Success Story

Digitalization of Lifeguards

How SEWOBE administers 1.6 million DLRG members in the Enterprise Cloud by IONOS in line with data protection regulations

To many, digital transformation in associations is pie in the sky. But the Deutschen Lebens-Rettungs-Gesellschaft (DLRG, German Life-Saving Association) has a different view. Over 1.6 million lifeguards and volunteer members will soon be administered via the Enterprise Cloud of IONOS. Associations often face the mammoth task of bringing decentralized and diverse structures under one roof. Yet how do cloud providers and IT service providers manage to shape the digital infrastructure in a secure and user-friendly manner that spans all generations?

DLRG faced this challenge a few years ago. Augsburg-based IT company SEWOBE GmbH came to the rescue as a premium provider of online software for member administration. The long-established association software for central, easy, and efficient member administration, situated securely in the cloud of the German IaaS provider 1&1 IONOS SE in compliance with data protection regulations, was enhanced in conjunction with DLRG, resulting in DLRG MANAGER.

Efficient, Secure Member Administration

In 2012, DLRG started looking for a solution that would standardize its member administration and make it more efficient. SEWOBE in Augsburg specializes in tasks exactly like these. 20 years ago, Thomas
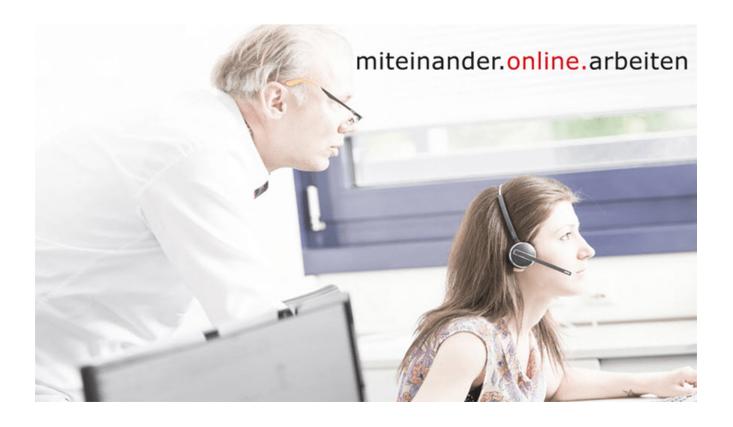
Weishaupt and Eiko Trausch established the software company that is now a pioneer in the field of cloud-based solutions for member administration of clubs and associations.

The initial position was challenging: DLRG has around 1.6 million members throughout Germany in 18 regional associations and over 2,000 branches. The association is mainly run by voluntary employees. Prior to the project, a total of 20 different software programs had been used for administration, in most cases only installed locally. This was highly inefficient and no longer suitable. At the same time, a generational shift was taking place at DLRG: growing numbers of young members were joining and taking on key roles. Therefore, set-up of secure, modern member administration could not be put off any longer.

SEWOBE has a professional CRM solution (customer relationship management) in its portfolio, and it already contained many of the necessary functions at the time. Additional modules were newly developed in close collaboration with DLRG fully in line with the association's requirements. Many topics were discussed, assessed, and presented in the lengthy initial phase leading up to the order. At the time of commissioning, DLRG's specifications therefore contained all functions that were expected and able to be implemented.

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Safe Transition to the Cloud

Another obstacle was that some sites still had no proper Internet connection, and therefore worked with stationary software that was synchronized with a central storage system. However, the error risk involved with the large number of synchronizations was far too high. It was therefore clear that central member administration accessible from all locations and devices was the only sensible solution.

In 2014, SEWOBE won the contract to develop a new CRM solution, initially for DLRG in Württemberg. At the time, the company was growing. Expansion and professionalization of its own server structures and networks were top on SEWOBE's agenda. As the association software was naturally used to administer large volumes of sensitive and personal data; the IT service provider was particularly keen to ensure that the data was stored on servers in Germany.

