

Application to the UFI ICT Award Competition 2012

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1. Objectives

What were the objectives of the mobile activities within your exhibitions?

In 2010 Messe Frankfurt decided to extend its media services into the mobile world with competitive smartphone apps for its shows. The objectives were:

- **to improve the visibility and quality of exhibitor data with the aim of offering an even more successful business environment**
- **to encourage the use of mobile devices in order to close the gap between the online and offline experience during a fair visit.**
- **to enhance Messe Frankfurt's leading role in innovative services by providing more information and support for exhibitors and visitors**
- **to create marketing and PR value for each show**

Messe Frankfurt decided to target to an increasingly mobile audience to provide real-time services to the customers on the go. The key was therefore to implement a successful mobile solution to meet the needs of users in the orientation phase just before and during their fair visit.

Mobile was identified early on as an essential asset within the trade fair community. From 2011 on Messe Frankfurt's own fairs have been equipped with smartphone applications following a test phase during 2010.

To measure success of the app the following KPIs were established:

1. Number of Messe Frankfurt shows with an app: Messe Frankfurt wanted to equip 9 important fairs in 2011. A rather ambitious plan since each of them had to receive its own initial roll-out for an app, including communication measures and technical updates and adjustments.

2. Downloads: Since there was no experience with mobile apps, there was no specific target concerning download rates, but the data collected in 2011 has set the basis for the targets for the coming years.

3. Number of service and support cases: Since there was no specific team for providing customer support for the app, the app needed to be stable and simple to use in order to ensure minimum service and support cases from its users.

4. Influence on exhibitor content: Messe Frankfurt offers a wide range of options for exhibitors to display company and product content. One goal was to increase the attention paid to these options and their use.

Did your mobile app replace an existing programme or is it a newly applied solution?

The mobile app of Messe Frankfurt was the first holistic approach towards establishing a mobile app for Messe Frankfurt. Some experience was gathered beforehand with solutions based on Windows Mobile 6 and a simple web interface. Yet these programs were not

embedded in a mobile strategy or in the media services covering the needs and goals of each show, nor in the service approach towards our customers.

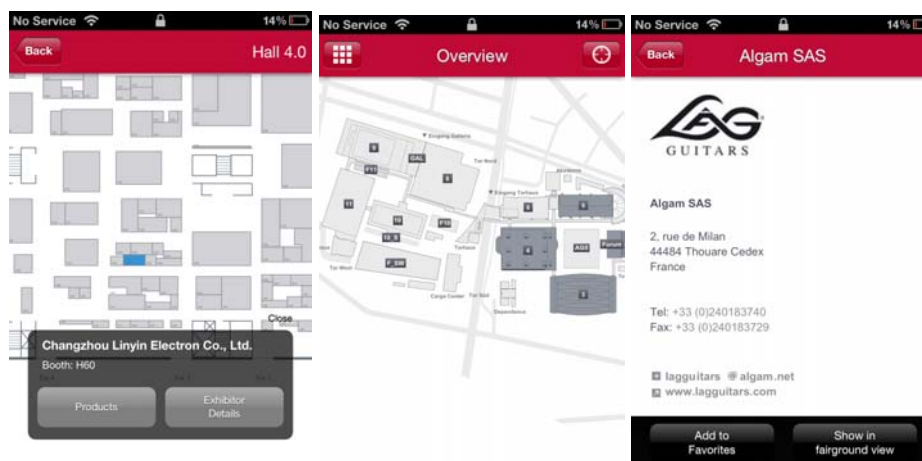
Messe Frankfurt for instance provides extensive content concerning companies and products within its “media package”. Part of the digital strategy is that this content is to be featured throughout all the media of Messe Frankfurt, including mobile applications of course. This content was not provided within earlier solutions.

What added value service did your project seek to provide?

Messe Frankfurt also wanted to create extra value for customers and designed features that were new and unique to trade fair apps. As with our website, messefrankfurt.com, the apps have quickly defined some new standards for similar solutions from other German trade fair companies. Due to the deep integration in the Messe Frankfurt IT infrastructure they have to date been unmatched. As we develop native apps for smartphone OS systems specifically, we also take advantage of smartphone functionalities that are not available when your app is simply based on a number of mobile websites that it connects to.

