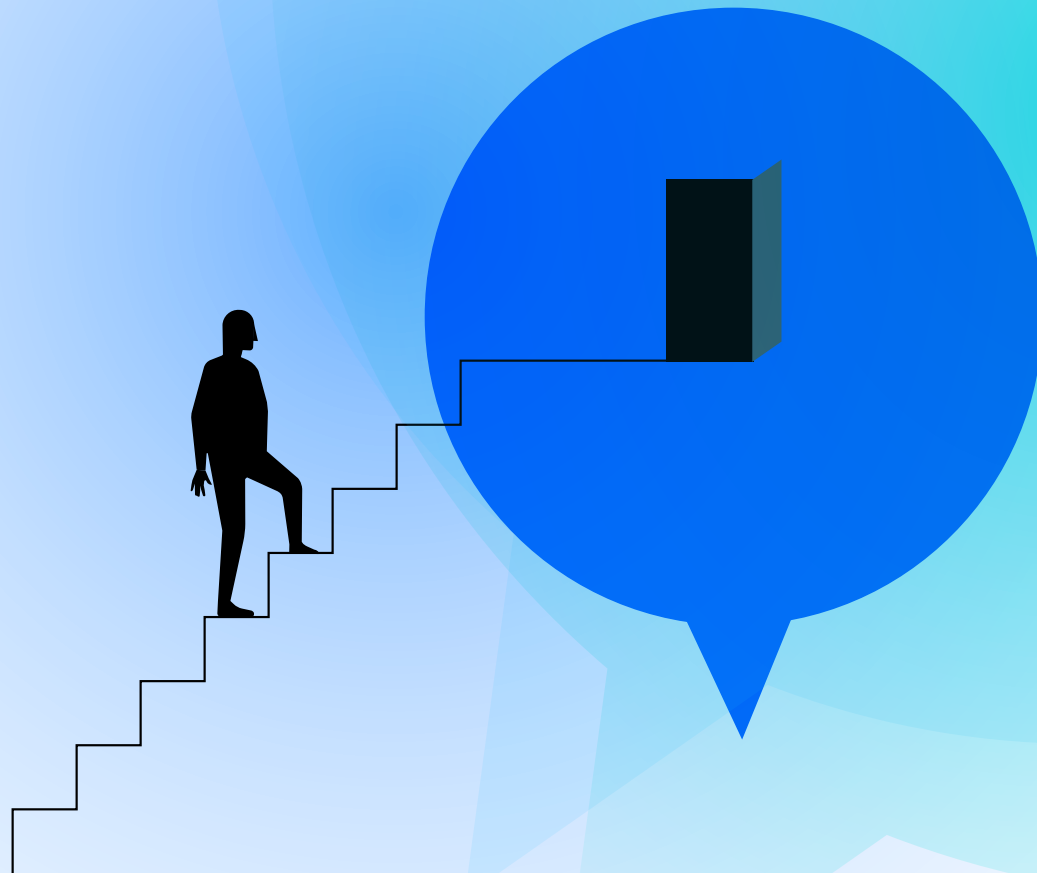

THE TOPIC AT THE CENTRE

A Path to Strategic and Agile Communications



Case Study

Executive Summary

Since 2019, Union Investment Privatfonds GmbH has been relying on a central content strategy in its sales communication with the aim of providing the steadily growing number of channels with consistent messages tailored to the target group. **A thematic focus replaced the prevailing channel focus.** Thematic categories, which are in line with the fund management company's communication strategy and agile editorial processes thus provide all those involved with a clear framework for their work.

