GUIDEWIRE

Basler Versicherungen Enhances Service to Its Agents and Customers

Swiss Insurer Delivers Efficiency, Agility, and Speed to Market with Guidewire

CASE STUDY

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>
> —Urs Bienz, Chief Operating Officer, Basler Versicherungen

Basler Versicherungen is a Swiss personal and commercial lines insurer with a history that spans more than 150 years. It is part of the Baloise Group, which also writes business in Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

Located in Basel, Switzerland, Basler Versicherungen provides insurance and pension solutions, as well as banking services, to individuals, small- and medium-sized firms, and large enterprises. Its non-life insurance products include property, household, general liability, motor, accident, health, and miscellaneous insurance.

Dedicated to Making Policyholders Feel Safer

Basler's goal is to make its customers feel safer. It does this by providing trustworthy insurance, personal consultations, and such special services as Hail Repair Centers, where policyholders can bring their damaged vehicles for fast, onsite claims service. "We are dedicated to doing more in security and prevention for our customers," says Michael Müller, CEO at Basler Switzerland.

"Making our customers safer is really a philosophy we stand behind," adds Urs Bienz, chief operating officer at Basler.

Standing Out in a Competitive, Changing Market

The Swiss insurance market is crowded and competitive, and insurers that operate in it are under pressure from changing interest rates, government regulations, and customer expectations.

To stand out, Michael Müller explains that Basler leverages the link between its insurance and banking businesses to give customers "360-degree advice and a complete set of products." The company also has innovative offerings, such as home insurance that provides psychological treatment for those whose homes have been burgled.

A Need for Modern, Flexible Core Systems

Because Basler is dedicated to delivering superior customer service and innovative products, it wanted to replace its numerous legacy systems with modern core systems that can support its goals.

Basler Versicherungen

Headquarters:
Basel, Switzerland

Operations:
Switzerland

Business Lines:
Commercial, Personal

Employees:
3,700

Website:
www.baloise.ch

Products:
- Guidewire PolicyCenter®
- Guidewire BillingCenter®
- Guidewire Rating Management™
- Guidewire Client Data Management™
- Guidewire DataHub™

Benefits:
- Provided agents and employees with common processes and faster workflows
- Trained agents and employees in hours instead of months
- Gained ability to launch new products in days instead of a year
- Enabled business to make rating and pricing changes weekly instead of twice a year
- Provided customers with better, more informed customer service
- Poised to reduce TCO through efficiency gains across the organization

"We have a lot of different legacy systems, and some are very old," explains Pascal Hirzel, product owner of Guidewire PolicyCenter® at Basler. "We could not make system changes easily, and business users complained that they couldn't update products due to the constraints of the policy systems."

Deciding to Buy Versus Build

Like many insurers, Basler considered building its own systems before deciding to buy from a software vendor. "We thought about extending our existing systems, but we decided to buy instead," explains Tristan Schuler, IT program manager at Basler. "For 30 years, the IT strategy in insurance was build-your-own. But today, it is more difficult to build software; technology changes fast and it's hard for insurers to develop and maintain their own software. We are insurers, not software development companies."

> "Sometimes out-of-the-box processes are more complicated but, with Guidewire, the processes were simpler out of the box, not more complex."
>
> —Tristan Schuler, IT Program Manager, Basler Versicherungen

Basler Becomes Guidewire's First Swiss Customer

After looking at systems from more than 20 different vendors, Basler Versicherungen chose PolicyCenter for underwriting and policy administration, BillingCenter to support commission and billing operations, DataHub for data migration and management, plus Guidewire Rating Management™ and Guidewire Client Data Management. "Based on our findings, Guidewire has the most mature solutions on the market," explains Urs Bienz. "We also liked the professionalism of the Guidewire people."

An Out-of-the-Box Implementation Strategy Pays Off

Even before the inception of its Guidewire implementation project, Basler's IT team had decided on an out-of-the-box strategy. "At Basler, we try to stick as much as we can to out-of-the-box products, and Guidewire products are designed in a way that we can do this," says Rolf Schiltknecht, program manager of all Guidewire implementations at Basler Switzerland.

