



Case Study

A Burst of Development in the Cloud

Austrian Post modernizes its IT application development with support from Avanade – creating dynamic application lifecycle management.

The Starting Point: Systems Grown over the Ages

With approximately 24,000 employees, Austrian Post is one of the largest employers in the country. Every year, the group handles 860 million letters, 590 million addressed and 3.5 billion unaddressed items of marketing material. They also manage 80 million packages and express deliveries (EMS), 400 million items of print media and 290 million items of regional media. The Post maintains more than 15,000 postboxes and operates nearly 1800 branches offering face-to-face customer service. The central nervous system of this complex and widely diversified organization is an IT landscape which has been shaped over the years as it has faced ongoing new challenges. One of those challenges is digital transformation: a strategic goal for the whole group, and an important core goal for the IT department.

With this in mind, Austrian Post began to modernize its IT systems in 2014, with plans to implement the latest technologies, methods and standards. Their goal is to be as future proof as possible. "The cloud is a crucial factor, both today and in the future," explains Horst Bratfisch, Head of Application Development at Austrian Post. "Wherever it is available, the cloud option is our first choice." This also applied to the modernization of the IT Application Development department, led by Bratfisch, with around 100 employees. Historically, the development and maintenance of about 200 applications required a number of systems operating in parallel. That was detrimental in terms of transparency, and made collaboration between teams difficult to achieve.

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The Goal: Application Lifecycle Management in the Cloud

"We wanted to create a new, homogeneous platform for application development which covered each step in the process; in other words, true application lifecycle management," summarizes Horst Bratfisch. And it didn't take long to find the right platform: Microsoft Visual Studio Team Services (VSTS). Being a cloud solution, and specifically part of the European-hosted Microsoft Azure Cloud, this provided everything Austrian Post needed.

They began their search for a service provider to help develop the platform, and to raise application development to a new level with the help of modern, optimized processes. The primary goal was comprehensive automation within application development, delivering an increase in speed, efficiency and quality. Other items on the wish list were more transparency and collaboration through working on a unified, shared platform. "It was about a lot more than just installing new software," says Christina Wegscheider, the Project Leader responsible for introducing the platform. "It was a transformative project with a lot of implications for how we are going to work in the future."

After an intensive search, the Austrian Post ultimately picked Avanade as its strategic implementation partner. "Avanade's technical expertise and process knowledge and their strategic approach to consulting impressed us right from the beginning," remembers Bratfisch. "And it quickly became obvious that we had made the right decision."

The Solution: Project Success through Versatile Consulting Competences

Today, most IT application development at the Austrian Post takes place in Microsoft Visual Studio Team Services, based on processes developed together with Avanade. The code developed on the platform using standards and norms unified across teams is stored in a central directory. From here, programs are automatically generated, tested and prepared in various environments, right through to the production environment. Everyone responsible now always has the current development status at their fingertips, and is fully informed about whether individual applications are meeting targets, as well as the status of the IT application development as a whole.

The collaboration with Avanade during the project proved itself to be exemplary. "Our Avanade consultant brought an impressive mix of process and method knowledge, technical expertise and social awareness – important things that are needed to accomplish a project like this," summarizes Bratfisch. "So it didn't take him long to convince our software engineers that external advice and support are both helpful and necessary. This was essential for bringing them on board." Project Leader Wegscheider expands: "Within the project itself, it was then very important to keep the momentum going and to ensure that the project wasn't sidelined by day-to-day activities. The Avanade consultant was also helpful in this respect, since our colleagues were extremely motivated to complete their project tasks before his next visit."



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The Results: Greater Momentum, Speed and Quality in Application Development

Even though it is only a short time since the system was implemented, the benefits of the transformation project are clearly visible. Horst Bratfisch uses one of the group's biggest applications as an example: "Our letter logistics software controls the daily movements of 9000 delivery agents. If we have to make any changes to this application now, we can program, test and distribute them within a very short space of time. In the past, this would have taken at least three weeks." This is where the effort Austrian Post invested into automation is really paying off. "Lots of things run overnight and without the need for human supervision, which really accelerate the process," reports Christina Wegscheider. Departments and members of the IT Application Development team both confirm that the quality of the applications has also improved over the course of the project.

The Post has plans to expand the system again in the future, with a particular focus on request management and operational handover. "We would like departments to send their requests to us via the platform itself. This would eliminate media disruption and ensure greater momentum," says the Project Leader. Automating the roll out and installation of applications will also increase speed – "and, above, all reduce errors," says Horst Bratfisch with conviction. "We are already working with Avanade to look at this important quality issue. That is our next important milestone on the journey towards complete application lifecycle management, with as much automation as possible."

The Results:

 **Greater Momentum**

 **Speed**

 **Quality**

in Application Development



About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud-enabling services, business solutions and design-led experiences, delivered through the power of people and the Microsoft ecosystem. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation and has 29,000 professionals in 23 countries. Visit us at www.avanade.com

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