



CASE STUDY ZORO.COM

How Zoro.com leverages MACH[®] to support commerce growth



About 12 years ago, [W.W. Grainger](#), a B2B industrial supply company that specializes in the global distribution of MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Operations) materials to large enterprise organizations and government institutions, created Zoro.com as an outlet to sell directly to smaller-volume business buyers.

At the time, there wasn't a good B2B eCommerce solution out there as most players were B2C focused. So, the initial concept was for Zoro.com to sell products Grainger already carried under an entirely separate brand name. Since the company already had a significant interest in a Japanese business with a similar business model, [MonotaRo.com](#), they used its website as a reference point, taking the principles they'd learned from that experience and even some of the code to create Zoro.

COMPANY SIZE

\$1 Billion USD

MARKETS

United States

HEADQUARTERS

Buffalo Grove, Illinois

INDUSTRY

Business supplies, equipment and tools

BUSINESS MODEL

B2B

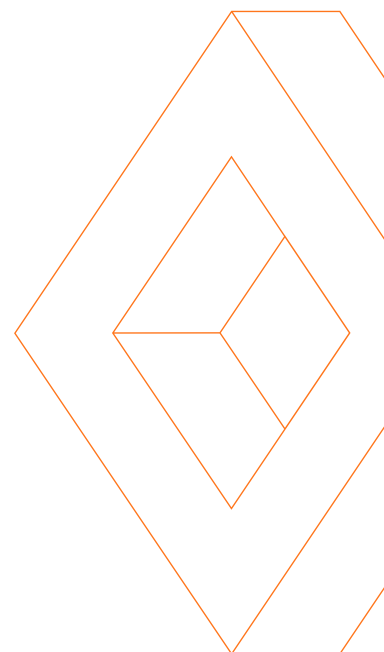
WORKED WITH PARTNERS

DMI

The Challenge

Eight years after launching, Zoro's impressive growth and popularity led leadership to rethink its vision for the brand. Instead of focusing solely on the MRO needs of their audience — industrial workers, machinists, plumbers, electricians and contractors — the new strategy was to offer everything an SMB needs to run their business.

At the time, the company's platform was already struggling to keep up — customers were waiting unreasonable amounts of time to log in, check out and track their orders. As the team started contemplating expanding from the 4-5 million items in their virtual catalog to 20+ million and beyond, while sourced from thousands of suppliers, it was clear the platform couldn't scale like that.

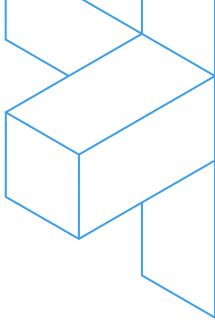


The Solution

Timothy Daneliuk, Senior Director and Chief Architect of Zoro, already had experience with microservices. He led his team into its initial foray into headless and microservices-based architecture. First, they identified an immediate business problem: Whenever their ERP went down, the company had no access to customer information, because all the account data was in the ERP — and then built a next-generation solution in-house.

The “guest checkout implementation” project proved that headless and microservices technology, combined with Zoro’s existing cloud-native and API-first foundation, was the right direction to go to build out a full commerce platform. It was a MACH solution before MACH was even a thing.

When the time came to enable the full eCommerce buying experience, instead of building everything in-house, the team opted to find partners with the expertise to speed time-to-market. After completing a side-by-side feature and benefits analysis of all the major vendors, commercetools emerged as the winner.



It was prudent for us to buy commercetools as an accelerator into the marketplace to get us where we needed to go. I suppose everything we did could have been done on our own, but it wouldn't have been very economical and it wouldn't have been very fast.

