

Ymago project Final report

June 2009





Contents

Introduction4
"Solutions through dialogue"5
Four pilot models6
Ymago agencies6
Lead and branch post offices6
Postal entrepreneurs7
Money transfer machines7
Implementation decisions9
Implementation	10
Ymago agencies	10
Post offices	11
Postal entrepreneurs	11
Solutions for the employees	12
Consensus and conflict	13
Outlook	14
The post office network by canton	15
Annex: Stakeholder management	18
Test phase	18
Summary	18
Population/customers	19
Swiss Post employees	20
Local authorities	21
Cantonal governments and interest groups	22
Media	22
Implementation	23
Summary	23
Population/customers	24
Swiss Post employees	25
Local authorities	26
Cantonal governments and interest groups	27
Media	27

Introduction



Customer habits are changing: fewer and fewer letters, parcels and payments are coming in over the traditional post office counter. The main reasons for this are modern technologies such as SMS and the Internet, combined with deregulation of the market.

Swiss Post is meeting the challenges posed by this trend with new solutions. In this connection, the Postal Act and the Federal Council impose clear constraints on it: it is required to improve its customer orientation and cost-effectiveness, while at the same time operating a nationwide post office network, thus guaranteeing the basic postal service.

To meet the changes in its business, Swiss Post radically modernized its sales network between 2001 and 2005. In many places, classic post offices gave way to innovative offerings such as the home delivery service ("doorstep delivery") and a first form of agency ("the village shop post office"). Closures without replacement remained the exception, although the number of branches fell from 3,400 to 2,500.

However, it soon became evident that these measures were not sufficient: the decline in postal business continued – often affecting even villages and districts experiencing population growth. As a result, even after the network reorganization there was a need for further action. In other words, transformation of the post office network had turned into an ongoing task.

"Solutions through dialogue"

Against this background, Swiss Post launched the Ymago project at the end of 2003. The project name alludes to the Latin imago (image) and stands for the philosophy behind the approach: first images and ideas would lead to unconventional ideas for the future.

At the same time the project was guided by the two catch-phrases of "Solutions through dialogue" and "Serving the customer". From the start relations with all the stakeholder groups relevant to Swiss Post were nurtured on an ongoing, open and professional basis (stakeholder management). These stakeholder groups included customers, employees, local and cantonal authorities, interest groups (trade associations, consumer organizations, the municipal and city associations, trade unions) and media.



Four pilot models

Ymago agencies



In a preliminary step, four models were developed. These were tested starting in 2005 in 36 trials each lasting about a year. The pilot types were as follows:

Further development of the established principle of "the village shop post office". Ymago agencies have attractive opening hours and cover the letter and parcels services that are in demand on a daily basis. Customers can use a self-service scale to weigh their items for mailing. In addition, cashless inpayments and cash withdrawals can be made with the PostFinance Card. 16 pilot trials. Locations:

Hermetschwil-Staffeln AG	Nuglar SO
Remetschwil AG	Bellinzona Carasso TI
Gümmenen BE	Capolago TI
Oberbalm BE	Cevio TI
Thun Lerchenfeld BE	Villars-Burquin VD
Les Hauts-Geneveys NE	Allenwinden ZG
Wagen SG	Dinhard ZH
Weite SG	Winterthur Hegi ZH

Lead and branch post offices



Reorganization of the distribution of tasks within Swiss Post. Planning, administration and management are concentrated in lead post offices on a regional basis so that post offices in the surrounding area can devote more of their energies to sales and to advising customers over the counter. The range of services offered is not affected. Seven pilot trials. Locations:

