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SOLUTIONS

Robotics, Order management system, On-premise solution

TECHNOLOGIES

Ruby 2.7.0, Rails 6.0.2.1
React 17.0.1 and Workbox
Python 3.9, Flask 1.1.2
Kotlin 1.3.72, Postgres 12.3
RabbitMQ 3.8, MQTT, STOMP, LCM protocol, Docker and Docker-compose, Terraform
AWS: Lambda, API Gateway, S3, IoT Core, SNS, DynamoDB
Nginx, Gunicorn Sumologic

DURATION

2 years

METHODOLOGY

Kanban

TEAM

1 Project Manager
1 Account manager
1 Designer
1 Software Architect / Tech Lead
2 Middle / Senior developers

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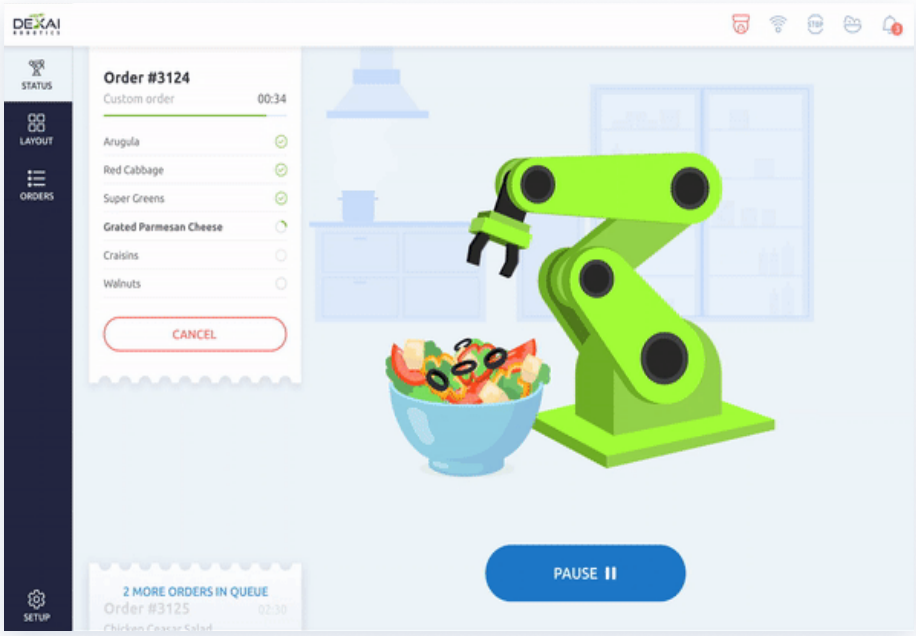
Client: Dexai Robotics
Industries: HoReCa / Restaurants & Hotels / Hospitality
Region: Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Website: dexai.com

Dexai Robotics: Graphical User Interface for Robot Operation



Meet Alfred, an automated robotic arm and your personal sous chef! Alfred was born at Dexai Robotics, while SumatoSoft developed a graphic user interface (GUI) that helps to communicate with the robot!

Special features

State Page — displays an action that the robot is performing at the moment. There are unique and animated screens for every state. The design of screens is very bright and simple so robot operators can easily understand the current state of the robot at a glance.

Error and alert handling — the app informs the operator if some problems occurred and guides how to solve the issue. If the robot runs out of ingredients, needs a bowl, or a utensil is missing, the app shows an alert.

Business challenge

There was a **robotic arm named Alfred**, but only robotics and software engineers could communicate with it. The client didn't have a user-friendly interface that sends commands to the robot or monitors its state.

The company planned to sell Alfred to restaurants and reached out to the SumatoSoft team to develop a platform with GUI for interaction between restaurant personnel and multiple robots.

