NBC.com iPad app reaches #1 in the App Store and 2 million users within 9 months

Rapid mobile innovation powered by Appcelerator

INTRODUCTION

NBC is one of the most-watched television networks of all-time and has led the industry in the evolution from television to the web back in the late ’90s. Now a decade later, the move to mobile was well underway, and NBC had a decision to make.

THE CHALLENGE: SCALING NBC’S APPROACH TO MOBILE

Like many media companies, NBC had many choices within the mobile space to consider when getting started in mobile, particularly in mobile applications. Initially their approach was to work with a show to create one-off apps, however this became challenging to maintain, update, and sustain long-term.

NBCUniversal

COMPANY

One of the world’s largest broadcasting networks, NBC has hundreds of original broadcast shows across TV, cable, and online properties.

OBJECTIVE

Create the best possible user experiences across every device.

BENEFITS

Rapid innovation: Update cycles from weeks to days

Cross-platform efficiency: 97% code reuse across iOS and Android for Late Night with Jimmy Fallon

Cost savings: 80% reduction in cost and time-to-market compared to outsourcing to an Objective-C or Java developer

Scalable development: Mobile media framework on Titanium can scale and support hundreds of new apps
NBC.com initially focused on delivering iPhone apps using third party Objective-C programmers. That approach worked for the first app, but the company saw that there were several areas of opportunity for improvement:

**Faster update cycles**
Building any app in Objective-C requires weeks or months of development to refresh, which means more time spent on updates and less time spent on new content, features, or apps.

**End-to-end control over digital and mobile**
NBC had great success engaging their viewers over the web. By utilizing these same developers to create their mobile apps, they were able to manage web and mobile as an integrated in-house effort.

**Branching out beyond iOS**
While iOS remains popular, the rise of Android and other platforms requires sourcing not just one, but multiple skillsets.

**Integrating mobile, broadcast and web advertising**
NBC.com was able to package broadcast and online advertising very effectively and wanted to extend this to mobile in a repeatable manner.

**Content library reuse**
Each new app required starting over when it came to connecting to NBC’s large online content library.

There had to be a better way... a more strategic approach to mobile

**BUILDING AN INTEGRATED AND SCALABLE MOBILE CLOUD STRATEGY**

NBC decided to extend their internal digital strategy to include mobile by integrating it with NBC’s web and broadcast strategy. As they looked at how mobile could be part of the company’s core business, NBC identified four requirements to building a scalable, long-term mobile strategy:

**Create the best possible user experience**
NBC was in the business of delivering the best-quality broadcast and online experience; their mobile experience should meet that same high quality bar.

**NBC Everywhere**
NBC wanted to showcase their content to every user on every device, so they needed a platform that enabled them to reuse code from OS to OS.

“Choosing Appcelerator is as much about planning for the future as it is innovating in the present. As we scale to include more programs across more devices, we need a platform that enables us to have organizational agility and efficiency. Appcelerator Titanium is that platform.”

-Vivi Zigler, President, NBCUniversal, Digital Entertainment
Leverage existing in-house web developers
NBC had a great team of web developers with a tremendous amount of institutional knowledge and experience engaging their viewers. NBC wanted to utilize this expertise on their mobile projects.

Scalable content and advertising delivery model
NBC needed a single unified approach to delivering content and advertising to multiple devices across a growing portfolio of applications.

THE SOLUTION: APPCELERATOR TITANIUM AND TITANIUM+PLUS

NBC.com first started using Appcelerator Titanium in early 2010. They were initially attracted to Appcelerator’s platform because their web team could jump in and build mobile applications using their existing JavaScript and HTML skills. NBC.com manages its online properties internally so they can quickly innovate as new shows air or new changes to web delivery best practices arise.

1. Jay Leno’s Garage
Their first internally built mobile app using Titanium was Jay Leno’s Garage for the iPhone. This app empowered the NBC.com team to see first-hand what they could produce internally with mobile ... and what the limitations were with the smaller form factor.

“After seeing that we could control our own mobile destiny, I saw that Titanium was transforming the breadth of capabilities that my team could deliver. We were using the same web team that produced the Jay Leno’s Garage website to build a mobile application. No retraining required. No outsourcing our future. No compromising on the experience. It was a very natural move for us,” said Robert Angelo, VP of Product, NBC.com.

2. Late Night with Jimmy Fallon
After Jay Leno’s Garage came Late Night with Jimmy Fallon (“LNJF”). LNJF raised the bar for the NBC.com team. Fallon is heavily involved in all of the decisions related to his website, so he was a natural early adopter to work with NBC on their approach to mobile. The Fallon development team wanted to build an app that was fun and engaging. And it had to be cross-platform.

