

## Create IT

### Winner for Best SharePoint Public WebSite

#### project information

**Project Name:** Pestana Transactional WebSite Platform

**URL 1:** <http://www.pousadas.pt>

**URL 2:** <http://www.pestanapriority.com>

**URL 3:** <http://www.pestana.com>

#### the challenge

**Grupo Pestana**, the largest Portuguese group in the tourism sector, manages two hotel chains (**Pestana Hotels & Resorts** and **Pousadas de Portugal**) composed of 86 hotels and more than 9000 rooms. Around half of those hotels belong to each of the two brands. Each of the hotel chains had its own public Internet portal which has always been one of the main revenue and client attraction channels.

The goal of the project was to design and build a new platform that would support all the public Internet websites of the group, including new versions of the portals of **Pousadas de Portugal** and **Pestana Hotels & Resorts**, and a portal for the freshly created loyalty program of the group, **Pestana Priority Guest**.

The client would measure the success of this project in terms of revenue from each of the transactional portals, expecting at least 10% of growth in the first year. The new loyalty program is expected to attract between 100 and 150 thousand new clients in its launch year (2011).

Some of the challenges this project had:

- Each of the three portals would have a radically different look & feel from its predecessors and a set of new features for the customers of the hotels, scattered all over the world.

- Micros OPERA Reservation System was being implemented by Grupo Pestana at this time and both transactional portals would have to integrate directly with it. Potential customers would be able to check the availability of a single hotel or multiple hotels in a region, for a specific period, and book a stay on one of the hotels using real time integration with the new Reservation System. Bookings of predefined circuits which include multiple hotels in the same reservation would also have to be supported.
- Both transaction portals must support real time payments using a payment gateway, for pre-paid reservations and for the online store.
- Customers must be able to register and authenticate against the Microsoft Dynamics CRM, the system that owns all the information about each of the customers. The portals would have specific information and promotions only available to registered customers or customers with corporate agreements.
- The loyalty program portal must allow customers to register, edit their profiles, check the points earned in previous stays, and use these points to pay in new reservations.
- All the portals must support multiple languages and creating a new language should require no technical skills. At launch time, Pousadas de Portugal must support 5 languages, Pestana Priority Guest must support 2 languages and Pestana Hotels & Resorts must support 7 languages.
- Being rather large portals, with thousands of pages and rapidly changing contents, the backoffice would have to promote efficiency allowing content managers to quickly perform their tasks on all languages.
- Performance and SEO are obvious concerns that are considered critical since each of these portals gets over 3 million visitors each year and the combined revenue is around 15 million euros per year. This means that low page ranks on search engines, extended downtime and slow performance can have a very large impact on the revenue of these portals.

### **the solution**

The new website platform is based on SharePoint Server 2010 due to its highly scalable architecture and extensibility. The extensive feature set allowed us to save a lot of time during the development phase and the familiar UI helped the content management users achieve higher efficiency than ever before.

Each of the portals was branded with customer master pages and page layouts. Using jQuery allowed us to build attractive UIs with simple animations without sacrificing usability and performance.

To handle integrations with the OPERA Reservation System, Dynamics CRM and the payment gateway we developed custom common modules, reused by all the portals. These common modules use Interfaces and Factories to allow us to change the underneath reservation system or payment gateway should the client decide to change them in the future.

Multiple languages were handled using SharePoint's variations and .Net resource files. Since each portal has a very large structure including a website per hotel per language, each with around 8 to 10 pages, and several other websites for promotions, corporate information,

restaurants and events, the automatic site and page propagation mechanism has been really helpful.

To improve content management efficiency, some of the contents that change more often are stored in SharePoint lists, where authorized users can edit them in datasheet view much faster than editing them directly in pages, for each language.

Regarding performance, we made extensive use of caching at several levels. However, since these are transactional portals, some of the information depends on the current authenticated user and some of the information is retrieved in real time and cannot be cached.

Search Engine Optimization was present during all the phases in the project, since the screen mockups to the actual implementation, following all the best practices regarding page information, friendly URLs and correctly defined content.

We launched the portals in sequence so that we could use the lessons learned from each portal when developing the following portal. The first portal, Pousadas de Portugal, was launched in October 2010 followed by Pestana Priority Guest in May 2011 and, finally, the largest and most complex portal, Pestana Hotels & Resorts, in October 2011.

#### **conclusion**

The project was a huge success with the first portal, Pousadas de Portugal, growing over 30% in the first year, and Pestana Hotels & Resorts already growing 20% after just one month of operation. It's expected that the whole project will pay for itself in just one year.

#### **additional information**

For additional information please contact | **create | it** | directly or one of the persons listed above.

<http://www.pousadas.pt/historic-hotels-portugal/en/pages/home.aspx>
Pousadas de Portugal | Cha... x

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**POUSADAS DE PORTUGAL**

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North - Gerês - Caniçada, São Bento	€ 90
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### Cultural Agenda

Learn about all the events and festivities in each region of Portugal and stay in a Pousada.



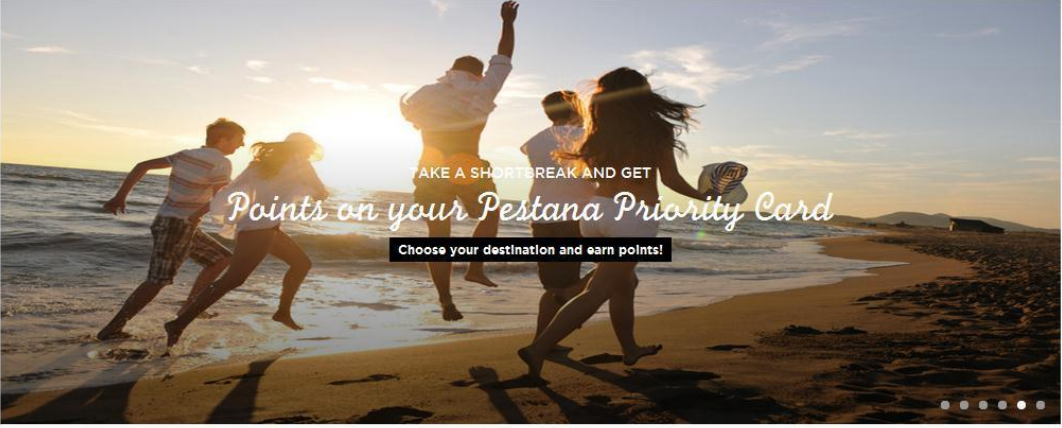




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