<p>Canton Basel-City Basel St. Clara (lead post office), Basel Horburg, Basel Badischer Bahnhof, Basel Kleinhüningen</p>	<p>Canton Jura Delémont 1 (lead post office), Delémont Ville, Courrendlin, Courtételle</p>
<p>Canton Geneva Geneva Mont-Blanc (lead post office), Geneva Les Pâquis, Geneva Cornavin Dépôt, Geneva CIC, Geneva Nations Unies, Geneva OMS, Geneva BIT</p>	<p>Canton Lucerne Kriens 1 (lead post office), Oberneau, Littau, Reussbühl, Horw, Malters, Schwarzenberg</p>
<p>Canton Zurich Zurich Oerlikon (lead post office), Zurich Affoltern, Zurich Seebach, Zurich Messe, Zurich Schwamendingen, Zurich Hirschwiesen, Zurich TMC, Zurich Airport</p>	<p>Canton St. Gallen St. Margrethen (lead post office), Au SG, Heerbrugg, Bernebeck, Widnau, Diepoldsau</p>
	<p>Canton Ticino Mendrisio Stazione (lead post office), Mendrisio Borgo, Genestrerio, Stabio, Coldrerio</p>

Postal entrepreneurs

Independent post office managers with additional, non-postal business. The idea is that the proceeds from this second arm should compensate for falling postal sales. Eight pilot trials. Locations:

Herznach AG
Jussy GE
Grono GR
Wauwil LU

Altenrhein SG
Reichenburg SZ
Quartino TI
Ernen VS



Money transfer machines

An additional service in well frequented post offices. Customers can use the machines to make transfers from their own postal account with the PostFinance Card. Five pilot trials. Locations:

Baden 1 AG
Berne Schanzenpost BE
Biel Annahme BE

Lausanne St-François VD
Zurich Airport ZH





Implementation decisions

The information gleaned from dialogue with the stakeholder groups along with the business results formed the basis for the analysis of the pilot trials. Based on this, Executive Management and the Board of Directors of Swiss Post made the following decisions in October 2006:

- **Ymago agencies**
Around 200 agencies based on the new model would be set up by the end of 2008
- **Lead and branch post offices**
The internal reorganization would be implemented nationwide by the end of 2007
- **Postal entrepreneurs**
The pilot operation would be extended to the middle of 2007 (interim results good, but a year's pilot operation too short for new companies)
- **Money transfer machines**
These would not be implemented (equipment practical, but customer demand too low)

Forecasts suggested that implementation of Ymago in the post office network from 2009 would lead to an annual improvement in results of about CHF 50 million. Moreover, the calculations assumed between 400 and 500 redundancies. The effects on Swiss Post employees should be negotiated with the trade unions.



Implementation

Ymago agencies



When it came to the implementation, the main focus was on the replacement of agencies after the old model, which Swiss Post no longer follows, and of smaller post offices. As of the end of 2008 decisions had been made to proceed with Ymago agencies in 227 cases and 186 were already up and running. The aim of having about 200 locations within two years was thus achieved. Swiss Post concluded framework agreements for collaboration with Volg Detailhandels AG und PAM (Produits alimentaires SA, shops: PAM, "Proxi" and "Treffpunkt"). A list of the partnerships is provided below:

Volg partners:	41	Municipalities /	
Volg Detailhandels AG:	34	tourism organizations:	23
PAM:	5	Stations:	8
Migros:	3	Newsstands:	5
SPAR:	2	Pharmacies:	4
Other retailers:	53	Others:	8

Distribution by canton:

AG: 30	BS: 2	JU: 0	SG: 7	TI: 8	ZH: 18
AI: 0	FR: 2	LU: 7	SH: 4	UR: 0	
AR: 3	GE: 1	NE: 2	SO: 8	VD: 9	
BE: 24	GL: 5	NW: 0	SZ: 5	VS: 13	
BL: 5	GR: 23	OW: 1	TG: 8	ZG: 1	

The newly opened agencies proved stable. There were only eight changes up to the end of the project: three changes of partner, three closures without replacement and two locations at which postal services were assured through a home delivery service after the partner withdrew from the business.

