CONSTRUCTION

SUCCESS STORY

Secil builds 17 simple, intuitive, no-training-required apps in three months, reaching over 1,000 employees and nearly every customer

Secil modernized its SAP operations in just three months and improved its digital employee and customer experience with an easily developed portal. They created a Digital Hub with four portals to improve customer and vendor relationships. The easy-to-use customer portal increased sales volume by 53% compared with the previous solution.

Company Snapshot

Secil was founded in 1918, operating a small natural cement plant that had been in service since 1904. In 1930 Secil underwent a major merger with Companhia Geral de Cal e Cimento. The merger shaped the existing group of almost 40 companies that currently operate in complementary areas. Although cement production remains Secil's core activity, the company also integrates mining and the production of concrete, hydraulic lime, mortar, and coverings. The company has cement plants across eight countries and four continents, with an annual cement production capacity of more than 9.75 million tons. Today, Secil operates as a major player in the construction materials sector, with more than 2,600 employees and 100% Portuguese capital.

Industry Focus	**Construction**
System Version	**SAP ERP**
Number of Users	**Over 1,000 internal with external customer access**
Devices	**Smartphone, Tablet and Desktop access**
Timeline	**Three months to meet digital transformation migration deadline**

This success story has been developed based on the source document: "Secil Automates with Neptune DX: How Low-Code Delivers on Digital Transformation in the Construction Industry," by Holger Mueller, Vice President and Principal Analyst at Constellation Research.

The Success Story

Challenges
- 10-year-old user interface of Secil's existing solution had a dated look and feel, and the platform's out-of-the-box ERP capabilities did not support automation for digital transformation for its SAP ERP
- Business expansion into other construction industry sectors required additional functionality beyond its cement-process-related platform
- Company needed a better, more modern user experience (UX) for its management tool, customer portal, and commercial portal.

Solutions
- Shift to Neptune DXP for lower TCO, less coding with the help of no-code/low-code and easy SAP integration to support a robust user experience with mobile capabilities
- Pilot Neptune in HR for maximum employee reach and to prove usability, to make adoption and training more seamless
- Build a new procurement portal and digitize all main processes to reduce approval time and new-vendor processes
- Modernize and automate multiple interfaces across internal, customer, and commercial portals while creating new automation capabilities for numerous new business sectors
- Create a Digital Hub with 4 portals to improve customer and vendor relationships; unify customer experiences and mobile-friendly interfaces across all portals
- Account for remote locations, complex labor regulations, and shift management

Benefits
- Built 17 enterprise applications across HR, procurement, quarries, commercial excellence, logistics, and accounting
- Created new self-service capabilities for truck drivers, quarry weight measurement, and offline app capabilities for remote quarry locations
- With the ability to create and submit their own orders, 37% of Secil's suppliers migrated to the Digital Hub resulting in an increase of sales orders by 27%, and sales volume increased by 53% compared with the previous portal
- Employee self-service capabilities empower workers to handle their own time-off requests and manage their own transports
- Vacation approval time quickly decreased from three weeks to three days, and the company eliminated the need to print over 7,500 documents each year
- New applications helped reduce the management capacity needed from two full-time equivalents (FTEs) to one
- App for procurement purchases reduced approval time from two weeks to two days, and the new-vendor process decreased from three weeks to three days
- By decreasing phone calls and optimizing transport routes, the portal reduced the time required to manage this process to 0.5 FTE
- Freed 1,500 labor hours annually with an explosives-tracking app while improving the ability to support safer quarry operations and meet legal requirements
- Positive return on investment (ROI) across all Neptune Software projects

Challenges: As Secil grew, its old solution lacked modern UX and automation capabilities

Secil's existing SAP-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution didn't have the functionality required to support the automation and digital transformation it needed to thrive. **An older solution helped bridge some gaps, but its 10-year-old user interface had a dated look and feel.** Legacy systems like SAP ERP can hinder growth and efficiency, Neptune helped Secil to overcome that and still make use of their earlier SAP investment.

Employees and customers today expect modern processes and a robust user experience, which meant that Secil would need to completely transition their internal management tool, customer portal, and commercial portal. **Secil wanted to empower its employees with efficient internal systems that run smoothly no matter what** because their lack of modernization [not having digital solutions] slowed down teams, preventing them from doing their best work.

Neptune Software

Secil's original automation scope was built for cement-related processes. However, the company has since extended its business to include ready-mixed concrete, aggregates, mortar, precast concrete, and hydraulic lime. As a result, it needed new capabilities to automate each of these new sectors.

Meanwhile, **Secil also grappled with challenges many construction companies experience, including complex user management and labor regulations for vacations and shift management.** With quarries located in remote places, network coverage was also a challenge. Their IT team **struggled to build [offline Fiori] apps that would empower employees to access the mobile apps on any end device instantly and request assistance onsite**, no matter where, no matter the connection.

Considering a bulk of transports were also handled by third-party truck drivers, **Secil needed to find a solution that allowed for an intuitive UX with mobile app capabilities that required little to no training** for its users. But, even more so, it needed the modern capabilities that come with digital transformation to help drive innovation and disrupt its competition.