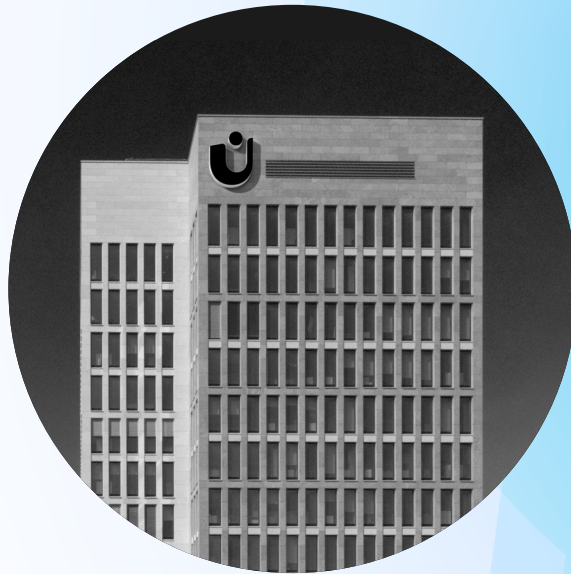
The previously used, purely database-based topic management tool was no longer able to meet these requirements. In spring 2021, Union Investment implemented dirico as their new software for agile editorial management that supports the forward-looking communication approach and enables the required transparency. **Profilwerkstatt GmbH accompanied the entire process – from content strategy to dirico implementation and usage.**

About Union Investment Privatfonds GmbH

Union Investment is one of the largest financial services providers in Germany and takes a leading position in investment funds and private pension provision via “Riester-Rente”. Almost 4,000 employees provide investment solutions for private and institutional clients.

Since its founding in 1956, Union Investment can look back on a successful history. More than 5.3 million private clients currently entrust their money to the fund company - a total of over 360 billion euros. Values such as partnership, transparency and sustainability are part of the company's philosophy.

Union Investment Privatkunden GmbH sells its products through partner banks in the “Genossenschaftliche FinanzGruppe” (cooperative financial services network). Their advisors are the target group of the B2B4C sales communication and therefore also of the work of the group “Redaktions- und Trainingsmanagement” (Editorial and Training Management).



“TURNING MONEY
INTO FUTURE”