Where, having examined an agency of the old type or a small post office, it turned out not to be feasible to implement an Ymago agency, the primary alternative was a home delivery service. This solution was implemented in 68 cases. There were twelve instances of an existing agency or post office closing without replacement.

Post offices

The reorganization of the distribution of tasks between post offices was completed at the beginning of 2008. There are now 22 sales areas consisting of 206 post office areas, each with between three and about 30 post offices and agencies. As tested in the pilot trials, planning, administration and management are the responsibility of one post office in each post office area. The conceptual difference between lead and branch post office has not been pursued: a post office remains a post office.

As a result of the altered structures, the three management functions of head of sales area, head of post office area and head of operations were created in the post office area. The vacancies were filled from in-house applications. Moreover, due to changes in the requirements profile, some of the post office managers transferred to new pay scales.

Implementation of the model proceeded throughout Switzerland virtually without any hitches. Despite the demanding timetable, operations continued normally in the post offices and the new distribution of roles among management personnel was soon working smoothly. Customers did not experience any deterioration in the service. Moreover, the success of the reorganization was reflected in the business key figures.



Postal entrepreneurs

In June 2007 the extended pilot phase came to an end. The analysis testified to the quality of the offerings of the postal entrepreneurs, and customers and local authorities were accordingly very satisfied. It turned out that the test post offices had compensated for the decline in postal business through their additional business, which was one of the main objectives of the model.

Despite the positive results, Swiss Post meanwhile decided to confine implementation to the eight pilot operations. The main reason for was the difficulty of finding sufficient suitable post office managers to extend the model.



Implementation

Solutions for the employees



In March 2007 Swiss Post and the trade unions agreed to adopt a redundancy scheme with employment and pay assurances for employees who were affected by the implementation of Ymago. Post office managers born in 1952 or older are entitled to a nominal pay and employment guarantee up to retirement. For the remaining post office managers, current nominal wages are guaranteed, graduated according to years of service and age, up to no later than mid-2011.

Under the terms of the redundancy scheme, it is not possible to dismiss employees for business reasons. The aim was to achieve the job cuts through natural wastage and an incentive scheme devised by Swiss Post. To make it easier to change jobs inside the company, the social partners agreed to make the reasonableness criteria as set out in the collective employment contract more flexible.

As a result of the reorganization of the distribution of tasks and the introduction of new agencies, almost 500 full-time jobs were shed. As discussed with the unions, when closing down post offices, Swiss Post made a point of using personal vacancies or departures. In all other cases local staff received an offer of reasonable employment, wherever possible in the vicinity. Even where the level of employment fell as a result of changes in the distribution of tasks between post offices, amicable solutions were found. For this reason the redundancy scheme only had to be used in a few instances.

Consensus and conflict

The top priority in examining alternatives to a post office or agency after the old model was to reach an amicable solution with the local authorities. Where this was not possible, the decision was notified in writing. The municipality concerned could submit this to the independent Post Offices Commission for adjudication. In the case of an appeal, this body delivers a recommendation to Swiss Post which represents the final decision.

Of the 312 decisions to proceed with an Ymago agency, a home delivery service or closure without replacement, 290 were based on a consensus of opinions. Consequently it was only necessary to notify a decision in 22 cases; eight of these cases resulted in a submission to the Post Offices Commission. The Commission supported Swiss Post's position in seven cases, issuing only one dissenting recommendation.

At a political level, the agency model of Ymago has occasionally provoked considerable discussion. In a report dated April 2007, the postal regulator PostReg ruled that the new form of "the village shop post office" was legal. This opinion was given following an enquiry conducted by the Committee for Transportation and Telecommunications of the National Council (CTTNC) and a submission from the Kommunikation union (GeKo). At the end of May 2008 the National Council rejected the motion dealing with the future development of the post office network proposed by the CTTNC by a clear majority. The motion had been aimed at committing Swiss Post to continue to offer cash payments in new agencies.

