

Operations

Rapid response in times of crisis: The Calimax success story



Roney Almeida



Calimax



Since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 a pandemic, in March 2020, it feels like the commerce world's reset button was pushed. While most brick-and-mortar stores had to shut their doors, others have seen their sales skyrocket.

Pharmacies, supermarkets, and grocery stores are the most notorious examples of businesses thriving during the crisis. Particularly those that have already started the journey of digitally transforming their organizations.

This was the case with the Mexican supermarket Calimax.

Accelerating digital commerce transformation

Calimax is a traditional grocery store chain with over a hundred stores in Northwestern Mexico. At the time coronavirus started closing physical retail stores down, Calimax still didn't have an online store. But this did not deter them from the challenge of introducing a whole new channel.

When VTEX approached Roger Zapata – Calimax's CIO and decision-maker of the project – amid the pandemic, they were in an almost two-year struggle to implement their e-commerce operations. Our project team in Mexico then made a bold proposal: To put everything up and running in just four weeks.

Planning is halfway to success

With such a short time frame, the team needed to prioritize the implementation of must-have modules and phase the introduction of nice-to-have features after launching. The decision to use Agile methodologies was crucial in determining an MVP and to keep all stakeholders working towards a common goal.

Teamwork and the companies' combined expertise in the grocery industry were key factors for the success of the operation. Through the knowledge they acquired from previous projects, the VTEX team worked in close partnership with Calimax to map all the required integrations.

"It's not only about having a great product. What really made the difference was the VTEX team's expertise in our industry."

José Treviño, Calimax's Project Manager and responsible for the go-live.

After the project's blueprint was completed, the development team started working on the implementation of a full online experience for Calimax's customers.

A clockwork execution

The highest level of commitment is necessary if we want to deliver a full online experience in just four weeks. This is why the team created rituals to keep everyone on track: Two daily meetings, one first thing in the morning to set the tasks, and another at the end of the day to wrap-up what has been done. Both meetings opened with a reminder of the go-live date.

Working in total synergy with Calimax, the VTEX team could come up with a comprehensive multi-store delivery flow for complex fulfillment scenarios, including picking and packing, ship from store, and scheduled deliveries.

The combination of VTEX Commerce Cloud's out-of-the-box features and flexible API collection allowed them to quickly implement the necessary functionalities that were vital to the Calimax business model. For example, VTEX provides native solutions to sell fruits, meat, and other products by weight – which is essential for any grocery operation – as well as the possibility to filter items by their specifications and add them to cart straight from the search suggestions.

Working with VTEX Commerce Cloud, Calimax could easily integrate with its brick-and-mortar stores' inventory and pricing lists. Another VTEX functionality gave Calimax's customers the option to decide from which store they're buying from. This doesn't only allow customers to benefit from special prices and discounts, but also to choose if the orders will be delivered at home or picked up at the nearest store.

Another element that played a significant role in the launch of Calimax's online store was our native integration with JANIS, an OMS that has been serving some of the largest supermarkets in the industry. The solution offers better pickup control in the store, an app for pickers (which gives more control over the picking capacity, more accurate product replacement suggestions, and product and pricing adjustments), alerts for delays, and an app for drivers with automatic routing.

The results

As promised, the site went live in just four weeks. That was a significant milestone for Calimax, since in addition to a new sales channel, they were able to find a way to assist their customers in times when social distancing measures limit their ability to shop in physical stores. This also meant that shoppers did not have to look for alternative sources for groceries, ensuring Calimax that customer loyalty can adapt to the new normal.



WRITTEN BY
Roney Almeida