad, CHF 4)
An optically beautifully made cookbook with great recipes. Unfortunately, the basic version only contains 84 recipes; additional recipes cost three francs per set. But it’s worth buying the app for the recipe for Vietnamese PHO BÒ noodle soup alone, so you can give it a try!

Lunch-Check (iPhone, Android, free)
The first app that I programmed myself. An overview of all restaurants in Switzerland that accept Lunch-Checks. It’s been downloaded 3,500 times in five months. My BSI work colleague, Christian Ulrich, ported the app for Android. Please download and evaluate it.

Mailbox (iPhone, free)
An attempt to revolutionize the handling of e-mails. Upon receipt, e-mails are either archived, added to a list (e.g. to buy) or deferred to a later date. The goal is to attain an empty mailbox. Currently, the app only functions with Gmail accounts, and there is a waiting period.

An interesting approach with loads of potential.
Customer relationship management is of great importance to the cement giant Holcim. Five years ago, the construction materials manufacturer worked with BSI to set up a transnational and cross-segment customer view in ten countries with the CARE CRM project. Now it is ready to take the next major step: the rollout of the upgraded CARE in 22 Holcim EMEA countries. This rollout is a component of the European Business Model, which involves issues that can be improved throughout the entire group. "The customer view plays a significant role in this regard," explains Sandra Berger, Business Expert Project Manager at Holcim. The CRM Overall Project Manager knows the importance of a uniform customer view in global markets. It's worth the effort: "Working has become much easier for the sales team through the CRM with its 360° customer view and uniform offer management, giving them more time to look after their customers."

Important CRM milestones, challenges and findings
Offer management is one of the highlights of the CRM solution. When preparing offers, prices can be optimised by the sales representative using integrated margin calculation. The customer's credit data can be viewed at any time, and the system automatically notifies the sales rep in the event of delivery blocks or downrating levels. The CRM also ensures that offers containing special price discounts are reviewed. This validation can even take place on mobile devices to avoid delays in the process. Upon signature, offers are automatically converted to SAP contracts and executed. Even complete contracts with tiered discounts and refund agreements are no problem.

Furthermore, the automated 360° reporting to the management board, the integration of Lotus Notes and the handling of processes with mobile devices and smartphones make life easier for the Sales staff. "The validation of complex offers based on different country-specific rules is very much appreciated by our Sales department. Sales reps can now devote themselves to their customers and not the approval of processes," explains Sandra Berger.

The CRM expert launched the project with a kickoff for each cluster – involving all the countries in that cluster. The basis for the success of the project was laid here by presenting the functions and advantages of the new system to employees and local project managers. "Change management is not to be underestimated when it comes to CRM introductions. Showing staff which new channels, possibilities and benefits the common solution brings is essential for its success," explains the experienced project manager.

Benefits for sales reps, customers and the company
According to Sandra Berger: "It is important for the Sales department to be able to predict the customer's future orders based on past purchases. Hence, the customer history is especially relevant; it supplies valuable information about sales potential among the various product groups. What makes it special is that the CRM runs completely integrated in Lotus Notes. When reading a customer e-mail, the rep is immediately presented with the most recent customer activities and reasons for contact." Furthermore, data quality is assured by the sales rep – the ideal prerequisite for marketing activities such as trade fairs, mailings or campaigns.

The discount and price structure is very complex for this global player. Many doubted the seamless depiction in the CRM right from the start. "BSI developed a prototype for us. Through skillful procedures and user reviews in two- to three-week test cycles for each country, we managed to successfully develop the creating functionality that is so appreciated by our employees," according to Sandra Berger.

Ensuring success after the implementation
To introduce CRM in 22 very different countries is a major challenge; the subsequent efficient use thereof is equally so. "The key user structure contributed to the success of the CRM. The key users are in charge of ensuring that the CRM is used throughout the company once it is introduced, and also develop specific CRM strategies for their own country. Combined with support from management, this form of organization proved itself," explains Sandra Berger and sums up: "The better we know our customers, the more targeted are our sales. Uniform processes and business analyses help the company with evaluations and accurate planning."

As a global group with Swiss roots, Holcim has stood for materials from which dreams are built for over 100 years: cement, gravel, and concrete. Sustainability and durability are values that apply to this global market player not only in floors, pillars, and roofs, but also when it comes to managing customer relations.

"BSI UNDERSTANDS OUR BUSINESS. THIS, COMBINED WITH THEIR SOLUTION ORIENTATION AND VAST PROCESS KNOWLEDGE, EXTREMELY SIMPLIFIES THE COLLABORATION."

