



“Digitalization offensive”

Facility management is more relevant to real estate customers than other sectors of the real-estate business, and, at the same time, it is the ideal starting point for intelligent data creation and collection.

immobilienmanager discusses this with the CEO of Germany’s largest real estate service provider, Dr Jochen Keysberg.

immobilienmanager: *How much is Apleona investing in its digitalization activities?*

Dr Jochen Keysberg: Understand that I cannot give exact figures but it is a substantial sum for Apleona. In addition to this is a high level of personal commitment, both in the development of digital customer solutions and in the establishment of our completely cloud-based, variable digital platform, Apleona Ecosystem.

immobilienmanager: *What targets are you pursuing with this?*

Dr Jochen Keysberg: It is about making our business model and the nature of our service performance fit for the future and further enhancing the market position in Europe together with new, digital services. Our digitalization offensive will make Apleona faster, better, and bigger. For example, this means more transparency in service provision and performance for our clients, better service and more quality for the user, meaning high customer satisfaction and, not least, faster and better recommendations and decisions for portfolios managed by us using data-based intelligence and, in doing so, real added value for our clients. At the end of the day, digitalization is about efficiency, i.e. more and better service for the same or lower cost, both for our customers and for us as a service provider.

immobilienmanager: *One of the flagships is definitely the cooperation with IBM Watson. What is this all about?*

Dr Jochen Keysberg: The aim of the cooperation is to develop operational applications together with IBM and major customers, to test them live in portfolios of major customers managed by Apleona, and then to

roll them out as standard applications. In doing so, we want to significantly increase the pace of development of digital solutions to market readiness.

immobilienmanager: *Are the solutions developed together with IBM connected to IBM or are they compatible for potentially all customers?*

Dr Jochen Keysberg: The market-ready solutions are developed and piloted with some major customers but at the same time, we also make sure that they are flexible and scalable. All customers benefit from this because we do not develop stand-alone solutions.

immobilienmanager: *Does it generally make more sense to develop solutions and then offer them to the customers, develop solutions together with pilot customers or connect up to tools already available to customers?*

Dr Jochen Keysberg: In development, our path is quite clearly to work with customers on solutions – this is the only way to avoid bypassing their needs and market in development. However, these solutions can be quickly varied and rolled out with other portfolios and customers. In addition, we will be in the position to connect up to already available customer tools at any time using our cloud-based ecosystem in future.

immobilienmanager: *The aforementioned second project is the establishment of a cloud-based platform. What tasks should this platform perform? What significance does it have in your digitalization strategy?*

Dr Jochen Keysberg: It is a flexible interface for our customers and partners and will enable us to integrate many more data-based solutions and processes. With this platform, it will be possible to successively integrate even more individual solutions, e.g. from proptechs, effectively into this platform and the data acquired from properties, facilities, and users to be used intelligently and exploited as new services or products.

immobilienmanager: *Larger companies are more in a position to invest in digital projects, products and services than small companies. In your opinion, will this contribute to the consolidation of the market?*

Dr Jochen Keysberg: Yes, definitely. Digitalization will accelerate the further division of the market into specialists and niche providers and large generalists like Apleona, which can operate cross-regional and country portfolios at the same level of quality with a broad range of services.

immobilienmanager: *How do you convey to your employees investment in more efficiency without raising fears of imminent downsizing?*

Dr Jochen Keysberg: At the moment, fears are rather that with Apleona's strong growth and the general labor shortage, we cannot fill our vacant positions in time. Because of this, we are explaining to our

colleagues that we also want to increase their productive time with the digitalization initiatives by managing order management and service provision more efficiently. In general, we try to get everyone enthusiastic about the opportunities of these new technologies – especially in terms of Apleona's future success. This has been working quite well so far. I have rarely received so much and so much positive feedback from our employees as I have to the news about the development partnership with IBM. This does not really surprise me – we are a company with a strong technical focus. Because of this, our digitalization initiatives will soon be a natural and commonplace element of Apleona's business development.

Cooperation with IBM

Apleona has agreed a development partnership with IBM for digital and cloud-based applications in real estate management. The aim is to develop and test operational applications together with IBM and Apleona's major customers and then introduce them as standard applications. A joint team of developers has been established for this purpose. The initial fields of this cooperation are predictive maintenance, optimized office space utilization and automated reception services. In addition, there will be a customer cockpit that building occupants can call up using smartphones to report faults.

The interview was taken by Christof Hardebusch.