CKW.

Swiss utility Centralschweizerische Kraftwerke AG ignites network services with ServiceNow

75%
Processes automated

1
Customer portal with integrated self-service

2,400
Working hours saved

Industry: Energy
Location: Lucerne, Switzerland
Size: 1,800+ employees

CKW delivers innovative energy solutions, illuminating customers throughout Switzerland

Electricity is an integral part of life today. From traffic lights to hospitals to our own homes, it's vital to receive consistent power. Even the simple task of brewing a cup of coffee involves multiple systems working properly, including electricity production, connection with the transformer network, and installation of the meter. If one part of this connected network is broken even a seemingly simple event, like turning on a light, can't happen. This is why Centralschweizerische Kraftwerke AG (CKW) is committed to providing its customers with a fast and easy power supply.

CKW's network division delivers innovative power solutions to electricians, building firms, architects, and independent inspectors within its region and fields a variety of requests, such as applications for the connection of a new building to the electricity grid, temporary power supplies for machines and equipment at a building site, or a homeowner wanting to install a photovoltaic system. Workflows to fulfill requests for grid extensions, power lines, substations, and transformer stations can be long and complicated, so CKW turned to ServiceNow to help automate these processes.

"CKW is planning for the future," explains Nastasja Nicke, IT Project Manager at CKW. "We want to simplify our existing processes as much as possible in order to prepare for new requirements and services, such as smart meters, smart energy, and adjustable grids. The best and most effective way to do that is by standardisation."

Challenge
Create a single system with automated processes to alleviate employees processing requests manually in multiple, isolated systems

Products
• The Now Platform®

Solution
The Now Platform automates business processes and provides an integrated, easy-to-use customer portal for internal and external users

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CKW seeks a standards-based workflow automation solution to improve service to its customers

According to Nastasja, there aren't many industry-specific workflow solutions for the energy sector. Companies often choose from a wide range of products and tools to find the ones best suited to their requirements, which can lead to several standalone solutions managing different processes and running in parallel.

In CKW's case, customers entered requests on a complicated portal, while the staff assigned each request to the appropriate tool, usually by hand, depending on the subject of the request and the process stage.

The work was tedious and often contributed to a shortage of qualified caseworkers to handle requests. Additionally, there were few specialists available with the extra capacity to focus on meaningful work that could boost the business.

Against this backdrop, Nastasja and her team realised that ServiceNow could help power a centralised portal for staff and customers that is user-friendly, fast, and transparent due to standardised processes.

CKW identifies the need to reduce manual processes and consolidate onto one platform

CKW network division's previous system was based on an external customer portal for requests from electricians, construction firms, and inspectors. However, many of the data entry options were not well-defined and the system did not check for errors. As a result, staff had to call customers to confirm requests. The manual process transferred data from the external portal to a separate, internal tool so that staff could work on the case.

The problem was that no one had an overview of the request or process status. It was unclear what needed to be done next and by whom; and there was no indication whether someone from the team was already working on the case.

For example, if a construction firm plans to build an apartment block in an area that is not yet connected to the power grid, it needs a temporary supply of electricity for its machines and equipment. CKW had to determine the exact location of the project with a complicated system involving the identification of plot numbers.

The building firms used the same portal for complaints, such as a power cut resulting in builders not being able to work. Upon construction completion, the portal was also used to request a permanent power supply and an electricity meter for each apartment. CKW also manages the contracts and bills for each resident, as well as accesses permissions for maintenance work. The result was countless requests and huge data volumes that were entered in a potentially error-prone system, manually transferred to a different tool, and sometimes handled in both systems simultaneously.

ServiceNow helps CKW automate 75% of its business processes

The Now Platform provides an intelligent solution to CKW to help it interconnect the various systems, information, and tasks for internal and external portal users. The platform manages requests in a fast and user-friendly way, freeing up the team's capacity for innovation.

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"The Now Platform has helped us to set up a centralised customer portal for internal and external users," notes Nastasja. "With its integrated workflow engine and open interfaces, we have the flexibility and performance we need to run 12 processes end-to-end on a single platform."

