

ECATER

ABOUT THE CLIENT

eCater is an Australia-based online portal for ordering food quickly and efficiently, without the hassles of waiting in a line to book your orders or waiting to get through a busy phone system. Users can simply log into eCater using their account details, select the restaurant or catering company, place their food orders and log out just as easily. The portal creates an invoice of the order and also sends in the order details to the catering company via text messages or fax, so as to ensure that the order reaches their patrons on time.

The website allows users to search and select restaurants in a particular locality or directly select a restaurant of their choice to place their orders. Users can easily place their orders as well as pay online by simply logging into the website with their details or even use their Facebook credentials for logging in. It ensures that customers get the power to choose the best from the available list of options, while the website makes sure of updating the customers with detailed tax invoices, feedback forms, etc.

GOALS

eCater was a complex project because it required integrating a huge database of restaurants located in various parts of the country into one single website. The client wanted to have an online marketplace for the food and beverages industry to facilitate the process of ordering, paying and delivering through one common platform along with various added advantages to users. They had many new ideas in mind to develop this platform as a powerful tool to the users, but implementation was difficult. Taking our time, we listened to the client's requirement and documented a goal strategy that is listed as under:

INDUSTRY

Food and Beverage

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- ✔ Develop an online marketplace that will make hundreds of eateries accessible through one common virtual platform.
- ✔ Upload menus from different restaurants for easy access from home, office, etc. so that consumers can have the liberty of comparing dishes of different restaurants as well as their respective prices.
- ✔ Overcoming the complexity of creating separate accounts with different food suppliers to place an order online in their restaurants.
- ✔ Develop a website that could facilitate smart and convenient navigation to virtually access all the leading eateries through smart search option such as suburb, postcode or cafe name.
- ✔ Promote a way to simplify the process of catering in parties, offices, boardrooms etc. And also to make the process more cost effective.
- ✔ Make the online food selection and ordering process prompt and easy through free web and mobile apps.
- ✔ A secure mechanism for storing user data and other details furnished while registering on the website.
- ✔ Promote the habit of online food ordering, so that people can have access to cuisines of different kind and can dine on the finest of food at home itself.

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CHALLENGES

After detailed analysis of the client requirement and business goals, we came up with a solution to develop a high-end eCommerce platform supported with a complete back-end CRM. Keeping in line with this, we started conceptualizing our plan of action. We had set our goals but those were not sans challenges. The process of conceptualization helped us realize the challenges involved in the project. The more rewarding solutions we planned, more complex was becoming the execution of the project. Mentioned below are some major challenges faced by our team in the development of eCater.com.au.



✔ MANAGING DATABASE SIZE:

eCater was planning to include the maximum number of restaurants, caterers and cafes in Australia in its website.

The combined data of the estimated number of food and beverage suppliers to be included in the website was of mammoth proportions. So, the main challenge was to manage and disseminate a large chunk of information in a correct manner.

✔ INTEGRATING NEW TRENDS OF FOOD ORDERING:

Online food ordering is not a new concept as individual restaurants offer online food ordering from their personal websites. So, our challenge was to realize and integrate new eCommerce trends so that customers get an edge with eCater over other ordering options.

✔ ENCOURAGING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE FOOD SUPPLIERS:

The active participation of the food suppliers and restaurants was necessary to fulfill its main purpose of setting up a website to facilitate online food and beverage orders. For this, we had to provide the participating suppliers a good scope of business profit on the website. So, the site had to be developed keeping in mind not just the customers' convenience but of the suppliers as well.

✔ ENSURING THE SECURITY OF CUSTOMERS' INFORMATION:

As an e-commerce website, eCater is expected to encounter credit and debit card details of thousands of customers' on a regular basis. So, ensuring the security of the customer transaction details was also one of our major concerns.