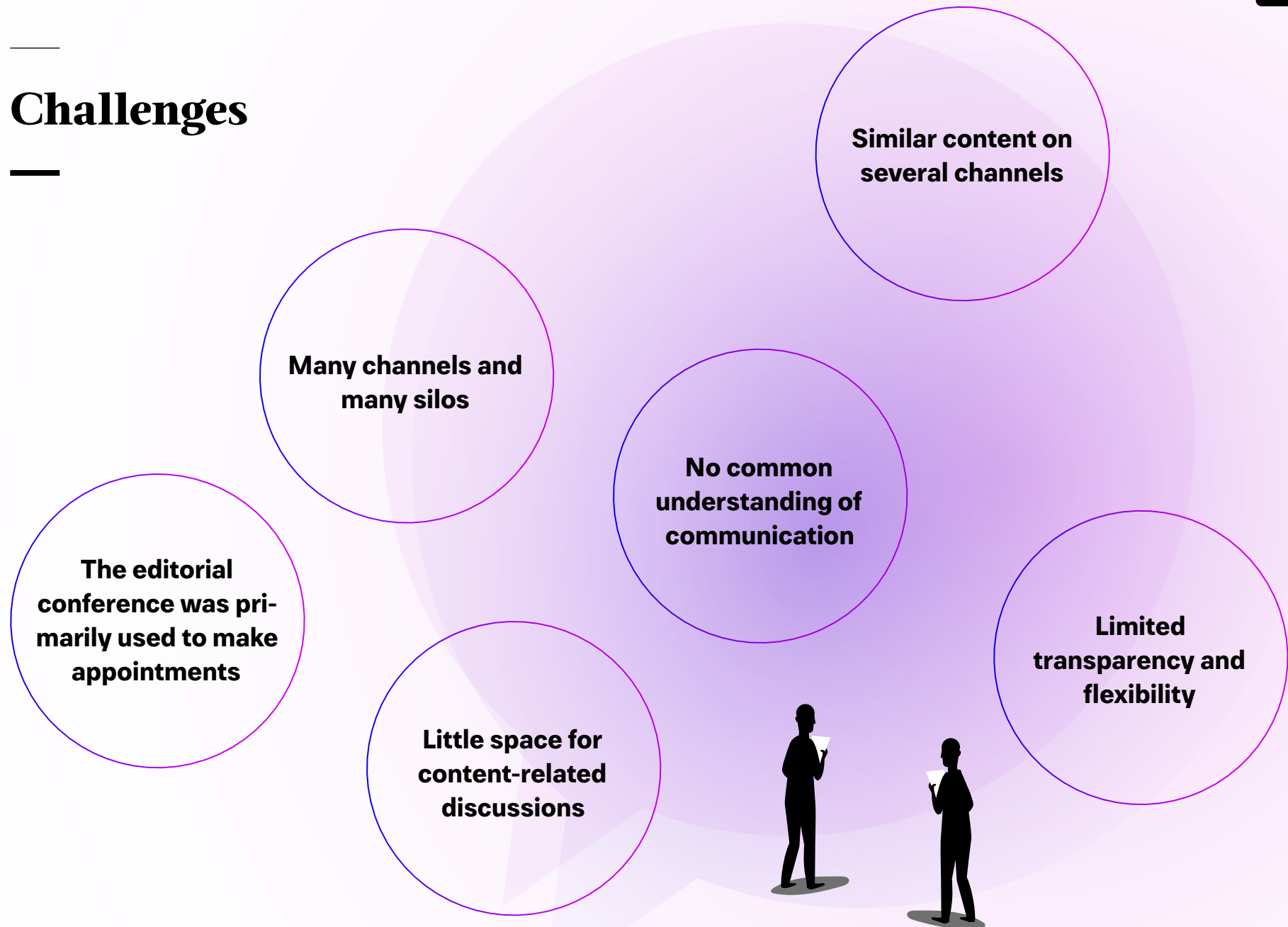
A Content Strategy for Sales

The Editorial and Training Management group is based in Sales. It communicates regularly with banks and investors. Bank advisors are kept up to date with content about journalistic, sales and didactic topics related to fund investment and are trained for fund sales.

The group primarily deals with communication issues from within the company. For years, these were entered by departments in a rather simple database. From these ideas and orders, the group planned the sales communication.

In 2019, the steadily growing number of managed channels, associated responsible persons and the relaunch of the central sales and news portal required a content strategy that applied to all sales communication channels. Following Kristina Halvorson's model, editing, user experience, structure and processes were re-described with the aim to increase customer focus and the role of the portal. The strategy was developed together with Profilwerkstatt GmbH.