- Messe Frankfurt was among the first to come up with the idea of linking floor plan data to exhibitor profiles and vice versa. This way an integrated experience of using the app was possible where it didn't matter whether a customer searched for exhibitors via the plan first or through the search.
- Messe Frankfurt introduced a QR code scanner that works seamlessly with an own Messe Frankfurt QR code generator. It allows exhibitors to integrate QR codes in their advertising, which, once scanned with the app, lead directly to their profile within the app to access the services added. No detour via the browser and therefore a faster, more efficient solution.
- Messe Frankfurt offers an event calendar that synchronizes with the web site of the event in real time.
- Messe Frankfurt included free WiFi in the App from the beginning, making it possible to offer real-time data for all customers via a wireless connection. In this way we wanted to enhance the ease of use and make the service more accessible.
- Finally Messe Frankfurt introduced the so called “Buddy Finder” – a module that lets the user connect with other Messe Frankfurt customers (further details later)

Hall plan links to exhibitor detail page and vice versa



2. Actions

What measures did you take to achieve these objectives?

In the planning process Messe Frankfurt considered the following questions:

- What information matters when?

- What has to be added, what needs to be left out?
- Who are the users and what are their expectations of such a tool?
- What can be delivered technically? What should be delivered?
- How is the solution marketed?
- How can extra value be added for the customers?
- How do we make the service accessible?

On the basis of these questions the following action parameters were identified:

- **Speed & Simplicity** – information must be retrieved in the easiest and fastest possible way – and at no additional cost for connectivity during the shows at our venue.
- **Structure & Relevance** – not every piece of information is relevant in the specific situation of use.
- **Compatibility & Low Maintenance** – Messe Frankfurt has an extensive network of content databases. All Information is already available - it just needs to be tapped.

The result is an integrated mobile app that is based on one single framework and was rolled-out to iPhone and Android for each fair. It was adapted to the specific event by design and data. It was therefore clearly marketable for each show team as their own app and could be intensively advertised to customers. This solution was preferred to a so-called “container app” in which all data of every fair was packaged in one store item – a concept initially chosen by most of our German competitors. By 2012, most other German trade fair companies have also switched from their original “container app” approach to our solution.

To keep the interface simple and to provide the most relevant information in the shortest amount of time, the app uses standard buttons, gestures and interface layouts that smartphone users are used to. “More tapping, less typing” – following this guideline led to the decision to concentrate on touchscreen devices only.

By leaving out certain marketing content and information that was for the most part only relevant before the fair, a slim and simple content structure was created.

To keep app-specific maintenance low the smartphone apps are currently equipped with five different APIs to internal databases of Messe Frankfurt. These APIs retrieve the exhibitor stand data, the floor plans, the log-in data of users, the data of the lead-tracking system and the event calendar data. On top of this there are APIs to twitter, linkedin and facebook. For that reason no content has to be specifically created and managed for the mobile apps! Together with the option for free WiFi a real-time connection Messe Frankfurt latest News and Content was made possible.

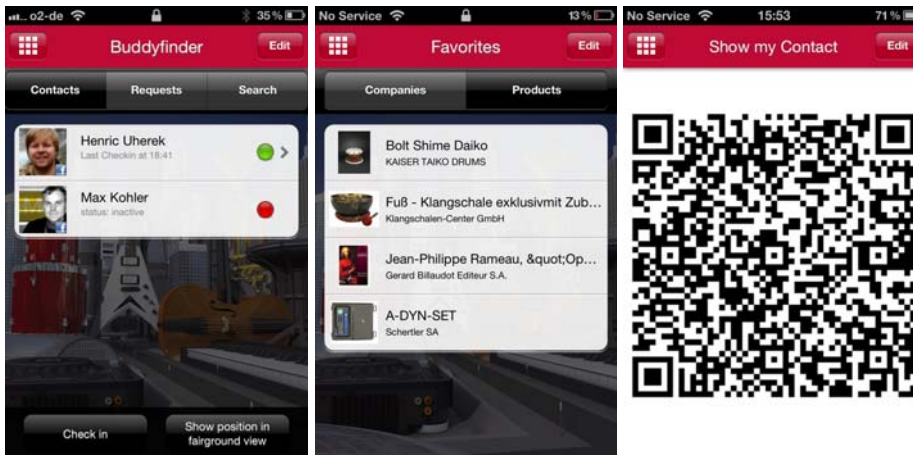
To increase the use and attractiveness of the app, the innovative features mentioned above were created of which the “Buddy Finder” deserves some special introduction:

