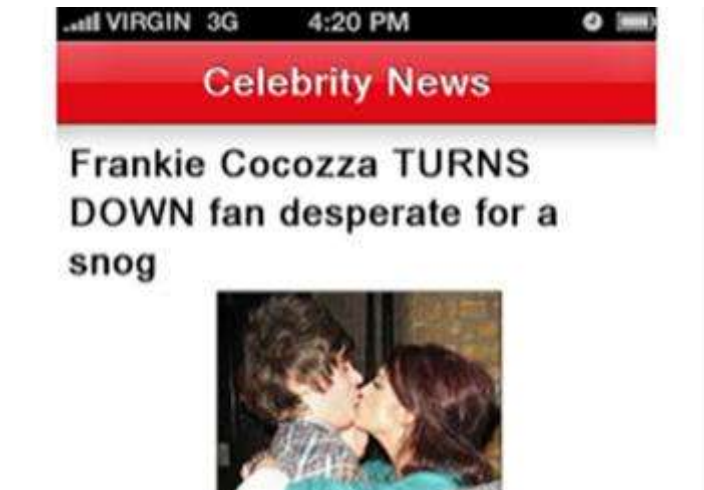


How Northern & Shell newspaper group developed a strong mobile app strategy

Apr 2, 2012



Background

Northern & Shell owns four national newspapers and is a 50 per cent joint venture partner in two more in Ireland. In Channel 5 the company owns one of Britain's leading national terrestrial television networks. It is also at the forefront of digital media as a key stakeholder in YouView, the world's leading internet television service. Northern & Shell dominates important parts of the consumer news and magazine markets in the UK and worldwide, operates in all major areas of publishing and has diverse interests in new media, print, distribution, investment and property.

Strategy

Whilst being a major player in the news and magazine market, Northern & Shell saw that there was a need to continue to build new opportunities to engage with its current and potential readers on mobile. To ensure their titles were reaching as broad an audience as possible, via as many mediums as possible, Northern & Shell recognised an opportunity to offer their content through mobile apps.

Implementation

Although Northern & Shell had recognised that creating a mobile app would be the way to distribute their content to tech-savvy audiences on the move, they didn't know how best to do it, and were concerned by the apparent cost and complexity of dealing with a number of fragmented platforms.

Northern & Shell outsourced the development and distribution of its mobile apps to specialists Mippin. Mippin built an app initially for iPhones, then migrated the content to be compatible across multiple platforms – including iPad, Android, BlackBerry and Windows Phone.

Further to the initial iPhone apps, Mippin built applications for five of Northern & Shell's publications, including Daily Express, Daily Star and OK! Magazine, and had them in the app stores of BlackBerry, Android, Windows Mobile and Apple. This breaks down as follows:

- 20 individual, native apps
- Five titles, each across 4 device platforms (iPhone and iPad, Android and Android Tablet, BlackBerry (including Playbook), Windows Phone)
- Each built on purpose built templates for each device platform and including full-scale tablet capabilities (not a rescaling the smartphone version)

Results

Northern & Shell's apps are in the top ten of their categories on iTunes and BlackBerry App World and have been selected as 'featured' apps by both BlackBerry and Microsoft.

Northern & Shell has extended its reach exponentially on mobile. In total, over 1.5 million people have downloaded the applications. Across the board, the apps are receiving over 14 million page views per month. Users spend an average of ten minutes per session with the apps.

BlackBerry was the number one platform, accounting for 65% of the total downloads in the last six months.

Gregor Park, senior planning & marketing manager UK – Applications, from RIM said: "Northern & Shell's apps, particularly OK! Magazine's, have proved hugely popular on BlackBerry App World. From August 2011 – February 2012, over 450,000 Northern & Shell apps were downloaded by our customers."