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Find out what the global leaders in Search Intelligence are saying about working with Dotfive

A Captifying conversation

Captify's Head of Engineering, Bruce Eddy, explains how partnering with Dotfive helped his team adapt and evolve, and enabled the business to overcome some significant technical challenges.

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Award-winning Search Intelligence specialists Captify are the largest independent holders of search data outside Google. Their technology provides real-time search insights for some of the world's biggest brands to help them attract more customers, and provide users with better, more tailored digital experiences. Since 2021, Dotfive has been working with Captify to provide key expertise in areas of specialist knowledge, perform R&D, and augment Captify's engineering capacity. This has included performance optimisation of data services, improving the reliability of data infrastructure, guiding on technology options, and carrying out a business-critical data migration to their new analytics platform, Databricks. Here, Bruce explains how Dotfive provided the additional engineering and infrastructure abilities he needed for successful delivery, and helped him to respond quickly and effectively to problems caused by unforeseen global political events.

What were the main challenges that you were facing before working with Dotfive?

We were experiencing challenges with getting the right technical approach to understanding key points about our data, in order to get the right answers to the questions we wanted to ask. The architectural and technical approaches we had taken to storing, querying, and making data available to stakeholders had been good when they were implemented five or more years ago, but were no longer fit for purpose or for the ambitions of Captify. Dotfive produced some good ideas about setting our systems up for success, and helped us progress a good way towards achieving this.

A further challenge arose from the war in Ukraine. With offices in Kyiv, these developments posed risks to our people and our business. A lot of vital knowledge was in the heads of people living in the warzone. Dotfive were very flexible, and the very next day they began helping us with documentation to support knowledge transfer which would make sure an understanding of our key processes, core infrastructure, and business-critical data was held by the Dotfive team as well as our people in Ukraine.

What were the main reasons for you choosing to work with Dotfive?

Dotfive were one of several potential partners I called to discuss the challenges we were facing. I've spent a long time recruiting for technical roles and making judgements on people's expertise. During conversations with the Dotfive team it became very apparent that they were very smart and thoughtful, with a deep technical knowledge, and that they were the right people to help us improve the quality of our systems and help us make some important decisions that would have a long-term impact on our business.

> The progress that we've made towards data infrastructure gets us closer to the dream of data democratisation across our business.

What are some of the key benefits of working with Dotfive?

One of the things Dotfive said when we started our relationship was that it's a partnership, and that they are invested in Captify's success and my team's success. And that has proven to be the case. They have been exceptionally flexible in responding to our changing needs. I also appreciate that Dotfive are thinking ahead and saying, "I think that Captify are going to need to go in this direction, and we want to be ready for them when they do," so that's something which has been particularly impressive.

Once we settled down into a regular project work cadence, the quality of the work has been exceptional. They've been working in an area of the business which was previously a bit of a Cinderella; not very popular with the stakeholders. That perception has noticeably changed among key senior stakeholders for the data warehouse and BI (Business Intelligence) functions within the business. On several occasions I've had positive feedback about the increased reliability of those systems, and of the responsiveness to queries from the Dotfive team, so there's a number of things which I'm pleased to be associated with.

How has working with Dotfive helped to improve your business?

There's the obvious day-to-day improvement in perception and improvement in performance. The technology that the Dotfive team have been working on is a core part of our Business Intelligence and finance reporting, and helps us to make effective decisions for the business as a whole. That information is seen by the CFO and CEO, and the board on a monthly basis. I was under a lot of pressure before I started working with Dotfive on this. Reporting would fail at inopportune moments, which meant that we were constantly struggling to get the information needed to make effective business decisions. Very soon after Dotfive started working on this, the reliability was noticeably improved, and it's not really been an issue for me during the period we've been working on it. So that's a tactical thing that has gone much better for our business whilst working with Dotfive.

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Thinking more in terms of the work they've done on our strategy and our longer-term investments, the progress that we've made towards data infrastructure gets us closer to the dream of data democratisation across our business.

Already, we're seeing the insights in the BI teams. We're beginning to learn how to use Databricks, and teams are beginning to understand that they can self-serve their own scheduled reports. They can set up monitoring to understand when our downstream partners have not been sending us data, and they can do this themselves rather than having to rely on our engineering team. We're on the cusp of realising a really significant business benefit here, where the work of maintaining and understanding and benefiting from our core business data is distributed across our organisation rather than being concentrated on a few people in product engineering.

Dotfive will deliver a project effectively, which is not true of every development partner you'll work with. It's a measure of how impressive I found working with Dotfive.

What have you learned from working with Dotfive?

The way that the Dotfive guys work is very considered and systematic and thoughtful. I can see the beginnings of a change of behaviour in some of the people in my team who have been working most closely with them. They're beginning to adopt more of a measured and systematic approach to their problem solving, which is an extremely positive thing. I think that the quality of the work and the quality of documentation that the guys produce is seen relatively widely across my team and is a good example to them as to how things ought to be done in an ideal world.

What is the best thing about working with Dotfive?

We've never had any surprises or unexpected occurrences with Dotfive. There are never any surprises in the costs, and the invoices are always what I expect them to be, which is not always the case with other suppliers. The predictability from Dotfive is great.

What would you like to say to other businesses who are considering working with Dotfive?

I would recommend that they do. It kind of goes without saying that Dotfive will deliver a project effectively, which is not true of every development partner you'll work with. It's a measure of how impressive I found working with Dotfive: that basic level is something you don't really need to talk about; that's obviously going to happen, which is great and I think I'd definitely say that to other companies considering working with Dotfive.

I think the other thing which distinguishes Dotfive from other potential technology partners is the engagement with the problems that we have as a business, and the application of expert thought to try to solve those problems. It's what technology partners are meant to do. The level of reflection and thoughtfulness from Dotfive is what I would recommend to potential partners.

## How does Dotfive compare with other suppliers in terms of cost?

Dotfive's price is extremely competitive compared to other equivalent organisations, and it's one of the reasons that I was able to work with you. The price you were able to offer me was very competitive and that meant that it was a much easier conversation to have with the budget-setting team. The price compares fairly favourably with the market for freelance contractors, but is actually much better value, because of the consistency and the 'hive mind'; the shared expertise that comes from the Dotfive organisation, which a freelance contractor doesn't have.

The consistency and the predictability that comes from working with Dotfive because of their 'hot spare' system means you never have to slow down the project because of a sick day or because someone's gone on holiday, so that's very good. So Dotfive was extremely good value. Pricewise they are about the same as contractors, but much better value.

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Would you consider working with Dotfive again?

Yes, certainly! I think that as soon as we find ourselves in the position of needing some additional expertise for a defined period of time, then you'll be first on my list.
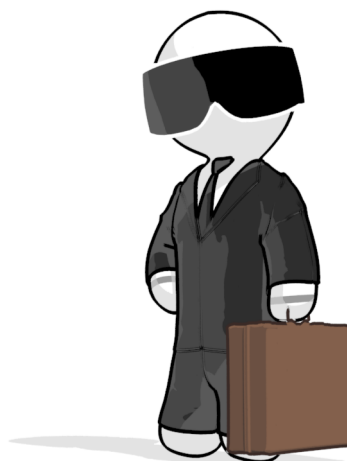
dotfive™

www.dotfive.co.uk
hello@dotfive.co.uk
+44 (0) 8456 808 805
+1 (307) 222 4842