



**Hewlett Packard
Enterprise**

Keeping data at home, safe and secure

**Balz Informatik AG expands its
“All in Switzerland” offering
with IaaS for Swiss SMEs**

For many organizations in Switzerland, it is imperative that their data be stored securely on Swiss soil. To address this, Balz Informatik AG offers a Swiss solution meant to serve small and midsize companies. But Balz goes one better: Its data centers are underground—in a former emergency hospital in the heart of the country.

Competitive edge: A local player

While many Swiss companies see it as a competitive advantage to store data in Swiss data centers, some companies and public sector organizations are legally bound to do so. The mandate includes running all business processes on infrastructure securely managed within Switzerland. Most international providers either cannot guarantee this or do not offer it at all. “The data protection regulations are likely to become even stricter,” cautions René Balz, Managing Director of Balz Informatik AG. “We have made this our focus and now offer organizations a complete portfolio of secure IT services delivered from Switzerland.”

These services have gained the trust of customers of all sizes, from single users to startups to companies with multiple sites and up to 1,000 employees—very large companies by Swiss standards. As a result, Balz counts as clients a host of communities, doctors, health insurance companies, healthcare companies, and financial service providers, as well as companies active in other industries. Balz looks after customer IT environments and applications whether they reside at the customer site or in its own secure cloud in the “IT Center Emmental” in Sumiswald. And Balz takes the word “secure” seriously: its data centers are located underground. Not only does it use the former location of an emergency hospital of the Swiss Army but utilizes its existing infrastructure, including proven diesel generator sets.



BALZ
informatik

Industry: IT services

Country: Switzerland

Vision

Extend IT service to include infrastructure as a service (IaaS) to offer the right solution to each customer.

Strategy

Provide a scalable, reliable, and secure platform to enable business growth and new offerings.

Outcomes

- Expanded offering portfolio to include IaaS
- Ensured faster onboarding and 100% uptime for customers
- Created capacity for company's five-year growth plan

Tailored offerings

“Our customers appreciate that we are small enough to know them, yet big enough to provide them comprehensive support,” notes René Balz. “Some business customers have been loyal customers for 28 years.” For starters, it is important for Balz, as service provider, to assign a personal team to each of its clients. These teams become the first point of contact for all IT issues. In addition, Balz carefully analyzes customer requirements together with the customer to work out a range of alternatives for a solution that best suits that customer’s business. Mario Hiltbrunner, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) at Balz explains: “It’s not about pushing our own cloud. With CAD applications, for example, it makes sense to operate them at the customer site since bandwidth is of crucial importance with such amounts of data.”

To maintain its market success, Balz must constantly expand and adapt its portfolio to address the evolving requirements and various needs of its customers. The goal of its business strategy—to offer IaaS—was intended to round off its service portfolio. However, its capacities were not sufficient for this. The Balz team was also concerned that its existing infrastructure would not be powerful enough for future requirements.

Continuous training

“We have a very, very good team of about 30 people, and we train ourselves,” says René Balz proudly. “For example, our IT staff—to qualify for the Swiss certificate of competence—and our system technicians in four-year apprenticeships.” Operating a data center requires up-to-date knowledge of both the

hardware technology and the business applications in use. To that end, Balz invests in continuous training and ongoing education for its team. For example, Hiltbrunner completed the coursework for his degree while working at Balz. To encourage on-the-job learning and a lively exchange of ideas, Balz deliberately creates teams made up of younger and older employees from a wide variety of backgrounds and depths of experience. This increases the workforce’s collective range of knowledge, which also helps compensate for employee absences. “An employee can go on vacation with an easy mind,” assures Hiltbrunner. “We will have someone available to cover their area of expertise.”

Fit for purpose

Balz applies strict standards to all its projects. An in-depth evaluation of its requirements for the upcoming project is also a must. “We need security and peace of mind for the next five years,” explains René Balz. A thorough analysis of the criteria included the existing and planned corporate structures of its customer base as well as performance, support, power and space consumption, ease of implementation, reliability, and efficient supervision.

