melissa

SKR Reisen optimises customer experiences with Melissa

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If you are looking for a unique worldwide travel experience or just a retreat to the great outdoors, SKR Reisen offers two things: a great travel experience, and an even better customer experience throughout your entire "journey". The tour operator used the time during the pandemic, which resulted in reduced bookings, to optimise its processes. Melissa's data quality solutions provide a solid foundation for these improvements.

> " *Thanks to Melissa, we were able to harmonise 55% of our customer data and improve it in terms of uniform formatting, to name just one example.* "

– JULIAN FEDER, HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY AT SKR REISEN

THE BEGINNING OF THE "ADVENTURE"

The need for process optimisation arose from a historical peculiarity within the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, which served as the primary source of customer data. A large number of bookings increasingly led to duplicates due to a lack of reconciliation with the current database. These were not optimal conditions to provide the best experience for either travel agents or customers.

SOUND PLANNING

Therefore, SKR Reisen decided to continue to digitalise and optimise their internal business processes. The first step was to create a clean database in order to make it available to other solutions, such as a customer relationship management (CRM) system. Moreover, the technical department wanted to connect the ERP system to the new infrastructure and update the data, which was being received at minute intervals, so that it could be transferred to the CRM system. Not only does this mean that duplicates are recognised, but also that all addresses should be in an uniform format. This is a prerequisite for addressing customers correctly and to implement better marketing campaigns.

THE SEARCH FOR A PARTNER

SKR Reisen identified its technical requirements before beginning the search for a suitable data quality solution."It was important to us that the solution works with our new infrastructure," explains Julian Feder, Head of Technology at SKR Reisen, adding, "The tool should work in the current process and support the continuous creation and modification of data". To put it briefly: the developers wanted a module that they could integrate into their system landscape.

They talked to the most promising candidates about their plans. Melissa impressed everyone with a promising offer and a good price/performance ratio. Julian Feder explains enthusiastically, "It was interesting that we were able to get to the technical core of Melissa's work. It was exactly what we were looking for - a cleaning solution with additional functions that we could connect to our core system." The developers were given the opportunity to access MatchUp®, Melissa's solution for duplicate checking, via APIs. With this, even difficult-to-recognise duplicates can be identified and merged through a combination of in-depth domain knowledge of international address formats and advanced fuzzy matching techniques. Julian Feder adds, "We felt that Melissa truly understood what we were trying to do."

SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY TOGETHER

SKR Reisen was able to extensively test Melissa's products during the proof of concepts that followed and decided to use them. The company then began to integrate Melissa services into the development system in mid-2021. There was only one technical challenge, "but it arose from our individual situation," says Julian Feder and explains, "in order to integrate MatchUp®, we needed a Python connection, which was not yet provided for in our system landscape." As a solution, the tour operator developed an isolated cloud-hosted service in Python that handles all interactions with MatchUp®: duplicate detection and addressing the APIs for data cleaning. "Good documentation was helpful, so that it worked well in the end," explains the software engineer. SKR Reisen also states that the communication with Melissa was always fast and friendly.

Thus, the test run and go-live could start after just a few weeks. The latter was initially carried out as a test, so that optimisations could still be made. "The whole thing was an iterative learning process for us," said the IT experts. For example, they learned that the duplicate check works better if the data is validated beforehand - an insight they could apply directly. Melissa initially cleaned up the entire stock of customer data as part of its service. Since the end of February 2022, data has been continuously cleaned in strict compliance with the GDPR.

This is done by checking the data of new customers in real time via the API. This means that every change to data is corrected immediately, and a duplicate check is carried out. "Thanks to Melissa, we were able to harmonise 55% of our customer data and improve it in terms of uniform formatting, among other things," concludes Julian Feder.

OPTIMAL EXPERIENCES BEYOND THE HORIZON

SKR Reisen's expectations have been fulfilled. All customer data has been and is being cleaned up with the help of Melissa and is then prepared for the CRM system in such a way that even if there are several entries, a customer is still clearly identifiable. Not only will this make it easier for all employees to communicate with customers in the future and optimise their work processes, but it will also offer the customer a harmonious experience across all stages. Julian Feder concludes, "It was the right decision to use the last few months to digitalise our business processes and ensure better data quality, while adhering strictly to the GDPR.

About SKR Reisen:

SKR Reisen has been the original tour operator for worldwide adventure and round trips in small groups to Asia, the Orient, Africa, America & Oceania and Europe since 1978. Its portfolio is complemented by "Urlaub mit Sinn" (Holidays with Purpose) in Germany, Austria and South Tyrol. The special feature of the German tour operator is the small group sizes of max. 12 guests for long-distance tours and max. 16 guests within Europe. In total, there are 405 different trips to 82 countries. Private tours and special group tours are also offered. The family-run company, which is based in Cologne, sent more than 26,000 guests on trips in the 2019 financial year and, together with 120 employees, generated a turnover of more than 60 million euros. For more information, see: www.skr.de

About Melissa:

Melissa is a leading provider of data quality, identity verification and address management solutions. Melissa helps companies to acquire and retain customers, validate and correct contact data, optimise marketing ROI and manage risk. Melissa has been a trusted partner in improving customer communications for companies such as Mercury Insurance, Xerox, Disney, AAA and Nestlé since 1985. For more information, see www.melissa.de