

Generali Switzerland unites data systems with Red Hat OpenShift



Generali Switzerland, part of Assicurazioni Generali Group, found that its isolated systems and data made it difficult to meet end customer and sales agent demand and stay competitive. By integrating its systems with a single, containerized platform using Red Hat OpenShift Container Platform, the group can now more easily share and reuse data and integration components between its many applications. As a result, Generali has improved its time to market for new applications and features, increasing its competitiveness. Generali Switzerland is now sharing best practices with other Generali companies in additional countries.

Software

Red Hat® OpenShift®
Container Platform

Red Hat Ansible® Automation

Red Hat Consulting



Insurance

1,800 employees

“By moving away from virtual machines to containers using Red Hat OpenShift Container Platform, we can now deploy several times per day. We can respond to demands with shorter release cycles, helping us gain a competitive edge.”

Christian Nicoll

Director of platform engineering and operations,
Generali Switzerland

Benefits

- Centralized access to up-to-date data, helping sales agents easily use and share information
- Improved time to market by shifting from monthly to daily releases
- Increased productivity by automating repetitive manual tasks



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Director of platform engineering and operations, Generali Switzerland

Isolated systems affect customer access

Generali Switzerland is a division of Assicurazioni Generali Group, one of the world’s biggest insurance groups. Generali Switzerland successfully competes in the modern insurance markets using many digital applications and platforms for sales agents and end customers. In the past, these digital offerings were managed by various systems aligned by business area—for example, consumer life insurance and corporate business. These disparate systems—some 20 or more years old—did not connect well with each other or customer-facing portals, keeping customers and sales agents from accessing up-to-date data or accounts.

“We had a lot of point-to-point connections between various systems, created on a project-by-project-basis,” said Christian Nicoll, Director of Platform Engineering and Operations at Generali Switzerland. “Ongoing maintenance was difficult because we had to focus resources on building new solutions from scratch for each use case or business area.”

In 2016, Generali Switzerland decided to adopt a new four-year strategy to put its customers at the center of its business. “We decided to create a new, containerized connection platform to overcome these issues and support our focus on our customers,” said Nicoll.

Single, containerized platform integrates key applications and tools

Generali Switzerland chose to base its new platform on Red Hat OpenShift Container Platform, a solution that incorporates Kubernetes and other open source projects into an enterprise container platform designed for cloud environments.

“Our colleagues from Generali Germany had already adopted OpenShift and had spent a lot of time evaluating it, so we chose to use OpenShift based on their positive experiences,” said Nicoll.

To define and design this new centralized platform, the company worked with a local Red Hat partner, Avectris AG. After initially implementing the platform, Avectris runs OpenShift on HPE servers, virtualized using Microsoft Hyper-V, as a fully managed, highly available service. To comply with current Swiss regulations, the platform is hosted on premise. Generali also uses Red Hat Ansible Automation to automate, configure, and manage various tasks using Ansible Playbooks.

During implementation of these new Red Hat solutions, Red Hat Consulting provided on-site support. Another Red Hat partner, Innovation Process Technology (IPT) AG, also helped Generali Switzerland build and integrate its new connection platform and the applications that now run on it. “We had a very challenging goal to finish the connection platform within a year,” said Nicoll. “With Avectris, IPT, and Red Hat, we were able to successfully meet this short deadline.”

Generali has used its containerized integration platform to further expand its technology capabilities by integrating Apache Kafka, a real-time data streaming platform, an application programming interface (API) gateway, and Prometheus monitoring software.

With these technologies, the insurance group runs New Agent Workplace, a solution that processes data from Generali’s database and shares it with agents.

ABOUT AVECTRIS

Avectris AG is an experienced Swiss IT service provider for companies primarily in the financial services, insurance, healthcare, industrial, and utility sectors. As a professional partner, Avectris offers its customers comprehensive one-stop IT services. The focus is on hybrid cloud solutions, outsourcing, SAP® S/4HANA®, collaboration, IT service management, and consulting services, with a main emphasis on IT security and business continuity. The company is based in Baden, Switzerland, and has around 280 employees.

www.avectris.ch

ABOUT IPT

Innovation Process Technology (IPT) AG is a Swiss IT consulting firm with more than 100 consultants that delivers innovative integration solutions to complex business challenges.

www.ipt.ch

Better integration supports focus on customer

Easier access to accurate data

By connecting its previously isolated applications through a single, centralized platform using Red Hat OpenShift, Generali helps its staff more easily and reliably gain access to essential data and share it. As a result, the group's sales agents can quickly access up-to-date information, without waiting for data from different systems to be aggregated.

"The new platform makes accessing accurate data easier," said Nicoll. "Having a consistent view of the same data is key having a comprehensive understanding of our customers."

Faster application development and deployment

With its new OpenShift-based, containerized platform and a microservices-based architecture, Generali has reduced time to build and launch new staff- and customer-facing products and features.

"Before, we released applications once per month at best. If we need a lot of time to react to customer demands, one of our competitors will step in," said Nicoll. "By moving away from virtual machines to containers using OpenShift Container Platform, we can now deploy several times per day, helping us save up to 30 days of work. We can respond to demands with shorter and shorter release cycles, helping us gain a competitive edge," said Nicoll.

In addition, using a centralized platform helps the company reuse resources to further speed development. For example, the Salesforce integration it created for the Cleo cloud platform can be used for other upcoming projects or systems.

Increased productivity

With Red Hat Ansible Automation, Generali has automated many previously manual tasks and processes to further improve productivity.

"As we continue with the platform, we anticipate that using Red Hat Ansible will save us time by scripting more tasks, such as deploying middleware components in production," said Nicoll. "Making these tasks automated and repeatable is a big advantage."

Success leads to plans to share best practices

Generali Switzerland will continue working with Avectris to further optimize and scale its efficient, centralized platform. It is also looking to move some of its nonproduction systems to a public cloud environment.

"While we have to keep our production environment running on-premise for compliance reasons, moving our development systems and other parts of our nonproduction environment to public cloud could help us gain flexibility and cost improvements," said Nicoll. "Moving to the cloud would also help us adopt new technologies, such as machine learning."

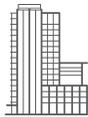
"Our experiences with Red Hat and OpenShift were very positive. OpenShift has provided us with many new capabilities," said Nicoll.

About Generali Switzerland

Generali is an independent Italian insurance and asset management group with a strong international presence. Established in 1831, it is among the world's leading insurers and is present in over 50 countries, with total premium income exceeding €68 billion in 2017. Generali's total assets under management (AUM) is €530 billion. In Switzerland, it has almost a million private customers, plus many businesses, and 1,800 employees.

www.generali.ch

About Red Hat



Red Hat is the world's leading provider of enterprise open source software solutions, using a community-powered approach to deliver reliable and high-performing Linux, hybrid cloud, container, and Kubernetes technologies. Red Hat helps customers integrate new and existing IT applications, develop cloud-native applications, standardize on our industry-leading operating system, and automate, secure, and manage complex environments. Award-winning support, training, and consulting services make Red Hat a trusted adviser to the Fortune 500. As a strategic partner to cloud providers, system integrators, application vendors, customers, and open source communities, Red Hat can help organizations prepare for the digital future.



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