Challenges

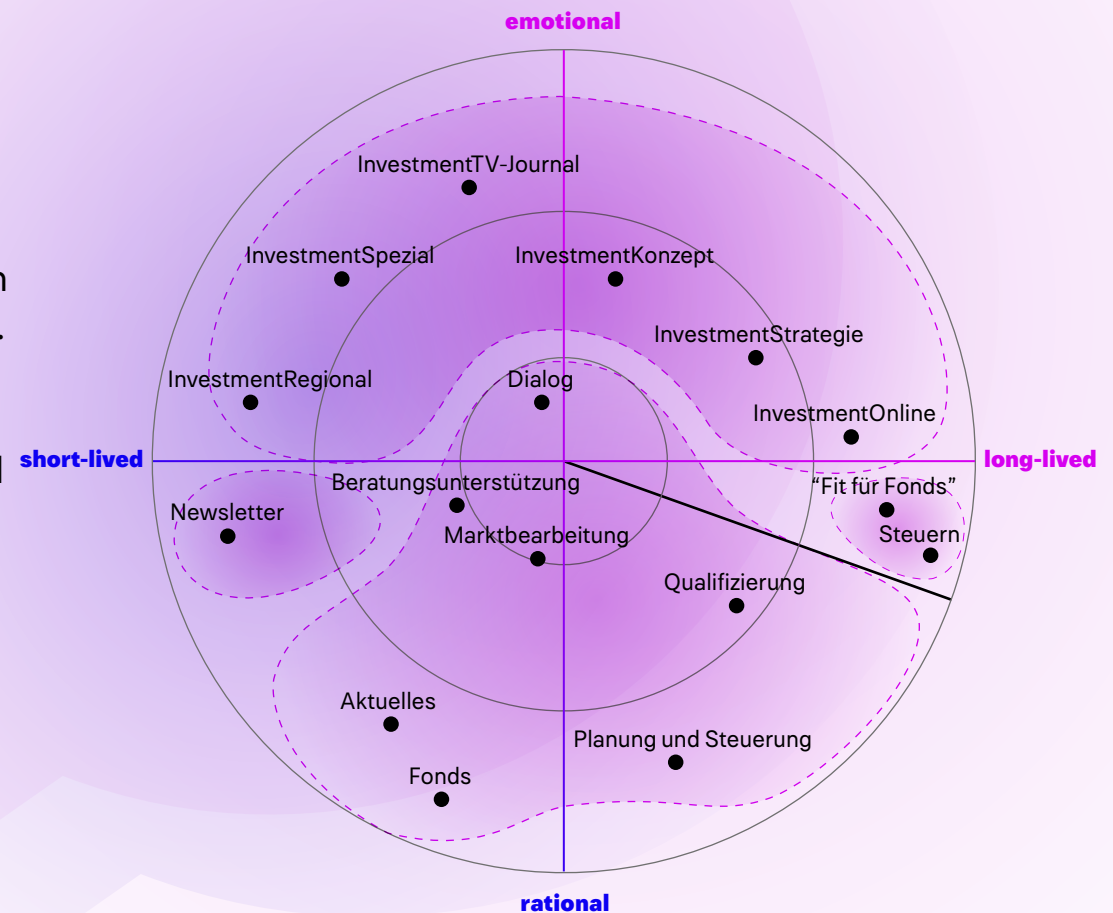


Content must have the right impact

The simple quintessence of the strategy: an end to content and channel silos and the scattergun approach. As a solution provider and translator, the Editorial and Training Management is geared towards topics and messages as well as target-oriented formats instead of primarily towards channels.

For this, the profiles of the individual channels have been redefined: each channel has been given its own positioning and is now differentiated from the others. A classification according to emotionality and rationality, but also according to the validity of the content and formats to be created, clarifies on which channel these will later be published. > >>

Target Group Bank: Positioning of the channels



In this way, content can be planned and designed more easily. News and qualifical content are primarily found in the new extranet “InvestmentWelt” – the daily online tool for banks. “At the same time, we are giving our magazines more space for in-depth content and stories,” explains Group Head Thorsten Bartsch.

By using content marketing techniques, the group communicates in a more recipient-oriented way and focuses on the customer benefit instead of the sender's interest. All content is intended to contribute to the communication goals of the aspects “knowledge” and “attitude” and thus achieve an “effect” with readers – for example, to encourage “active action” or to expand the high level of loyalty.



“WITH OUR CONTENT STRATEGY AND AGILE PROCESSES, WE ARE TRANSFORMING OURSELVES INTO A MODERN COMMUNICATION UNIT.”

THORSTEN BARTSCH
Union Investment

On the Pulse of Time with Agile Processes

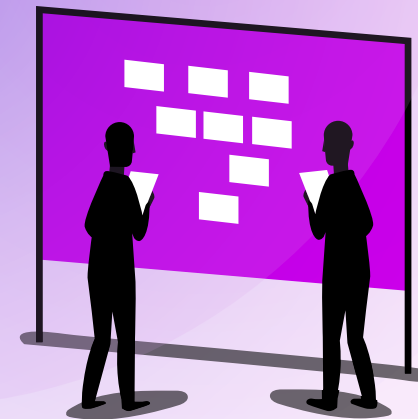
Agile marketing aims for customer-oriented cooperation instead of a silo mentality, as well as continuous satisfaction of readers' needs. Therefore, contemporary editorial management is also characterised by agile processes. “For us, this is clearly a forward-looking approach to communication”, confirms Jens Müller, Senior Consultant at Profilwerkstatt, who was involved in the content strategy and dirico implementation. In Union Investment's sales communication, this means, among other things:

- **Flat hierarchy:** Channel managers organise themselves independently, there is no managing editor. The group leader only makes decisions in exceptional cases.
- **Manageable content teams:** Channel managers are divided into extranet, magazines and investor communications.

