Merlin Entertainment’s mobile “app factory” delivers 12 apps in 6 months creating 40% savings per app

Rapid mobile innovation powered by Appcelerator

LEGOLAND’S PARENT COMPANY DEVELOPS 13 THEME PARK APPS WITHIN 6 MONTHS ON TITANIUM

Merlin Entertainments Group is the second largest destination entertainment company in the world after Disney. It provides entertainment across 72 attractions including LEGOLAND, THORPE PARK, Alton Towers, Gardaland, and Madame Tussauds. Already, Merlin has 13 mobile apps for 6 different park attraction locations and has accumulated 350,000 downloads in the past year.

LEGOLAND recognized the opportunity to create an immersive theme park experience through a cross-platform visitor application.

THE CHALLENGE: USING MOBILE TO ENHANCE THE THEME PARK VISIT

Like many destination entertainment companies, Merlin Entertainments Group is always looking to create memorable experiences that will encourage their visitors to return often and stay longer. Mobile apps provide nearly endless opportunities to maximize the customer visit and transform their relationship with their customers:

- Lengthen park visits through enhanced park engagement
- Increase in-park revenue with in-app ticket purchase capabilities
- Promote and upsell park features using mobile messaging and a custom CMS

COMPANY

Providing entertainment to more than 40 million people per year across 72 attractions, Merlin Entertainments Group is the second largest destination entertainment company in the world after Disney. Merlin’s international attractions including LEGOLAND, THORPE PARK, Alton Towers, Gardaland, and Madame Tussauds.

DEVELOPMENT PARTNER

DOGFI.SH MOBILE specializes in rapid development of mobile solutions for iPhone, Android, and mobile websites. Based in the UK, DOGFI.SH clients include GUINNESS and TUI Travel PLC.

APPLICATION

The LEGOLAND app is an immersive theme park app containing information about the park, rides, restaurants, and shops, as well as interactive maps, videos, games, and augmented reality.

BENEFITS OF APPCELERATOR TITANIUM

Quick time to market: 30 days to develop prototype, 20 days to release production-grade app

Scalable development: 50 days for first app, 30 days for second app building on top of custom framework

Cross-platform efficiency: 85% code reuse between iPhone and Android

Worldwide app production: Cross-platform mobile apps for LEGOLAND, THORPE PARK, Alton Towers, Gardaland, Madame Tussauds
STEP ONE: SELECT AN INTEGRATED MOBILE DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

Merlin teamed up with DOGFI.SH MOBILE—a mobile development company based in the UK—to build visitor-centric apps for their park attractions around the world.

When choosing a development strategy, the DOGFI.SH team knew that a mobile website wouldn’t do—they needed to develop a native experience for park visitors. “Currently, a native app is the best way to achieve an interactive and media-rich user experience with camera access, streaming videos, and integrated social media,” says Ross Tuffee, Co-Founder at DOGFI.SH Mobile.

To extend the native experience across multiple devices and brands, DOGFI.SH investigated several development platforms and chose Titanium.

STEP TWO: BUILD A SCALABLE MOBILE FRAMEWORK

Merlin understands the benefits of being able to re-use functionality across their brands and locations. In order to minimize time-to-market and maximize scalability, DOGFI.SH built a framework on top of the Titanium platform, which could quickly deliver new Merlin apps.

This scalable framework utilizes key native app features like augmented reality, mapping, and messaging. By leveraging their library of code in this way, DOGFI.SH is able to quickly roll out apps for additional parks and device platforms.

STEP THREE: BUILD A WORLD-CLASS USER EXPERIENCE

LEGOLAND was able to leverage DOGFI.SH’s mobile framework to world-class user experience for their key constituents—park visiting moms—in two key ways:

1. Augmented reality to enhance park engagement
   Mapping features are central to an immersive user experience. The LEGOLAND app offers a choice of park map, satellite, and augmented reality map views so they can quickly get where they want to go or explore their surroundings.

2. Flexible mobile messaging through cloud-based CMS
   LEGOLAND needs control over the app’s messaging to send up-to-date content to users. DOGFI.SH Mobile addressed this need with

“We evaluated several mobile development platforms and quickly identified Titanium as the best solution for our needs. With Titanium, we were able to get our apps to market quickly and easily train new developers on the platform as we grow.”

ROSS TUFFEE, CO-FOUNDER OF DOGFI.SH MOBILE
a cloud-based content management system that would update the app’s content through a combination of user-based content changes and by pulling information off the brand website with an XML feed.

“Augmented reality is a great feature for a destination app like LEGOLAND. It encourages customers to engage with their physical surroundings in a fun and spontaneous way that ultimately deepens their relationship with the LEGOLAND brand,” says Tuffee.

By leveraging Titanium’s integrated mobile development platform, total development time for the framework and the first production app was only eight weeks.

WHAT’S NEXT: CREATE A LONG-TERM MOBILE STRATEGY WITH APPCELERATOR TITANIUM

LEGOLAND’s mobile success
Since releasing the iPhone and Android app, LEGOLAND has experienced increased brand awareness evidenced by social media buzz, and park engagement through multi-day attendance.

Scaling mobile development across Merlin’s attractions
By leveraging their mobile framework, DOGFI.SH Mobile has developed 12 Merlin attraction apps in 6 months with plans to roll out 5 more by the end of 2011. DOGFI.SH anticipates that they will hit one million downloads for Merlin by early 2012.

“Merlin has 72 attractions in 17 countries around the world, all of which are considering mobile as a channel. Our ability to compete in this space and scale to meet Merlin’s requirements is enabled by our adoption of the Titanium platform,” says Tuffee.

Appcelerator is the #1 Mobile Cloud Platform
Appcelerator is the leading enterprise-grade, cross-device mobile development solution on the market today. With over 1.6 million developers worldwide and 35,000+ 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.