As the National Broadcasting Corporation, NBC’s customers and advertisers expect them to be everywhere. LNJF would be delivered across iOS and Android – the two most popular mobile platforms. The look and feel would be similar to the website, but optimized for a native mobile experience.

“Our company needs to be on-air, online, and on-device for our viewers and advertisers. Appcelerator is our strategic partner to help us deliver on this vision.”

-Robert Angelo,
VP of Product, NBC.com
Early on, Fallon had several great ideas on how to engage his audience. Topping the list would be audience participation. On air, he would invite viewers to take a picture of themselves in a wild outfit and he’d feature the best shots on his show. He also had an idea for “Jimmy’s apps” – little ‘applets’ in the app itself that could be revealed over time. The combination of features would keep viewers coming back to the app and reward loyal viewers by creating a direct connection with the show.

Titanium was perfect for LNJF on a number of levels. First, NBC was able to innovate at a very rapid pace. How would the camera integration work with the flow of the app? How would Jimmy’s Apps be delivered on an ongoing basis? How would the mobile user experience leverage the Jimmy Fallon brand, but be uniquely mobile in its utility? To answer these questions, NBC rapidly prototyped several user experience options and ran them past Fallon. By reducing the idea creation-to-prototype cycle from weeks to days, a new feature could be acted upon in a very short timeframe.

Second, the cross-platform nature of LNJF showed the importance of having an integrated mobile media framework that sat on top of the Titanium platform. Photos, blogs, video, news feeds, myNBC social, Omniture analytics, Google DART (DoubleClick) advertising, notifications, show schedules and more all required integration with NBC’s backend infrastructure and 3rd party cloud APIs. In partnership with Appcelerator, NBC used Titanium+Plus’ cloud extensibility capabilities to create this reusable framework and allow the team to build a library of components as the LNJF app was built out.
BUILDING AN INTEGRATED MOBILE CLOUD STRATEGY

NBC’s first two Titanium-powered mobile applications set the stage for the rapid pace of innovation that would be required for their next iPad project, NBC Portal. NBC wanted to build one application that could tie together all of NBC’s shows with an engaging, highly personalized user experience. The key to delivering on this goal was focusing more on the end-customer experience than on all the backend connection points. NBC achieved the following benefits from this approach:

Rapid innovation cycle
NBC realized an 80% reduction in cost and time-to-market versus outsourcing to an independent vendor. Updates can be made in days versus weeks, resulting in more time spent on adding new features as programming needs change.

Cross-platform efficiency
LNJF reused 97% of its code across iOS and Android through a single Titanium-based code base.

In-house control
New additions to the application are regularly made by NBC.com’s web team as needed by the show.

A scalable media framework
Over a dozen components built with Titanium+Plus for LNJF are now being reused for follow-on NBC.com applications. New modules and extensions are regularly added to NBC’s mobile media framework, resulting in a high-degree of agility and speed when it comes to new projects.
Using Titanium to rapidly prototype new features and Titanium+Plus to leverage NBC’s prior investment in a cross-platform media framework enabled the rapid mobile innovation required for NBC Portal. They are now in a position where they can discuss new features without having to worry about a long development cycle needed to test each idea. With Appcelerator, they have built a solid cross-platform, fully native, cloud-connected foundation and set of capabilities upon which they can add the new experiences that they really want. They have a true roadmap for mobile.

NBC now runs its mobile strategy in much the same way as their successful web strategy. A single team is responsible for delivery across all mobile and web platforms; the team rapidly tests new ideas with its viewers and innovates quickly based on feedback; delivery is now timed to coincide with NBC’s larger annual planning cycle for new show lineups and integrated offerings for advertisers.

THE FUTURE: NBC EVERYWHERE

Going forward, NBC plans to be everywhere the audience is.

“Choosing Appcelerator is as much about planning for the future as it is innovating in the present,” said Vivi Zigler, President of NBCUniversal Digital Entertainment. “As we scale to include more programs across more devices, we need a platform that enables us to have organizational agility and efficiency. Appcelerator Titanium is that platform.”

Appcelerator is the #1 Mobile Cloud Platform

Appcelerator is the leading enterprise-grade, cross-device mobile development solution on the market today. With over 1.5 million developers worldwide and 20,000+ cloud-connected mobile, desktop and web apps in the wild, Appcelerator is the largest publisher of applications in the iPhone App Store.

The company’s flagship offering, Appcelerator Titanium, is the only platform to enable fully native, cross-device development from a single codebase for iOS, Android, and Blackberry.

Appcelerator’s customers include NBC, PayPal, eBay, Orange, and Cisco. These companies develop their mobile applications on Appcelerator products so they can decrease time-to-market and development costs, increase customer adoption and revenues, and enjoy greater flexibility and control.