

Hospitality Digital selects CGI to help restaurants win more customers through innovative digital services

Through a micro-services architecture and cloud-native environment, CGI drives scalability and agility in the delivery of online hospitality services

Let's say you own a small restaurant and are passionate about food, as well as creating a unique dining experience for your customers. There's just one major challenge. You have no customers.

In the highly competitive hotel, restaurant and catering (HoReCa) industry, drawing customers, especially as a small restaurant, is a herculean task and the reason why so many restaurants fail. Today, the challenge is even greater as digitalization transforms how customers choose providers and products, even within the HoReCa industry. In times past, the customer experience began inside the restaurant. With digitalization, it begins online, with customers searching for restaurants, browsing menus and making reservations.

The lack of an internet presence for a restaurant today can mean the difference between success and obscurity. However, many of the available online platforms and services are too expensive for small and medium-size restaurants. The vast majority do not even have a website, let alone the means to agilely build and integrate additional digital services.

Hospitality Digital developed a business model to help restaurants take full advantage of digitalization, win more customers and increase their loyalty.



Incubating a **digital future**

METRO, a global wholesale and food retail specialist, founded Hospitality Digital in 2015 as a business unit focused on the digitalization of the hospitality industry and helping independent restaurants, hotels and caterers implement digital solutions. As an agile digital solutions incubator, Hospitality Digital identifies and validates new digital solutions and innovative approaches that are developed either in-house or by start-ups. Through Hospitality Digital, METRO offers sustainable digital solutions that deliver superior economic value for independent entrepreneurs in hospitality.

One such solution developed by Hospitality Digital is a free internet platform for restaurants. While the solution gained some traction in the market quickly, it soon became apparent that growing demand required a more scalable approach. Hospitality Digital originally built the initial prototype with the help of a small local technology company. However, it now a different approach at the infrastructure, technology and software architecture levels to meet its goal of digitally empowering 500,000 restaurants in Europe by 2020.

CGI offered what Hospitality Digital was looking for in an implementation expert, including a global presence, end-to-end capabilities, emerging technologies expertise and a proven track record in digital transformation. With the right qualifications and a trusted relationship in place, CGI fit the bill for becoming a digital partner of Hospitality Digital and the two companies began their collaboration.



Using the **right approach to deliver the right solution**

In June 2017, the CGI team conducted an architecture and performance analysis of the existing internet platform to identify the required architectural and technological improvements.

From the analysis, the team determined its development approach would need to be unique—one that used a combination of modern techniques and a modern architecture to deliver an innovative platform optimized for the cloud.

As a first step, the team recommended a complete software redesign using a micro-services architecture to enable continuous delivery and deployment in a DevOps model, as well as the use of a different technology stack with broader market adoption.

To deliver the new solution, CGI formed a highly structured delivery unit. The conceptual work, planning and architecture were conducted onsite by CGI experts in Dusseldorf, while CGI experts in Malaga, Spain performed part of the software development. CGI's best-fit delivery model gave Hospitality Digital the benefit of competitive services coupled with a strong local presence. The CGI team worked at the client's location each day, proactively responding to its needs.

CGI redesigned and rebuilt the internet platform as a highly customizable, do-it-yourself tool that is easy to update, maintain and use. Most importantly, the tool is scalable to meet and exceed Hospitality Digital's ambitious customer acquisition targets.



Adding **new services quickly** using a modern methodology

Once the success of the revamped internet platform became evident, Hospitality Digital asked CGI to design and build an online reservation tool to integrate into the platform. In less than six weeks, the CGI team delivered a minimum viable product (MVP) for the reservation tool to secure buy-in from internal stakeholders.

The team then went a step further and modularized the reservation tool, so that restaurant owners who already have a website could integrate it as a standalone service. Our MVP approach allowed us to receive rapid feedback about the tool's acceptance in the market.

Within weeks after the initial launch, thousands of restaurants set up their internet presence using Hospitality Digital's internet platform and further international rollout is ongoing. Today, restaurant owners in more than 14 countries can integrate the reservation tool as a website widget that offers full international language support.

The next step of the transformation was to enable Hospitality Digital to deliver these new services quickly. To drive agility, the CGI team migrated Hospitality Digital's on-premise internet platform into a cloud-native environment on the Google Cloud Platform with Kubernetes orchestration. In just two months, the team designed from scratch and put into place the underlying infrastructure, allowing at the time more than 70,000 restaurant websites across 14 countries to be migrated from the old infrastructure to the new cloud platform, with that number rising every month.



Delivering tangible value through **an improved customer experience**

By the fall of 2018, more than 100,000 restaurants were using the internet platform. In addition to more customers and sales, these restaurants also benefit from decreased administrative tasks and operational costs. And, all of these advantages have led to an improved customer experience.

In addition, the use of a standards-based micro-services approach has enabled technology reuse in future business models. Adding new services and solutions also has become a quick and agile operation.

Hospitality Digital exceeded its growth targets for 2018 and, at this pace, the company is primed to develop new revenue streams and provide innovative digital services to an even larger customer base for METRO and non-METRO customers.

Looking to the future, CGI is happy to continue supporting Hospitality Digital in conceiving, rapidly designing and delivering new digital solutions that help drive digitization and growth forward in the hospitality industry.

“ Using digital tools helps you to use your time more effectively and be in contact with customers and staff. It saves me a lot of daily time that I can use much better on other parts of the business. ”

Ludwig Horn, A Horn, Café and Restaurant
(user of the website builder and online reservation tools)





CGI's end-to-end digital capabilities

CGI is helping clients around the world bring ideas to life and achieve scale. We work together with diverse teams—end users, business owners, industry experts, designers, and technology experts—to create services that are desirable for users, viable for the business, and technologically scalable.

CGI also helps clients transform their application development capabilities, working with them to create an environment (platform, tools, methods, culture) that delivers new products and services at the pace demanded by the market, clients and stakeholders. We believe in starting small, demonstrating value and scaling quickly. With deep industry expertise and diverse teams, we help clients achieve better economics through scaled platforms.



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