An e-commerce platform should help increase profitability and customer service

Fast time to market, global expansion, mobile-friendly, scalability, easy to integrate, omnichannel capabilities and low total cost of ownership. These are all attributes of a modern, successful e-commerce platform—and they're all phrases any retailer who has gone through a recent replatforming project likely knows well. But far too many are still operating on older systems that aren't able to offer the advantages associated with newer, cloud-based platforms.

As technologies advance and consumer shopping behavior changes along with it, older platforms just aren't cutting it anymore, says Alexandre Soncini, vice president of business development for North America at VTEX, a cloud-based software-as-a-service platform provider. "So many current platforms have outdated online stores that are not upgrade-friendly," he explains. "These platforms lack features that address the current demands of customers, and they have a high total cost of ownership."

Soncini says savvy retailers and branded manufacturers doing retail who want to keep up with the changing demands of customers are looking for more robust yet flexible platform solutions. And most importantly, they want platforms that can prove a solid return on investment in shorter periods of time. That's what Gabriel Cabrera did when he embarked on a large replatforming project.

As Sony's regional director of online business in Latin America, Cabrera realized the company's existing platform had become difficult to maintain and parts of it were outdated with regard to consumer needs. Sony Latin America wanted to provide customers throughout the region a simple, secure and efficient way to acquire Sony's products on its website from any device. Additionally, the company wanted to expand into other markets.

Sony sought a more efficient approach to its e-commerce platform by considering cloud-based solutions that allowed for regional expansion, and were easy to integrate, scalable and cost-effective. They wanted technology that employed responsive design so that a single website would adapt automatically to the screen the consumer is using, whether that is on a computer, smartphone or tablet.

"We wanted to find more efficiency on our investment and through our expansion into other markets," Cabrera explains, and says he found that in the VTEX platform. Cabrera also says the company was able to achieve its first implementation in what he calls "record time. In four months, we had a full e-commerce site ready," he says. "After launching that site, we were having rollouts every two to three weeks for the rest of the countries."

Six months after launching the VTEX platform, Sony Latin America has seen its conversion rate increase. According to Soncini, that's because VTEX has a business model that enables brands and retailers to focus on their business in addition to providing an updated platform evolving at the same pace as consumer expectations.

"At a lower ongoing cost, we offer an up-to-date solution that provides a competitive differential to our customers with upgrades on a daily basis," he says. In fact, VTEX provides an average of 846 upgrades per month; its clients experience, on average, a 46% boost in conversion rate; and its time to market is, on average, 103 days. Overall, the company provides services to more than 700 retailers—including major brands such as Whirlpool, Calvin Klein, Nokia and Disney—and supports 1,200 online stores in 14 countries using a multi-tenant cloud-based platform.

"Regardless of the type of platform you want for your replatforming strategy, it's very important to analyze in the long term if that solution will be prepared to push you forward rather than hold you back," Soncini explains. "Our end-to-end solution includes all the capabilities that allow our customers to increase their conversion rate, customer satisfaction and at the end of the day, their profitability."