

Adapting to the new normal: delivering virtual AGMs in Germany





With Germany's protective measures, listed organisations now face challenges. They must hold general meetings without the physical presence of their shareholders to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In late March 2020, the German government introduced a law to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Covid-19 Mitigation Act).

The planned changes mainly affect the German Stock Corporation Act and aim to enable the management of listed companies for the duration of 2020 to:

- Host virtual general meetings
- Remove the physical presence of shareholders
- Extend the statutory period when ordinary general meetings must be held within eight months of the full fiscal year 2020.

Delivering the first virtual AGM in Germany in just five weeks

Since the start of COVID-19, industries around the globe have had to adapt to new ways of working.

We have done what it takes to support our clients, whatever their needs or requirements.

Across Germany, Luxembourg and Austria we innovatively led the way to help our clients ensure their shareholders remain safe and connected. In fact, we were the first to conduct a truly virtual AGM in Germany.

How did this start? In early March, it was announced in Germany that all physical AGMs would be postponed until at least the second half 2020.

To prepare for virtual AGMs, a new law needed to pass in Germany. This was completed in a week because of the level of urgency.

We received our first request for a virtual AGM to take place in May. This gave us just five weeks to create a secure and easy-to-use online portal that shareholders could access in place of the traditional AGM.

‘Although the preparation time for our first virtual general meeting - one of the first in Germany - was very short, the Link AGM team in Munich did a great job delivering a tailored software and security solution for a seamless virtual general meeting on May 5, 2020’

Michael Eitenbenz – Project manager AGM comdirect bank AG

a subsidiary of Comdirect Bank AG

Our portal

Our whole business model needed to change, and our team worked around the clock, seven days a week, to meet our first deadline.

With the help of a trusted partner, we successfully created a flexible online portal that adhered to the new law.

It was developed to suit our variety of clients, including cooperatives, associations and multiple insurance associations.

IT security and our data centre were more crucial than ever before.

We completed the data security risk analysis and pen test with the help of renowned IT-security company, SEC Consult, in ten days. We knew then that our portal was secure and safe for our clients' shareholders and proxies.

This was just in time for our first fully-virtual AGM that took place for Comdirect Bank AG, a subsidiary of Commerzbank, in early May.

Shareholders accessed the portal using their individual user login. Here, they found their rights and could be granted proxy rights. They could also ask questions up until two days before the AGM.

Our portal is unique because it is designed specifically to suit the client. We research and adapt the design to fit with the client's branding and messaging.

We believe in doing things the right way for our clients and their shareholders by giving them security, stability and consistency.



This solution is pioneering for our industry in Germany, with over **90%** of the German market behind it

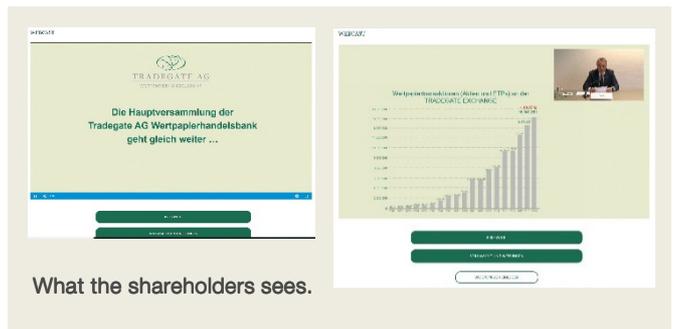
What's next?

We are committed to constantly improving.

We want shareholders to experience more ways of interacting, including speech and images. We also want to allow shareholders to ask questions during the AGM, rather than up to two days beforehand.

We can't wait to enhance shareholder experience of our portal even more.

We've developed up to **15 different portals** a week and have sold our product to **over 100 clients**



Making it work

On the day, the portal has been fully prepared with need-to-know data, such as capital numbers and shares.

We have dedicated members of our team who check the internet connection is working securely before the event. They also catch up with the management board so that everyone is comfortable prior to the event.



All attendees are given a problem hotline they can call. Our team members are always on hand to support with any issues associated with the portal before, during and after the AGM.

...Because we believe the future of AGMs is hybrid.

Fully physical AGMs will be a thing of the past, but the need for human connection won't disappear. An integrated solution will be the standard way forward.

We aren't just looking at this year, next year or the year after that. We're planning well ahead.

We will continue to adapt to whatever our clients need while pushing the industry forward.



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