

Rapperswil-Jona

Enabling a Successful Merger of Swiss Local Councils with Support from Symantec and the Altiris Client Management Suite



Rapperswil-Jona is the regional center of upper Lake Zurich. The local government authority attracted much attention last year when the formerly independent communities of Rapperswil and Jona merged following a referendum. An important element of the successful merger was the integration of the existing IT systems—at both an administrative and a school level. Today, with the help of the Altiris® Client Management Suite from Symantec™, Rapperswil-Jona boasts an efficient and less costly IT infrastructure, making it a shining example for the rest of Switzerland.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Rapperswil-Jona is the regional center of upper Lake Zurich in Switzerland. It attracted much attention in 2007 when the formerly independent communities of Rapperswil and Jona merged following a referendum.

INDUSTRY

Public Sector

SOLUTION

Endpoint Management

“The merger of local governments also involves the merger of internal administrative IT systems. Homogeneous administration of the overall network is based on the Altiris Client Management Suite. The project has been so successful that it now serves as a shining example for other Swiss local councils.”

Mario Göldi

Head of IT
Rapperswil-Jona

A Single Social Entity

Although the flourishing towns of Rapperswil and Jona on Lake Zurich in Switzerland were officially independent until the end of 2006, the two local governments' infrastructures had already been merged, many projects were being implemented jointly, and the two towns had also long formed a single social entity. Thus, the merger decided by referendum was simply a logical conclusion to the progression experienced in practice, and met with widespread approval.

The merger also involved the integration of the two communities' existing IT systems, both at an administrative level and at the 15 schools in the area. Today, Rapperswil-Jona boasts a centralized computer center with 21 servers and 1,200 PCs, fully supported by the Altiris Client Management Suite from Symantec.

Joining Forces in IT

“Once the decision to merge the two independent communities had been taken, the question of how to tackle the IT issue arose,” recalls Mario Göldi, now head of IT, Rapperswil-Jona. “There were 15 schools which had planned and acted independently up to that point, as well as the two separate administrations to consider.” A migration concept was therefore commissioned at an early stage. The merger would create the largest town on the eastern shore of Lake Zurich, with some 25,000 inhabitants in total, and involved much more than just the integration of a few PCs.

The remit was thus a comprehensive one: to integrate around 300 PCs belonging to the city council as well as the entire, hitherto distributed IT of all the area's learning institutions into a common infrastructure. The new concept provided for a central computer center with 21 clustered servers and 300 PCs for the city council. To this was added a fiber optic network to which around 1,200 clients would be connected for the merged community's 3,500 schoolchildren and 500 teachers. And all this was to be administered on a central basis.

Swiss local government authority ensures effective management of its IT infrastructure with Altiris Lifecycle Management solutions from Symantec.

Effective Administration is Essential

In its role as a planning and consulting firm, OBT was responsible for the hardware: creating and implementing the entire hardware concept, with the focus on administration. HP PCs and servers were installed across the board as a hardware platform. The core of the new solution, however, was its management software. Here, Rapperswil-Jona opted for the Altiris Client Management Suite, implemented by Altiris specialist ROTRONIC. One of the schools involved was already working very successfully with the Altiris Client Management Suite and ROTRONIC had already performed important preliminary work here: many of the school applications were already packaged and thus prepared for automatic software distribution. The school's experience had been very favorable and tipped the scales in favor of Altiris.

"The Altiris Client Management Suite offered us all the functions we needed," explains Mario Göldi. "Effective software distribution, without which we would not have been able to re-configure almost 1,200 computers; effective management of the connected computers, enabling us to support the entire network with only three employees; and integrated asset management, via which we can register hardware and software resources and, above all, perform effective administration." To this are added the Helpdesk functionality, which now ensures centralized, competent service, and the Recovery Solution for rapid server recovery.

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SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Business Drivers

- Ensure uninterrupted business operation
- Reduce cost of IT lifecycle management

Technology Challenges

- Combine existing structures at 26 locations in a single computer centre
- Reduce the support effort
- Implement software distribution and centralized IT management

Solution

Easily manage and troubleshoot systems from virtually anywhere

Symantec Products

- Altiris® Client Management Suite™ from Symantec, featuring:
 - Deployment Solution™
 - Software Delivery Solution™
 - Helpdesk Solution™
 - Recovery Solution™ for servers
 - Wise Package Studio™

Technology Environment

- PCs and servers: Central computer center with 21 clustered HP servers and 300 HP PCs (for the city council); 1,200 clients (for 3,500 schoolchildren and 500 teachers)
- Operating systems: Microsoft® Windows® 2003, Windows XP (desktops)

Symantec Partner

- ROTRONIC

Good Preparation, Effective Implementation

The school integration demonstrates how valuable this good preparation was in practice. “Pre-packaged installations are now available for automatic software distribution in standard applications,” says Mario Göldi. “But this isn’t the case with the programs used by the schools. They have to be implemented on the school computers as part of the Altiris software distribution.” The preliminary work performed by ROTRONIC enabled the company to package some 60 programs within the space of a single month, thus satisfying the requirements for integration of the schools in such a short period of time.

In order not to restrict the creativity of the schoolchildren and still ensure professional administration of the installed PCs, Mario Göldi’s team chose to tread a path between the two: the standard installation comprises all the programs requested by the respective school, plus software that simulates a virtual PC. Students can use this virtual machine for programming and trying out everything required for their lessons. Should this damage the computer configuration, the computer can be reconfigured via the network and is ready to use again after only 20 minutes.

Rollout proceeded rapidly and according to plan, with the individual locations integrated successively into the new infrastructure. Reliability was one of the most important factors in the entire migration process. “The servers run under Windows 2003, while we opted for Windows XP for the desktops,” reports Mario Göldi. “Vista is planned for 2008. As Altiris enables the operating system to be distributed smoothly, we are in no hurry and can take things slowly.”

BUSINESS VALUE AND TECHNICAL BENEFITS

- Enabled a successful reduction of overhead cost and increased operational leverage by merging the two independent local councils
- Introduced centralized new computer center including the effective rollout of 1,200 PCs
- Centralized helpdesk improved resources utilization and knowledge sharing

Fit for the Future

Savings must be made, no matter what the cost. German administrations are keen to adopt this principle—implementing what are in fact expensive savings measures. The number of Swiss local councils is also on the decline, but not because they have been ordered to merge in an effort to save money: Swiss mergers must be decided by a referendum of the citizens involved. There are two main reasons why they vote in favor of mergers: because the social reality has already created a communal spirit and because this will give the new community better opportunities in the future—the Swiss are practical folk.

These requirements were satisfied in Rapperswil-Jona, with the resulting merger in itself representing a shining example for the rest of Switzerland. Attention is now focused on the changes resulting from the merger. And the successful IT consolidation with high performance management by the Altiris Client Management Suite from Symantec is now regarded as one of the factors that contributed towards the overall success of the integration process.

we take advantage of a single catalog across both core sites. Moreover, we will shortly benefit from ‘single touch’ in the unlikely event of a disaster scenario.”