• SOLUTIONS

Overcoming the aforementioned challenges, we delivered a colorful and highly user-friendly website of eCater. The website lists a majority of restaurants, caterers and cafes from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra and other areas, which specialize in providing quality home delivery and catering for corporate meetings or private functions. Also, the look and feel of the website is designed keeping in mind the purpose behind its creation - food. And, since a lot of information was to be handled and processed, we came up with the following solutions to successfully develop and deploy the website:

✔ AN ADVANCED CMS SOLUTION

We started off by developing a strong CMS system for the website. The CMS facilitates the storage of complete data about the food suppliers like outlet contact details, brief profile, serving area, menu and other relevant details. These data are disseminated through a very smooth navigation system that can be effortlessly understood by the user.

✔ ACCOUNT CREATION FOR ORDERING

In order to promote a secure and organized way of ordering and delivering process, we developed a user registration system. This allows both the admin and customers to view and update records of the order being placed.

✔ BUSINESS GENERATION

3. Since eCater is an online food and beverage ordering website, both the suppliers and users stand to benefit from it. The users would get access to a variety of restaurants and cafes, while the suppliers would get increased revenue from the online orderings.

✔ ORDERING STAGES

Making the ordering process easy and fast was our main goal. So, we developed the system of a 3-step ordering routine, where customers just need to find a local restaurant, select items from the menu and place their orders. This 3-step process has been made possible through:

– EFFECTIVE SEARCH OPTION

The website supports efficient search of local restaurants through the use of suburb, postcode or café Name.

– FILTERED RESULTS

The selection of a café is very well channelized as one can select a café based on closest location, pick/diner/home delivery facility and cuisine type. So, a customer can be as specific as they want and still have the best of choices.

– SUGGEST A CAFÉ OPTION

If a customer didn't find the café looking for then he/she can suggest that café and soon the admin of the website can incorporate that café.

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✔ FREE MOBILE APP

To bring the features of the website more closer to the customers, a mobile app has also been developed that can be downloaded for free to run in both Android and iOS platforms.

✔ SECURED DATA TRANSMISSION

Card holder data is protected via a 128-bit Secure Socket Layer (SSL) encryption. The payment gateway interface utilizes XML request and response messages. Messages are transported via HTTP and SSL; an automatic security certificate from SecurePay is used to encrypt requests and decrypt responses. SecurePay's 128-bit SSL certificate is issued by Thawte Server CA.



Technologies Used

✔ ASP.NET FRAMEWORK 4.0

✔ C# LANGUAGE

✔ WCF & WEB SERVICES

✔ SQL SERVER 2008

✔ WINDOW SERVICES

✔ JQUERY & JSON

✔ AMAZON MWS WEB SERVICES

✔ ABE BOOKS AMP SERVICES

● PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

We used the following third party tools for effective management of the project:

JIRA and Green Hopper: We used JIRA as project management tool to help us strictly follow the complete project life cycle. The whole project was divided into different verticals and further into tasks among a team of analysts, team leads, QA and developers. Mentioned below is an example for any task to be accomplished.



✔ New Requirements/Modifications/Issues posted by Business User/Analyst/QA in JIRA.

✔ BRD document prepared for all new tasks, alternatively, any explanation posted by QA in case it's an issue. The ticket/ task is in planning mode while preparing BRD, once document is complete we change the status to Design and then Ready for development.

✔ Team leads assign the project to different team members according to their availability and experience in working on similar tasks.

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- ✔ Team member changes the status to "In progress" when he starts working on a task and hits the development resolved button once he finishes the task.
- ✔ The task goes into QA and as per QA outcome, QA hits the QA resolved or QA unresolved button. If its QA unresolved, then it is sent back to the developer to get the problem fixed, before sending it back to the QA for review. If a task passes QA then its QA resolved.
- ✔ Once QA resolved, the task goes to Analyst, and is in UAT stage. Analyst confirms the task at his end and inform business about the task, once the business and analyst are good task is UAT resolved and ready to go in Release Cycle.
- ✔ We have a weekly release cycle, prepared by release manager and distributed among teams. Team leads review could prepare and add their changes related to specific ticket in release branch. Release branch merged to trunk on release day.