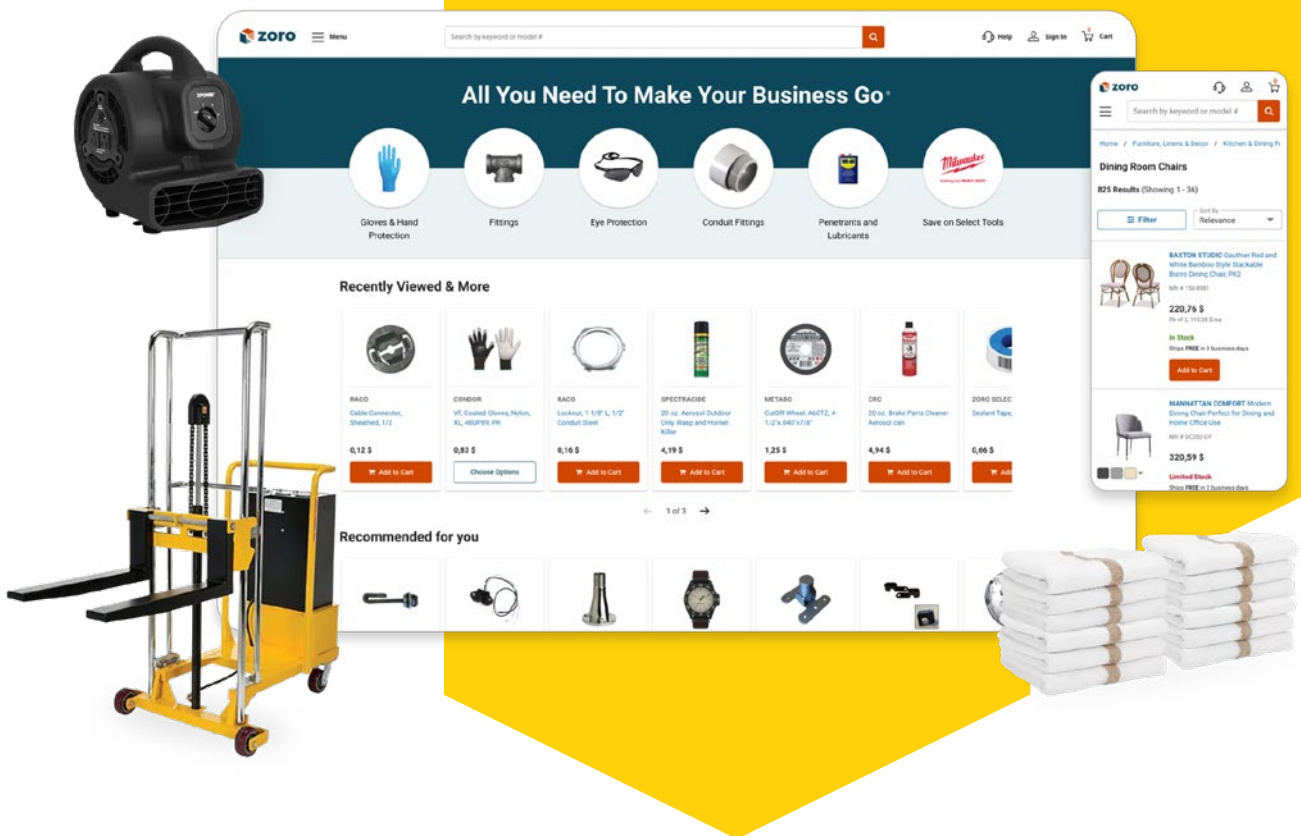
TIMOTHY DANELIUK
SENIOR DIRECTOR AND CHIEF ARCHITECT, ZORO.COM



Why it was a success

Zoro gradually transitioned to their new MACH®-driven platform, adding 5% more users at a time to see how the system behaved under strain and under load. Shortly after it went fully live, there was a 24-hour problem with a core system provided by a third party. In that time period, Zoro’s headless technology implementation in concert with commercetools protected thousands of orders from being lost. As Daneliuk explained, “That speaks to the power of a headless model.”

Currently, commercetools keeps track of all orders, carts and intermediate states for Zoro.com. And, now that his team is confident the eCommerce experience they are delivering is rich, reliable and has proven itself to work at scale, Daneliuk said a lot of increments of improvement are planned for the future. “With commercetools as a partner, we certainly expect that, as we discover new use cases, we’ll be coming back and saying, “Hey, what about adding this feature that we thought would be really useful to the system?”



commercetools features for Zoro



Cart

Simple cart and order processes streamline and speed up the purchasing experience for Zoro customers.



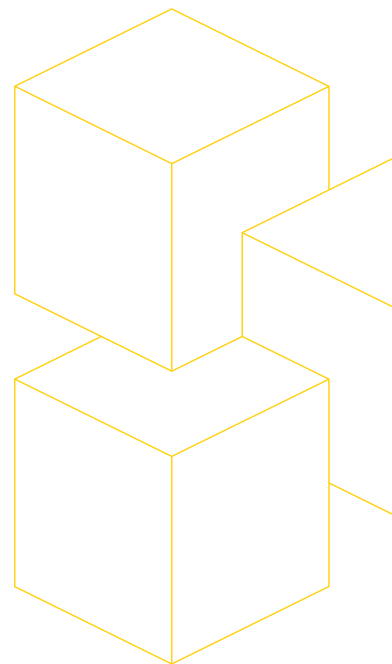
Orders

Managing order creation, pricing, promotions, and taxation, in concert with Zoro-written custom microservices.



Checkout

Provides Zoro with control over the entire checkout process through submission to Zoro's own fulfillment system.



About commercetools



commercetools

Munich-based **commercetools** is a technology disruptor delivering an industry-leading eCommerce SaaS solution. Today, some of the world's most iconic brands trust commercetools to enable their digital customer experiences. As the visionaries leading the modern MACH architecture movement, commercetools gives companies the agility to innovate and iterate on the fly, merge on and off-line channels, drive revenue and future-proof their business.