The Swiss Association of Postal Agencies was also in favour of implementing Ymago agencies. As it represented the interests of the operators of agencies after the old model, its support was important for locations at which Swiss Post had previously had a partnership with Association members.



Outlook



It looks as if the goal that was set with Ymago of improving results for the post office network by about CHF 50 million per year from 2009 will be achieved. Irrespective of this, Swiss Post wants to and has to also adapt its sales network in the future in line with the changes in customer behaviour and become more efficient. For there is no sign in sight of any end to the decline in post office counter business: between 2000 and 2008 the volume of letter and parcel business fell by 46% and that of inpayments by 17%. In addition, the full market deregulation that the Federal Council intends to implement as early as 2012 is increasing the pressure to create new offerings and find alternative solutions.

Swiss Post therefore plans to review alternatives for probably about 420 post offices with low demand by the end of 2011. The following solutions are possible:

- Leave things as they are
- Replace with an agency (non-postal ec and Maestro cards will also be allowed for cashless inpayments from the first quarter of 2010)
- Replace with a home delivery service.

In its approach, Swiss Post is observing its political and legal obligations. It is following the proven model of Ymago in seeking dialogue with those affected with the aim of reaching agreement.

The post office network by canton



AG	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	177	10	54	0	0	0	241
31.12.2008	154	30	57	1	0	1	242



AI	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	5	0	1	0	0	0	6
31.12.2008	4	0	2	0	0	0	6



AR	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	23	0	4	0	0	0	27
31.12.2008	20	3	4	0	0	0	27



BE	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	308	10	164	0	0	0	482
31.12.2008	283	27	174	0	0	1	484



BL	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	63	0	25	0	1	0	89
31.12.2008	57	5	27	0	0	0	89



BS	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	23	3	0	0	0	0	26
31.12.2008	23	2	0	0	0	1	25



FR	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	116	1	75	0	0	0	192
31.12.2008	111	2	78	0	0	1	191



GE	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	74	1	7	0	0	0	82
31.12.2008	72	1	7	1	0	1	81



GL	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	18	2	7	0	0	0	27
31.12.2008	15	5	7	0	0	0	27

The post office network by canton



GR	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	140	31	99	0	5	0	275
31.12.2008	128	26	115	1	5	0	275



JU	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	50	0	32	0	0	0	82
31.12.2008	48	0	34	0	0	0	82



LU	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	100	6	32	0	0	0	138
31.12.2008	93	9	33	1	0	2	136



NE	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	57	1	26	0	0	0	84
31.12.2008	55	2	27	0	0	0	84



NW	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	10	0	4	0	0	0	14
31.12.2008	10	0	4	0	0	0	14



OW	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	11	1	5	0	0	0	17
31.12.2008	11	1	5	0	0	0	17



SG	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	145	0	41	0	0	0	186
31.12.2008	135	7	42	1	0	1	185



SH	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	25	3	12	0	0	0	40
31.12.2008	23	4	12	0	0	1	39



SO	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	87	4	26	0	1	0	118
31.12.2008	80	8	30	0	0	0	118



SZ	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	40	1	7	0	0	0	48
31.12.2008	35	5	7	1	0	0	48



TG	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	86	4	37	0	0	0	127
31.12.2008	80	8	39	0	0	0	127



TI	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	176	4	123	0	0	0	303
31.12.2008	167	10	125	1	0	0	303



UR	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	20	1	6	0	0	0	27
31.12.2008	20	1	6	0	0	0	27



VD	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	224	4	135	0	0	0	363
31.12.2008	211	9	143	0	0	0	363



VS	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	141	11	65	0	0	0	217
31.12.2008	130	14	70	1	0	1	215



ZG	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	19	0	3	0	0	0	22
31.12.2008	18	1	3	0	0	0	22



ZH	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	225	13	42	0	0	0	280
31.12.2008	212	20	46	0	0	3	278



CH	Conventional post offices	Agencies*	Home delivery service	Postal entrepreneurs	Mobile post offices	Closures without replacement	Total number points of access
Before Ymago	2363	111	1032	0	7	0	3513
31.12.2008	2195	200	1097	8	5	13	3505

* The figures for 31 December 2008 include another 14 agencies based on the old model. As of the cut-off date these had not yet been transformed into an Ymago agency or been replaced by another solution.