Using the Now Platform, CKW has automated 75% of the network division's business processes, which have been converted to functions that can run in the background. For example, when a new customer file is created the permission process is triggered automatically in parallel and assigned. Since all processes run end-to-end on the Now Platform, staff members finally have the visibility into the status of each request. The portal's internal users can now give customers valuable information since they are able to see what has been done, which tasks require completion, and if necessary, communicate with colleagues directly within the system. Customers can also check the portal to find the status of a request.

CKW's hallmark solution with ServiceNow: tailored interface, self-service capability, and automation

To help ensure that team members aren't overwhelmed by information, the platform's interface is tailored to their specific activities. This means that entire departments are spared from a flood of irrelevant information, as certain types of processes generate huge amounts of data. In addition, internal users are now able to identify the context surrounding a request, as all data related to a process is stored on the platform in a transparent, yet traceable way.

A further advantage of the customer portal is the intelligent self-service function in ServiceNow. This makes the application request process much clearer and easier for external customers to use, as the questionnaire verifies that the information entered is correct. The standardisation also limits the number of options to select. This saves time and resources for customers and staff, as they no longer need to double check or correct requests.

All of the network business unit's processes running on the Now Platform are transparent and user-friendly, while ensuring a high degree of automation. The centralised customer portal collects all the relevant request data and formats it clearly so that staff and customers can work more easily, efficiently, and intuitively.

The Now Platform reduces processes to 25% with a user-friendly, efficient customer portal

With the implementation of ServiceNow, CKW's goal was to create a centralised, user-friendly, streamlined, and future-oriented portal for internal and external users.

"Thanks to ServiceNow, we have reduced our processes to 25%," notes Nastasja. "About 15,000 processes run on the platform, from meter provisioning to pay-as-you-go payment models. We have 70 internal users and 350 external users. After the official go-live in a few months, we'll have closer to 1,500 users."

ServiceNow's open APIs have also made the company's work easier and more efficient. Rather than spending time trying to find plot numbers by contacting the relevant public authority, building company users can now pinpoint where they need their temporary electricity supply using Google Maps. What previously was a complicated and time-consuming process has now been reduced to a few clicks.

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"The time savings are huge," says Nastasja. "Before ServiceNow, we put about 4,800 of our 16,000 letters into envelopes and gave them to the internal mail room, and with 20 to 30 minutes per letter, that accounts for 1,600 to 2,400 hours of work. Now, everything runs on the platform and our staff can focus on strategic tasks that help drive the business forward."

If required, the meters can also be managed with the Now Platform. Combined with the pay-as-you-go model, this opens up new opportunities for CKW and its customers. For example, customers who tend to be late with payments can switch to a prepaid plan and be reminded automatically by the system about the next due date.

It was important to the network division to have a portal that was as simple, user-friendly, and efficient as possible. "Every customer we can move to the portal is one less to interact with by postal mail. And that makes our work far easier," says Nastasja.

ServiceNow receives high marks from both CKW's customers and management

ServiceNow has improved CKW's processes significantly and everyone appreciates the fact that the platform runs smoothly and consistently. However, the implementation of ServiceNow was initially not welcomed throughout CKW because the company had security-related reservations about using a cloud-based solution.

There was also some resistance on the customer side, as many of CKW network division's external users are not very IT-savvy and were worried that the new solution would be even more complicated than the old one. For these reasons, it was important for the network division to sell the Now Platform both internally and externally.

"Although the project is still in the beta phase, it's already very successful internally," says Nastasja. "We're already thinking about what else we can do with ServiceNow. And the feedback from our customers is really positive—we regularly get praise from them."

The benefits of the Now Platform in terms of transparency, efficiency, and usability are obvious throughout the organisation. The network division has reached out to its internal and external stakeholders with extensive, ongoing information campaigns. These include local consultations in which customers are informed in detail about platform changes. Also, the open APIs in ServiceNow enable CKW to run critical applications on-premises at any time to help keep user satisfaction high.

CKW plans to expand ServiceNow to simplify and streamline future processes

With a stable, standards-based platform in place, CKW is well positioned to service customers and employees, while developing new energy solutions. Nastasja concludes, "At CKW, our goal is to simplify our future in the energy industry. We want to further optimise and streamline our business processes: partly to counter the shortage of qualified staff in the energy industry; partly to be able to offer our staff and customers the type of intuitive solutions they're used to in their private lives; and partly to expand our portfolio with innovative new lines of business. That's why we're currently evaluating ServiceNow for use in IT service management, risk, and facilities management too."

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