

Green light for financial digital transformation

The digital transition of banking is gaining pace. Financial services providers are, however, currently weighing up their options and considering how best to adapt. Roger Süess, CEO at **Green**, speaks of the choices banks are having to make and how his company's expertise can help.

The financial services sector has long been known as one of innovation – both client facing and back office. Over the past few years, in fact, it has changed beyond recognition – thanks largely to the adoption of new technologies. Online banking, apps and digital trading platforms are all now commonplace, bringing with them a new age of financial services to consumers.

But these changes have been shadowed by significant questions for those heading financial institutions: how do we make the best use of technology to the benefit of us and our customers, and how do we do this in an efficient and cost-effective way?

With it also comes a totally new commodity: data. This priceless resource is shaping the future of banking – as it is many other industries. It is not easily handled, though, and is subject to considerable regulation and cost. As any industry insider knows, data centres have traditionally been crucial here, with banks traditionally storing their own data at their own expense. But change is coming. Today, after all, many banks are looking further

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afield – to specialist data and cloud services providers.

Aside from the regulation of data storage, meanwhile, there are other issues too – not least energy consumption and related costs. The sector is open about how much it consumes, providing details of the ratio of total energy used at the facility,

Roger Süess,
CEO, Green



divided by the energy required to operate its systems. This is expressed in a score ranging from 1.2 to 3.0, the so-called power utilisation effectiveness (PUE). A score of 1.2 is 'very efficient', while one of 3.0 is 'very inefficient'.

Significant efficiencies

Roger Süess, CEO at Green, says that as technology evolves, energy consumption at today's modern data centres has significantly improved. "If you compare older centres to the ones that we now design, it's completely different," he explains. "Your classic data centres have PUEs of two, maybe even above two, particularly those run by enterprises themselves. We are very much pushing to narrow it to just over one."

After first launching as a pioneer, offering the first connectivity services in Switzerland in 1995, today Green has

evolved to be a leading provider of digital services across the country. The company operates four data hubs across Zurich, providing services for those living and working throughout the confederation.

With exceptional interconnection, the sites comprise two campuses of hyperscale class and two satellites. "In addition to that

base function infrastructure, Green also provides solutions like IaaS (infrastructure as a service), communication and collaboration services in the enterprise stack," says Süess, working with suppliers, carriers and developers and engineers all on the Green platform.

At the beginning of 2021, the company announced it was investing in its second data campus, saying it was a "prominent statement" of intent of "Green's vision to play a part in evolving Switzerland into an innovative location for secure and sustainable data centres". The site will be four times bigger than New York's Times Square, at 46,000m², and will cost an estimated £395m.

The growing use of data centres and cloud services continues apace within the financial services sector, in part fuelled by the pandemic. All the same, Covid merely hastened their adoption – banks were already charging towards a digital future. Green, for its part, is at the forefront of this transition. It was recognised as the 'Leading Data Centre Provider' after independent analysis from Information Services Group, and became the first Swiss operator to receive the 'M&O Stamp of Approval' for its management and operations from the Uptime Institute.

"Innovation, technical competence and dedication to deliver 100% uptime of our services have built our reputation as a reliable and trusted partner," explains Süess. "With our comprehensive digital platform we want to help customers move their business and IT forward, shaping their digital future and letting them grow."

As part of that digital future, Süess sees an increasing shift among companies in the financial services sector, but also more broadly across industry, from their own

servers and systems to providers such as Green. He believes one of the key drivers for this is energy consumption, PUE. Another is interconnectivity, as banking systems become more intelligent, more widely-used and more complex in terms of the data being harvested. The sources used – such as clouds or multiples of clouds – are important too.

However, Süess says, there is still work to do as the sector transitions. “Something I think that’s generally true, in particular for industries that are heavily digitised like banking, is that they start to make their cloud strategy a business strategy,” he explains. “For a very long time, businesses have seen this as the CIO’s problem, just the next tech cycle.”

Effective transitions

Süess believes it is vital – if banks are to transition effectively without harming their organisation – to place greater emphasis on digital adaptation. He says that aside from the benefits that stem from it, this transition is much more than just “a different server paradigm” – rather it’s a disruption to a business and how it operates, how safe it is, how cost-effective it can be, and how engaged it is with clients. “Because it can be disruptive,” he adds, “you should place it with your business strategy rather than just an IT cycle.”

On the issue of energy consumption and sustainability, Süess says this is where Green has real foresight, one that stands out from the competition. “We are convinced that energy efficiency is not a ‘nice thing to have’, it’s a ‘must’; a duty for data centre operators.” He adds the company does everything it can to make its operations efficient and use resources sparingly, thanks to the promotion of “clever solutions”.

“Under the theme of ‘Act Blue’, we have committed ourselves to using technology in a smart way,” Süess continues. “For example, by investing in free cooling, harnessing wasted heat, building photovoltaic systems and optimally designing rooms. We use 100% renewable energy.” At Green’s newest data centres, the company is achieving a PUE of 1.19 at maximum load, an unreachable figure for banks operating their own facilities.



Green Data Centres prioritise sustainability by investing in free cooling and harnessing wasted heat.

To put it another way, Green can see the end in sight for enterprise data centres, as more migrate to specialist providers. However, Süess continues, if this is to become the way businesses operate in future, data centres must be able to cope – something Green says it’s ready for. “We align our data centre locations so that they function as data hubs. In

Security, critical to the banking sector, is not taken for granted by the company either – nor would data centres, virtual or otherwise, ever operate efficiently or safely without taking serious security precautions. The company continuously invests in security and is audited by various independent and official bodies, Süess explains. “For financial institutions

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other words, we provide comprehensive networking solutions to partners, cloud and various content providers, over the shortest distances.”

Central location

Operating in Switzerland, Green is in a rather unique position, both geographically and in terms of business infrastructure. Given Zurich’s prominence in the global financial community, it is essential to have a durable infrastructure. This, says Süess, is another reason to work with Green. “As a data location, Switzerland is distinguished by its reliability, political and legal certainty and well-developed infrastructures. The country is considered innovative and competitive, not least because of its well-trained specialists too, an advantage we harvest here at Green.”

we comply with ISAE3402 and FINMA requirements. This is essential for us to provide high-quality services to financial institutions.”

It’s clear, then, that Green is a major player in financial data across Switzerland, with growing ambitions to become an increasingly important service provider across Europe and around the world. That, however, is a plan for the future – for now Switzerland is Green’s focus, and it is there that the company will consolidate all future plans and ambitions. “Green has been a local pioneer and innovator,” Süess concludes. “Our customers want a trusted partner, a reliable partner that really makes sure they get the best service. That’s how we see ourselves.” ●

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