

ONCE IT BECAME CLEAR TO HIM THAT HE WAS NEVER GOING TO BE THE HEIR TO A LAVISH FORTUNE, MATTHIAS MEIER "DECIDED ON SOMETHING ELSE". AND THE WORLD OF WORK TURNED OUT WELL – HE'S NOW IN CHARGE OF CREDIT SUISSE'S MESSAGING AND STANDARDS CENTER, POWERED BY MINT



"MINT HAS A LONG HISTORY BEHIND IT. WE CERTAINLY DIDN'T WANT TO BUY A PRODUCT THAT PROMISED THE WORLD BUT WOULDN'T SURVIVE INTO THE NEXT FIVE TO 10 YEARS"



Bringing projects to completion through consensus is a vital element of Matthias Meier's work as the head of Credit Suisse's Messaging and Standards Center. As the focal point for the bank's financial messaging exchange with the outside world, and for the outside world's communications with the bank, the Zurich-based center is responsible for developing the bank's strategy for connecting with the "street side", as Matthias calls it.

The role of the center is to ensure that business and IT work together to develop connectivity. As Matthias explains: "Each project is run jointly by an IT and a business project leader." A spirit of co-operation between the two areas is fostered by the open-plan nature of the Zurich offices.

FLEXIBLE WORKING

For Matthias, there is no such thing as a "typical day". The only constant is his early-morning cup of good, strong espresso: "I'm not much of a morning person and need time to get started."

The work of the Messaging and Standards Center is both project-oriented and strategic. "Messaging is a vast area and there are many different topics to cover," says Matthias. "What we are working on can change every day, and we try to be flexible. One day I may be concept reading, the next I am gathering information. I also look for

new business opportunities that messaging can bring to the bank."

Until recently, the Swiss bank's messaging was decentralized. However, the move to SWIFTNet, the IP-based network operated by Brussels-based financial messaging co-operative SWIFT, provided the catalyst for a centralization of the bank's entire messaging connectivity. The bank now operates two messaging hubs: one in New York at its investment banking arm Credit Suisse First Boston, and the other at Credit Suisse in Zurich. Most of the bank's SWIFT connectivity – as well as other messaging to entities such as the international central securities depository Euroclear, the Swiss Interbank Clearing System (SIC) and via the FIX protocol for buy-side to sell-side communications – is handled by the two hubs.

Matthias says the migration of SWIFT FIN messaging from SWIFT's X.25-based store-and-forward network onto IP-based communications with SWIFTNet opens up many business

HOME LIFE

HOME: Horgen, 13 km outside Zurich.

FAMILY: Married with two children, aged 14 and 11.

PASTIMES: "In summer I go out on my mountain bike or racing bike. In the winter, it's skiing and computer games."

VACATION: "In the summer holidays, it's hiking and biking in the Alps. I also like traveling to interesting cities such as Venice and Berlin."

BEST THING ABOUT ZURICH: "Where we live has a beautiful view of Lake Zurich and the Alps. In 10 minutes you can walk to a forest, or swim in the lake in summer."

EDUCATION: Degree from a Swiss business school.

CHILDHOOD DREAM: "When I was young I wanted to be the son of a wealthy father – a 'professional son', I guess you'd call it. Unfortunately, I had to decide on something else."

opportunities. But, as he explains, "in order to pick up on these opportunities, it was clear the bank needed to have a coordinated approach to messaging".

Among the opportunities SWIFTNet provides is FileAct, a file transfer service that provides secure and reliable transmission of data files over SWIFTNet, and InterAct, which is designed to complement FileAct and SWIFTNet FIN and supports tailored solutions for market infrastructures, closed user groups and other financial institutions.

FOCUSED MESSAGES

Following the centralization, Matthias's department now acts as the external focal point for SWIFT. This has made life easier for both the bank and SWIFT – "I can coordinate and pool resources and expertise on certain areas, and SWIFT now has just one point of reference within the bank," he explains.

With a team of just seven in Zurich, Matthias coordinates Credit Suisse's financial messaging, of which cross-border messaging is an important component. Underpinning the bank's messaging capability is the MINT suite of products, which act as message broker, router and retrieval system. "MINT and our transformation system will be the backbone of financial messaging at Credit Suisse," says Matthias.

MINT acts as a bridge from the bank's financial messaging system to the SWIFTNet Alliance gateway. In 2005, says Matthias, the bank will introduce new functionalities into its MINT application, including the ability for international branches to access MINT for financial messaging. "It is important for us, as a provider of Web-based solutions, to provide our international locations with the entry and retrieval of SWIFT messages over the Web," he says.

MINT also allows the bank to process not only SWIFT messages, but also messages sent on other networks such as FinancIP (the

WORK LIFE

BUSINESS HOURS: 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 or 6:00 p.m.

OFFICE: "Just outside the center of Zurich, with good public transport links to our head office."

VIEW: "I can see the city, as well as the surrounding hills."

WEEKEND WORKING: "Only rarely."

DESK HYGIENE: "I am organized – in the sense that you cannot see it! My desk isn't tidy, but I know where everything is."

PERSONAL ORGANIZATION: "I used to have a PDA, but our IT security is very tight and it was difficult to synchronize with Outlook, so I don't use it any more."

DRESS CODE: "I wear suit and tie, but the dress code is open to interpretation."

CORPORATE CULTURE: "We have an open-plan office, which encourages business and IT people to work closely together. I'd feel uncomfortable in an office of my own; I like to be able to talk directly to my colleagues and have noise around me."

Swiss IP network operated by SIC). "We were looking for a system that could cater for all the different messages, standards, connectivity and gateways with which we deal," Matthias says. "MINT has enabled us to move away from single-silo systems for each gateway."

In choosing MINT, the bank was reassured that it was buying a product with "a long history behind it", he says. Moreover, MINT is focused on exactly the functionality Credit Suisse is looking for. "MINT doesn't try to be everything to everyone. And we certainly didn't want to buy a product that promised the world but wouldn't survive into the next five to 10 years."

THE SUNGARD SOLUTION: MINT

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