Zeroing in on ICT in Zurich

Thanks to an attractive meetings infrastructure and one of the most innovative networks in ICT, Zurich continues to lure association events. The Swiss city is known as a global leader in many fields – especially information technology and sustainability – in addition to being one of the top in terms of life quality, which has helped attract the attention of international associations for some time now – and rightfully so.

Words Rémi Dévé, with Zurich Convention Bureau
One of the best examples of innovation in Zurich? The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, one of the world’s leading universities in science and technology. Known for cutting-edge research and innovation, it was established in 1855 as the Swiss Federal Polytechnic School, and, more than a century and a half later, the university counts over 20 Nobel Prize laureates as alumni, including the great physicist Albert Einstein.

IBM, Google, and Disney are just three of the many corporations that chose to locate important research centres in the city, which is also home to 450 spin-offs and startups. As if this figure isn’t impressive enough, over 5,000 companies employ around 50,000 ICT specialists in Canton Zurich alone.

digitalswitzerland
Zurich is Google’s largest research and development centre outside the U.S., employing almost 2,500 staff. The company has rented new offices in the city and, according to Patrick Warnking, who has been at the head of Google Switzerland’s business operations since 2011, Google intends to expand further in the coming years. When asked about Zurich’s position as a centre of knowledge, Warnking responds: ‘Switzerland stands for diversity, innovation, and quality. The great administration and infrastructure here are further success factors. Google’s Swiss centre has maintained its international competitiveness for years.’

A few of the key services he’s referring to: Google Search, Google Maps, Google Assistant, and YouTube. In addition, Google’s ‘made in Switzerland’ services are being developed for the whole world. For these operations to be successful, an in-depth knowledge of languages and cultures is crucial. ‘With some 85 different nationalities, our workforce in Zurich encompasses this diversity.’ Warnking says. ‘In addition, numerous employees come from Zurich’s outstanding technological colleges and universities, which we collaborate very closely with in the field of research. For Google, this is also an important argument in favour of Zurich.’

Google Switzerland sees itself as part of the Swiss society and the Swiss economy. ‘For this reason, we are actively involved in a wide variety of projects at a local level, such as startups. We are also a founder member of the ‘digitalswitzerland’ initiative and part of the framework of the partnership between Google for Entrepreneurs and the Impact Hub Zurich,’ says Warnking. Thanks to these partnerships, Swiss start-ups have global access to the Google for Entrepreneurs programmes and events, such as Silicon Valley boot camps or the investor pitches, ‘Google Demo Days.’

Start-up company Kenzen, which is affiliated with the Impact Hub, is just one of the many success stories. As for top picks for places to visit in the city, Warnking recommends ICT convention delegates add these three to their Google Maps before visiting: the ETH main building, a symbol of centuries-old tradition, innovation, and fascination for the sciences; Zurich Airport (in which other metropolis in Europe can you reach the city centre in just 10 minutes by train?); and the top of Uetliberg, where you can admire panoramic views over the city, lake, the Glarus and Graubünden Alps. ‘It’s just beautiful!’ Warnking exclaims.

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