



Vortal creates a new vision for electronic procurement

The nextVision platform, which was recently revealed to the market, shows new abilities and features that place it as the world leader in this sector.

A Vortal

Vortal was a pioneer in the electronic procurement sector in Portugal. Its operation began with eConstroi, in 2001, that was made for the engineering and construction industry. Then, they went on to the Public Administration (the first electronic public procurement procedure was made via Vortal in 2006), health and corporate sectors.



After 13 years, technology evolved immensely. Examples of this are platform integration with clients' management software (ERP), emergence of digital signature and certification, electronic payments, and, most recently, the collaborative contract management and dynamic procurement systems.

Thanks to these developments, Vortal was included by Gartner in the 2018 report "*Magic Quadrant for Strategic Sourcing Application Suites*", as one of the 10 world companies that complies with the strict requirements that must be met to be included in this independent report made by analysts on eSourcing technologies.

Pedro Coelho Cabral, the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Vortal, says that all the conditions are gathered for a second moment of public and private entity digitalisation, in terms of the "*use of solutions that are more effective in managing*

contracts, catalogues, qualification and assessment of suppliers, amongst other Vortal solutions."

The interoperability between electronic public procurement platforms is one of Vortal's areas under development. Vortal is the leader of Interplat, an European consortia that is co-funded by the European Union, that aims at implementing interoperability standards between Portugal, Germany, and the Netherlands, and that expects to show results already during next year.

- 10** Thousand purchasing entities
- 300** Thousand customers
- 25** Billion euros awarded
- 900** Thousand purchase processes

Vortal must keep on evolving and improving its platform to stay within this level of recognition. Pedro Coelho Cabral explains that they are already working on solutions that use machine learning and predictive analytics to add to the offer they provide to their supplier clients, and that this will help them increase efficiency when searching for the most suitable business opportunities, or when preparing competitive proposals.

Vortal's commitment to permanent improvement was shown with the release of its new nextVision platform, in early December. This new solution relies on a Cloud-based platform that brings the agility needed to develop new features and deliver them to users quickly. Without this, it would not be possible to develop or deliver the new solution to end clients.

NextVision is in the **Cloud**

A more stable, visibly improved platform in performance terms that ensures a smoother, faster user experience: these are some of the improvements that derived from this migration to a Cloud solution.

Keeping international leadership in the public and private electronic procurement market is one of Vortal's main challenges. The company, which specialises in eProcurement and eSourcing solutions, is now releasing new products to the market in order to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of companies and the public sector.

Innovation and usability are the keywords when it comes to this goal. Many changes were made to deliver this proposal, especially at the infrastructure level. Vortal also relied on a managed services provider (MSP) that was a reference both nationally and internationally.

Pedro Coelho Cabral, the CTO of Vortal, explains the path that was followed in order to release the Cloud-based platform Vortalnext to the market, and talks about the main features of nextVision and Vortal's vision of the present and future of electronic procurement.



Key services:

- Public Cloud
- Microsoft Azure
- Managed Cloud Services
- 24/7 Support

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“...the recent recognition of Claranet as an Azure Expert MSP, by Microsoft; the inclusion of this company in the Magic Quadrant for Data Centre Outsourcing and Hybrid Infrastructure Managed Services, Europe by Gartner; and the success cases and experience in migration of existing applications to a Cloud environment, were the aspects that determined our choice.”

Pedro Coelho Cabral
CTO
Vortal

What are Vortal's main challenges?

Our first challenge of 2019 was met in May, when we migrated all our solutions to the Cloud. Among our offer, we had Cloud-native solutions and traditional data centre-based solutions. This project, in early 2019, allowed us to standardise and centralise our technological solutions in one single Cloud, therefore stabilising and facilitating solution management and monitoring.

The development of Vortal's recently released new electronic procurement platform was another challenge.

What impact will the new Vortal platform have?

There is a remarkable evolution in terms of usability and functionality, but matters such as the scalability, availability, resilience, and performance of our systems were also addressed.

The tech stack that serves as the basis of our new platform is aligned with the most recent and recommended technological architectures, as well as with the good practices used by reference organisations of all sectors. This allows for a quicker evolution of our products and prevents technological obsolescence.

This usability / evolution binomial is the foundation of Vortal's new eSourcing and eProcurement suite, the nextVision.

What originated Vortal's need to seek a Cloud solution?

Vortal's portfolio is composed of technological solutions, so we have the same needs and concerns as every technological company: security, availability, performance, resilience, and improved resource consumption efficiency.

Scalability and agility were added to this equation recently. The Cloud became our best option and will allow us to take advantage of other types

of approaches, such as Platform as a Service (PaaS), that are emerging day after day, with many of them being disruptive and totally game changers.

