



Overview

Country or Region: Germany

Industry: Retail

Customer Profile

OTTO is a multichannel retailer with a significant reputation built by more than 50 years of experience, and is one of the leading and most innovative retailing companies worldwide.

Business Situation

To solidify its position as an innovative retail leader, OTTO wanted to build a virtual store that overcame many traditional barriers in e-commerce.

Solution

By using the Microsoft® .NET Framework 3.0 and Windows Vista™ technologies, the OTTO Store application offers novel user controls, exciting visuals, and convenient authentication functions.

Benefits

- Breakthrough shopping experience
- Convenient security
- Extended reach and flexibility
- Efficient development

German Retailer Creates New Fashion Shopping Experience

“Our new OTTO Store application is an entirely new shopping experience that takes advantage of Windows Vista technologies for unmatched style, convenience, and security.”

Dr. Thomas Schnieders, Vice President for New Media, OTTO

German retailing giant OTTO is always looking for ways to offer innovative shopping experiences. A pioneer in multichannel retailing, OTTO is known for its specialized mail-order catalogs that offer customers high-quality fashion, furnishings, and technology at good value. In order to extend its lead in retailing innovation, OTTO wanted to build a virtual store for fashion apparel—a shopping experience that would break through perceived barriers in online shopping. Working with Microsoft®, Microsoft Gold Certified Partner ATE Software, and design specialists from SinnerSchrader, Otto built the groundbreaking OTTO Store application that takes full advantage of the Microsoft .NET Framework 3.0 programming model and Windows Vista™ operating system capabilities. The solution provides customers with stunning visuals and secure e-commerce functions.

“Regular Web technology constrains media to its own separate window or a frame in a Web page, but Windows Presentation Foundation integrates media deeply into the experience.”

Mr. Roland von Gehlen, Vice President for Software Development, OTTO

Situation

Since its first mail-order catalog in 1950, OTTO has always sought retail innovation by introducing new distribution methods, customer channels, and shopping experiences. OTTO was first in its industry to use telephone ordering, to produce a CD-ROM version of its catalog in the 1990s, and to build out one of the largest collections of online merchandise (available at www.otto.de). Today, OTTO is the world's number one mail-order company and the number two online retailer.

In keeping with its role as an industry trailblazer, OTTO wanted to move beyond typical e-commerce experiences. It believed that even the best e-commerce sites could perform better when it came to converting shoppers to buyers, especially in retail apparel. Fashion-minded customers want to be able to examine articles closely, explore product details, and see how different pieces of clothing look together. And they want to browse intuitively, without having to adhere to traditional Web site navigation schemes.

“OTTO saw that by creating a high-fidelity and easy-to-use shopping experience, we could ease online shopping pain points and increase sales. There is still tremendous potential to be realized in retail technology—we want to be first to reap those gains,” says Dr. Thomas Schnieders, Vice President for New Media, OTTO.

OTTO decided to build a virtual store for fashion apparel that would transcend traditional e-commerce limitations and foster closer relationships with customers. Aimed at women fashion enthusiasts, the virtual store needed to provide high-fidelity visuals, an intuitive interface, useful product information, and easy-to-use and secure e-commerce functions. OTTO also wanted to introduce entirely new e-commerce features, such as

community tools and drag-and-drop user controls.

Solution

After attending industry conferences and seeing impressive demonstrations of Microsoft® technology, especially the Windows Vista™ operating system, OTTO executives were inspired to build their own application that took advantage of the visualization, integration, communication, and security enhancements afforded by Windows Vista.

“With Windows Vista technologies, we could do things like integrate video of fashion models wearing a featured article. Regular Web technology constrains media to its own separate window or a frame in a Web page, but Windows® Presentation Foundation integrates media deeply into the experience,” says Roland von Gehlen, Vice President for Software Development, OTTO.

Imagining a New Shopping Experience

Working with technical experts from Microsoft, Microsoft Gold Certified Partner ATE Software, and top-flight design firm SinnerSchrader, OTTO built the OTTO Store by using the Microsoft .NET Framework 3.0, the new managed code programming model for the Windows operating system. OTTO Store is a smart client that takes advantage of local hardware and software resources for a rich and responsive user experience, but it also integrates deeply with Web resources. The smart client approach also means OTTO Store is available when shoppers are not connected to the Internet.

Customers can download the OTTO Store application onto their computers and browse a range of branded apparel and accessories. OTTO Store offers functions that are not available or that are difficult to implement on traditional e-commerce Web sites, including the ability to see sets of clothing together,

Figure 1. OTTO Store uses novel user-control elements, such as the three-dimensional carousel pictured in the screen capture.



dynamically zoom in on image details, or easily access high-fidelity fashion videos.

OTTO Store also makes use of Gadgets for Windows Sidebar, which provides convenient access to key OTTO Store functions and information without having to open the full application. Windows Vista Gadgets are customizable mini-applications that offer easy access to frequently used programs.

Building OTTO Store

OTTO and its partners built OTTO Store in just five months with a small team of developers. The project team used Microsoft Visual Studio® 2005 and the .NET Framework 3.0 components: Windows Presentation Foundation, Windows Communication Foundation, and Windows CardSpace™.

Windows Presentation Foundation

Windows Presentation Foundation provides all the ingredients for creating the most compelling, immersive experiences: seamless integration of video, user interface controls,

high-quality text, and 2-D- and 3-D graphics. This incredibly rich platform enabled ATE Software and SinnerSchrader to easily integrate novel visual and control elements into the user interface. For example, shoppers can rotate a 3-D carousel that allows them to quickly navigate through categories of products (see Figure 1). In addition, all the visual elements are rendered by a vector-based composition engine for maximum processing speed.