"BSI CRM, THE SALES DEPARTMENT CAN DEVOTE ITSELF TO CUSTOMERS AND NOT THE APPROVAL OF PROCESSES ON THE COMPUTER."

"CHANGE MANAGEMENT IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE. SUCH PROJECTS ONLY FUNCTION IF ALL THE PLAYERS ARE INVOLVED EARLY ON."

On a solid foundation: Holcim EMEA expands BSI CRM for their customer relationship management

MEET THE CLIENT

BSI’s Pieric Ferrari knows Holcim’s processes intimately and offers valuable support to Overall Project Manager, Sandra Berger.

PHOTOS: PETER SCHAUBLIN

BSI is a global leading supplier of cement and aggregates, ready-mixed concrete and asphalt, along with related services. The Group is active in 70 countries and has a headcount of around 80,000.

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BSI CRM for their customer relationship management

TEXT: CLAUDIA GABLER

MEET THE CLIENT

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PHOTOS: PETER SCHAUBLIN

BSI Business Systems Integration AG

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The economic boom at the beginning of the 20th century enabled the new outdoor advertising supplier, APG|SGA, to gain a solid footing in the advertising industry.

"APG|SGA SPECIALIZED IN PROFESSIONAL OUTDOOR ADVERTISING 113 YEARS AGO."

Switzerland blossomed economically at an unprecedented rate in the 19th century. The list of companies founded between 1800 and 1900 reads like the "Who’s Who" of the corporate world, many of which are still among the top names nationally and internationally today. This rapid development led to increasing competition, from which, in turn, arose the modern advertising industry. But what would advertising be without outdoor advertising? The number one in outdoor advertising, APG|SGA, was founded in 1900 and, when it comes to customer and agency relationships, has relied on BSI for the past seven years.

From paper chase to CRM

Through branch offices in all major Swiss cities, APG|SGA markets 75 percent of the outdoor advertising space in the country. Since 2006, APG|SGA has helped BSI CRM to handle its customer and agency relationships as well as for the acquisition of new projects. Data that previously was maintained in different systems has since become available to staff in a single view at the press of a button. The multilayered sales process and the complex interwoven relationships could be depicted for the first time with the solution. While in the past, employees recorded appointments, e-mails, meeting notes, tasks and contact history in various IT systems or even on paper notes, BSI CRM ushered in the era of the 360° customer view.

Everything went smoothly. For six years, around 100 APG|SGA employees worked with BSI CRM, managed their 40,000 contact partners and 30,000 customers and were pleased with the efficiency gained through uniform application and simple administration.

The seven-year itch

And just as in many a good relationship, after a while, a certain amount of boredom crept in between the APG|SGA staff and their CRM. Following a long period without a new release, user acceptance dropped along with the pleasure in the solution, which had grown somewhat long in the tooth. With overall responsibility for the CRM, Hansruedi Stamm decided to provide a fresh breeze in the form of a new release. With overall responsibility for the CRM, Hansruedi Stamm decided to provide a fresh breeze in the form of a new release.

From sales to strategic sales

With the new release, BSI was able to completely unfold with its specialty: guided processes including all relevant links. The target plan for strategic selling was retained. This involves sales management, which means which customer groups are to be visited, how often and in which form they are to be looked after. This includes evaluations, reminders and actions. Intensive interfaces and processes with business partners to exchange company and personal data are now also part of BSI CRM, as are sales figures and order data. APG|SGA also uses the upgrade for marketing purposes and customer satisfaction surveys. "The new release represents a major relief for our employees, because the APG reservation system works more closely together with the CRM, and therefore we were able to automate work steps. Furthermore, the connection with Outlook and the option of placing documents in the CRM with drag & drop simplify our work. Users are motivated and enjoy working with the new CRM," according to Hansruedi Stamm. What stood out for him in the collaboration with BSI was good personal contact. "In addition to that, BSI understands our requirements and needs and always finds appropriate solutions," stated Hansruedi Stamm. He listed the transmission of campaigns to customers, the future integration of key figures and expansion to all segment brands as important milestones. "We value the broader and deeper customer view as a major CRM success," explained Hansruedi Stamm.

"THIS BECAME CLEAR IN ONE OF OUR TRAINING SESSIONS: A NEW RELEASE OFTEN PROVIDES NEW MOTIVATION FOR EMPLOYEES."

