

SaaS-apps / webapps

Why Combella is the perfect application hosting partner according to Odyssey

It is important for Odyssey to know that the applications it develops for its customers keep running continuously. That is why some 10 years ago, and after researching the market, this Dutch company opted for Combella's hosting services. It was looking for a partner that shared the same values and, in addition to this, understood that applications have specific requirements. Care, integrity, honesty, reliability: characteristics woven into Odyssey's DNA and which it sees reflected in Combella as its application hosting partner.

From own campaign to application developer

Odyssey Solutions **develops platforms and communities (or apps, SMS and web applications)**

for businesses. But in actual fact, it all began with a campaign of its own. In 2003, Clifford Francis, founder of the company **Odyssey Solutions**, had the idea of putting together a community for people who were in an uncomfortable situation, for example a serious illness, through circumstances outside of their control. A kind of mutual support organisation.



The idea: each month, the members of the community pay a small amount by text message to be eligible for one of the prizes – a holiday for the entire family, a mobile phone, a ticket for a concert, a workshop, etc. All things they would love to do or have if only they had the money. The concept enjoyed immediate success: from 300 registrations on the first day to a community in excess of 60,000 members within a year.

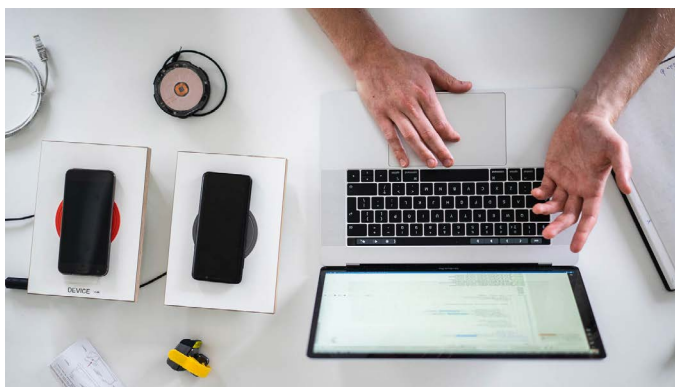
The success of Odyssey's own SMS campaigns inspired other companies to request its services, and Odyssey began to specialise more and more in the development of platforms and communities for national and international companies. The tools: SMS, apps and web applications.



Positive impact as guiding principle

The platforms and communities are incredibly diverse, but they are united by a common theme: their **positive impact on society**. Here are a few examples:

For **MVO Nederland**, which is responsible for boosting the circular economy, a community was developed where businesses can interact with each other. For example, a large beer brewer had biological waste material left over from beer production. This business was linked via the community to a company that uses this residual product as the raw material for making paper. And that paper is then used by the brewer in its production process. This is truly an example of **circular business**.



Another great example is the platform developed for Zens, a company that makes wireless chargers for offices with **flexspaces**. The platform can be monitored to find out which offices are occupied. In this way, the lighting can be turned off in empty offices, or offices that have been used can be brought to the attention of the cleaning team in the

context of coronavirus measures. The solution ensures that the desk is at the right height automatically or even that the desktop is heated, which has been shown to prevent illness in employees; the overall heating level can also be lowered, which is better for the climate.

Partners with the same values in their DNA

Oddessey distinguishes itself in various respects from other app builders. 'We always try to **brainstorm with our customers** to solve specific issues, and get a feel as to what exactly is necessary to achieve the correct results. On occasions, that may be via a different route than what the customer had in mind. We collaborate intensively with the customer, even to the extent of participating in the project. Then, we are really building together and making joint decisions about how we can bring the platform, the community, to life.

And, according to John Hertogs, team manager at OddeSsey, it is that **partnership** that appeals to the customers. 'We take any challenges faced by our customers extremely seriously, and if a customer is experiencing a problem with a project, we will get to work and fix it before we go to bed. We are really driven – we see the customer not so much as a customer but more as a partner with which to achieve the best possible results that please us both.





"We are really driven – we see the customer not so much as a customer but more as a partner with which to achieve the best possible results that please us both – just like Combell."

John Hertogs

Another distinguishing characteristic of Oddessey is **integrity**. 'Our integrity is woven into our culture. In our dealings with customers, we are always sincere and honest and give them the best advice – even when that is not to our benefit, such as when we believe it would be better not to develop a certain feature. Assisting the customer properly is more important to us than booking hours of work. And that is the reason why our customers stay with us year after year', according to John.

Another of Oddessey's assets is the comprehensive care. 'Oddssey assumes full responsibility, so that the customer can focus on marketing, sales, etc.' As our application hosting partner, Combell has a big role in this comprehensive care: the applications developed by Oddessey run on Combell's cloud servers.

A hosting partner must understand the specific requirements of applications

Oddssey has enjoyed a great track record for

growth since 2013. The company is now up to 20 employees, and **the applications that Oddssey develops are operating in 65 countries**. The customers are highly diverse, from quasi-governmental bodies to mediagenic businesses that are often in the spotlight or approach the media themselves to get publicity for their platform.

John Hertogs cautions: '**Application hosting is a lot more technical than a website**. You need to make sure that the application keeps running and is capable of **scaling up**. You need more computing power than for a traditional website, and the app may also need highly **specific computing power**. It is important that your application hosting partner understands what the application does and can therefore provide you with advice on your hosting needs – it has to fulfil these specific requirements and be responsive to these particular needs.'

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As far as that is concerned, John is more than satisfied with Combell. 'We have our own account manager. He can answer most questions about our cooperation, and if it concerns a more technical matter, he will always put me in touch with the correct people with whom to reach the right solution.'