The development and design team took advantage of Windows Presentation Foundation's declarative Extensible Application Markup Language (XAML) to quickly implement most of the code for the user interface. XAML facilitated collaboration between OTTO Store developers and designers, allowing them to work from the same project files using specialized tools for their respective roles. Developers used Visual Studio 2005 and designers used Microsoft Expression® Interactive Designer.

“Windows Vista capabilities will be used to deliver television, digital photography, music, and video—OTTO wants to extend the [Windows] Vista experience to shopping, as well.”

Mr. Roland von Gehlen, Vice President of Software Development, OTTO

Windows Communication Foundation

To connect with OTTO platform and legacy applications, OTTO Store uses Windows Communication Foundation, which includes a programming model built from the ground up for the development of service-oriented applications.

Windows CardSpace

OTTO Store developers used Windows CardSpace to build the application's authentication functions. Windows CardSpace provides users with an easier and safer shopping experience, saving them the hassle of typing in user names and passwords. OTTO is considering Windows CardSpace for use across its e-commerce operations, including future iterations of its leading retail Web site.

Benefits

Windows Vista technologies allowed OTTO to pioneer a new shopping experience. The OTTO Store application will bolster Otto Group's efforts among high-end fashion customers by eliminating hindrances associated with traditional Web shopping. Windows Vista also makes possible new ideas in retail, things like a true virtual store and community tools.

“We agree with Microsoft's Smarter Retailing Initiative, which recognizes an opportunity to transform the relationship between customer and retailer through technology, especially at points of interaction. Our new OTTO Store application is an entirely new shopping experience that takes advantage of Windows Vista technologies for unmatched style, convenience, and security,” says Dr. Schnieders.

Breakthrough Shopping Experience

OTTO Store is online shopping without traditional boundaries. OTTO Store lets shoppers easily drag and drop items into a shopping cart, or zoom in to examine the

details of a garment. Instead of browsing through static, thumbnail images of products, OTTO Store shoppers can quickly rotate through an animated 3-D carousel to browse the clothing catalog.

OTTO Store also puts video to good use, inserting video showing clothes on live models instead of the clothing article by itself. These videos are integrated into the interface and do not open in a separate frame. These types of integrated, fun features differentiate OTTO Store from traditional e-commerce experiences.

“With OTTO Store, we wanted to make online shopping fun and entertaining. Our goal is to stir emotions and to motivate customers, not just address their basic needs,” says Dr. Schnieders. “In the end, an enhanced user experience will drive increased revenue per customer and attract new customers.”

Convenient Security

Because OTTO is a leading retail brand in Germany, it enjoys enhanced credibility in its e-commerce endeavors. Windows CardSpace allows OTTO to capitalize on its position as a trusted online retailer by introducing a new, easier way for customers to authenticate themselves and manage their online identities. Instead of having to sign in and remember a password, OTTO Store customers use Windows CardSpace to present preconfigured online identity cards.

“Windows CardSpace is an incredibly easy way to manage online identities and it helps to differentiate the OTTO Store experience. CardSpace will help protect customers and validate their confidence in our brand,” says Dr. Schnieders.

Extended Reach and Flexibility

OTTO Store is part of OTTO's efforts to extend its e-commerce reach. Today, Web content and services are moving outside of the Web

browser and onto the Windows desktop and mobile devices. Because OTTO Store is a smart client that operates on computers, OTTO believes it will reach more customers and tap more revenue opportunities.

“Windows Vista allows us to add so much more to the shopping experience than is possible over the Web. Windows Vista capabilities will be used to deliver television, digital photography, music, and video—OTTO wants to extend the [Windows] Vista experience to shopping as well,” says Mr. von Gehlen.

To establish closer relationships with shoppers and communicate new product and sales announcements, OTTO used the Windows Vista Gadgets function. “In the past, online retailers would try to pull customers to their Web site, but with Windows Vista Gadgets, we can communicate the latest information directly on their desktops,” says Mr. von Gehlen.

Efficient Development

Tools and features of both the .NET Framework 3.0 and Windows Vista raise the level of abstraction for designers and programmers, so they do not have to deal with low-level details and can get products to market faster. The team building OTTO Store experienced development efficiencies by using the following integrated technologies:

- Windows Communication Foundation Web services capabilities, which allowed the development team to easily make use of third-party Web resources, such as detailed product content.
- Expression Interactive Designer and Visual Studio 2005 designer for Windows Presentation Foundation, which both use XAML, enabled developers and designers to use an XML-based model to declaratively specify the desired user interface behavior. Traditionally, developers would have to re-create

functional versions of design mock-ups, but with XAML, developers and designers use the same project files.

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about OTTO products and services, call (49) (40) 6461401 or visit the Web site at: www.otto.com

For more information about ATE Software products and services, call (49) (69) 94413988 or visit the Web site at: www.ate-software.net

For more information about Sinner Schrader products and services, call (49) (40) 3988550 or visit the Web site at: www.sinnerschrader.de

Windows Vista

Windows Vista can help your organization use information technology to gain a competitive advantage in today's new world of work. Your people will be able to find and use information more effectively. You will be able to support your mobile work force with better access to shared data and collaboration tools. And your IT staff will have better tools and technologies to enhance corporate IT security, data protection, and more efficient deployment and management.

For more information about Windows Vista, go to: www.microsoft.com/windowsvista



SinnerSchraderStudios
Kreativagentur für digitale Markenführung

Software and Services

- Windows Vista
- Microsoft Visual Studio
 - Microsoft Visual Studio 2005
- Microsoft Servers
 - Windows Server 2003
- Microsoft Expression Interactive Designer

Technologies

- Microsoft .NET Framework 3.0
- Windows CardSpace
- Windows Communication Foundation
- Windows Presentation Foundation

Partners

- ATE Software
- Sinner Schrader