The Name Says It All: Data Center Designer

SEWOBE soon opted for the Enterprise Cloud of IONOS, after reading about the company in an article

in the trade press. Thomas Weishaupt's team then set up a test account to see how the Data Center Designer (DCD) works. The DCD is the graphical user interface for efficient set-up and administration of the stacks of the Enterprise Cloud so that a cloud infrastructure can be set up and administered even more quickly and easily.
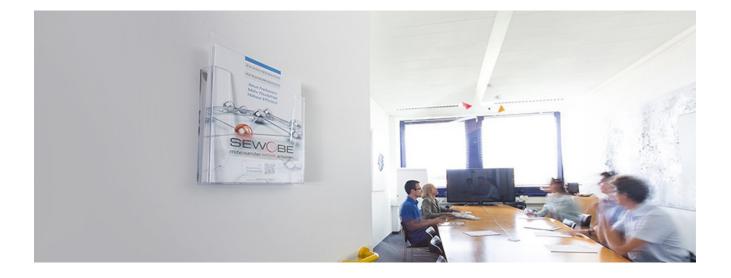
„We got started with three or four servers on which we had set up our own environment with a file server, network server, and firewall. It all worked and performed very well, and was easy to install and administer."

Thomas Weishaupt
IT Managing Director at SEWOBE

With the Enterprise Cloud, users can build an IT infrastructure in the cloud to meet their actual needs. The Data Center Designer is not a rigid, prefabricated package. Instead, it allows CPU, RAM, storage, and the network to be assembled into a precisely scalable virtual data center. Since requirements can change constantly, live vertical scaling (LVS) makes it possible to add new capacity to a virtual infrastructure at

any time, including on a temporary basis – even during operation. Once the contract for the old root servers used up to that point had expired, SEWOBE fully migrated its stack to the TÜV-certified and SSL-encrypted Enterprise Cloud.

„The move was carried out relatively quickly and without a hitch. We only had to transfer database dumps. With the Enterprise Cloud, we created images and amended them to suit us via LAMP stack. The source code came from our old source-code administration."

Thomas Weishaupt
IT Managing Director at SEWOBE

SEWOBE used the virtual data center in live operation from the outset. The scalability of the cloud servers has also proved to be highly stable: since the move, the data volumes that SEWOBE manages have become much larger as a result of the company's growth.

GDPR by Default

Data protection is a key issue in cloud-based member administration. Beginning on May 25, 2018, all companies and organizations have had to apply the provisions of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). However, according to Weishaupt, this was no problem at all when developing the solution for DLRG:

„When we started the project in 2015, we knew nothing about the new Data Protection Regulation. But we automatically created our system in such a way that our authorization system only issues the most essential information. Because of the architectural structure, we have actually been complying with data-protection rules for some time."

For instance, each certified DLRG program user can see only the data relevant to their specific task. The treasurer sees only the data necessary for accounting and finance. Anyone who works in member eligibility sees only the data relevant to this. Even so, it is obviously necessary to comply with the regulations that are essential for audit-compliant accounting under tax law. For example, the metadata of former members must be retained so that the business transactions for the stipulated period can be documented. Therefore, this data remains in the system, but is automatically hidden from normal users.

Germany-Wide Software Rollout

At first, the solution was used only in the Württemberg regional association. The first local groups went online there in 2015; since then, 80 out of 250 branches have gone live. In 2016, SEWOBE also presented the solution to the Germany-wide committee of DLRG, which subsequently approved the nationwide launch of the software.

The various systems in the regional associations had to be replaced to make way for central user administration. The advantages are obvious: administration of member data is now much faster and easier. The members, all of whom provide their services on a voluntary basis, no longer have to spend nearly as much time on burdensome administrative tasks. For instance, instead of having to be laboriously drawn up in the individual local groups and sent to the regional association, lists of members can simply be issued centrally via the Enterprise Cloud at the touch of a button.

Patience Is Rewarded

There was a period of around five years between initial contact and the rollout across Germany. To begin with, DLRG and SEWOBE had to come together, analyze the highly complex initial situation, and develop the requirements that the system ultimately had to meet. The transition to the Enterprise Cloud of IONOS at the start of the development phase went extremely smoothly following a short test run. All 2,000 branches across Germany have been prepared for the system since November 2017. Via the regional associations, all branches can now log into the live system successively themselves once the necessary certificates have been attained in the training system. The outcome is efficient and straightforward member administration — audit-compliant and in line with data-protection rules. This means less time-consuming administration work and consequently more time for what really matters: saving lives.

Can we help you write your own success story?

We've already helped countless other businesses in various industries do just that. Learn how the cloud can help you reach your business goals. If you're interested in unlocking your firm's potential and ensuring that your business remains future-proof, get in touch with us. Our Cloud Consultants are happy to offer expert advice and will demonstrate how shifting your IT to the IONOS Enterprise Cloud will best equip you to meet the challenges of a digital future.

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