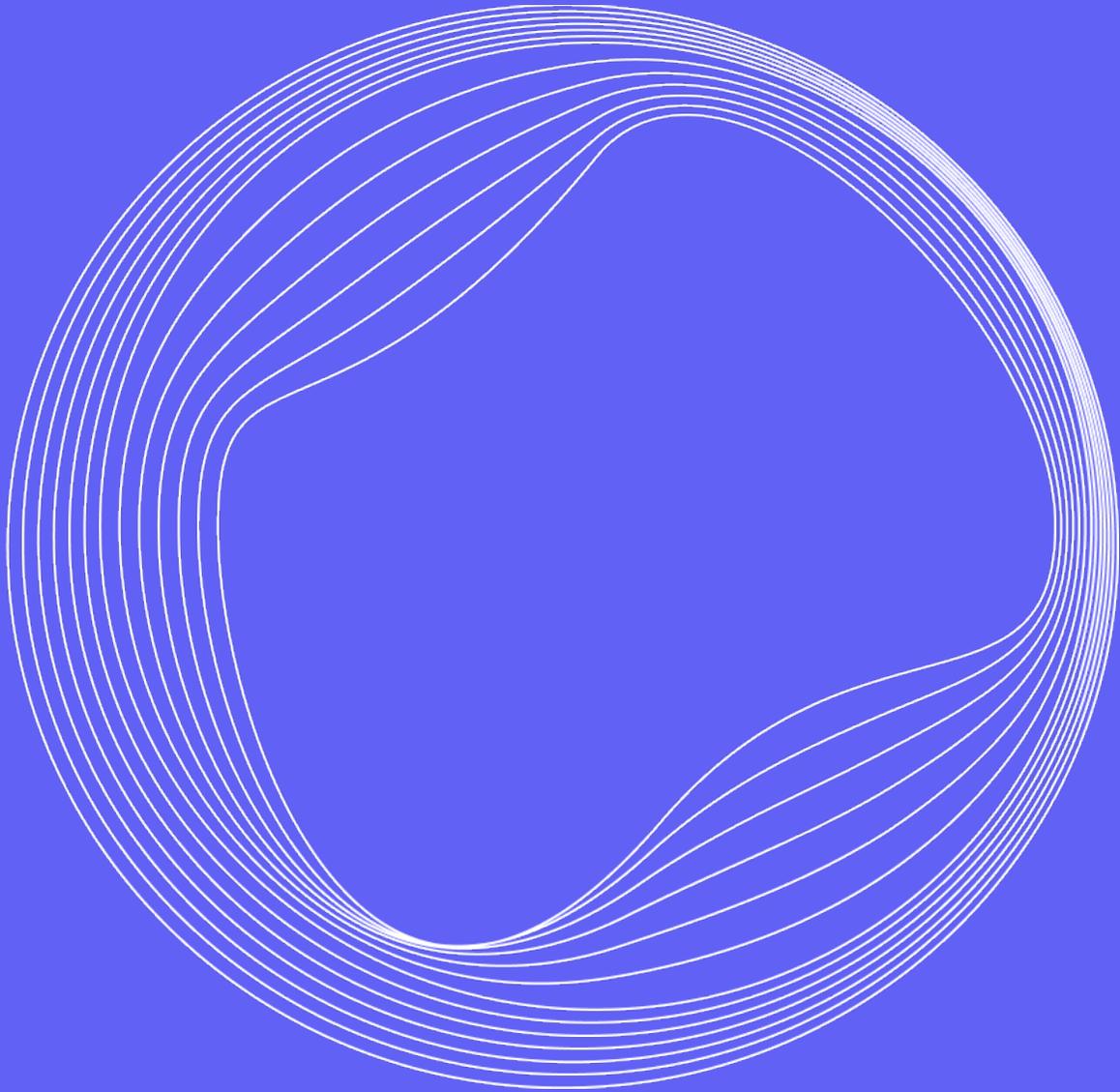




How Holland & Barrett accelerated their digital transformation with Auth0



CASE STUDY

auth0.com

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ABOUT HOLLAND & BARRETT

Holland & Barrett International is one of the world's leading health and wellness retailers and the largest in Europe supplying their customers with a wide range of vitamins, minerals, health supplements, specialist foods and natural beauty products. With over 145 years of experience in the industry, our name is a familiar sight in almost every major city and town across the UK and is becoming increasingly more visible further afield, in markets as diverse as the Netherlands and Malta to the UAE, China and India.

