



"We have to offer hybrid IT systems that can handle both conventional and highly digitalized customers." – Ralf Morawietz, Panalpina CIO

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"We need secure infrastructure"

The world's logistics firms are in the midst of a digital transformation. But this is nothing new, says Panalpina's Chief Information Officer, Ralf Morawietz, in an interview with Swiss publication IT-Markt. He would like to see more common sense and composure.

What is your typical workday like, and where do you come in contact with IT service providers?

Ralf Morawietz: I perform a variety of duties involving most areas of management. These range from relatively mundane things like planning meetings and travel, all the way to complex issues such as Panalpina's digital transformation. Naturally this means having conversations, and sometimes doing business with, external service providers of all sizes. I want to make it clear that a partner's size doesn't necessarily say anything about their ability to deliver. We work with a few heavyweights, but also with selected small and mid-sized enterprises.

What are the three most important qualities you expect in your IT service providers?

First, vendors must have capabilities or knowledge that we currently lack and need at short notice and at a reasonable price. Second, transparency and trust are indispensable. Especially in areas that are important to us, vendors must be very transparent in their processes and business performance. We want to work with companies whose success is not based on pure chance or external investor funding. Third, vendors must have an impeccable reputation and follow applicable laws and recognized guidelines at all levels of the business relationship.

Where do you buy the components you need?

We buy directly from the manufacturer, but we also work with intermediaries. With some manufacturers we actually prefer this.

What parts of your IT systems have you outsourced?

For our legacy systems we've outsourced maintenance and in some cases their operation. We've also outsourced support for certain parts of our SAP landscape and are currently reviewing how closely this conforms to our new IT strategy. We see IT commodities as a potential field for future outsourcing.

What areas, on the other hand, would you never outsource?

Any areas that are critical to our business success and require rapid adaptation will definitely remain in-house. Beyond that, I'm not a fan of public cloud solutions. We need a reliable and secure infrastructure that we can build upon ourselves. The only thing available today that accomplishes all that is a private cloud that we operate in our own data centers.

What challenges are you facing?

Naturally the digital transition being hyped so much in the media these days affects us as a supplier of supply chain solutions. We are confronted with the challenge of offering hybrid IT systems that can handle both

conventional and highly digitalized customers.

How can the trade support you in this?

I'd like to see somewhat more common sense in the whole discussion around the Internet of Things and Industry 4.0. Broadly speaking, the adoption rate of new technologies in our industry and in the economy is slow. When you see how many companies are struggling with IT reconfigurations and how many are still operating on "green screens", then you know where the global economy stands. There ought to be less scrambling and more composure and pragmatism. Consulting and IT companies along with their sales and marketing people are naturally on the front lines here, and they're the ones pushing these ideas. But ultimately technology is meant to bring benefits, and this is where a sustainability approach is more effective than shooting first and asking questions later.

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