CREDIT COMPANY ONESTO FORGING AHEAD WITH A DIGITAL PLATFORM TO PROVIDE FUTURE-PROOF SERVICES

The ability to respond quickly in a changing world requires a solid digital strategy. Onesto opted for a digital platform. They used this to streamline their day-to-day services, both customer-facing and internal, and brought in-house functionalities that may be useful in the near digital future.

HOME LOANS THAT OFFER OPPORTUNITIES

Onesto has been the place to go for attractive, guaranteed loans for 125 years. As an approved mortgage lender, they offer everyone an opportunity to acquire or retain their own property. They focus exclusively on first-time buyers who want to finance their first home and potentially some renovations, and then guide them through the entire home project. "Guidance like this demands a wide range of services and close contact with our customers and other stakeholders, such as appraisers. We have drawn up a digital roadmap to raise this communication and information sharing, with the customer and within our own company, to a higher and future-proof level," says David Govaert, board member at Onesto.

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DAVID GOVAERT, BOARD MEMBER AT ONESTO

WE WANTED THE LINK FROM TODAY TO TOMORROW

"We were working with a long list of stand-alone applications to manage all our services. For example, we had a rather primitive CRM system that was developed in-house. Unfortunately, processes often came to an abrupt end, which made further follow-up much more difficult, for example, after signing an agreement. Our systems therefore no longer met our current circumstances, and in particular prevented us from growing. We felt that we were standing still, while we have many players in our market who are strongly committed to innovation," explains David. In 2015, Onesto asked itself some crucial questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? What do we need to get there? What is going on in our market and in other sectors? How are other players tackling their digital transformation? The answers resulted in a long list of wishes and needs, brought together in the digital roadmap.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TIME IN THE DESERT

"The roadmap was moving us towards creating a digital platform. But what requirements did this platform need to meet? We deliberately worked with our staff to design this requirement catalog, as they are the everyday users of the platform. Of course, we looked at it from the customer perspective as well; we mapped out a customer journey for each typical target group. In the end, we had a table full of pieces of the puzzle, and we went looking for a partner to help solve that puzzle using a tender," says David.

Realdolmen proposed the Liferay DXP platform as a solution, in collaboration with its partner Internet Architects. "We were immediately impressed by their knowledge and expertise. We also saw many benefits to the partnership, with Realdolmen focusing on the technical aspects and Internet Architects on the UX section. We organized a kick-off meeting involving all the parties, including our entire team. Their participation was very important to us as involvement and acceptance go hand in hand. The idea was to work in short sprints using the agile method. We quickly discovered that the pace of sprints was too fast. On our side, this giant project was resting on the shoulders of a small number of people. We were forced to apply the brakes and added an initial learning phase, which we later jokingly referred to as the time in the desert. To construct the platform more efficiently, the partners had to get to know each other better and align speeds. All parties entered into a constructive discussion, and the belief in this project remained intact at all times," says David.

The pause button was pressed. Onesto sat down to work out its expectations and requirements in more detail, so that everything was prepared for the developers in bite-size chunks. Realdolmen reduced the size of its team a little to ensure a better match with the customer's side. The credit sector and all its rules were also further explored in order to become more familiar with the inherent complexity, and so be able to build a solution tailor-made for Onesto.

THE POWER OF A PLATFORM

The project then really got going. Based on user stories, bite-sized packages of functionalities were systematically developed and a regular helicopter view from the steering committee helped to retain an overview of this complex set of components. "The CMS, or the central management system, is at the heart of the application. Onesto commissioned it in early 2020, and it drives the entire credit review process. A year or so earlier, our 'shop window' went live, our website where prospects can get started straight away. What is the maximum I can borrow? How much will I pay off each month? Just a few clicks give you the answers to these key questions, while the loan offer system bridges the gap between the internal and external sections. Our employees convert the initial calculations from a simulation into a real and personalized loan offer.

MyOnesto is the final piece of the puzzle. In the personal customer area, we bring together the communications, exchange documents and the customer can track the process of their home project step by step. Although we firmly chose to go in the direction of self-service within the digital platform, we are still strongly attached to a personalized approach. Customers initially explore what is possible, then we collaborate using all the digital tools we have at our disposal," David explains.

"Of course, the platform also quietly delivers many benefits to our employees. Collaboration is key. Isolated case tracking has been dumped in favor of an approach where colleagues collaborate on projects. We can also exchange data easily and efficiently with external parties, such as appraisers. There is a lot more integration. Whereas in the past we had to log in to four different silos to track down customer data, one search will now give us everything. Our customers immediately noticed this, because we are now able to help them much more rapidly. We also made a giant leap forward in terms of security and GDPR. Migration to the cloud relieved us at a stroke of all the security stress that having our own servers entailed," says David.

BUILDING MORE ON THE FOUNDATIONS

"The most important step is complete, and the digital platform is in place. It's a flexible and scalable foundation into which we can easily plug in tools. I like to think of it as a box of building blocks, with which we can now build more. Our list of improvements and wishes is growing every day, inspired by intensive use of the platform. Not all of our stand-alone applications have as yet been transferred to the new platform. As an example of how important this project is to our organization, we recently recruited someone whose job is to seek out and identify which future developments would provide customers and/or Onesto with the most added value. Naturally, Realdolmen continues to contribute in a constructive manner. They are fully on board with our story and help us to look to the future," says David.

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Realdolmen: www.realdolmen.com
Internet Architects: www.internetarchitects.be