



BlackBerry Customer Success

Emirates Group accelerates user adoption with multiple BlackBerry applications

The Emirates Group is a major player in global aviation, travel, tourism and leisure. It provides commercial air travel through Emirates Airline, which has won more than 400 awards for excellence worldwide. Another key subsidiary within the Group, dnata, handles passenger, cargo, ramp and technical services for airlines at Dubai International Airport and destinations around the world.

KEY BENEFITS

- Rapid development and deployment of mobile apps
 - High level of user, developer and management engagement
 - Secure mobile access to corporate data
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THE CHALLENGE

In air travel a key business challenge is providing the right information to people who are always on the move. For example, the 12,000 Emirates cabin crew members start their day at home, not in the office. At any point in the day, they need to be informed of their flight status, schedule and the crew roster. They need to know where the flight briefing is being held and they also need to complete paperwork when they reach their hotel at any destination. Similarly, an Emirates flight dispatcher manages and coordinates catering, flight engineering, flight operations, petrol distribution and cargo from an airport concourse. Even office-based staff are highly mobile. Many managers and senior executives travel frequently. All of this information, for all teams, needs to be provided through a secure mobile platform.

To distribute information efficiently, Emirates wanted to provide employees with smartphone applications that would give them mobile access to data in corporate systems wherever they were. Speed was of the essence. The sooner the applications were in the hands of employees, the sooner they would begin enjoying the benefits. But the sheer number of potential applications was daunting. Mercator, Emirates external IT division, realised that a traditional top-down approach to application development would be too slow and too costly to deliver immediate business value.

THE SOLUTION

So Emirates decided to take a different approach. It launched an unprecedented initiative to accelerate the development of mobile applications. Using a community model, business owners and in-house developers were free to collaborate together to quickly identify usage needs and develop mobile applications for them. Mercator provided the platform and a common set of programming tools and APIs (Application Programming Interfaces). Users could download the applications to their BlackBerry® smartphones from the private Emirates app catalogue.

To help ensure the success of the initiative, Mercator prioritised development of mobile apps for the BlackBerry® platform. There were several reasons for this choice. First, Emirates already had a large number of employees

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Sanjay Sharma, head of Mobile Development, Emirates Group

Industry: Travel

Region: UAE

Company size: Large

Solution:
BlackBerry® smartphones

using BlackBerry smartphones. Second, it provided a secure environment for deploying and managing applications. Mercator could use IT policies to control which applications users could access. Data connections are encrypted and secured, and push technology provides automatic delivery of data. Finally, developing BlackBerry applications used the existing skillsets of the IT department: its community of developers were already adept at developing Java and web-based applications.

“By putting the BlackBerry solution at the centre of the community model, we could ensure a large user base, secure management and cost-effective development,” says Guruswamy Periyasamy the manager for IT Security & Specialist Services at Emirates Group.

THE BENEFITS

This grassroots approach quickly spawned new applications. The first wave of development focused on mobilising existing desktop services. The Flight Availability and Booking Status application (FABS) enables employees to check the capacity and booking load of any Emirates flight. The TRIPS on Mobile (TOM) app allows Emirates Group employees to buy and book Emirates tickets on their devices and also allows the user to update traveller information, such as passport details.

The next wave of applications began to address operational excellence. For example ERP Lite lets finance managers approve purchase orders from their BlackBerry smartphones, featuring integration with Emirates’ Oracle ERP system. iCrew provides cabin crew with roster details and lets them see the profile of their other crew members before going to flight briefings, thus speeding up the briefing process. The Dispatcher application gives concourse-based dispatchers access to all the systems they need to do their job including the option to push notifications to other Emirates departments if an incident risks disrupting a flight or airport operations.

As seen from the number of downloads and the developers’ enthusiasm, the initiative is a clear success. Today over 1,500 Emirates BlackBerry users have downloaded mobile applications. Recently a standby flight application was downloaded hundreds of times within a few hours of being released. Moreover, at any one time, there are over 30 new applications in development. These are figures that a top-down development model wouldn’t be able to match. Most importantly, Emirates now has a mobile application ecosystem capable of helping keep up with the fast-paced nature of its business.

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