

LEADING WITH THE CLOUD

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When most businesses were reeling due to 2022's tough, post-pandemic economy, Unido Capital Holdings Inc., the Filipino corporation that owns household names such as Landers Superstore, Popeyes Philippines, and Kuya J Restaurant, was anticipating dramatic growth.

During this year, this group set bold goals for their brands. They planned to exceed 20 Landers Superstore branches by 2024. On top of this, they aimed to triple Landers' value as well as open their 400th Popeyes and 100th Kuya J stores by 2026.

All of these targets are still eminently achievable, thanks to this company's early and swift shifts to the Cloud. The Unido Group confidently harnessed this technology to be flexible and agile during disruptive times with the help of their trusted partners, ePLDT and PLDT Enterprise.

"It's also about trust. We can have access to a lot of things – information, technology, other resources – but trust is never quite as easy to access. It needs to be developed [and] have a good foundation. PLDT, being around for decades, epitomizes Filipino technology. It is something we trust."

*Francis Reyes,
CFO and COO,
Unido Capital Holdings, Inc.*

ePLDT and PLDT Enterprise made good on this faith many times over. Experts from ePLDT and PLDT Enterprises are constantly working with the Unido Group to understand its diverse, evolving requirements. From there, tailored, cloud-based solutions and services were developed that facilitated the group's various brands in taking full

advantage of programs such as **Salesforce Cloud, Amazon S3, and Microsoft Azure as well as develop personalized e-commerce platforms.**

Backed by ePLDT, the Unido Group initiated the development of Landers Superstore's online website in 2017. It was thanks to this established platform that Landers was able to expand even when COVID19 brought foot traffic to a standstill. Over the past couple of years, the superstore recorded 53% growth and claimed the lead in terms grocery shopping within Metro Manila.

When the Unido Group's restaurants urgently needed to pivot during the pandemic to reach its locked-down customers, ePLDT helped them set up their online delivery platform, Central.ph, within a short 22 days.

Today, the group is working with ePLDT to streamline their adoption of customer support solutions and backroom operations infrastructure. One of their largest projects in the works is Project Giga CRM, which aims to improve contact and data management, the quality of customer center support, and the depth of customer analytics by connecting all the stores and datapoints in the Cloud.

"With ePLDT and PLDT Enterprise, we don't just get access to the cloud or to new technologies. We are able to sit down and think of solutions together. And that is why we truly value this partnership,"

Francis Reyes

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ENHANCING EFFICIENCY THROUGH AI

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Filipinos in general like to be reminded about their payment deadlines, but at the scale of PLDT and Smart's 4.5 million Postpaid customers, training human agents to handle this delicate job is decidedly time-consuming and costly.

In November 2022, PLDT and Smart worked with ePLDT to roll out an advanced solution that supercharged their collections process: the Intelligent Virtual Collections Assistant (VCA) program. This assistant is an **Artificial Intelligence (AI) conversational bot that automates the collection reminder process without trading off on customer experience**. Seeming as human as her name, Cindy, this bot listens and responds like a local, speaking an approachable Taglish and answering questions without any trace of mechanical choppiness.

In fact, customers' typical reaction upon interacting with Cindy is to politely hang up then ask disbelievingly "Wait a minute, was I really talking to a robot?"

Dianne Blanco, PLDT and Smart VP of Consumer Credit and Collection Account Management, remarked **"What's more impressive is that AI is so efficient that both our productivity and collections have increased substantially since we rolled out the service."**

From launch in November 2022 to March 2023:

222%

Increase in
processed accounts

82%

Increase in
productive calls/day

Besides its incredible results for both customer experience and the bottom-line, part of what makes this AI solution remarkable is how quickly and easily this futuristic technology was implemented with ePLDT's support.

Despite the advanced workings of AI, ePLDT's expertise, partnerships, and existing telephony system enabled the VCA program to be implemented in just six months. To put this in perspective, standard ICT solutions of this scale can take years.

"We chose the right partner with ePLDT. They are super enablers.

They are on the Microsoft Azure platform, they have the exact ICT solution we needed, they took care of everything. They owned and managed the project and ensured seamless coordination with our Singapore-based partner WIZ AI."

Jeanine Rubin,
FVP Customer Care Group,
PLDT and Smart

Additionally, ePLDT's role did not end once the bot got off the ground. ePLDT's project managers are continuing to monitor the bot's analytics and are ready to shift strategies at a moments notice.

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