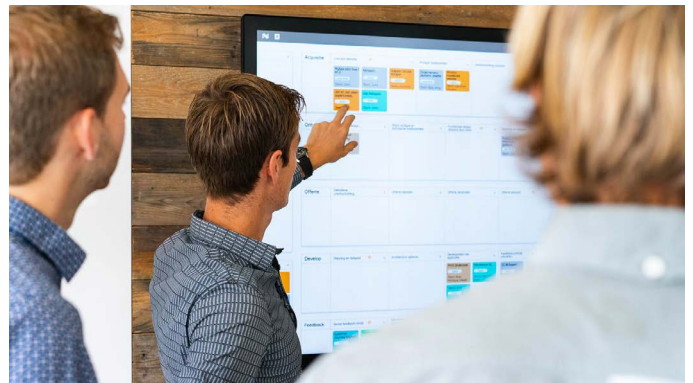
This way, we always get the right advice so we can offer our customers the right hosting package for their business.'

Partners, each with their own core business

The cooperation between Combell and Oddesey developed gradually as Oddesey itself began to take off. After an initial small project, step-by-step other projects were transferred to Combell. Currently, Oddesey is buying **various types of hosting** from Combell: **cloud servers** and **dedicated web hosting** for the most business-critical applications, depending on their scale. 'And for smaller projects, we use **reseller hosting**', says John, 'a platform specially designed for Combell partners where we can create our own packages for each project. That is ideal for us, because we can manage everything in one place.'

For the most part, the cloud servers are set up by Combell. Oddesey does do some things itself, such as linking the domain name, creating the databases, etc. But the management and maintenance of the servers is handled by Combell. 'That is a profession in its own right', points out John. 'They have the specialised expertise this demands and therefore we do not need to get involved and can concentrate on what we do best. All in all, it is nicely split up: the **customer focuses on the concept, sales and the marketing. We concentrate on implementation and leave the hosting and technical operation to Combell.** Everyone looks after their own core business!'

"All in all, it is nicely split up: the customer focuses on the concept, sales and the marketing, while we concentrate on the implementation of the app, leaving the hosting and technical operation to Combell. Everyone looks after their own core business!"



Combell chosen as application hosting partner following market research

It might not seem an obvious choice for a Dutch company to choose a Ghent-based company for its hosting. However, the choice was based on objective criteria – Oddesey did its market research and Combell simply emerged as the best. John Hertogs:



'We did have a provider already, but in 2010, when we entered our growth phase, this provider was no longer up to the mark. We therefore went looking for a sound hosting provider that was a match with our DNA, our continuing growth and our customers' needs.'

The key criteria were **flexibility, scalability and, of course, good service**. And should a problem arise, the hosting provider had to be able to act as appropriate to resolve it as fast as possible. John explains: 'Our customers are relying on us. Once we have delivered the application, it is vital that it keeps working all the time. Our customers spend a good deal of money on marketing, and if the application is not working, visitor numbers will tail off. That may cost our customers thousands of euros in no time at all.'

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Oddessey did its research to identify parties which had a good reputation and were known for excellent service. And **Combell emerged from that research as the best application hosting partner**. It is no accident that the core qualities on which Oddey places a high value (integrity, care, partnership) are also present in Combell's DNA!

Would John recommend Combell to others? 'Yes, certainly. We share certain characteristics that are really important to us. Care for the environment, integrity, and **being a dependable partner on which both we and the customer can rely**. Integrity is particularly important. We lack the knowledge to compare everything our customer needs for the hosting. We have to go by their advice and be sure they will recommend what is needed rather than what is most profitable. And they are really strong in that respect!'

Together with Tom Hoekstra, team manager at Oddey, John confirms: 'We have grown rapidly. For our customers, we build tailored applications for which response time is crucial. It costs a considerable amount of money if they are inaccessible. Since the solutions are running on Combell servers, we can be confident that they will keep running. And the customers will have no worries when it comes to the technical side of their applications.'



'We build the applications for the customer, fully customised, and then run them on Combell's servers. We are therefore confident that they will keep running.'



Security is central to the development of an application

Oddessey makes **security central to the development of its apps**. But apart from the precautions that Oddeesey itself incorporates in its applications, the **hosting** is also **important**. 'We set a lot of requirements for the **security of our hosting**, but Combell satisfies them all. It continually invests in security enhancements and does not compromise in this regard. You pay a bit more with Combell than you would with a cheap hosting supplier, but you get higher quality. And for us, that is more important – in the end, it is not about the price but rather the quality.'

Oddessey also regards **security as paramount** for its own customers. The fact that it is able to refer to the certificates obtained by Combell for its hosting is a big plus point. It is also very important that the **data is hosted in Europe** so that the requirements of the **GDPR** are met.

In addition, Oddeesey offers its customers a **maintenance contract** for regular maintenance and updating, as this can prevent an application from being hacked. It is all to the good that Combell is applying up-to-date security at server level that is

100% watertight, but if the application is not properly maintained, then hackers can still get in.

Fortunately, **good backups** of the customers' data are made. Combell takes care of that, automatically. **Backups that you can restore yourself** via the control panel. In specific circumstances, Oddeesey makes extra backups, e.g. when an application is undergoing major maintenance. This ensures that customers never lose data.


It is primarily a **question of trust**, as John puts it. 'We can rely on Combell as our partner, and that is necessary to be able to grow. We can guarantee quality to our customers with complete confidence: the application is running and will keep running because it is with Combell.'

Combell's **good reputation** is also a selling point for Oddeesey in its negotiations with a customer. 'With Combell as our application hosting partner, we can substantiate that the stability, security and so on are fully in order. We refer to the website, the ISO certifications, and can also point to the security of the **data centre**, the traffic and the infrastructure. For some customers, that does not make much difference, but other customers view all that as very important. And then, it is great that we can demonstrate this,' comments John.

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