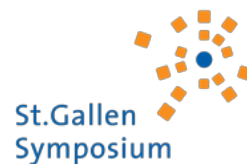# St. Gallen Symposium gets website as progressive as its debates

Sitecore platform improves event registration experience for scale, speed and reliability

avanade

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St.Gallen Symposium

CASE STUDY
St. Gallen Symposium gets website
as progressive as its debates

Overview:

Once a year the St. Gallen Symposium brings together hundreds of the world's leaders and young talents to debate some of the most important topics in society, politics and culture. During this time, the university student organizers running the event face enormous challenges with online registrations and administrative support.

With Avanade's help, St. Gallen Symposium built a reliable, flexible and user-friendly digital platform to serve its guests—one that parallels the modern, engaging atmosphere of this global conference.

Situation:

Event registration site requires modern capabilities

Conducted every year by the International Students' Committee, St. Gallen Symposium is a global gathering of senior business leaders, politicians, NGO representatives and renowned pundits that takes place every May at the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland. Delivering an enjoyable experience for all participants is a top priority.

"St. Gallen Symposium is an event which has a very high level of customization and a very personal way of interacting with participants and speakers," said Dominic Baumann, Chief Operating Officer, St. Gallen Symposium. "This means that we cannot use a standard application to register our participants because there are so many different types. We wanted a single system that would treat participants as individuals."

Its legacy online platform could not meet the demands and expectations of the symposium's distinguished participants. Heavy traffic during peak registration times pressured the website and risked crashes. Manual processes for hotel bookings, transportation, scheduling and customer tracking were prone to human error, and the lack of a standardized system of management meant a disconnected experience for all.

Symposium organizers knew a change was in order. They envisioned a registration website that would be as progressive as their debates. So they set out to develop a new digital platform to power and customize the registration process at every stage of the event.

"Every participant is unique so we have to create a platform where you can personalize every single user," added Joel Tinguely, ISC member.

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Solution:

Sitecore platform integrates with Dynamics CRM to expand capabilities

The St. Gallen Symposium chose Sitecore for its flexible and advanced functions to meet its requirements. No other solution on the market provided a single platform that can also be personalized. To guarantee optimal delivery of this solution, St. Gallen Symposium wanted a partner that understands the technology needed to deliver the best digital services to all users, so they turned to Accenture and Avanade for their core expertise on the Sitecore platform.

We built a standard web application hosted on the Microsoft Azure platform, which provides a feasible solution for user registration. The application, known as My Symposium, is designed to support and track session registration and attendance authorization. Given the global extent of the event, we helped St. Gallen Symposium set up the cloud infrastructure in Azure so users can access the same standard of services from any location.

"We decided to partner with Accenture and Avanade to create our very own, unique registration platform." Baumann said. "The experience with My Symposium is fantastic. People love it, and there are always things that we can optimize."

Our reliance on agile development methods allowed us to deliver a modern, optimized solution that would function with ease, speed and reliability as the demand requires. The solution included:

- **Migration to the Sitecore platform:** We developed and launched a new, fully responsive website on the cloud.

- **Integration with Microsoft Dynamics CRM:** A customized CRM framework integrates tightly with existing services to provide additional web support. For example, the Sitecore Scheduler captures the user's personal and participation details, including hotel and work session registration details, which ISC can better track and manage.

- **Automated accommodation and transportation bookings.** This feature displays room availability in different hotels and arranges for local transportation. Upon request, the ISC team can manage these bookings for the user.

- **Application of mobile capabilities:** The platform synchronizes with the event app, SpotMe, to link events and information with the user's calendar on mobile devices.

- **Migration to the cloud:** The entire site is hosted on Microsoft Azure to increase speed and service functionality for both internal and external users.

"When we started this transformation, we had a lot of ideas about how My Symposium should operate – and we still have a lot of ideas," said Oliver Krek, Project Manager, St. Gallen Symposium 2016. "But when we introduced this new platform, it turned out better than expected and now we have a good foundation upon which to build major improvements and further innovations."

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"The platform was a great success because we made the process for our customers a lot simpler and more iterative."

— Fabian Karst, Project Manager, St. Gallen Symposium 2017

Results:

New platform delivers a seamless, reliable experience

Today the St. Gallen Symposium operates on the new Sitecore platform and the capabilities achieved offer significant benefits for ensuing events:

- **Increased scale, speed and reliability**: By leveraging Azure cloud infrastructure, the symposium can now easily process nearly 1,000 registrations during a two-day period. Page response has improved and participants can reliably register for their favorite sessions, especially since the most popular ones can fill up within minutes. And given that the event occurs only once a year and visits to the site have a limited timeframe, the platform scales according to event needs.

- **Improved efficiency at reduced costs.** Automated and digitized processes managed in a new centralized CRM system are easy to use and eliminate manual errors. It guarantees student organizers gather and process the right information. Increased functionality and scalability help reduce costs.

- **Expanded features.** The Sitecore platform expanded the built-in features available to registering participants, including hotel bookings, transportation services, information updates and session registration. The system ensures these details are accurate and properly communicated to participants.

- **Optimized user experience.** Along with the SpotMe app, the site offers a more reliable registration process that is easily accessible on any device for users on the go.

As part of St. Gallen Symposium 2017, more features have been enhanced to further ease event administration and management.

"It was quite a privilege to work with Avanade," added Fabian Karst, Project Manager, St. Gallen Symposium 2017. "The platform was a great success because we made the process for our customers a lot simpler and more iterative."

St. Gallen Symposium is not alone in dealing with variations in traffic and demands on their sites. Many event organizers and retailers face similar challenges. Yet, the pressure to always deliver a seamless, reliable digital experience to customers remains consistent. By relying on this cloud-hosted modern solution, St. Gallen Symposium struck the right balance. Now it can keep its focus on shaping the future.

About the St. Gallen Symposium

The St. Gallen Symposium is a global gathering of Leaders of Today and Leaders of Tomorrow that takes place annually in May at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. It is organized by the International Students' Committee (ISC), a team of students from the university. The goal is to bring senior executives, politicians and societal leaders together with young professionals, academics and entrepreneurs to debate topics of management, politics and civil society. For more information, visit http://www.symposium.org/

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