Annex: Stakeholder management

Test phase

Summary

Dialogue with stakeholder groups (stakeholder management) took place at a variety of levels during the pilot trials. Nevertheless, the primary focus was always on

personal communication in the locality. The following is a summary of the surveys and data sources:

Measurement	Sources
Reactions of population/customers	Hotline, mailbox, Detection System Post
Satisfaction of private customers and business customers	Market research (customer surveys)
Views of employees	Ymago meetings, hotline, mailbox
Views of local authorities	Interviews, surveys
Views of cantons and interest groups	Interviews, letters
Media response	Media reports

Target group-specific communication with all those potentially affected was of central importance to the success of the tests. Accordingly, dialogue was intensive and took different forms. As a result, the project gained acceptance or at least credibility at a broad level.

It turned out that the Ymago agencies received the most attention among all stakeholder groups apart from employees and triggered the most emotional response, especially among customers and the media. Within Swiss Post, the most interest was generated by the lead and branch post office sub-project, which had a low take-up, and the postal entrepreneurs, a model on which the greatest hopes were pinned. The test operations with money transfer machines launched later on remained a subject of peripheral interest.

Swiss Post employees took Ymago extremely seriously. The main interest here was in issues which might affect their work prospects if Ymago were implemented. In this connection anxiety and worries were frequently perceptible. This was true also of customers and the local authorities, who expressed a variety of fears regarding not only the scope and quality of future postal services but also jobs if the new agency model were to be adopted.

The cantonal governments and interest groups were predominantly neutral to well-disposed, waiting to see what would happen. They thought it was particularly important to continue the dialogue. It further transpired that media coverage was primarily local or regional in flavour and specific to pilot trials. Here, comments remained the exception. Generally, the reports were once again neutral to positive and were geared towards the agenda and the content of project communication.

Population/customers

The Ymago agencies attracted the most interest among the population and customers and triggered the most responses. For this stakeholder group the new model also constituted the biggest change as regards postal services. Moreover, the high level of interest generated is probably due to the intensive communication campaign (flyers, information events) at the test locations.

Specific feedback on the test agencies tended to be negative. By contrast, the telephone customer surveys conducted in three waves produced good to very good results. During the trial phase, a total of over 8,500 interviews were conducted on the new "post office with a partner" model. Those who used the new service appeared to quickly get used to it. Benefits cited included opening hours, partner staff and the handing in of letters and parcels. Close to 90% of those surveyed found the agency opening hours to be practical. The employees at the agencies were awarded 8.8, 8.4 and 8.3 out of 10 for friendliness, discretion and professionalism. Moreover, most customers found the self-service mailing process to be practical. The main points of criticism were the failure to accept cash repayments and mistrust of the agency concept.

In the pilot locations the postal entrepreneurs also generated discussion, but this was universally positive. This impression was reflected in the business figures and in the customer surveys, in which the model fared even better than the previous post office. This was partly due to changes in the opening hours. Over 1,500 completed questionnaires were returned in the two survey waves. In the course of the test, the level of customer satisfaction rose markedly, from 80 to 86 points (on a scale of 100). Overall satisfaction with the additional business of the postal entrepreneurs reached a level of 89 points.

Take-up of the money transfer machines was lower. Although the equipment was rated highly in preliminary tests and in the interviews conducted during the pilot tests, actual use was well below expectations, despite the surprisingly high level of familiarity. The main reasons were that the persons surveyed preferred to make their payments at the post office counter or online or had not had any opportunity to try out the new service.

