

Putting ourselves in our client's place

Ernst & Young is the international auditing and advisory firm with the most consistently global orientation. In Switzerland we are the leading provider of complex services with a particular focus on auditing, tax and legal, advisory and accounting services.

Ernst & Young's major clients have a global presence and expect the same of their audit and advisory company. As a worldwide organization, this audit and advisory company needs to provide services that conform to global standards and methodologies. Then there is also the cultural aspect, "We need to have a uniform strategy for how we handle and solve our clients' problems," explains Markus Schweizer, Managing Partner Accounts & Industries and member of the Management Committee.

Working with an audit and advisory company becomes significantly easier if it has a uniform corporate culture worldwide. In this way clients always know what they can expect wherever they are - and this fosters trust.

The "Achieving Potential - Making a Difference" motto and brand claim that Ernst & Young adopted in spring 2008 inspires our 135,000 people worldwide to live a uniform corporate culture. This corporate culture is unique in that first we examine the potential and goals of the client, and then look how Ernst & Young can contribute to their realization. So our primary focus is on the view taken by the company's target groups and stakeholders: its clients, employees and the public.

"Achieving Potential - Making a Difference" builds on the existing values of the company. These consist of tailored offerings, but also solutions to client problems that go beyond the standard requirements of the engagement, where both the auditor and the advisor are required to think proactively.

The total focus on the client's perspective stems from the observation that the auditing and advisory business has become much more emotional. "The human factor is key. Especially during the proposal phase, clients are alert to the social skills and personal commitment of the people with whom they would later like to cooperate on a long-term basis," notes Markus Schweizer. The new motto, which focuses consistently on the outside perspective, is intended to speed up the culture process that is already under way.

"Achieving Potential - Making a Difference" has an impact on internal communication too. In our People Policy the primary emphasis is on the personal goals and potential of each employee. Once they have been clarified, binding medium-term career plans can be drawn up. As a result of our consistent focus on the client, when selecting new trainees we naturally look at the person's integrity and interpersonal skills in addition to their intellectual abilities.

For the general public, the auditors make their largest contribution in the area of the capital markets, with politicians and the public ascribing them a supervisory role. When something does happen, the public demands that more rigorous examinations be conducted in order to ensure transparency and integrity in that specific area. Ernst & Young engages in consultations with the Swiss Institute of Certified Accountants and Tax Consultants, the Swiss Federal Banking Commission and SIX Swiss Exchange when new laws or professional standards are being developed, or when guidelines or existing standards need to be interpreted, thus helping to ensure that the capital market's expectations are met more effectively.