Two tasks were accomplished in one stroke. The technical and business analysis for the project was part of the CTO Hiltbrunner’s thesis. “For ongoing training over a three-year period, the thesis should also serve as a useful resource,” declares René Balz. The preference matrix and risk analysis ultimately identified HPE Alletra and HPE ProLiant DL385 Gen10 servers as the seamless edge-to-cloud solution that best met all criteria.



With HPE Alletra,
we have increased
the performance by
a factor of 2.5 with
no increase in power
consumption.”

– **Mario Hiltbrunner**, Chief Technology Officer
(CTO) at Balz Informatik AG



“We are particularly excited about HPE Alletra’s ‘deduplication’ feature. We have 200 to 300 virtual machines on one repository. In the past, an operating system was discarded just as often. Deduplication enables us to make massive reductions in capacity and cost,” explains Mario Hiltbrunner. “In addition, the infrastructure that was replaced required a lot more monitoring and represented a risk. Now we can sleep peacefully again,” admits René Balz.

Long-term partnership

“We have been a very satisfied HPE partner and customer for a long time. We even keep old servers to meet customer needs. The machines work. That’s what matters,” says René Balz, with Mario Hiltbrunner adding: “In addition to the reliability of the products and solutions, we value the fact that all components come from one source.”

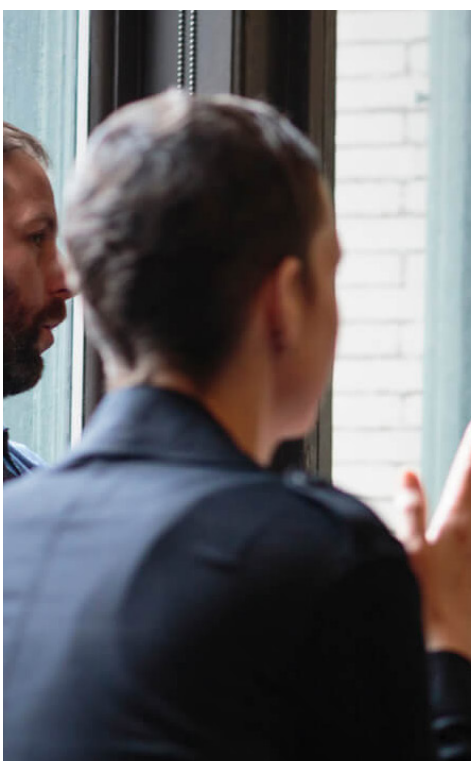
The new HPE Alletra solution was installed with the help of HPE experts. The Balz infrastructure team was able to rely on HPE support, especially for short-term inquiries, and quickly received competent and goal-oriented help. “In general, it is very important for us that we know our partners in technology and infrastructure personally,” stresses René Balz.

Balz’s trust in HPE was justified. The data reduction capabilities of the HPE Alletra solution far exceeded expectations. The team is also very satisfied with HPE InfoSight and the quick overview it provides of all systems, their capacity utilization, the status of deduplication, and the recommendations it provides, for example, of what firmware to use.

Dynamic growth, local roots

“With the help of the HPE Alletra solution, we can now offer our customers infrastructure as a service,” boasts René Balz. Customer onboarding has been significantly accelerated. Thanks to the reliability and support provided by HPE InfoSight, employees can also easily handle the growing volume of orders, freeing them up to focus on new areas. “Cybersecurity in particular will tie up more resources,” hints René Balz.

The high availability of the overall solution fits well with the requirements of IT service providers, which include maintaining a secure and independent data center. As already mentioned, Balz uses the premises of a former emergency hospital located under a mountain, which also served as a regional hospital for a long time. The structure, composed of strong concrete and steel reinforcements, is equipped to operate independently of an external power supply. Balz works closely with the local energy provider and uses primarily sustainable electrical power sources to renew its battery storage. Just in case, the company has its generators on standby. “All in all, we now have security and flexibility for vigorous growth in the coming years,” concludes René Balz.



For our customers, what matters are solutions that move the business forward—not the cheapest solution.”

– René Balz, Managing Director of Balz Informatik AG





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Solution

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- HPE Alletra 6030 with 92 TB
- HPE ProLiant DL385 Gen10 server

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- HPE InfoSight



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