INDUSTRY

Retail

REGION

EMEA

3 months

to build new authentication layer

We saw so many companies doing amazing things with Customer Identity Cloud. But we also saw that migrations were easy and robust. We could transition from our existing platform without our customer noticing anything.

Paris Apostolopoulos

Engineering Manager

Holland & Barrett are Europe's leading nutritional supplement retailer. Founded in 1870 from a sleepy English village, the company now operates over 1,300 locations across 16 global markets and boasts annual revenues exceeding £726.7m (\$821.21).

Like many physical retailers, the Coronavirus pandemic forced Holland & Barrett to accelerate their digital transformation plans. Although the company was an early internet pioneer, establishing their e-commerce platform in 2008, their existing online presence proved difficult to scale.

In 2020, Holland & Barrett chose to rebuild their web platform from the ground up, with a modern microservices-centric design. With security and developer agility as a leading priority, the company selected Auth0.

Rearchitecting Holland & Barrett

“Like many old-school retailers out there, Holland & Barrett started their online journey by relying on out-of-the-box solutions,” explained Paris Apostolopoulos, Engineering Manager.

Although the previous stack served the company well as they grew their online presence, the growing shift from physical retail to e-commerce emphasized the need for the company to take full ownership of their technological architecture.

“We previously relied on huge, commercial systems that owned both the functionality and customer data. As we sought to better understand our customers and improve their shopping experience, we realized we had to move away from that. We needed a modern system that is easier to secure, more flexible, and is easier for customers to use,” Apostolopoulos says.

Rebuilding an e-commerce giant from the ground-up is no small task. It required Apostolopoulos and his team to make decisions with profound consequences for the future growth and evolution of the platform.

“Our original identity system was a simple Java-based web service that tied together the various Oracle products we used,” he says.

“We thought about re-implementing that functionality using a modern tech stack, but ultimately decided against it. We’re in the business of retail. We don’t want to reinvent the wheel. We want something that would ultimately put us in a more secure position, while proving easier to develop and maintain.”

Prioritizing security and flexibility

Security was Holland & Barrett’s first priority. Data migration and long-term maintenance followed.

“We want our users to securely access our website. But, at the same time, we’re currently dealing with 15 years of legacy systems. We needed something that was flexible and would allow us to easily make changes in the years to come,” says Apostolopoulos.

“We saw so many companies doing amazing things with Auth0. But we also saw that migrations were easy and robust. We could transition from our existing platform without our customer noticing anything. That was important because, from a business side, we don’t want to lose customer data or accounts. The only thing they should see is a nice UI, and that’s it,” he says.

In three months, Apostolopoulos and his team had built a new authentication layer, and development represented a fraction of this time.

“In the case of our web applications, we integrated in one day. Our mobile apps took a little bit longer. The biggest challenge was moving our customer data from the existing proprietary tools to our new infrastructure,” he says.

“Our contract included a number of support hours with your architects. We found the tooling and documentation really mature, and the only time we asked for help was when dealing with specific migration challenges. The quality of support was incredible. We had specific questions and received definitive answers.”

Holland & Barrett’s identity journey

Starting from scratch is a daunting task. Especially when you’re one of the world’s leading wellness brands. Although Holland & Barrett are yet to deploy more advanced identity features, like Social Login, they feel confident that their chosen solution will give them the flexibility to make more ambitious improvements in the future.

“There’s still a lot of work to do, but we’re thrilled we don’t have to deal with authentication any more. Auth0 has saved our developers a lot of work,” says Apostolopoulos.