The Buddy Finder was established with the Musikmesse 2011 for the first time. It was meant to be a fun addition to the rather sober looking business tool that a trade fair app usually is. Its idea was based on popular services such as “foursquare” and “gowalla”, which encourage their users to check into venues such as restaurants. It is based on GPS location and therefore named “Location-Based Service” (LBS). By checking in, all other connected users are informed about the location of the checked-in user. While foursquare and gowalla turned this idea into a game to discover new places, the Messe Frankfurt app utilizes this idea to offer customers an easy way to show their buddies and colleagues that they are also on the fairground and up for a meeting.

To set up the Buddy Finder an individual Messe Frankfurt MyAccount is generated, the account can be linked to facebook and linkedin to find other buddies using the app.

The related feature “show my contact” generates a QR code from the MyAccount data that can then be scanned by other users with their app to retrieve their contact data in exchange.

Buddy Finder, Favorites list and QR-Codes – innovative extra features



What were the specific challenges faced? How were these overcome?

The Messe Frankfurt mobile app is subject to constant development. With every release new features and improvements are coming out. Over time many key challenges were faced. These include:

- *keeping the set-up costs for each fair to a minimum while maximizing the overall value for show teams*
For each show the set-up costs are an important factor since marketing budgets are limited and apps were not perceived as an essential part by all show teams at the beginning. By using the framework solution and only changing data and layout, the set-up cost for each show was limited to a very reasonable amount.
- *establishing high download rates*
Publicity for an app is key. It leads to high download rates and more marketing value for the show. It was important to plan each roll-out together with the communication teams of each show. The closer the cooperation was, the better the download rate. This was one important lesson so far.
- *introducing new features and finding an audience for them*
The best feature is not worth anything if nobody uses it. When Messe Frankfurt introduced the QR code reader for the App it was essential to also ramp up the usage of QR codes throughout the company. QR codes are now part of every show's catalogue and of the offerings of the Advertising Services Department. There exhibitors can pick up QR codes to tag their display cabinets etc.
- *international strategy and white label*
In order to cater the rapidly developing demand company-wide, an internationally oriented strategy also had to be found. This was achieved by developing a "white label" solution as well. This solution takes into consideration that not all fairs of Messe Frankfurt use the same databases and APIs. It is suitable for the guest shows as well that are not run by Messe Frankfurt but which are interested in running their own app. As a result Texworld in Paris in January 2012 was the first to run the white label solution.

Was your mobile app project outsourced or developed in-house?

The Messe Frankfurt mobile app was planned and designed in-house and implemented in cooperation with some talented external programmers. The whole solution is tailor-made and adapted to the needs of Messe Frankfurt's fairs down to the smallest detail. It was important for Messe Frankfurt to go this way in order to be able to adapt to specific needs of our shows and their customers. The deep integration in the IT landscape with the seamless integration was also a strong point in the decision-making process. Finally the strategic goal of also

offering the app as a white label solution to our guest shows on the fairground and to our subsidiaries led to the decision to develop in-house.

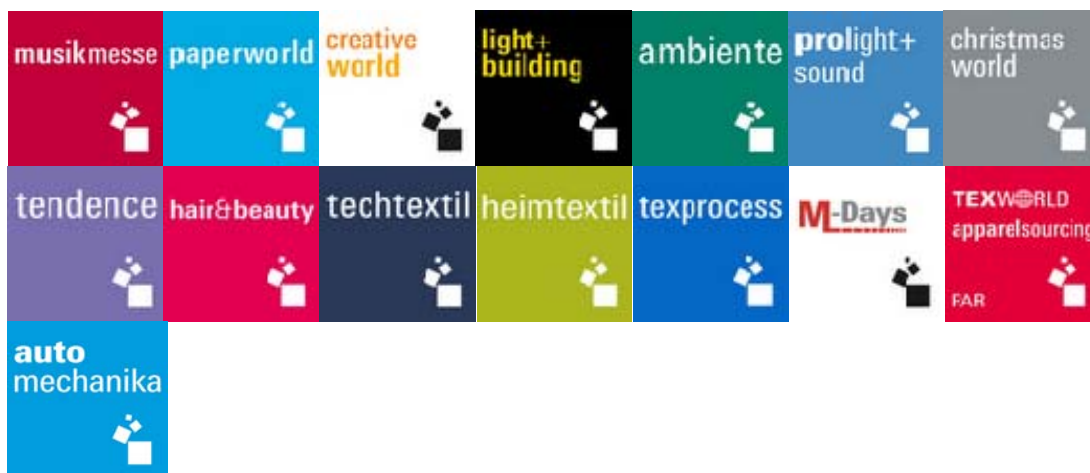
3. Results

Have your objectives been achieved?

