

Windows Azure Customer Reference



Kantonsrat
Zürich

Overview

Customer profile

Parliament Services supports Zurich Cantonal Council and its committees with the fulfilment of their duties. As an administrative department, it provides a comprehensive range of services.

Current situation

The council solution of Zurich Cantonal Council had become outdated and was no longer up to date from a technical perspective. During the modernisation of the solution, more cost-efficient operating models were also to be reviewed.

Solution

Via a solution platform operated in the cloud, all information on political events that is of relevance for the work of the Cantonal Council is entered, managed and made available to users via the Internet.

Results

The modular and scalable business, user and group management functions provide Parliament Services with efficient work processes and the ability to adjust in line with changing requirements on an ongoing basis. All of the information can be retrieved via the Internet simply and quickly based on structured criteria. Thanks to Windows Azure Cloud Services, licence and system maintenance costs have been reduced significantly.

The council information system of Zurich Cantonal Council moves to the Windows Azure cloud.

A new information system based on Windows Azure supports Parliament Services at Zurich Cantonal Council with all administrative processes and helps to reduce costs.

‘Thanks to this cloud solution, we are making significant savings in relation to licence costs and system maintenance.’

Claudio Stutz, Head of Council and Committee Services at Zurich Cantonal Council

Public administration is expected to handle the tax money entrusted to it in an economical manner. Once it became apparent that a new IT platform was needed, the Council Services of the Zurich Cantonal Council started looking for opportunities to reduce costs. The IT partner Allgeier (Schweiz) AG therefore designed a new web-based council information system that is operated entirely in the Windows Azure cloud. The new information system enables Council Services to manage information efficiently and publish all political information for users in a fully automatic manner. The new cloud solution, which is based on the latest Microsoft technologies such as .NET 4.0 and Silverlight, improves the flow of information, increases the flexibility and mobility of users thanks to platform-independent, browser-based operation, and helps to reduce licence and system maintenance costs.

‘Thanks to the Windows Azure cloud services and platform-independent operation via a web browser, our employees can work with the system no matter where they are.’

Claudio Stutz, Head of Council and Committee Services at Zurich Cantonal Council

Partner



Allgeier (Schweiz) AG

Allgeier is one of the leading IT consulting and service companies in the German-speaking region and offers a comprehensive range of IT solutions and services. With more than 4000 fulltime employees and around 1500 freelance IT experts, Allgeier offers numerous national and international customers a full-service approach that covers all aspects, from the initial design phase to implementation and the operation of IT environments. Allgeier Schweiz (previously known as 1eEurope) has more than 20 years of experience in consulting and the realisation of projects based on Microsoft technology platforms in the Swiss market.

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Customer profile

Parliament Services supports Zurich Cantonal Council and its committees with the fulfilment of their duties. It provides a comprehensive range of services as an administrative department in order to ensure that the Cantonal Council and the committees can concentrate on their political work. Parliament Services reports directly to the Cantonal Council and in particular its Administration Committee, which consists of the Chairman of the Cantonal Council and the Vice Chairman. Parliament Services has 18 full- and part-time employees.

Current situation

The IT solution used by Parliament Services was outdated and no longer capable of meeting increasing requirements in relation to user-friendliness and ease of use. Mobile access to the traditional client-server solution was also only possible to a limited extent, and the regular system and security updates required caused a great deal of administrative work as well as costs. In addition to this, there was also need for action with regard to the website of the Cantonal Council – communication with the general public and the media had to be improved and the overall appearance needed modernising. What's more, the ability to manage content simply and independently was also required.

Solution

Upon the recommendation of the IT partner Allgeier, solutions based solely on the Windows Azure cloud were designed and implemented for the information and management platform as well as the website. The core application, which Parliament Services uses to enter and manage users, groups and the business activities of the Cantonal Council, was developed in the form of a cutting-edge, browser-based rich Internet application with the help of

Microsoft .NET 4.0 and Microsoft Silverlight 4. The graphically and functionally optimised website (www.kantonsrat.zh.ch), which lists relevant information on the organisation and activities of the Cantonal Council and is also used to publish data from the council information system, is now 100% cloud based. The only item that has been left on a conventional server system is the information and work platform of the cantonal councillors, which is used to store and manage confidential information and documents.

Results

The new cloud-based council information system provides a whole range of benefits. Claudio Stutz, Head of Council and Committee Services, highlights the most important ones: 'In the past, our employees were restricted to working from workspace PCs. The cloud solution, in contrast, can be accessed on a wide variety of devices using a browser, no matter where the user is located. With the help of the integrated CMS functions, we can update content directly ourselves and publish it via the web without needing any external assistance.' The costs represented an important reason for the change. Claudio Stutz: 'Thanks to this cloud solution, we are saving taxpayers in Zurich a lot of money when it comes to licence costs and system maintenance. Time-consuming patches and updates are now a thing of the past, and the capacity of the system can be increased and reduced very simply – which means that no IT resources need to be kept in reserve.' Claudio Stutz is also full of praise when it comes to the performance, security and user-friendliness of the new council information system solution in the Azure cloud. 'The availability is great and, thanks to the fully automatic backups, our data is also perfectly protected', says the head of the administrative department. As the cloud solution has the look and feel of the familiar Microsoft desktop software and can also work seamlessly with these products, it was possible to complete the implementation without any problems and with a minimal amount of training.

Software and Services

- Windows Azure
- Microsoft .NET Framework
- Microsoft Silverlight 4
- Microsoft Excel Reporting Services
- Microsoft Active Directory (AD)
- Microsoft Office
- Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server (Extranet)
- Microsoft SQL Server
- Microsoft Visio
- Microsoft Windows Server

Key figures

Project duration Mai 2012 to November 2012 (6 months)

Improvements

Cloud-based information system for entering and managing the users, groups and business activities of the Cantonal Council; significant cost savings in relation to licences and system maintenance (no more local software installations, updates, patches, etc.); information and documents can be entered and managed simply and quickly and published automatically; platform-independent, browser-based operation of the entire system via any end device; intuitive operation, simple and time-saving search and research functions; simple and independent management by those responsible (CMS functions); utilisation of familiar work instruments such as web browser, Office programs and Windows Explorer; scalable based on needs; high availability and security thanks to fully automatic backups and redundant data storage; simple changeover with minimal training requirements thanks to the familiar look and feel as well as seamless interaction with Microsoft desktop software.