

CASE STUDY

## Create IT partner of innovation of Sonae e-commerce platforms

Continente Online is in Portugal's Top 10 preferred online stores and is one of the only four national platforms in the latest SIBS Market Report ranking. According to this study, 84% of the Portuguese have shopped online and 40% do it at least once a month. Sonae is no stranger to this reality and, for this reason, has been investing in an intuitive e-commerce portal, with quick search and fully optimized processes in terms of catalog, logistics, distribution, billing, and management. Create IT has been working with Sonae's team to innovate and grow the portal, Continente Online.



**200 thousand** articles  
with **50 thousand** products in the portal  
for sale at anymoment

**2000**  
daily  
purchases  
online

**4.5**  
million  
annual  
visits

**600.000**  
registered  
customers

**6**  
Create IT  
professionals

### CHALLENGE



From a very early stage, Sonae embarked on a journey in the online world and pioneered in e-commerce in Portugal. With the evolution of technology and consumer demands, Sonae has been investing in the monitoring of trends and changes in the online market, positioning itself as a reference in the area. Create IT joined the project six years ago, as part of a comprehensive team (with internal elements - Sonae, and external elements - technology partners), participating in the mission to create a new, modern and flexible version of Continente Online, allowing a greater number of stores within the portal and addressing the market and business needs.

**"At first, our involvement was focused on the frontend. The trust and successful relationship led us to strengthen the team on other fronts where we are differentiators, namely in the area of integration",** says Sara Oliveira, Project Manager. Create IT has also been co-responsible for the inte-

gration of Sonae's internal ERP data with the portal, including products, campaigns, and prices, as well as for the automation and continuous improvement of existing processes.

Sonae also had the challenge of responding efficiently to different delivery requirements, on a single order which has diverse possibilities of products (for example, products that may have to be delivered separately) and managing the entire related operational process, from notifications, warehouse/store picking, distribution, billing, and support. All this involves the integration of many different systems and external entities, such as payment methods, promotions of the Continente card, carriers, etc, for which Create IT has been collaborating. In addition, challenges related to legal requirements arose, such as the new European standards that obligated the indication of the food products' nutritional information.



## SOLUTION



Selecting Create IT to integrate a vast team that is seen as unique (Continente Online team) has a simple explanation: **"We already had a relationship of trust with Sonae and always demonstrated competence in all the requests. As challenges and complexities arose in the project, we proved to be a responsive partner and fully involved in the success of the deliverables"**, highlights Sara Oliveira.

The role of Create IT in the project started with the UX (User Experience), then the integration of all Sonae data, and finally it extended to the frontend and the e-commerce platform that supports the checkout of purchases and promotions.

Create IT was responsible for the portal's search, functionality that plays a critical role in the platform since it is the main engine to reach the available supply. **"We are a part of the puzzle and work in true partnership with everyone that is involved in the development and evolution of the project. Currently, we have a multidisciplinary team with various skills and competencies, from integration to front-end, backend, and search"**, adds Sara. The Create IT team was also involved in the development of the checkout component of Continente's mobile application.

All this joint teamwork resulted in one of the most advanced e-commerce platforms on the market. In fact, Continente Online has all the functionalities that allow an excellent user experience and high customer satisfaction in accomplishing their purchases, which support a wide range of payment options, promotions, and delivery methods.

At a technical level, the portal is powered by SharePoint technology and Amazon CloudSearch and is based on Microsoft's Commerce Server platform.

**"Much of the content presented to the customer is obtained through searches, such as product details, related products, and category pages"**, reveals Nuno Carvalho, Senior Consultant at Create IT. **"We focused on optimizing performance and on how search returns content, presenting articles according to certain business criteria and suggesting terms as the user types, for example."**

As in other projects, Create IT works using the Scrum methodology. In this case, together with the Sonae's team, and that, given its experience, has played an important role in its evangelization. Among other things, according to this methodology, there is a Product Owner (PO) that represents the business and defines the functional requirements to be passed down to the development team. **"The development team reviews the functional requirements presented by the PO and discusses the best way to implement them. The team delivers them in an iterative and incremental way, receiving direct feedback from all the parties involved"**, refers Sara Oliveira.

Continente Online's platform has evolved to integrate new businesses, always on a continuous improvement basis. **"The redesign of the portal involved more than the frontend. The entire back office has been optimized and the processes reformulated"**, explains Pedro Vala, Senior Consultant at Create IT. The Continente's megastore has grown and now it has several stores, such as Well's, School Books, Continente Business and Continente's own store. **"We have also begun to**



make innovative evolutions at the operation level, which have no visibility to the final customer but bring enormous gains of internal efficiency. This is the case, for example, for the Dark Store, a retail concept that includes a physical warehouse like Continente's store, but without customers", explains Pedro Vala. "Those who go get the goods have the optimized route to respond to online orders faster, without bothering the customers", he adds.

#### SPECIFICS OF THE SOLUTION:

- Technologies used: SharePoint Server 2010, CSS / HTML, WCF, ASP.NET WebAPI, SQL Server, Microsoft Commerce Server, FAST Search SharePoint 2010, Amazon CloudSearch, BizTalk 2010.
- E-commerce platform with frontend development, advanced search, integration with catalog, pricing, stock management, Oracle Retek promotions for Microsoft Commerce Server and custom backoffice.
- Continuous, incremental development with the Scrum methodology.
- The connection to the business is made by the Product Owners, with the team's support when necessary. The dialogue takes into account business needs, customer feedback and technological/market trends.

## RESULTS



The online business is a growing trend and it's where a great evolution in corporate results are expected. The consumer dictates the future and wants more and more to optimize his time, buying when and where it is more convenient. Continen-

te Online is in the Portuguese Top 10 online favorite stores. It won in the category of online shopping of the "Brands of Trust" awards, the results are extremely positive. The online store bets on a service that is effectively a value proposition for all the customers who seek comfort and ease in the tasks of the day-to-day. Currently, more than 2000 daily purchases are made in the portal, there are more than 600,000 registered customers, and accesses exceed 4.5 million annual visits.

In addition, the processes have been greatly optimized, which is critical for Continente's profitability, customer satisfaction, and consequent repurchase. Search, list building, payment, and delivery are much faster, accurate, and rigorous today. On the other hand, the insertion of products, the integration of new businesses, and the connection with Continente's core applications have become very agile, easy, and transparent.

**"The feedback has been extremely positive, and everyone involved in the project works as a single team, there is no Continente team, X partner team, Y partner team, and that makes all the difference",** says Sara Oliveira. **"At the moment, we work in an oiled machine and Sonae places great value on people who are proactive and who constantly suggest and incorporate new improvements. That's precisely how we work, so we're aligned!"**

The future strategy is to continuously participate in the evolution of the platform, in both e-commerce trends and technology. **"We want to be part of the team that will implement everything that is innovative in Continente Online, and be involved in everything that enhances its business and customer satisfaction",** concludes Sara Oliveira.

## lcreate|it

Founded in 2001, with one guiding principle - to provide leading-edge IT services and solutions to its customers. The company focuses on multi-platform solutions covering collaboration, web and systems integration services. With a team of talented professionals, eager to develop best-of-breed solutions to its customers, Create IT has been a pioneer in introducing premium solutions to its projects, based on a careful choice of technological partners.  
[www.create.pt](http://www.create.pt)



Continente Online is a platform that allows Sonae to enhance its retail business, providing a mall-like experience, where the customer can shop in multiple stores with a unique shopping experience, in the browser or the App.  
[www.continente.pt](http://www.continente.pt)