- **Fast reaction:** The group responds promptly to concerns, enquiries and events from the company or the capital market and keeps content up to date.
- **Flexible planning:** As the first point of contact for stakeholders, a topic coordinator ensures that editorial plans can be adjusted transparently and ad-hoc.
- **Clear agreements:** The editorial team discusses issues in various specified conferences. The participation of other stakeholders improves transparency.
- **Better analyses:** The group analyses click numbers and other KPIs in each editorial conference and derives further measures from them. >>>

New Structure of Editorial Meetings

- **Editorial Meeting:** weekly discussion of current topics and planning and monitoring of communication concerns (cross-departmental)
- **Editorial Time:** weekly optional detailed discussion of cross-channel implementation of selected topics
- **Editorial Stand-up:** brief meeting twice a week for continuous editorial planning of the extranet
- **Production Meeting:** exchange between those responsible for the channel and the agency on the concrete implementation of the content



Covid Crisis as a Baptism of Fire

The editorial process includes silo-free planning and creation of content. Topic coordinator Catharina Heidecke acts in a central role and as an interface to the company. She plans content cross-medially, standardises messages for channels and target groups and procures information and briefings so that the channel managers in the group can create the respective content in cooperation with agencies.

The agile editorial processes exploit their strengths especially with the “InvestmentWelt” portal, which was launched at the beginning of 2020: For the ex-

tranet, both managers and agencies have to react daily to short-term communication events, create content promptly and keep it up-to-date.

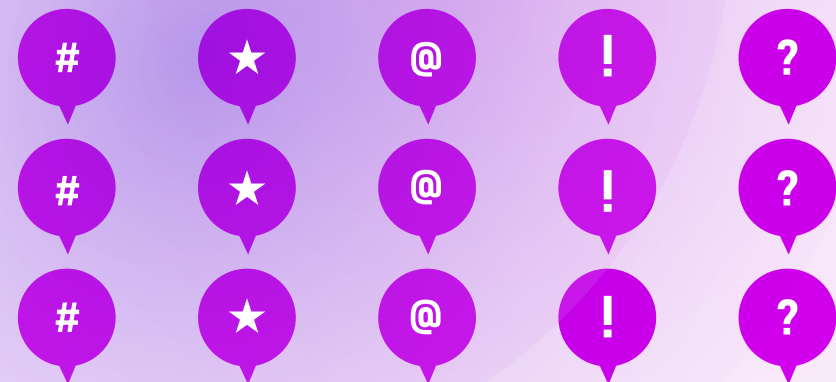
The processes for “InvestmentWelt” passed their baptism of fire right at the beginning of the Covid crisis in 2020 and the associated collapse of the capital markets. “With rigid processes and the old portal, we would not have been able to meet the readers' information needs or the company's communication interests,” recalls Thorsten Bartsch

Topic Architecture for a Clear Framework

A clear topic categorisation helps the group Editorial and Training Management to plan and analyse relevant topic areas. In doing so, the group is guided by the following key questions:

- To which strategic topic should the communication concern contribute?
 - Does a communication concern by a department correspond to the company's content strategy?
 - And what does the chosen topic category mean for the subsequent content production? What direction and what tone should the contribution have?
-

“The topic architecture was definitely new territory for us”, recalls Catharina Heidecke, who as topic coordinator was also technically responsible for the dirico implementation. “But it gave us a clear framework for our editorial work.”



New Tool for Contemporary Communication

Many of the innovations in the content strategy, including processes and topic architecture, could not be mapped with the current topic management tool. Expanding the application would have required reprogramming the platform.

