

DataArt: OKTOGO Case Study

About the Client

OKTOGO (www.oktogo.ru) is an online travel agency designed specifically to serve the outbound and domestic Russian travel market. The company brings the best practices of the western online travel industry and caters to such needs of Russian travelers as offline payments and visa support.

OKTOGO features over 102,000 hotels worldwide, providing a unique selection of chain and independent hotels, as well as hotels in major cities and small regional destinations, enabling travelers to make the best choice to fit their specific requirements. OKTOGO has built the largest offering of Russian/CIS hotels with over 2000 unique hotels.

Business Challenge

OKTOGO is a startup which aims to win a large market share of online hotel bookings in Russia. To acquire customers and to overtake competitors (e.g. booking.com) OKTOGO needed to build a sophisticated online system which would deliver the best selection of hotels worldwide at lowest prices with an unmatched online shopping experience. The challenge was complicated by an aggressive timeline imposed by the client.

Client's Key Requirements:

1. Fast time to market, need to launch working version on seed capital
2. User friendly, highly usable rich user experience
3. Highly scalable yet reliable technical solution
4. Integration with multiple external systems (inventory suppliers, payment providers)
5. Move development and technical support to in-house at project completion(grow internal knowledge)

How the Challenge Was Solved

To address each of the business challenges, DataArt created a comprehensive strategy which took into consideration all aspects of the project, including existing market conditions, possible technology approaches and engagement models.

1. Fast time to market, need to launch working version on seed capital
 - a. DataArt assigned a strong compact team of seasoned senior developers with deep knowledge on the industry
 - b. Engineers re-used existing components, modules & frameworks developed by DataArt
 - c. DataArt used an agile approach, focusing on must-have functionality, and strictly controlling change requests
 - d. Swift deployment: short development cycles

2. User friendly, highly usable rich user experience
 - a. DataArt conducted preliminary analysis of the shopping flow and competitor websites
 - b. DataArt employed its own design studio for design UI
3. Moved development and support in-house
 - a. DataArt created detailed technical specifications and delivered well-documented source code
 - b. Used co-location of OKTOGO & DataArt teams to facilitate knowledge transfer
4. Highly scalable yet reliable technical solution
 - a. DataArt designed scalable and redundant architecture to support growing customer base and ensure high availability of the service
 - b. Extensively used caching to reduce the system response time
5. Integration with multiple external systems
 - a. Implemented generic gateway to communicate with multiple providers
 - b. Designed the system to automatically match inventory from different providers and deduce the best price

The system was implemented using Microsoft .NET technologies: ASP.NET, AJAX, JavaScript, jQuery, WCF, Remoting and MSSQL 2008 as a database server.

Business Benefits

- OKTOGO entered the market early, established the brand and captured close to 50% of the market during the first year
- Less capital expenditure before profitability
- Upon completion of the project and to reduce ongoing technology spending, OKTOGO moved development in-house as planned
- Successfully raised venture capital
- Ranked as one of the most prominent online travel agency on Russian market

About DataArt

DataArt is a custom software development firm that builds advanced solutions for the financial services, healthcare, hospitality and other industries. Combining domain knowledge with offshore cost advantages and resource flexibility, DataArt develops industry-defining applications, helping clients optimize time-to-market and minimize software development risks in mission-critical systems.

With an unrivaled talent pool of highly skilled software engineers in New York, London, Russia and Ukraine, DataArt provides the technical skill, accountability and industry knowledge needed to deliver custom applications on time and on budget.

DataArt clients include Standard & Poor's, Harmonic Fund Services, artnet, Panasonic, Cancer Research, Charles River Laboratories, Betfair, Misys, leading asset management firms and three of the top ten investment banks.

<http://www.dataart.com/>