

CLIENT CASE STUDY

Design and Delivery of a Custom Tendering System for Sportmaster's 1,500+ Retail Stores

ABOUT THE CLIENT

Sportmaster is a multinational retail company specialising in sporting apparel and equipment.

The company operates over 1,500 stores across six countries, primarily under the Sportmaster brand. It also owns and manages several other retail chains, including:

- O'STIN
- Funday
- Demix
- and some Skechers and Columbia stores.

Sportmaster employs more than 20,000 staff worldwide.

PROJECT SCOPE

The objective of this project was to develop a proprietary platform for managing procurement processes with suppliers — a custom-built e-tendering system designed specifically for Sportmaster's internal needs.

A key requirement was to build the platform with future scalability and integration in mind, enabling further development and alignment with the company's broader IT landscape.

Sportmaster's previous solution was a standalone cloud-based tool with no integration into existing systems. This resulted in significant manual workload for users. One of the core goals of the project was therefore to reduce operational friction by embedding the new platform into the company's IT ecosystem.

PROJECT RISKS

The primary risk in this project was the strict deadline imposed by the expiration of the previous solution's license. The legacy tool had been prepaid until a specific date, and it was absolutely critical to have the new system fully operational before that deadline.

While many projects allow for some flexibility in timing, this case offered none — the contract with the previous vendor was set to expire, and there was no room for delay.

As a result, choosing the wrong development partner would have posed a serious risk: if delivery failed mid-project, restarting with a new vendor would have made it impossible to meet the deadline.

VENDOR SELECTION

“First of all, we knew it was time to move to a popular enterprise-grade platform — one that could be deployed internally within our infrastructure.

I prepared a brief summary of the project and sent it to a few dozen Bitrix partners, primarily high-level Gold Partners.

We started receiving early-stage responses — clarifying questions, quotes, and proposals.

What set IT-m apart was their thoughtful and structured approach. They asked smart, relevant questions — and not every vendor does that. Some simply reply with, ‘Here’s the price, we can do anything you want.’ Given the high-risk nature of the project, that kind of response was a red flag for us.

IT-m, on the other hand, suggested working with one of the standard Bitrix configurations — and even identified two that could potentially fit. Their detailed and considered questions stood out.

In the end, two other vendors with prior experience in building tendering platforms also made it to the final round.

IT-m was ultimately selected based on the best combination of price and functionality.”

*— Pavel Lutsenko
Solution Architect – Sportmaster’s e-Tendering Platform*

PROJECT STAGES

1. Phase One: Validating the Core Concept

The first priority was to test the core concept. To do this, the team developed a low-functionality but fully formed prototype that could be used to assess the suitability of the concept as a Supplier Portal for non-merchandise procurement.

This phase ran from January to March 2020, covering the full development cycle: requirements definition, implementation, internal review, and analysis of the prototype.

2. Phase Two: Full-Scale Development

In April, after the prototype was reviewed and received positive feedback regarding its technical capabilities, the project team commenced development of the full-scale tendering platform.

Given the anticipated scope and complexity of the work, the project was structured into four functional phases — beginning with the highest-priority features and progressing toward more advanced, large-scale system components.

3. Phase Three: Internal Release and Feedback

By July, business stakeholders were able to view and test a working version of the system. While not all requested features had been implemented at that point, the platform was already functional and usable.

It's worth noting that the project was initially constrained by both budget and scope. Following the internal demonstration and feedback from users, the team reassessed the project backlog, prioritised additional features, and secured an updated budget to continue development.

"Thanks to the thorough analytical work done by the Sportmaster team and the strong B2B platform technical expertise provided by IT-m's project manager, we were able to establish clear and efficient communication from the outset — across requirements gathering, development and acceptance.

This well-structured collaboration enabled us to deliver a significant volume of work within tight timeframes and launch the new platform right on schedule."

*— Oksana Beloborodova
Project Lead — Sportmaster's e-Tendering Platform*

4. Phase Four: System Launch

The go-live date was set for December 2020. Training sessions for end users began in November, and on December 7, the first users successfully transitioned to the new system.

5. Phase Five: Ongoing Improvements

Enhancements to the platform are still underway, as active use continues to generate valuable user feedback. Real-world operation revealed opportunities for refinement — certain features needed to be adjusted or extended, while others required rethinking after users began interacting with the system directly.

Initially, some users had a mental picture of how the functionality would work, but once they started using it hands-on, they realised that changes were needed to improve usability.