The implementation team deployed PolicyCenter 95 percent out of the box, and BillingCenter 85 percent out-of-the-box, and went live on phase one of the project on budget and one month ahead of schedule.

Rolf Schiltknecht credits Basler's successful go-live in part to its out-of-the-box implementation strategy, but also to the use of agile methodology, realistic estimates on time and resources, and the strength of the implementation team, which was made up of 40 people from Basler Versicherungen and Guidewire. "Together, Basler and Guidewire are responsible for this success," he says.

Positive Feedback from Basler's Business Community

After going live on phase one of its implementation project, Basler received positive feedback from its business project stakeholders, who were involved with the implementation from the very beginning. "Our business people are very happy," says Rolf Schiltknecht. "They have rated the project very well."

IT Team Pleased with Easy Localization

Basler's IT team has also been pleased with the implementation—including how easy it was to localize. "This was the first Guidewire installation in DACH for the German-speaking market," says Rolf Schiltknecht. "But localization was not a problem. Even Swiss-specific configurations were easy to put into the software, as well as implementing the software in three languages—German, French and Italian."

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Happy Agents and Employees

Basler has 800 "tied" agents who work for no other company, and it is important that they are productive and happy. "In Switzerland, the most important sales channel for private clients is the sales agent," explains Wolfgang Prasser, head of product management for private clients. Before the Guidewire project, he says, agents had to use four different policy systems, which slowed their work and sales processes. Employees, too, had to jump from system to system, and there were no common processes for all end users.

Today, agents and employees are using integrated core systems for property insurance built on a shared technology platform. Whereas before it took up to six months to train new users on the old systems, it now takes just two to three hours to train end users on PolicyCenter and BillingCenter. Everyone benefits from automated workflows that eliminate manual processes and minimize errors, and everyone shares the same, current information. Agents can also make policy changes online, and obtain billing information quickly.

"After go-live, we asked agents and employees to complete a survey on the systems, and the results were very good," says Tristan Schuler. "We received very positive feedback."

Greater Business Agility and Speed to Market with PolicyCenter

Basler's product and sales teams are happy, too. "Before, it could take a year to launch a new product," says Mira Figlestahler, product manager for personal property insurance. "Now, in comparison, it takes days."

"We have the agility to develop new products and bring them to market much faster than before," adds Wolfgang Prasser. "We can offer new coverages to address new situations in the market. We are much more flexible and better able to meet the demands of our customers." He adds that Basler can also make rating and pricing changes more quickly for the first product it released with PolicyCenter. "Before, we could only make rating changes twice a year. Now we can change rating and prices every week."

Enhanced Customer Service

Perhaps the biggest benefit Basler has gained from its Guidewire project is the ability to enhance its service to customers. Claudio Kapetanopulos, who works in Basler's Sales Directline division, explains that his teams now have the comprehensive customer and policy information they need at their fingertips to better serve their customers. "We also benefit by having direct access to billing information," he adds.

A Model Insurer for Guidewire

The project with Basler Versicherungen was Guidewire's first with Baloise Group, and the entire Guidewire team has been very impressed with the results. "The team at Basler has a lot to be proud of and we congratulate them," says Mike Polelle, chief delivery officer, Guidewire Software. "Their best practice use of a one-team approach for fast decision-making, deployment of largely out-of-the-box software, and their attention to detail made them a pleasure to work with and enabled them to deliver quick value for their company—ahead of schedule and on budget. We wish them continued success."

About Guidewire

Guidewire delivers the software that Property/Casualty (P/C) insurers need to adapt and succeed in a time of rapid industry change. We combine three elements – core processing, data and analytics, and digital engagement – into a technology platform that enhances insurers' ability to engage and empower their customers and employees. More than 200 P/C insurers around the world have selected Guidewire. For more information, please visit www.guidewire.com and follow us on twitter: @Guidewire_PandC.

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