DSM brings consumer-grade experience to B2B
Bringing the best of B2C to B2B

As beautifully designed, context-driven interfaces have become the norm on digital platforms, consumers’ higher expectations about user experience have flowed through all interactions online. That includes business-to-business space. Employees accustomed to the very best digital experiences at home are less willing to put up with protracted processes or badly designed interfaces at work.

For DSM, a multibillion-euro life sciences and materials leader, this presented a huge opportunity. The ordering tool used by its nutritional products line of business continued to see heavy customer usage but was now fifteen years old and approaching its end of life. What’s more, many sales were still going through by email, fax and phone, including a large number from infrequent, “long tail” customers.

This created the ideal moment for DSM to completely overhaul its online customer experience landscape. It is the ambition of DSM to create a modern, user-friendly, scalable buying experience that allows more self-service interactions through a digital portal to further increase the service quality and agility for customers. In turn, this would free the sales and customer service team to refocus on high-value customer relationships. It would also improve user experience across the board and enable DSM to extend its reach to a broader customer base.
When tech meets human ingenuity

Upgrading to SAP Commerce Cloud

DSM chose Accenture Interactive to design and build its new business buying experience. Bringing together a multi-disciplinary team of UX/UI and functional designers, technical architects, and delivery and analytics expertise, Accenture and DSM instigated a One Team approach to implement SAP Commerce Cloud.

Central to the whole project was an agile MVP (Minimum Viable Product) approach. This enabled the team to build the new platform in sprints, using a feedback loop with DSM’s customers and business users to capture user needs and iteratively enhance functionality and user experience at each stage. This customer feedback loop was achieved not only at the individual level, through closer one-on-one engagement, but also at scale by leveraging SAP’s experience management platform Qualtrics.

The agile approach was crucial in accelerating a complex project involving numerous decentralized DSM teams, each with their own different needs. In fact, after just eight months, the new platform was ready to be rolled out for Europe, with the Middle East and North America following, and Latin America and Asia Pacific to come next.

The result is a modern, streamlined, intuitive digital buying experience that integrates seamlessly into DSM’s business architecture. The technology stack is now standardized across multiple business units and regions, reducing the risk of technical debt, while creating synergies and building value across DSM’s business units. Scalability has been ensured by integrating many of DSM’s ERP platforms through a single high-performance data layer. That will enable the organization to roll out the solution to other business units faster and more cost-effectively, while still allowing local flexibility in each operating territory.
A valuable difference

A more customer-centric business

By putting customer needs at the center of the project, DSM has vastly improved its front-end buying experience. The new customer portal provides personalized product selections, individually negotiated prices and streamlined reordering (vital in B2B where repeat orders are frequent). Customers can now get real-time order/delivery updates, plus easy access to contract details, invoices and supporting documents. They can also access a full product catalogue, including integrated quality and regulatory information — especially important in the highly regulated nutritional products industry.

With so much functionality available through the portal, customers can manage more of their purchasing themselves. That means faster and more convenient buying online, and an experience that aligns with today's higher expectations of what a digital service should be. Indeed, the early feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive.

With the new Portal, customers can get services instantaneously and at any time of day and week, which greatly improves the service quality. At the same time, DSM's customer care agents have to handle far less routine administrative requests from customers, enabling them to focus on providing a specialized "white glove" service to DSM's most valuable customers.
What’s more, thanks to the project’s ongoing feedback loop, the organization’s culture has become more customer-centric. Its ways of working are driven less by static technical requirements and more by a dynamic understanding of customer needs. And it can now combine analytics and continuous feedback from relevant touchpoints across the whole customer journey. That insight is vital, enabling DSM to keep innovating and improving the user experience. It also opens up new opportunities for growth, such as enabling single one-off payments for smaller customers who don’t have a pre-existing account with the business.

Of course, customer experience is never complete. It must continue to evolve with customer expectations and business requirements. That’s why DSM’s new data-driven and customer-centric commerce platform is so important to its growth strategy, now and in the future.