That said, there were no cases where significant amounts of work had to be discarded and rebuilt from scratch. The development team maintained close collaboration with end users throughout the process — regularly showcasing new features in test mode and using immediate feedback to refine functionality before release.

In the end, the project was delivered on time.

Naturally, the new platform didn't launch without a hitch — a few issues surfaced during rollout. However, the team handled them effectively, and the new system went live as planned.

TEAM

"I would like to highlight the exceptional skills of IT-m's IT Project Manager, Aleksei Aprelkov.

We were truly fortunate to have him on the project. Not only did he have strong technical expertise, particularly in Bitrix24 and B2B platforms, but he also demonstrated excellent communication skills, which made collaboration fast and efficient.

Explaining our requirements to him was almost always quick and straightforward. Even when a task was large in scope, knowledge transfer rarely took long. As mentioned earlier, we intentionally broke down large tasks into smaller deliverables to speed up the process – and his ability to quickly grasp and deliver those made a huge difference.

There was also a genuine sense of personal involvement in our project. We could feel that the contractor was truly interested – it wasn't just a formal arrangement like, 'Well, we've signed a contract with Sportmaster, now we just have to deliver.'

Instead, the contractor actively proposed solutions and alternatives, which made the collaboration very comfortable and productive."

– Oksana Beloborodova

“Overall, Aleksei’s strengths include effective task management and a strong desire to fully understand the requirements. He doesn’t just follow instructions — he thinks critically and suggests optimisations. He doesn’t simply ‘complete the task’; he applies thought and insight to every solution.

To balance the praise with one note of caution: at times, Aleksei pushed the team a little too fast. That’s a great trait during active development and rollout phases, when speed is essential. But once we moved into the system stabilisation stage, we needed more focus on change control and release planning instead of frequent updates to the live system. On a few occasions, changes went live that later had to be adjusted.

That said, one of the contractor’s biggest strengths is their openness to feedback and willingness to resolve issues. They listened, adapted the process, and the collaboration remained very effective. Their hourly rate is also very reasonable.”

– Pavel Lutsenko

“The speed of execution was consistently high — no concerns there. I observed strong bursts of progress. At times, we might have needed to gather information on our side, but once we did, everything was implemented quickly and efficiently.”

*– Pavel Andreev
Business Stakeholder, e-Tendering Platform Sportmaster LLC*

OUTCOME

The original goal was clear: to build a fully controlled platform for managing interactions with suppliers of goods and services.

By “fully controlled,” we mean a solution entirely under Sportmaster’s management and ownership.

The platform needed to be flexible, scalable, and adaptable — ready to evolve with Sportmaster’s internal business needs and shifting approaches to supplier engagement more broadly.

The objective was successfully achieved. Today, the system is fully operational and performing its intended functions.

Moreover, the platform was built on a solid foundation, allowing for future development and the integration of the latest trends in supplier collaboration.

The new e-Tendering Platform is already delivering tangible advantages for Sportmaster, including:

- Geographical segmentation – enabling decentralised supplier management across multiple regions.
- Customisation to Sportmaster's workflows – tailored to the company's unique procurement processes and document formats, simplifying post-tender communication.
- Multiple integration options – designed for seamless connectivity with other internal systems, streamlining operations across the broader business ecosystem.

ONGOING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The project is currently in an active stabilisation phase, involving the entire project team.

A dedicated developer from IT-m is working closely with Sportmaster's business analysts, with a steady pipeline of tasks. These include support requests, defect resolution, and new feature development.

In terms of development, several strategic directions have already been preliminarily discussed within Sportmaster. While promising, these initiatives still require in-depth scoping before they are ready to move into implementation.

The immediate focus for the project team includes:

- Stabilising the platform,
- Fine-tuning the system to ensure a smooth and user-friendly experience,
- Supporting users in adopting the new tool and building internal expertise,
- Planning and preparing for future development phases.

"The ongoing support process has demonstrated that the contractor remains genuinely engaged and committed to our collaboration.

This continued involvement is important to us — developing a system is one thing, but supporting it during active use helps both our business and the contractor build valuable experience and expertise that will inform future improvements.

I'm genuinely pleased with how smoothly we transitioned from development and implementation to operation and ongoing enhancement. I truly hope this

partnership continues at the same high standard — and we can only wish there were more contractors like this one.”

— Oksana Beloborodova

SUMMARY

“The stars aligned for us internally — we managed to build a strong in-house team that delivered on their responsibilities and navigated the challenging phases of the project.

At the same time, the contractor performed their role as a full-fledged part of the project team and never let us down.

We were fortunate to have come together on this project.”

— Pavel Andreev