The Cloud enables agility and innovation. And this is surely the place where we want to be.

How did you get to this solution and to Claranet as an integrator?

The process began with selecting which Cloud to adopt. After having analysed the most consensual [Public Cloud](#) based solutions available in the market, we chose the [Microsoft Cloud, Azure](#). This decision was made after assessing many aspects, such as availability, scalability, security, costs, and performance. The long-standing partnership between Vortal and Microsoft and our in-house tech stack that strongly relies on Microsoft products were the factors that helped validate this choice.

Once the Cloud was chosen, what was your next step?

The next step was to select the MSP. At this point, the recent recognition of Claranet as an [Azure Expert MSP](#), by Microsoft; the inclusion of this company in the [Magic Quadrant for Data Centre](#)

Outsourcing and Hybrid Infrastructure Managed Services, Europe by Gartner; and the success cases and experience in migration of existing applications to a Cloud environment, were the aspects that determined our choice.

How long did it take to implement the eSourcing and eProcurement platform into a public cloud environment?

The end-to-end project, which included the migration of multiple solutions that were not yet in a Cloud environment and the aggregation of all products in Vortal's portfolio into a single Cloud subscription, took about four months.

How many stages did the project have?

We started the Cloud migration project with Claranet by defining four stages: Assessment, Plan, Implementation, and Operation. During the Assessment stage, we agreed upon the collaboration model and defined the responsibilities of all parties involved, thereby forming the project team. Then, we defined project details – solutions involved and migration terms – and the use of the Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) model for initial migration. After the assessment and definitions,

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Pedro Coelho Cabral, Vortal's CTO

we got to the implementation stage. We designed the technical architecture of each solution we wanted to migrate, created the infrastructure that would support every solution in the required environments, copied and synchronised data, established the precedence of tasks prior to Cloud migration and made some fine tuning, mostly to code and some data base objects.

How did the migration go?

The migration itself went according to planned. It was necessary to slightly adjust and adapt the initial plan, to address some problems that are normal in projects like these.

What improvements were most visible?

Right now, we are using Azure for about seven months, and our platform is more stable. Performance is clearly improved, and user experience is smoother and faster. The management of resources that support our platforms is more flexible. This allows us to create, cut over, or modify the features of resources that we consume in a much faster and more controlled way, which confirms that we made the right choice and that we are on the right track.

What precautions did you take in this project?

When it comes to platforms with this size and complexity, regulation level and countless integrations with other systems, it is vital to make sure that transition is fully transparent to all users and is made without interrupting the service.

In this project, we decided to bring all stakeholders on board in a timely manner, by previously ascertaining all integrations and dependences of external systems. These integrations were analysed, adapted, simulated and tested with the

respective entities before the cut-over, in order to ensure that there was no problem that could prevent normal operation at the zero-moment point.

Is the project already completed?

The migration of technological solutions is already completed and went according to planned, without any problems for the business.

What were the advantages of this project in terms of company business processes?

Centralising every product into a Cloud environment and single subscription accelerated business processes and facilitated their management. The added flexibility and agility that we now offer regarding the processes that make our solutions available, provide a time-to-market that is more aligned with the innovation pace and response to the needs of the international market sought by Vortal.

What business areas benefited more from this project?

Every business solution in Vortal's portfolio, organized by vertical solutions in the public and private sector, was considered in this project. All areas benefited from it.

Our clients can easily see that our solutions have a high degree of resilience, scalability and performance. And their satisfaction and trust are undoubtedly the major benefit that came from this migration.

What is the degree of innovation of the project developed by Claranet?

Every Cloud migration project has its own degree of innovation, and I believe that every case is different. For instance, in

our case, there were solutions that did not follow exactly the same migration terms, which made us adapt some strategies and "make something different".

The actual innovation begins now that Cloud migration is complete, and we are developing this new technological platform. We are working in a microservices architecture and with a fairly recent tech stack. This platform is already Cloud-native, which gives us many other possibilities, such as the use of docker containers to host microservices and Kubernetes to orchestrate them.

The introduction of CI/CD (continuous integration and continuous delivery) pipelines, enriched with Automated Code Review and Automated Testing steps, is another innovation that allows us to deliver the product faster and with increased security and quality.

How do you rate the role of Claranet as your partner in this project?

Considering the terms under which the project was executed and its overall outcomes, we think this project was a success, because Claranet met all goals previously defined.

Claranet played an elemental role in this project from the very beginning. They followed the migration very closely. The expertise they shared in terms of fine tuning, troubleshooting, previous migration experiences and Azure resource management was of great value.

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