With regard to the lead and branch post offices, the intention was that the public should not see anything of the changes going on behind the scene. The lack of responses suggested that this objective was accomplished. Two written survey waves with close to 4,500 responses also produced an encouraging picture. Satisfaction among private customers thus remained virtually constant over the test year at 85 out of 100 possible points (an increase of one point), whereas the level among business customers rose by three points to 82. Organizing more employees to provide advice at the counter thus had a positive impact.

Since 2001 customer queries and complaints have been fed into the Detection System Post. During the pilot phase there were 18 queries about Ymago, most of which concerned agency locations.

Annex: Stakeholder management

Test phase

Swiss Post employees



During the pilot phase the models that most interested employees were the postal company and the lead/branch post offices. In the course of about 20 information events on Ymago each year, it soon became evident that many employees, especially post office managers, saw new prospects for their own future in the postal entrepreneurs. However, in some cases the discussions indicated ignorance regarding details of the pilot type and incorrect ideas.

On the other hand, in the case of the lead and branch post offices and general questions, the issue was more one of possible implementation and its consequences (place of work, pay, function). Once again worries and fears were noticeable in these examples, along with a growing impatience in the matter of concrete statements on future stages of the project.

The Ymago agencies and money transfer machines generated little discussion. This may be because they were not (yet) affected by the agencies and the machine trials began later than the other trials. The events mentioned above proved a good way of finding out and tackling employees' questions and the aspects that they were sensitive about. This conclusion is supported by the pleasing attendance figures (between 30 and 90 people per event) and the positive response to the events. The mailbox and Ymago hotline channels were little used.

During the pilot tests with the lead and branch post offices, the level of employee satisfaction was measured once in each test area. Given the considerable organizational changes, the results were sometimes much lower than before Ymago (average: around 60 points). Shortly after the test phase was concluded, another survey produced another conclusion: all seven test areas had improved, sometimes markedly. On average, the level of employee satisfaction reached almost 67 points (on a scale of 100), and the total for the Post Offices & Sales unit was slightly higher (69 points).

Local authorities

Dialogue with the local authorities was intensive and took on a variety of forms. In advance of and during the test operation, personal interviews were conducted for all pilot types apart from the money transfer machines, normally at the initiative of the project team. Moreover, written surveys enabled the temperature to be gauged as the pilot trials progressed.

Thanks to ongoing, active communication, unanswered questions and the need for a roundtable discussion were quickly identified. It would appear that this approach played a significant part in gaining the acceptance of the local authorities for Ymago. Individual problems could be resolved in this way or at least opinions on the related issues could be clarified. Conflict therefore remained very much the exception.

In the responses to the two surveys conducted for each test location, the response to the trials reflected that of the population. Willingness to agree definite implementation of the Ymago agency or the postal entrepreneur in the location proved high, although the additional benefits of the agencies drew divided opinions. In the case of the lead and branch post offices, the view was largely confirmed that internal reorganization is not a political issue as long as the scope and quality of postal services remain unaffected.



Annex: Stakeholder management

Test phase

Cantonal governments and interest groups



The central importance of communication proved quintessential in the annual interviews with the cantonal governments and interest groups. The appreciation of early information about Ymago that was frequently expressed – except by the employee representatives – was combined with the desire to continue this during the next steps. This was particularly the case as regards implementation of the project.

Among the contact persons interviewed, Ymago was viewed predominantly neutrally or even positively. The relatively narrow bandwidth of questions and discussion points is no doubt related to the fact that Ymago had as yet had little effect on them, as the pilot trials were conducted quietly and decisions on the question of whether the new solutions would definitely be implemented had yet to be made. As a result of the ongoing dialogue, a relationship of trust was often built up with the contact persons.

The two postal unions, GeKo and transfair, had already withdrawn in the autumn of 2004 from the committee that been set up for them to accompany the project, as a result of the rejection by the electorate of the petition for a "postal services for all" referendum. After that, relations with them had to be managed through other channels and bodies.

