Reply
Living network

Reply Applications Factory

Abstract

In today's highly competitive market, in which only innovators and thought leaders will be first to market with successful offerings, Reply offers the end-to-end expertise and innovation to create a thriving mobile application ecosystem. Reply Applications Factory manages all the steps from creating strategy to idea generation all the way through to the final development of completed applications. Reply understands the ways in which to attract new developers and application aggregators that, in turn, lead to true market pull from a consumer base. Reply, operating with leading market players in the development of mobile applications and value-added services, has created around 1,300 mobile applications across a full range of mobile devices and operating systems.

Market Scenario

After the debut of the App Store for Apple iPhone and the following competitors' stores such as Nokia Ovi, Google's Android Market and Blackberry App World, the past few years have been characterised as the mobile supermarket era.

Application stores have provided new revenue streams to both telecom operators and hardware manufacturers, and are thus being adopted far beyond the mobile market, from Set Top Boxes to Connected TVs, to desktop PCs. According to Juniper Research, the market for mobile applications will keep growing to reach $25 billion by 2014.

An application store has to guarantee a high rate of new apps published to be attractive to apps developers and users. For every app store player it is key to stimulate developer communities to contribute with a high number of apps. Long tail developer communities are loosely tied groups that possibly grow over time, but they have to be nurtured and supported to flourish, and this kind of process generally has medium-long term effects. That is why developer communities cannot be the single answer to application stores' needs: high volumes of new contents and high publishing rates.

Reply Apps Factory

Reply is a major market player in the development of mobile applications. Reply Apps Factory is Reply's response to the market need for an industrialised process, an end-to-end service capable of delivering high quality applications, in high volumes, on a wide range of technological platforms and in a short space of time. Reply is able to manage all the steps in the production of applications, from devising an app strategy, to providing idea generation, up to the delivery of the final development with certified quality of the completed applications.

Reply has contributed very significantly in enriching some of the main mobile app stores worldwide, supporting them in the launch of the store and in the further evolution of it, by developing new apps and also providing architectural structures (Front-End; Back-End; Billing Integration, Content Management, etc...). In the apps development context, Reply positions itself as a fully outsourced developer partner, able to provide not only a whole outsourced offer, but also ad–hoc workflows tailored to satisfy different clients' specific needs.

The Reply Apps Factory process consists of three main elements:
- Idea generation
- User Interface Design
- Multi–platform development

IDEA GENERATION

Thanks to many years of experience in the context of value–added services and contents, Reply has the skills and the market overview to generate successful ideas for mobile applications and mobile services. In 2010, Reply provided its clients with about 2,000 cutting edge ideas for mobile applications, all conceived internally.

USER INTERFACE DESIGN

Reply can develop high–quality usable mobile applications, thanks to its profound experience in the mobile and digital communication fields. Several projects accomplished in the mobile world, strong relationships with the main hardware vendors, and the competence of Bitmama, Reply Group's agency focusing on digital communication, let Reply propose interfaces characterised by a strong emotional impact, pairing high–quality graphics with a rich user experience.

MULTI PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT

The mobile apps market is extremely heterogeneous, in terms of content, applications available for download and technologies used to develop apps. Furthermore, the technological scenario changes rapidly: some platforms lose traction and focus (Symbian, J2ME, JIL), while others make their debut on the scene and grow fast (Windows Phone 7, WAG). Each apps store on the market requires the development of mobile apps on either proprietary platforms (e.g. Apple, Samsung Bada, Symbian, RIM), or open source platforms (Android, Maemo), or platforms that run on top of terminal operating systems (J2ME, JIL). Therefore an application can have the same features, the same design and the same user experience, but can be implemented on different platforms and frameworks to be carried out for different stores. Thanks to the organisation of the factory, Reply delivers applications across several apps stores, ensuring rapid implementation and reduced costs.

Reply Apps Factory contains all the necessary technical skills to develop any kind of mobile application, employing existing proven technologies as well as rapidly adopting new ones. As of 2010, Reply already produced around 1,300 mobile apps on a wide variety of platforms and technologies.

Main References

SAMSUNG: FUNNY APPS FOR THE BADA STORE

Samsung bada is a smartphone platform released in 2010 for mid–range phones. For developers, bada is a further opportunity for business development towards an ever greater customer base. For customers, bada allows a wider choice of smartphones, cost–effective, yet powerful. Over 220,000,000 customers bought Samsung handsets in 2009 and over 40,000,000 customers bought Samsung touch phones in 2010. Samsung Italy asked Live Reply to support them in populating the bada Store, commissioning Reply for the production of 80 bada Apps for the 'Samsung Wave I' device. Reply managed all phases of apps production: Idea Generation for every app; User Interface and Graphics Design; Development and Testing; Delivery to the Samsung Store. The release of the apps was done in less than three months, during the second quarter of 2010. In addition, Reply was involved in porting these apps to new devices, adopting the new SDK available for wave lite devices, launched by Samsung. Reply adapted the initial apps to the new SDK to allow the new batch of devices to view all functionalities and graphical elements correctly, despite the new screen resolution. Reply has designed bada apps for Samsung combining quality and attractive user experience. Results assessment confirms this winning recipe, with more than 140,000 downloads from the Samsung Store for apps produced by Reply.

SKY: LIVE STREAMING APPLICATION FOR IPAD AND IPHONE USERS

Sky Deutschland, a major German subscription-based broadcaster, faced with the need to renew its range of products to acquire new subscribers, has embarked on a series of innovative technical projects, among which is the development of an application to access the Sky Sport and Sky Bundesliga channels streamed directly from the iPad. Potential customers regard the new terminal offered by Apple as highly distinctive and emblematic of innovation. Besides making live TV channels available on this latest generation device, the intent was also to allow users to access several other forms of content in real time, such as video clips, news, and statistics. The project was up against an important deadline: the launch of the application to coincide with the start of the Football World Cup in South Africa, a few weeks after the official release of the iPad in Europe. The release of the application on the German iTunes Store, achieved in just ten weeks, saw Reply heading the project management and the specific involvement of three of the Group's companies, bitmama, Open Reply and syskoplan AG, which contributed their skills and collaborated with other Sky Deutschland partners. syskoplan AG implemented the back-end components (CMS and the authentication system) in SaaS mode, bitmama designed the user interface and Open Reply developed the customer application. The success Sky Deutschland enjoyed from its subscribers motivated the German broadcaster to set out on the next phase of the project; releasing the new updated version of the application for iPad, enriched with new content and functionality such as HD channels, as well as a new ad-hoc version for the iPhone.

TELECOM OPERATOR: YOUTUBE CLIENT APPLICATION

Reply is involved in the development of Mobile applications and Value Added Services for one of the most important Telecom Operators in Europe. The customer asked Reply to develop a YouTube Widget client for an upcoming top device. The YouTube Widget is an application acting as an entry point to access YouTube videos and services. The project was also challenging because of the strict time constraints, due to the upcoming launch of the device. This led to the use of widget technology (HTML, JavaScript and CSS) for the fast development of a large number of features, such as movies and video browsing by categories, embedded video player launch, logged-in sessions to let the user comment, the possibility of flagging and rating videos, and so on. The YouTube Widget client allows users to browse the video library, to discover contents of interest through search functionalities and to access community features. User authentication is enabled through the widget so that user-generated contents can be shared via the online service. Based on the graphics concept defined by its customer, Reply took care of the complete development process of the widget application. Reply solution made use of JSON to ease YouTube APIs querying and response parsing, and achieved near–native performance. The YouTube Widget client was completed and delivered on time.