Viac: Fully digitalised third pillar

To make the abstract topic of retirement planning palatable to young Swiss people and at the same time offer a simple and reasonably priced 3a pillar solution – this was the vision of the three founders of VIAC. This led to the first-ever 100% digital solution for retirement planning on a smartphone app in Switzerland, developed swiftly by Ergon in close cooperation with Viac.

Retirement planning is a very important issue for the younger generation in particular since the first and second pillar will not be as reliable a source of pension financing in future. Young people often lack an incentive to concern themselves with something so far in the future. In addition, the complexity of the financial markets and possible investment strategies are also off-putting, and in many cases smartphone-based financial solutions are not suitably designed for their target group. Given this, what is required are starting points that make financial services simple enough to entice even digital natives to use them. This is precisely what the founders of VIAC are trying to do, starting with a 3a pillar app for smartphones. The start-up turned to Ergon both for the app's technical implementation as well as the User Experience. Viac was able to bring on WIR Bank as a financing partner, with the latter holding a stake in the start-up.

The founders of Viac with WIR Bank-CEO Germann Wiggli (from left Jonas Gusset, Daniel Peter, Christian Mathis and Germann Wiggli)

"For us it was crucial that all services could be purchased from one source, particularly within the area of User Experience."

Christian Mathis
Co-founder Viac

Time is money
The tight timeline was a significant challenge to the project. The 3a pillar business is very much seasonal – if you miss the peak season from November to February, you will miss out on most of that year's business. The VIAC team set itself an ambitious goal with this in mind: the app needed to be live in November 2017. So by the time the project started in May, there were six months left until the 'go live' date. This meant a tight schedule was necessary for the implementation plan, as were as few inefficiencies as possible in the collaboration.

For development, Ergon chose to use an agile process with close involvement of the customer on-site. To ensure work can be done fast and in the right direction, a cross-functional team that marries all necessary aspects such as business, engineering, UX and project management is required. Thanks to the short channels of communication, it was quick and easy to make decisions in consultation with the entire team.

User-centred design
In order to meet the tight implementation plan, the UX team was integrated in the agile process early on. Thanks to the close proximity to the customer and the decision to consistently be two sprints ahead of the

developers, there was plenty of time to create prototypes for the respective screens, test them and then polish them visually.

Parallel development
Integrating and connecting various third-party systems was also challenging, because certain assumptions about the semantics of the interfaces had to be made and tried out in the laboratory. Whether these assumptions were correct could only be discovered after the solution was integrated into the target environment. Since it takes time for all the systems to be properly configured, Ergon began setting up the production and test environment right from the beginning, in parallel with development. In time-critical projects in particular, working in parallel like this is essential.

Best-value 3a solution in Switzerland
The VIAC 3a solution can be opened in less than eight minutes in the comfort of your own home. The app is easy for anyone to use and, from just one Swiss franc in starting capital, you can invest in thousands of shares. The system is unmatched in terms of price as it does not require any bank staff or product salespeople for it to work, and the customer can take control of their 3a pillar themselves, with the option of investing as much as they want, when they want, without any minimum deposit, fee or term. VIAC is the first fully digitalised 3a product on the Swiss market. After only four months, Viac was able to attract over 2,600 customers, who put away a total of CHF 23 million for their old age.