Media



The emphasis of project communication with the media was on the individual pilot operations, i.e. at local and regional level. The priorities set left their mark on the reports: it was primarily local newspapers which carried reports about Ymago, and these were mainly in advance of and in the initial phases of the trials with agencies and postal entrepreneurs.

Swiss Post also lead-managed the content of the reports. Often the contributions were geared to the agenda and content of project communication. Independent research mainly occurred when a trial with a new agency was not going that well and there was public resistance. In such instances it was not unusual for the media to play the role of mouthpiece for those affected. Exceptionally, the response to Ymago from all the stakeholder groups in Ticino was either widespread scepticism or outright rejection.

In the review, contributions on individual pilot trials were neutral to positive. Moreover, even in crisis situations there were virtually no slip-ups or indiscretions thanks to the early and open communication. This was confirmed in the analysis of the general reports on Ymago which, in view of the success of the project, tended to be unspectacular, with the odd response occurring only where the CEO had said something new and important.

Annex: Stakeholder management Implementation

Summary

Stakeholder management and communication regarding the implementation of Ymago followed the procedure in the pilot phase. This meant continuous, active communication tailored to the various interest patterns and target groups. Principles:

- The dialogue should promote understanding of the changes among the stakeholder groups and hence their acceptance.
- Flow, subjects, dates and responsibilities in stakeholder management and communication were specified in detail, but where necessary they were also handled in a flexible way.
- The situation-, location- and interest-specific needs of stakeholders flowed into strategy and measures (based on previous experience).
- Official wording and lines of argument supported those responsible for stakeholder management and communication in their work.
- The emphasis remained on verbal dialogue with those directly affected, on the spot.

Stakeholder management 2007 / 2008	Number
Partner interviews for agency solutions (on average, 5 per case)	approx. 1250
Municipality interviews/contacts (on average, 3 per case)	approx. 960
Flyers for customers and media	approx. 450
Swiss Post information events or attendance at local meetings	approx. 30

Einfach, praktisch, kundennah Die neue Postagentur in Hendschiken



Sehr geehrte Kundinnen und Kunden

Ab **Mitte November 2008** finden Sie die Postdienstleistungen in Hendschiken in einer Postagentur. Für die neue Lösung konnten wir die **Landi Maiengrün** als Partnerin gewinnen. Diese wird die Agentur in ihrem **Volg-Laden** führen.

Mehr erfahren Sie auf der Rückseite!



Annex: Stakeholder management

Implementation

Population/customers



Normally, households and media in the locations of Ymago agencies received two flyers informing them about the model. In some cases, namely at the request of the local authorities, there were also information events for the public or attendance at municipality events (e.g. municipal assemblies).

Following publication of the agency solution, there were normally few customer responses. These can be broken down into two groups: questions on the specific offerings and dissatisfaction / lack of sympathy regarding the closure of the previous post office. The low negative response is due firstly largely to the fact that in most cases amicable solutions were reached with the local authorities. In exceptional cases, the latter sounded out the mood in the village with surveys before deciding what line to take as regards alternatives to the previous postal services. On the other hand, one not insignificant factor was probably the growing realization in broad circles that the changes in society and the economy would not stop at Swiss Post.

Up to the end of July 2008 the project team itself handled customer queries over the phone. After that this task passed to managers on the operational side, who have played a major role since August 2008 in supporting the agencies as soon as the decision was made to go ahead with implementation. The task of replying to responses expressed by letter or e-mail basically remained the responsibility of the project team.

As the reorganization of the tasks between post offices did not have any effect on customer contacts and strengthened the focus on customers, implementation did not lead to any complaints.

Customer satisfaction remained stable at a high level throughout project implementation. In 2008 it came to 86 for private customers and 80 points for business customers (on a scale of 100). By way of comparison, the values prior to Ymago had been 87 points for private customers and 81 points for business customers.

In 2008 the best results were again achieved by the post office counter staff with 91 points for private customers and 85 points for business customers.