Messe Frankfurt was able to set up all planned shows with mobile apps and exceeded this even by going international with the Texworld Paris to be the first show outside of Frankfurt to receive a smartphone app. This required a large amount of logistics and project management skills to sometimes deliver roll-outs simultaneously but it was fully and successfully achieved.

In 2011 over 26,000 downloads of the Messe Frankfurt mobile app were registered, and in 2012 this figure is already almost 12,000. This adds up to over 38,000 downloads in less than two years. Since Messe Frankfurt didn't have any expectations regarding download rates this is currently seen as quite a success (especially for a trade fair organizer with a strong focus on consumer goods fairs in stark contrast to organizers with more IT exhibitions). Most shows have 10% and more of their customers using the app. The Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound which take place simultaneously in April account alone for over 10,000 downloads. Yet trade shows such as Heimtextil (home and object textiles), which could be seen as less likely to attract a tech-friendly audience, had some 3,500 downloads in its first year.

All released event apps (February 2012)



Since there is no special support team to take care of customer feedback another goal was to keep service and support cases to a minimum. The customer requests can still be handled by one person so far – the plan to create an easy-to-use and self-explanatory app was successful so far.

As regards PR value Messe Frankfurt's show teams were able to extensively use the release dates of the mobile apps in their communication strategies. Links were featured on websites, in newsletters and on social media platforms, generating considerable feedback and attention for the app and of course for the fair.

What were the benefits for your customers?

The overall experience was perceived as helpful according to the feedback gathered. The app does a good job for all who need orientation during a fair visit, and this is also evident from the general lack of negative feedback.

Most positive customer feedback was about the experience with the exhibitor search and the floor plan. Many people enjoyed the easy-to-use favourites list to navigate from exhibitor to exhibitor.

A major benefit to customers is also the free WiFi that has been part of using the app since its first test runs in 2010. This was especially important for all foreign customers, who did not have to pay high roaming costs.

Since all data on the app comes from databases in real time and is temporarily stored in the app, data is always up-to-date to the detail. Every new stand, even if ordered the day before the event, is listed. The app is always complete – this is an advantage over many other trade fair apps which pull the data once or a few times only and exhibit some deficiencies in up-to-dateness.

Especially important for visitors of events such as Musikmesse (music fair with lots of concerts by famous musicians going on) is the event calendar.

Did you increase your revenues?

There was a discussion in the set-up phase as whether the mobile app should be sold over the app store to customers. Since most of the information was mainly perceived as an online service the decision was against selling it via the store.

As part of the media services for exhibitors the app is calculated into the revenues generated from the above mentioned “media package”. There have not been any price adjustments based on the existence of this new service so far to increase revenues generated through the media package. Messe Frankfurt also wants to take its time to evaluate the usefulness of mobile solutions for exhibitors before adjusting business models.

One definite next step is to establish advertising and sponsorship models within the app.

What were the quantitative and/or qualitative effects on your exhibition activity?

Mobile apps have dramatically thrown a spotlight on mobile and online data for nearly all show teams and exhibitions. The attractiveness of iPhone and Android telephones has led most customers and employees of Messe Frankfurt to at least take a second look at what is available within the app.

The attention for the data is there, also among customers. More customers now pay great attention to what is displayed about themselves online and as a result on mobile also.

This leads to higher rates of content data supplied for Messe Frankfurt's media package that feeds the app with information about exhibitors. More than 80% of exhibitors already supply extra content information beyond their basic catalogue data - such as product pictures, links, logos etc. This number is expected to rise further, along with the sensitivity to the digital presence and presentation of companies in digital and, in particular, mobile media.

Messe Frankfurt wants to continuously improve the media services and mobile is now an increasingly important part of it.

Please download our entry to the UFI ICT Competition 2012 from the Appstore:



Please scan with a QR code reader on your iPhone
Alternatively please use the following link: <http://m-es.se/d4T5>