Enter Neptune Software. With Neptune's no-code/low-code tools building business apps becomes effortless.

Solution: Use the help of Low-Code to modernize and automate internal, customer, and commercial portals and create automation capabilities for multiple new business sectors

With a **much lower total cost of ownership (TCO) for code than Secil's previous platform** and its compliance with construction security standards, Neptune Software was a natural choice.

Adoption and training for Neptune DXP were seamless. Integration with SAP was also easy, especially since Secil developers had a deep knowledge of SAP applications and platforms. They **were able to design an app in minutes and then roll it out in days.**

HR pilot delivers early wins
Beginning with a pilot in its HR department, Secil launched a new vacation scheduling and approvals application. Doing so would ease its workforce, many of whom had limited experience with computers, into the new approach. **It would also help prove the usability of the Neptune DXP–powered application.**

In just two months, Secil built a simple, intuitive, no-training-required application, which was quickly rolled out to more than 1,000 employees, making it easy for them to request time off. As a result, **vacation approval time quickly decreased from three weeks to three days, and the company eliminated the need to print over 7,500 documents each year.**
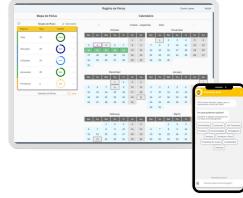
Since it launched right before the first COVID-19 lockdown in Portugal, application adoption was much easier and faster than expected. **The success led to the additional deployment of HR applications that managed overtime, absence management, and shift coverage.** Combined, the new applications helped make it easier for employees to work from home while **reducing the management capacity needed from two full-time equivalents (FTEs) to one.**

Apps built with low-code simplify vendor management, improve quarry management
Next up, the team created a new procurement portal and digitized materials management, vendors, workflow approval, purchasing requisitions, invoice checking, and service approval processes.

Time savings were significant. **Thanks to Neptune DXP, the newly built applications in place helped to decrease procurement purchase approval time from two weeks to two days.** In addition, the **new-vendor process decreased from three weeks to three days.**
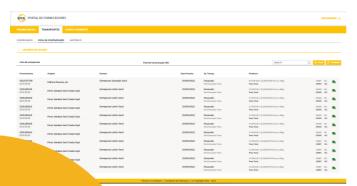
Neptune Software

More teams began requesting applications to solve their business problems. Among them, **self-service capabilities were created for truck drivers and quarry weight measurement, as well as offline app capabilities for remote quarry locations.** With the ability to manage their own transports, transporters save considerable time. Secil was able to empower its IT department with no-code/low-code solutions from Neptune Software to meet the ever-growing demand from the business side while continuing to deliver substantial business results.

In just two months, the team also built an explosives-tracking application to ensure that quarry explosives met legal requirements, creating capabilities that freed up 1,500 hours of labor per year.

Successfully tackling the biggest project: The B2B Digital Hub

The largest project for Secil was creating a new B2B portal to improve customer and vendor relationships. **Secil's Digital Hub was built entirely with Neptune DXP, yet separate from SAP.** The objectives: easy user management, seamless customer access to the portal, the ability to track key performance indicators, and the ability to customize processes as needed.

Today, the Digital Hub includes four portals, one of which empowers transporters to manage their own transports. **By decreasing phone calls and optimizing transport routes, the portal reduced the time required to manage this process to 0.5 FTE.**

Results: Three-month migration deadline to Neptune DXP supports enterprise acceleration, robust self-service for customers and employees, and strong ROI

Today, Secil has successfully put Neptune DXP to work to create unified customer experiences and mobile-friendly interfaces across all portals. **The company has also seen a positive return on investment (ROI) across all Neptune Software projects.**

Specifically, **the company has achieved enterprise acceleration with Neptune DXP, having built 17 enterprise applications to date** across HR, procurement, quarries, commercial excellence, logistics, and accounting.

Today, customers can create and submit their own orders through Secil's Digital Hub. **Within three months of launch, 37% of current customers had migrated to the new hub. Impressively, sales orders increased by 27%, and sales volume increased by 53% compared with the old portal.**

Self-service employee applications such as the vacation and time-off applications have empowered employees while streamlining key processes. **Not only can employees bypass manager approval for time-off requests, but the HR team's workload also was reduced by 0.5 FTE**, increasing agility and freeing precious time.

With these documented successes, **Secil plans to keep using and building with Neptune DXP across all geographies, adding innovative new capabilities to help the company thrive**, give employees, customers, and vendors modern convenience, and improve its ability to outpace the competition. That's a combination built for success.

In 2019, with a migration deadline of approximately three months, Secil switched to its new enterprise application platform (Neptune DXP), launching 17 applications that help to streamline operations across the entire enterprise.

About Neptune Software

Neptune Software is a rapid application development platform vendor with more than 730 enterprise customers and over 4 million licensed end users globally that empowers IT departments to deliver tangible business outcomes. Neptune Software offers with its Neptune DXP, a leading low-code, SAP-centric, enterprise app development platform to digitize and optimize business processes and user interfaces – at scale and with ease. Neptune DXP provides a fast and cost-effective way to industrialize the development of custom applications - saving companies time and money on development, integration, and operations. More info at: www.neptune-software.com

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