“It was clear to us that we needed a new tool that could be adapted to our diverse requirements,” says Thorsten Bartsch. Union Investment tested several providers together with Profilwerkstatt. The final choice was dirico developed by 247GRAD Labs GmbH.

Decisive factors were the flexibility of the platform, the open API and the possibility of transferring agile processes to the software. Among other things,

Kanban boards and teams can be used. It also fits that 247GRAD Labs itself works with agile processes. This ensures quick adaptation of functions as well as regular updates and new features.

Agile functions of dirico:

- Editorial planning with Kanban
- Content backlog
- Collection of ideas
- Task management with Kanban
- Internal groups for agile project teams
- Transparency about statuses
- Assigning responsibilities
- Setting goals
- Analysis of goals and content

Implementation Phase with Intense Exchange

In companies, the success of a new software depends, among other things, on how early users are involved in the implementation. Profilwerkstatt consultant Jens Müller worked closely with topic coordinator Catharina Heidecke and her colleagues to develop ideas on how to customise dirico for Union Investment. “Profilwerkstatt knows our challenges regarding editorial processes and was able to transfer them well to the platform – that helped us a lot,” says Catharina Heidecke.

Important: dirico had to be made fit for magazine planning. Union Investment uses its own module for this. In addition, many terms were adapted to the corporate language and functions were optimised for the content strategy and the agile editorial processes.

The way that departments enter new concerns (ideas) was slimmed down and optimised. The editorial team, on the other hand, can use additional input fields for content.

The editorial process planned with the content strategy was run through in dirico at an early stage in order to discover possible stumbling blocks. “A software must be oriented towards existing processes and be agile enough to be adapted at any time,” explains Jens Müller. “It is not the software that dictates the processes.” The play-through even uncovered further need for adaptation in dirico.

The path to the start of implementation was challenging. Due to regulatory requirements, financial service providers must overcome many hurdles before using cloud software. Jens Müller also provided advice on internal processes and coordination with IT and data protection and assisted with technical documentation and data migration.

Building Knowledge for Individual User Groups

Important elements for the use and acceptance were target group-specific trainings. Users were trained in dirico according to their assigned role. Channel managers got to know the software partly in individual training sessions due to individual requirements. For example, there are different ways of working in dirico for online channels and print magazines, and therefore also specific training.

Employees from other departments only received short group training sessions, which were carried out together with the Customer Success team from 247GRAD Labs. For Catharina Heidecke, the user-specific training programme was the right step. “We didn't want to overwhelm the individual users with long workshops if they were only going to use certain parts of dirico,” explains the topic coordinator.

But one-off training sessions were not the end of the knowledge-building process. Jens Müller conducted the individual training sessions and was then available to all group members for questions by phone as well as via a common Microsoft Teams channel.

User group-specific manuals including recommendations for filters and groupings as well as checklists finalized the training programme.



How Union Investment Uses dirico

The Editorial and Training Management team has been using dirico in their daily business since March 2021. At first, only the group worked with it to get to know the functions and the new way of working. For this purpose, there was a parallel operation with the previous topic management tool. After this familiarisation phase, dirico was rolled out for the departments and topic submitters.

