

Product in their Pocket: Retail App Development for Shop Direct Group



CHALLENGE

Shop Direct approached Answer to deliver a high content, feature rich experience to its increasingly mobile savvy customers.

THE QUESTION

As one of the largest online retailer groups in the UK, Shop Direct saw its very.co.uk brand as the ideal opportunity to present customers with a mobile shopping experience through the burgeoning Apple iPhone and iPad community.

With mobile technology accelerating as a channel to market and the imminent release of Apple's eagerly awaited iPhone 4, Shop Direct sought proven solution delivery experience which would be capable of implementing a new channel in a matter of weeks.



The challenge was to design a vibrant user experience covering a catalogue of thousands of fashion items whilst integrating with a sophisticated eCommerce platform to enable:

New and existing customers to purchase products using a secure checkout.

Customers to apply for a credit account.

Customers to browse and search fashion products.

BENEFITS

- The Universal iPhone/iPad app delivers a new distribution channel for Shop Direct Group – one which compliments the existing E-Commerce channels in web and mobile web.
- The introduction of a mobile app creates a market place presence for Very, enhancing brand value. The development of these apps creates a platform from which Very can grow an App business, in a rapidly expanding marketplace.
- The Universal app delivers an iPad-optimised solution, rather than an iPhone app presented through an iPad. Effective use of the expansive iPad screen real estate delivers a rich customer browsing experience and enhanced navigation control.
- Revenue generation through increasing consumer mobile consumption – making the most of alternative behaviors.

SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

Implementing the fashion ranges within the Very.co.uk catalogue as a shopping experience on a 2” wide mobile screen presents some obvious challenges. Understanding and working with the specific features of the iPhone and iPad affords design approaches to navigation and content presentation that are intuitive to the user.

COMMERCE INTEGRATION

Mobile has for many organisations become another channel opportunity to better serve their clients. Getting the experience right demands a design that minimises user ‘friction’ or touch points to transact.



“The Answer team brought much more than technical expertise, they pushed our thinking and working closely with them really drove the vision for a mobile shopping experience.”

Shop Direct’s Research and Development Manager

“Our project delivery practices are based on consistent and concise communication with all stakeholders. App development is no different from any other business critical software development undertaking and so we implement the same agile processes to drive rapid and effective results.”

Richard Ellis, Answer Project Manager

THE ANSWER

The Answer Engage® process allows all stakeholders to benefit from agile processes within a collaborative workspace. Based on agile methodology, we use project proven processes that expect change whilst maintaining a focus upon regular and incremental deliverables.

The overall delivery scope was broken down into prioritised requirements. Priorities were driven through collaboration between our team and Shop Direct, ensuring that these priorities reflected a good balance between the business desire to see features delivered and the technical complexity associated with delivery.

An automated approach to continuous testing was significant to ensure that the client had early visibility of a working app. Our rigorous approach to testing, both unit and functional, ensured that in preparation for release to the Apple appstore, no bugs prevented on-time release. Consequently, the app passed through at the first time of asking.

“The Answer team brought much more than technical expertise, they pushed our thinking and working closely with them really drove the vision for a mobile shopping experience.”

Shop Direct’s Research and Development Manager



THE APP

The app itself has created an end-to-end shopping experience enabling new and existing customers to purchase from the fashion ranges within the Very.co.uk catalogue. The rich UI gives users a familiar navigation presenting product detail as well as image and video content. The app supports a Credit Application process, integrating with the Shop Direct and credit referencing systems in order to provide the customer with a real time response to their credit application. The app is integrated to the back end systems of Shop Direct in order to ensure order fulfillment on purchased products.

“In under ten weeks Answer has delivered for Shop Direct a new and exciting channel to market which builds on the vibrancy of the Very brand. Answer is professional, responsive and innovative: in fact everything you want from a technology consultancy.”

Shop Direct’s Research and Development Manager

ABOUT VERY

Launched on 5th July 2009 Very is designed with internet savvy customers in mind. The website (www.very.co.uk) gives customers the opportunity to link with V-Blog where our network of V-Bloggers explore the latest fashion news and where customers can share tips and ideas in the forums.

Very also has clothing from a wide range of designers and celebrities including Holly Willoughby, Fearne Cotton, Denise van Outen, Jasmine Guinness, Preen & PPQ to name just a few.

ABOUT ANSWER CONSULTING

Answer, formerly UPCO, is a creator of business solutions for some of the world’s leading companies. Creators of bottom-line benefits for all sorts of big and small businesses in every sector, for a decade. It’s not a simple thing, it’s not a straightforward process, there’s an art to it. From global telecommunication gateways to applying white lines on motorways, Answer understands that each business challenge is unique. <http://www.answerconsulting.com/>

Contact Answer Answer, Union Mills, 9 Dewsbury Road, Leeds, UK, LS11 5DD
On the Web: answerconsulting.com Email: answer@answerconsulting.com
Tel: +44 (0)113 2010 600