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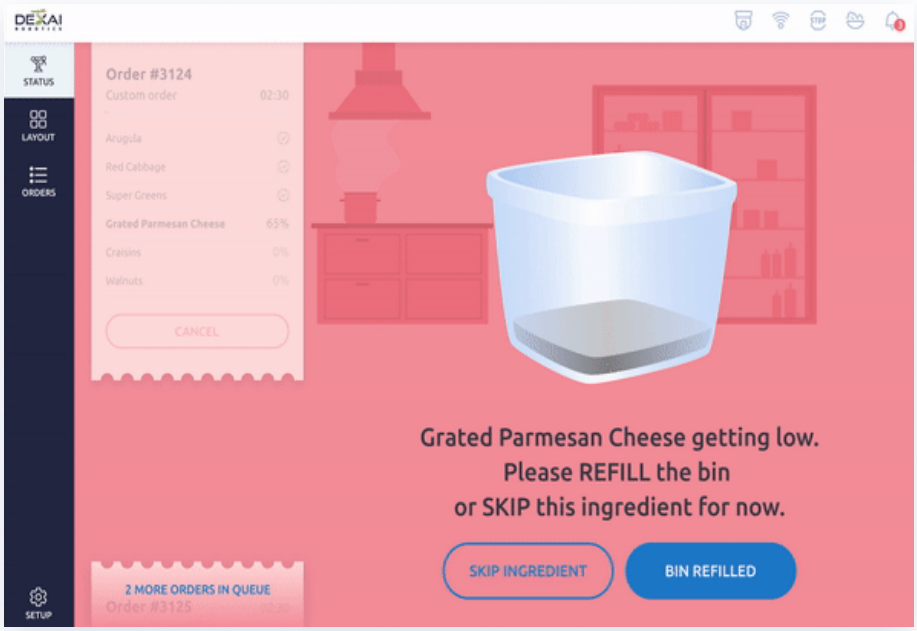
The list of additional requirements includes

- built-in user management system;
- robot state and actions monitoring;
- sending commands to robots;
- POS systems integration;
- managing the order queue;
- error/edge cases handling.

Our solution

React JS was chosen as the main technology for the GUI application, and Ruby on Rails was chosen as the backend technology. The main reason behind this decision was that they are well suited for the rapid prototyping and startup environment we worked in. The initial architecture included several microservices with HTTP communication. These microservices were React UI application and Rails backend server, written in Python.

During the development of the first version, a number of revisions were made both to the requirements and our final solution. First of all, we faced changes in requirements — the customer decided to go only with one robot instead of multiple for the MVP stage. Secondly, we found out that the robot was executing commands asynchronously and wasn't providing results of these commands. It became clear that HTTP protocol with its request/response scheme wasn't the best choice in our case, so we abandoned it.



At that point we'd also decided to get rid of the Rails server since we could move most of its features to another internal server and the remaining features were deprecated. In addition, the customer wanted a new version of the graphical interface due to some changes in requirements.

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All this led to a new version of the architecture, where the Rails server was deprecated and all microservices communicated via Message Broker (RabbitMQ) with each other. After implementing this version, we were able to immediately display robot state changes, send commands and orders to it and handle errors from the robot side.

One of the challenges of this project was the requirement that the main **order processing flow should work offline** (without global Internet connectivity). To achieve this goal, we decided to build PWA (Progressive Web Application) as the main UI for kitchen staff based on our React UI application.

During the next stage, the client needed to develop **several additional microservices and a separate user interface for order placing**.

Our final solution included multiple backend services

- service for order creation and storing them into the cloud;
- order queue management server;
- microservice for storing and managing recipes;
- service for synchronizing data between on premise and cloud service;
- UI for placing orders written in React JS and the cloud microservices written in Kotlin.

The developed solution allowed us to integrate with third party POS systems and keep a close watch on orders lifecycle. Each microservice was wrapped into a docker container, while metrics and logs monitoring relied on SumoLogic.

Customer’s benefits

Dexai Robotics wants to revolutionize the food industry with the help of a sleek, hygienic robot Alfred and provide seamless automated food preparation for customers. That is possible only if the GUI controlling the robot has simple and intuitive interfaces.

The developed platform meets these requirements. It allows restaurant staff to control Alfred from a tablet, pause the robot, handle mistakes, amend recipes, monitor performance. The business has an MVP that was successfully presented to investors and received financing for further development.

What’s happening with the project right now?

The project was successfully completed, the user interface allows to send commands to the robot arm. The robot functionality is currently being finalized to start real-life commercial deployments.

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