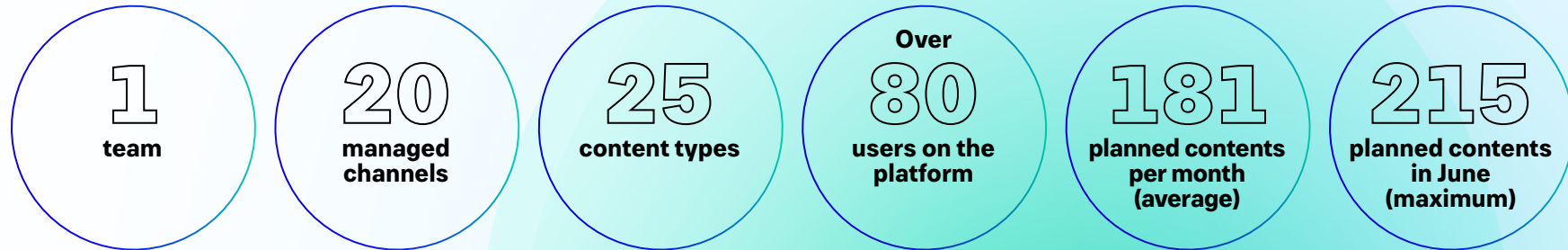
In order to facilitate the transition from the topic management tool to dirico, the functions of the platform are being introduced in stages. The Editorial and Training Management starts with those functions that the group needs for pure editorial planning – with individual views and filters as well as the possibility to tag colleagues. Additional features such as task management, approval processes, analyses and digital asset management are basically known and can be used individually. However, their use is only recommended in later stages. > >>



“WE START WITH SMALL STEPS TO MAKE IT EASIER TO GET STARTED WITH DIRICO.”

CATHARINA HEIDECKE
Union Investment

Facts and Figures – dirico at Union Investment:



What does working with dirico look like in daily business? All users can submit their own requests, including important key data such as target groups, core messages and publication periods, to a collection of ideas. These are checked by the topic coordinator in preparation for the weekly editorial meeting and, if necessary, amended with further information after consultation with the submitters.

In the editorial meeting, Catharina Heidecke presents all requests in dirico, then transforms them first into stories and then into associated formats.

This is how the channel-specific editorial plans are created. The next steps differ depending on the channel responsibility: for example, newsletters and print magazines are filled with content differently.

The submitters especially appreciate the transparency of the current editorial plans as well as the status of the respective content. For the extranet editorial team, the dirico editorial calendar was one of the biggest benefits: it allows planning to be adjusted quickly and easily.

What Does the Future Hold

The elements of content strategy and the agile approach to editorial management are easy to pursue with dirico. Many advantages have resulted from it for Union Investment:

