Corris – digital fundraising

Corris is a company providing fundraising services for about 30 non-profit organisations such as Helvetas, the WWF and Pro Infirmis. Instead of using a paper presentation folder, Corris' fundraisers now display images and films on an iPad and can use the same device to record donors' addresses and bank details.

You are most likely to see them standing at the entrance to the station or on a busy square in the town centre – young people collecting donations for a charitable cause from passers-by. Until recently, these fundraisers would work with a presentation folder to start a dialogue, and if the passer-by was prepared to make a donation, the fundraiser would fill out a form and get the donor to sign. The data would then be recorded electronically in Corris' back office and a standing order (SO) set up at the bank.

Tablet replaces presentation folder
With the advent of the tablet computer, Corris considered collecting and recording data electronically and locally: "Data quality was an important consideration, and we also wanted to look up-to-date. You can pass on more kinds of information more interactively with a tablet than with a presentation folder," explains Baldwin Bakker, Corris' CEO.

Similar mobile solutions were already on the market, but none of them fitted the bill for Swiss banks, which require a physical signature on paper to set up a standing order. There also had to be a way of recording data in offline mode. Corris decided to develop its own application and selected the experts at Ergon to help them.

A printer in a rucksack
Ergon set about the task in October 2013. The first decision was to choose a platform on which the solution was to be based, with Android, iOS and HTML5 all in the running. Ergon has expertise in all three of the systems and provided advice to support Corris's final choice, which was for Apple's iOS.

The banks' regulation that a donation form has to be signed on paper was a key requirement for the project and was solved by using a mobile printer. The street fundraisers carry the system with them in a little rucksack and a battery-operated access point at the stand generates an encrypted wifi hotspot that allows the tablet computer to communicate with the printer. The access point has a GSM uplink to Corris' servers, where the donors' data are stored and the fundraisers' presentations are downloaded.

Online and offline mode
A further requirement was to allow the street fundraisers to work in both online and offline mode. When the access point has no internet connection, such as in an underpass, for example, the app stores the data locally on the tablet. As soon as the internet becomes available again, the information is uploaded to the server.

A step into the digital world
"The Corris app was a big IT project for us. The application initially sounds very simple, but it is a far from trivial matter when offline operation, for example, has to be incorporated. Ergon gave us all the support and advice you would expect from an experienced partner during the entire project," says Baldwin Bakker.

For Bakker, the app is an important step into the digital world. "We can now accept donations by mobile phone as well – the fundraiser enters the number into the app and all the donor has to do is approve the amount over the phone." Social media has similarly been integrated: donors can snap personalised photos using the app to recommend the charitable organisation to others.

Ergon has worked with Corris to extend the app since its launch and the fundraisers now also record their work hours using a tablet. And all the good work they have done together has paid off – the Corris app won Corris and Ergon a bronze medal in the Enterprise category at the Best of Swiss Apps Award 2015.