

Best Travel Store attracts new customers and reduces client costs up to 30% by choosing AltexSoft Team.

Challenge

Discount airfare search is an ever popular theme for web users and despite the fact that the market already has several major brands the challenge remains formidable, so there is always room for specialized search engines.

The client Best Travel Store (www.bt-store.com) is a niche online player in the discount airfares and hotels categories. The company was founded in California 2002, with its customer service center and data center located in Los Angeles. They operate a data processing and technology branch in Slovenia, Europe. The www.bt-store.com airfare engine outperforms competitive solutions offered by major reservation systems in its ability to better search seat availability for locally stored fares based on predefined optimized airline routes. The result is finding lower fares on less popular and often more complex routes.

The company's core mission is multiple airfare and hotel broker integration through its Microsoft .Net-based open travel architecture, acting as a hybrid meta-search engine and a full travel reservation system at the same time. The benefits to end users are lower prices through combining multiple inventory providers and intelligent search, and access to exceptional traditional travel agency customer service by relying on the company's extensive reservation and fulfillment system architecture.

Best Travel Store began facing increasing challenges in the technology architecture complexity and simultaneous downward pressure on commissions and upward climb of online advertising costs in 2010. The situation forced the company to rethink how it conducts its core operations, including improving the software development cycle and cutting cost at the same time.

"Unfortunately, we could no longer afford the previous team and had to cut radically the work in Slovenia," – remembers Marko Cadez, CEO at Best Travel Store. "It must be emphasized, that the future team would have faced a tremendous challenge in the necessity to work with our open platform for searching and pricing and the reservation system, which consists of 68 different projects in a number of solutions."

Finding a technology partner with the technical and business expertise who could replace years of investment into research, development and engineer education was a serious challenge, the outcome of which would determine the very survival of the company.

The Solution

Best Travel Store was determined to find the brightest, best and the most economical team on the market, and they turned to the Internet to seek out the talent. *"We published a detailed project requirements job description and requested that each participant submit their very best source code sample to demonstrate their black belt knowledge of .net coding and architecture. No less would suffice,"* says Mr. Cadez.

“We considered other companies in the East, including Russia and India, but none demonstrated the uniquely advanced knowledge of .net and a hardworking, scientific and disciplined approach to problem solving. As a very hands-on customer, who is deeply involved in day-to-day software development operations, we do not tolerate short sighted architecture design, small and inefficient projects with few measurable results or having inexperienced staff work on demanding tasks. AltexSoft has the right resources available for such a challenge,”- says Marko Cadez, CEO at Best Travel Store. They are very driven by their passion to succeed.

Best Travel Store decided to take a conservative approach in their development resource migration, by employing a limited amount of staff: two software engineers, one QA engineer and a software architect, who is acting as the team lead, directly responsible for the pace and quality of the team’s work.

The AltexSoft team began their work by refactoring core system architecture, introducing advanced concepts such as inversion of control, thus **achieving greatly simplified future development and ease of application configuration**. The end result is **lower cost of development, maintenance and ownership**. Once the team consolidated the system platform they focused on improving the online user experience by upgrading the front-end application, resulting in an **improved visit-to-buy conversion rate and consequentially higher company profit**.

The User Interface of the Best Travel Store web application.

The screenshot displays the Best Travel Store website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo and links for Home, About Us, and Add Bookmark. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with categories like Flights, Deals, Hotels, Cars, Cruises, and Hostels, along with user account options like Sign In, My Trips, My Account, and Customer Service. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Flight Search Form:** Includes options for Round Trip, One-way, and Multi-City. It has fields for 'From' and 'To' (any city in the world), departure and return dates (Jun 2011), times (Anytime), and flexible days (No). It also allows for selecting the number of passengers (Adults, Children, Infants) and cabin class (Economy).
- Hot Deals:** A featured banner for 'LAGOS non-stop flights' by Arik, offering a \$200 savings. It includes a table of departure cities: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Charleston, Dallas-Fort, Detroit, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New York, Phoenix, Portland, Denver, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington.
- Travel Guides:** A section with a map highlighting Lima.
- Promotional Banners:**
 - A coupon for a mail-in rebate of up to \$80, with a table of cash back amounts: 3 travelers - \$40, 4 travelers - \$50, 5 travelers - \$60, 6 travelers - \$80.
 - A 'WHY BOOK WITH US?' section highlighting 'BIG SAVINGS' and 'ONLINE SEAT ASSIGNMENT'.
 - A 'Get Preferred Seats for FREE' offer.

The team is currently focused on designing and building a state-of-the-art online hotel reservation engine featuring 150K hotels from multiple high volume travel brokers. Before beginning work they established a **continuous integration** process with the main focus of designing, developing and testing small functional pieces of software. This approach to development resulted in significantly reduced cost and increased speed of final product delivery by ensuring that small, independent and thus manageable software pieces are checked on a typically daily basis, avoiding design flaws and major bugs that usually accompany a less rigorous software development approach.

Benefits

- **Increased visit-to-buy conversion rate** through improved graphical user interface.
- **Reduced cost of future development, maintenance and ownership** through core system refactoring using advanced architecture design.
- **Reduced software development cost by 30%** by outsourcing to AltexSoft.

Mr. Cadez summarized the current effort by saying that *“the solution we are working on is neither fast nor simple. We deal with searching, processing and ticketing over 75 million airfares on over 300 airlines, searching about 150K hotels worldwide from multiple wholesale suppliers, generating city and airport guide content for hundreds of worldwide locations, all in multiple languages. Overall **we achieved 30% savings**, at a steep initial cost, which consisted of need to train the new talent in the complexity of our business logic and overall system architecture. This is an ongoing process without a definitive end in sight. We hope to work with AltexSoft for many years to come.”*

AltexSoft – Turning Your Business Challenge into Your Business Achievement

AltexSoft offers a full cycle of solutions development for specialized search and data mining in the area of e-commerce, travel, financial, oil and gas sector. We also provide expertise in the field of marketing services and retail sales. AltexSoft specialists provide professional consulting on project management, architecture, information systems and quality management of software products.

Please visit <http://www.altexsoft.com/portfolio> for other Client Success Stories.

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