- Overview of main topics and topic categories
 - Topic architecture shows whether issues correspond to the content strategy at all
 - Editorial calendar facilitates planning and shows in a striking manner whether the content is optimally placed
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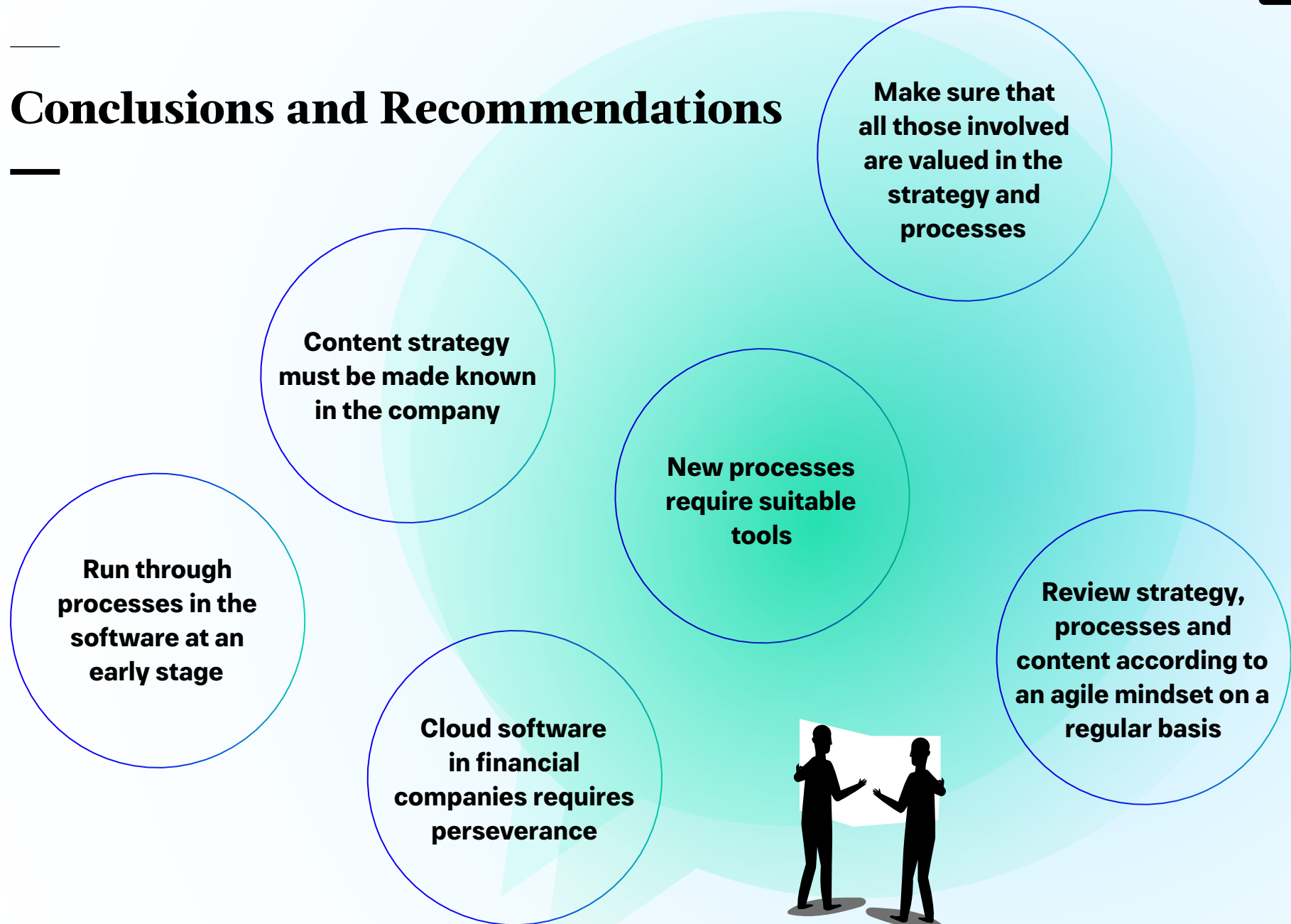
- Responsible departments find out more easily how their requests proceed
- Communication in dirico via mentions reduces email volume and multiple file storage
- Keeping an eye on the planning and status of several channels at the same time: The old tool couldn't provide that

The project is not finished with the launch of dirico. Content strategy, topic architecture and content types have to be checked and adapted regularly. > >>

The use of dirico will be expanded in further steps. A review meeting shall determine possible adaptation needs, and tasks such as content creation and re-release processes in the platform are also on the agenda. A deepening of the analysis function is furthermore conceivable. Finally, the connection to a ticket tool or an upcoming central digital asset management are on the wish list.

Editorial planning according to Kanban – as possible in dirico – would be a completely new approach for Union Investment. In cooperation with Profilwerkstatt, which also manages projects according to Kanban, a further development of agile editorial processes could be developed.

Conclusions and Recommendations



dirico

Transform your Content Collaboration:

dirico provides better collaboration in topic and editorial planning and in social media management. Manage the planning, creation, distribution and analysis of all your topics and content with a central content collaboration platform. Numerous corporate newsrooms, marketing and communications departments as well as agencies that have to cover and manage a multitude of channels are already using dirico successfully.

You want to learn more about this or other projects?

You want to get to know the services of Profilwerkstatt or test dirico yourself?

Then get in touch with us.



Sascha Böhr

CEO & Founder

customersuccess@dirico.io



Profilwerkstatt

Haus der Contentexperten

House of Content Experts:

Profilwerkstatt is one of the top 10 agencies for content marketing in Germany. We tell stories in digital and printed form. We give brands, messages and stories a strategic framework that leads to measurable success. We optimise editorial processes and transfer them to platforms like dirico. More than 60 permanent employees work for Profilwerkstatt at its locations in Darmstadt and Munich.



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