

Business Solutions

Power for Migros receipts.

A strong retail business solution from Sun and Sun partner UPTIME.

For the electronic archiving of its receipts, leading Swiss retail chain Migros put its stock in the competence and reliability of Sun and its partner UPTIME services AG. SunFlash asked Markus Strässle, Head of DataWarehouse at Migros-Genossenschaftsbund (MGB), and Patrick Richter, Federal Business Information Systems IT-Specialist and Managing Director of UPTIME Services AG about the background of this project.

Under Swiss law, detailed lists of receipts have to be archived for ten years. Easier said than done, especially when you serve more than 1.5 million customers a day. That's precisely the case with Migros, the largest retail chain in Switzerland. Each customer purchases an average of 10 items, adding up to 15 to 20 million data records a day.

Until 1998, the various Migros co-operatives archived their receipts in different ways. The majority of the stores packed the rolls in cardboard boxes, which resulted in enormous volume and made searches extremely difficult. A few were already using the cash register manufacturer's proprietary archiving system. However, compared to the present-day solution, the functionality of these systems was extremely limited.

UPTIME – the leader in performance.

It's no wonder, then, that in 1998, the co-operatives commissioned MGB with the task of evaluating the introduction of a uniform archiving system. It was not only the legal requirements that led to this decision. The co-operatives also wanted to improve the quality of their customer service, support accounting with clarifications and create possibilities for further use of the data.

"MGB obtained the offers of three providers," Richter recalled.

"The main reason UPTIME got the job was because we had already successfully set up a document archiving system at the St. Gallen Migros co-operative. In addition, we were able to demonstrate our excellent performance."

"Sun products and services meet our high standards."

Richter recommended that MGB choose a Sun platform. "UPTIME considers Sun a reliable partner. Its products and services meet our high standards. Our solutions benefit from the stability, scalability and performance of Sun platforms." MGB agreed to the suggestion, above all because Sun fit perfectly into the current environment. Sun computers were then, and are still today, very successful in their operations – for controlling, entering and logging EFTPOS transactions (cashless payments).

The new MGB electronic archive was given the name TLOG. "The most important component of the archive is the ARTS Retail," Richter explains, "an UPTIME document management solution for the retail sector. It was installed on a store-by-store basis over the course of a year. That also included employee training for the Customer Service representatives of the individual retail stores, the Accounting departments of the co-operatives and the Migros CUMULUS bonus card infoline employees."

A particular challenge was the integration of different types of cash registers from four different manufacturers. To prepare for this task, Migros defined an interface standard together with the cash register manufacturers, so that all registers would supply the data in the same format.

Migros' pioneering customer service performance.

From the onset on, TLOG has been working to the complete satisfaction of the users. Each evening, the data is delivered via file transfer to the central TLOG archive – not as scanned documents in pixel form (another UPTIME specialty), but as records with sales figures. The system processes the data at night, making it ready and available for queries in the morning.



Until 1998, most Migros co-operatives archived their cash register rolls in banana cartons, making searches extremely time-consuming.

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U P T I M E | services

ARTS Retail from UPTIME services AG.

Optimal for companies in the retail sector that:

- Have to archive their documents for legal reasons and thus need a suitable electronic archive.
- Want to use their archive in the Intranet/Extranet consistently and want to save costs by utilizing Internet technologies.
- Also want to make their data available on the Intranet and are looking for a system that meets strict requirements in terms of security and performance.
- Require an easy-to-use, space-saving system for electronically collecting/recording and storing their paper documents (cash register rolls, supplier invoices, etc.).
- Want to access all of their transaction data in order to be able to provide fast and competent information (e.g. to customers or internal departments).
- Require a system that is also equipped for the new demands of the future due to its modern architecture, superior concept and easy expandability.
- Need an electronic document management system which can also be used for other company data.

www.uptime.ch

Who accesses TLOG? "It is primarily used by our Customer Service staff," Strässle explains. "For example, if a customer brings in a vacuum cleaner for repair, but has lost his or her receipt, which also functions as the warranty. That's when the advantage of TLOG really comes into play and it is first and foremost the customer who benefits from Migros. Customer Service employees have a



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user-friendly ARTS interface at their disposal for making queries. Since it runs on a conventional browser, we here at the branches do not have to install or maintain any special software."

All sales made within the past twelve months can be accessed via this interface. For example, an employee enters a date, store number, cash register, and/or specific terms such as 'vacuum cleaner.' Usually within seconds, TLOG displays the receipt in visually perfect form. It is precisely this option that makes the system exceptionally user-friendly. Richter affirms: "Since ARTS is a Swiss development, we were able to gear the system towards our customers very quickly and easily."

Amazed at the performance of the Sun Enterprise™ 450 midrange computer.

Looking back, how would Strässle rate the solution from Sun and UPTIME? "It runs and runs, and we have far less work and expense because of it. It works so quickly and so well that you almost forget it is there. And of course it meets all the requirements stipulated by the data protection and privacy laws. All of those things make us feel secure. With TLOG, we got a uniform solution for the entire Migros chain. Not only does that have a positive effect on costs, but also makes it easier for employees to work at the different co-operatives."

And what does Strässle think of the Sun platform? "Let's just put it this way: It is especially important to MGB that TLOG runs on UNIX®, and not Windows. UNIX is our first choice whenever we put high demands on stability. We mostly use Windows for office applications. I am constantly amazed by the performance of the seemingly small Sun midrange computer. It processes the large daily volume of 2 to 3GB very quickly, and there are never any delays, even with the hundreds of accesses made every day. I can't even imagine going back to sorting through all these receipts by hand."

Peter WILHELM
HELLWACH I.E.



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