Swiss Post employees

The Ymago agencies were only a discussion point among staff who were directly affected by the implementation and, in the initial phase, in the trade unions. The local post office staff together with the municipal or city authorities were always pre-briefed in personal discussions on the ongoing clarifications.

It was the responsibility of the new managers in the sales network to regularly update their staff about the changes and the status of the internal post office reorganization. Close, ongoing contact between all levels made it possible to address uncertainties, clarify questions and open issues in an unbureaucratic way and reach solutions quickly in case of problems. Thanks to the strong presence of the Ymago project team and the Post Offices & Sales Board in operations, it was possible to accomplish the implementation in an ordered fashion. This in turn guaranteed a stable and strong organization.

However, the implementation still had an effect on employee satisfaction. In 2008 it dropped to 64 points in the Post Offices & Sales unit (on a scale of 100, Swiss Post total: 69 points). Here, perception of the work load and working hours was a factor. Motivation and willingness to perform were, however, not lower than the value for the Group as a whole (70 points).



Annex: Stakeholder management

Implementation

Local authorities



The aim of contacts with the local authorities, which in each case began directly after the internal release of a review of a post office, was to achieve consensus on how to proceed. In most cases a personal interview was sufficient; further dialogue up to the signing of a declaration of consent to the new solution (agency, home delivery service or closure without replacement) was conducted by phone and/or by e-mail.

One major concern of the municipal or city councils was that Swiss Post should consult them over the information provided to the public. Apart from a few exceptions, the local authorities agreed the content and timing of communications. On request, texts were occasionally made available to the municipalities so as to inform the public of the ongoing clarifications or to disseminate information supplied by Swiss Post over additional communication channels belonging to the municipalities (newsletters, noticeboards).

It was agreed that any new solution would be kept confidential until its official announcement, and in three out of four cases this was observed. As a result and through interviews with the Swiss Post personnel affected, rumours and uncertainty were largely avoided at individual sites.

Discussions in Canton Ticino proved much more difficult due to greater scepticism towards the alternatives to classic post offices and to a different perception of the public service idea.

Cantonal governments and interest groups

During the start and test phases (2004 to 2006) Ymago was a central point of discussion between Swiss Post and the cantonal governments and interest groups. During implementation in 2007 and 2008, the tradition of annual contacts, especially with the cantons, was continued, but the post office network proved just one subject among many.

Virtually all contact persons at cantonal level appear to be satisfied with the manner in which Swiss Post implemented the changes. To the extent that questions were raised, these primarily concerned special cases or cases of conflict or the services of individual post offices. Especially after the implementation decisions in the autumn of 2006, individual members of the cantonal parliament or cantonal parliamentary parties approached their governments to express their concern at the disappearance of post offices or to find out more about the proposed implementation in the canton.

Among the interest groups, the post offices and agencies receded into the background as other issues involving Swiss Post were coming to the fore (e.g. market deregulation, delivery).



Media

During the implementation phase the media, primarily local and regional, once again concentrated largely on reports about new agencies, home delivery services or closures without replacement mentioned in communications from Swiss Post.

This reflected on the one hand the large amount of information provided and the fact that changes were announced as early as possible, and on the other hand the fact that people were getting used to the idea: replacement solutions for post offices were no longer perceived by the media as outrageous, resulting in increasingly neutral to positive contributions. At the same time reports were becoming shorter or confined to notices. The situation was different in cases of conflict (resistance on the part of municipalities and the public) and in Ticino, where the frequently exaggerated articles and broadcasts often concentrated one-sidedly on the (negative) responses of the municipalities.

Independent research and questions directed to Swiss Post nearly always involved speculation about the fate of individual post offices or about changes in the postal services in particular areas, whether these had already been implemented or were planned.



Swiss Post
Post Offices & Sales
Viktoriastrasse 21
P. O. Box
3030 Berne

www.post.ch

SWISS POST 