Hansruedi Stamm, CRM Overall Project Manager

Modern formats – also in training

APG|SGA is moving with the times not only with the new release; training is also being modernized. Since 2013, APG|SGA offers its employees webinars for using BSI CRM. "The webinars last 60 minutes and are very practice-oriented. In a compact and concentrated manner, the teams exchange experiences and quickly arrive at the objective without travel time or other expenses," says Hansruedi Stamm, praising the advantages of the webinars created by Zeno Hug. "In the 60-minute webinars, we are in very close proximity to the users and can better understand their logic, processes and challenges, their level of use and improvement wishes. Through the webinars, we can filter out potential key users, employees who are really enthusiastic about the project who can spread the CRM spirit throughout the company as multipliers," according to Zeno Hug, who is also planning a series of webinars in the future together with APG|SGA. Internal project marketing and occasional new initiatives bring fresh impetus to the relationship between users and their tool – and, in turn, supply BSI with new ideas for the new release. "This became clear in one of our training sessions: A new release often provides new motivation for employees," concluded Hansruedi Stamm.

New BSI CRM release brings a fresh breeze

MEET THE CLIENT

New BSI CRM release brings a fresh breeze

TEXT: CLAUDIA GABLER
PHOTOS: APG|SGA

One of the oldest industries in the world, as you may have guessed, is outdoor advertising. As far back as 5,000 years ago, hieroglyphics on obelisks pointed out the way to travelers. And 2,500 years ago, Egyptian merchants chiseled sales messages in stone and cleverly positioned them in the streets. APG|SGA specialized in professional outdoor advertising 113 years ago. Since then, the company has evolved from a poster to an out-of-home media supplier to become a comprehensive, service-oriented partner for customers and agencies.

APG|SGA is the leading outdoor advertising company in Switzerland, and is specialized in digital and analogue out-of-home solutions at heavily trafficked locations. With its Airport, Mega Poster, Mountain and Traffic segments, APG|SGA covers all outdoor advertising sectors throughout Switzerland. The brand stands for passion, integrity, partnership, and sustainability. More than 550 employees work with property and real estate owners, authorities and the advertising industry to ensure that brands and institutions can effectively present themselves in public. http://www.apgsga.ch
Marco Bigolin originally comes from Bettenhausen, but is anything but a sleepyhead. He inherited his love for detail from his grandfather, an Italian-born carpenter. He is fascinated by modern technology, which is why he switched from a large Swiss bank to BSI a year ago, “where the technological future lives”. As the youngest team member, Marco Bigolin works on the oldest BSI project, the Swiss Post’s sales database, with loads of pleasure and motivation – when he’s not storming the skies over Bettenhausen with his model airplanes.

Alpha: Marco, you switched from a well-known large Swiss bank to BSI a year ago. Why?
After my Bachelor of Science studies in Biel, I saw the job at the bank as a major opportunity. But I soon realized that they work with antiquated technology. As an IT specialist, I had no contact with customers, but was really isolated from them. What’s more, I greatly reduced the average age of the team. One day, I asked myself what was to become of me if I continued working in the technological past.

Bravo: You started your probation period at BSI a year ago.
Yes, and everything is different here. The technological future is at home at BSI. I love the customer contact and the forward-looking thinking. Everything is so uncomplicated – the solution must turn out well, everything else is secondary. There’s no room for politics and hierarchies here. The team is great, and here I am exactly the average age. My commute to Bern is also very short.

Charlie: When did you know that you would take a technological path?
I was always interested in IT. I remember making cut-out sheets on an old computer in primary school and selling them to my classmates. This fascination has stayed with me. I consistently work with the latest technology at BSI. This means I am constantly learning. The work is very diverse, and I am always challenged – both by my colleagues and my customers.

Delta: What is your life’s motto?
“Those who do not attempt the impossible will never achieve the possible.” You will never hear, “can’t do it” from me. In the end, it’s all a question of time and money – everything that the customer wants is basically possible – only sometimes it’s too much work or too expensive.

Echo: You used to have to commute to Zurich every day – what do you do with the four extra hours of free time you now have?
I wanted to be a pilot when I was a boy. I now live out that childhood dream with model airplanes. I have a little hangar with model airplanes and helicopters in my grandfather’s old carpentry workshop at my parents’ house. I also fascinate by Lego Technic – all the gears and motors fascinate me. I treat myself to a new model every year, preferably the biggest one there is. I recently put together the Unimog.

Foxtrot: And where do you refuel with fresh energy?
In nature! When walking with the dog, sailing on Murten Lake or out in the country at my parents’ house. It’s also easier to fly my model airplanes there. My oldest buddy also lives there, the donkey Cindy. I grew up with her and rode her as a kid. She pulled my sled in winter and helped Father Christmas out on his gift-giving tours. She’s in donkey retirement now and enjoys life out in my parents’ pasture.
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