

## Swiss Re



# Increased Complexity Calls For Collaboration

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With the increasing business complexity of the reinsurance industry, Swiss Re knew it had to channel the collective intelligence of its employees. “We are dealing with complex global risks — climate change, natural catastrophes, pandemics, longevity — to name a few. This forces us to combine knowledge and information from very different areas,” says Swiss Re Communications Consultant, Anu Elmer.

**“We could show our executives a business case which had a positive financial impact.”** In 2008, during a three-day JAM session (a group brainstorming event), Swiss Re discovered more internal demand for collaboration than its current infrastructure could support. The purpose of the JAM session was to discuss the new corporate strategy with its entire employee base, giving every worker a chance to participate. What Swiss Re didn’t expect was the entire employee base’s engagement in return. “In those 72 hours we realized that there was more collaboration demand than we had available to offer. So we started to think about what we were missing and how collaboration technology could be used for the sake of business.”

## Planning And Implementation

The core team of five — from Communications, IT and Knowledge Management — started its planning by getting the buy-in of senior leadership. The team’s case focused on the call for collaboration in an increasingly complex environment and the need to replace some of the company’s outdated knowledge management solutions. “We were in a good position because we had legacy platforms that were costly. We could show our executives a business case which had a positive financial impact. But the benefits of increased collaboration and engaging company culture were equally important,” says Christoph Isenschmid, the Ourspace project lead. The team also reassured executives that employee time wouldn’t be wasted; use of any new tools would center around employees’ professional roles, and that the communities would be self-policing.

For six months, the team planned and piloted in preparation for the worldwide launch of its collaboration platform. The three-month pilot helped the team gain real experience with the technology, start viral promotion, and pre-populate the platform with relevant business content. With the help of 25 volunteer advocates from all

**“We could show our executives a business case which had a positive financial impact.”** business units and locations, “go-live” was September 2009. After being in production for 12 months, employee participation at Swiss Re has steadily


increased. Eighty-five percent of approximately 12,000 users have joined the platform, which receives 400,000 clicks per month. Additionally, 15% of users have created a document, discussion or blog; 25% have commented or replied; and 40% have joined a group, made a connection or changed their profiles.

## Benefits

The core team has noted some significant improvements at Swiss Re since the 2009 launch. Not only have legacy systems been decommissioned, but company culture is changing as well. “It becomes more and more natural to cross silos and reach out,” says Christoph Isenschmid. Today, success is not only measured quantitatively. It is also measured by the fulfillment of the business case; company processes are more transparent and employees actively share their business ideas with each other and Swiss Re leadership. “People see executives engaging in discussions, talking to people they wouldn’t have known before,” says Anu Elmer. Christoph Isenschmid sums up the

**“People see executives engaging in discussions, talking to people they wouldn’t have known before.”** new Swiss Re work experience, “You can see the difference; you can feel it.”

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