

PLM gains 50 percent share in medical mobile app use

Health information company designs 28 apps faster using the IBM MobileFirst Platform and SoftLayer

Overview

The need

Facing tough price competition, Latin American-based PLM wanted to add value to its reference information for doctors by digitizing it and making it available on mobile devices.

The solution

The company deployed the IBM® MobileFirst Platform to speed the delivery of mobile applications and was able to grow more easily by using cloud services from SoftLayer®, an IBM Company.

The benefit

Just six months from launch, PLM mobile apps are being used by 140,000 doctors, giving the company a 50 percent share of apps in use by doctors in its Latin American markets.

“Our mission is to restore health through knowledge,” says Antonio Carrasco Ruiz, CEO of PLM, a leading publisher of reference books for doctors in Latin America. “We bring doctors good content for making the best decisions possible. When our competition began to lower their prices, the question we faced was do we compete on price, or add value through technology?”

Data for care in the palm of your hand

Carrasco Ruiz chose to add value through technology. As PLM’s competition dropped their reference book prices, “we began to make all our information digital,” Carrasco Ruiz says. “It was a matter of survival.”

For 72 years, doctors in Latin America have been using PLM books. “We needed to extract information from the natural, unstructured language in our reference books into a structured database, localized for each country we serve, that doctors can use in many ways—and one of those ways is mobile access,” says Carrasco Ruiz. For this transformation, PLM needed a partner.

“IBM has a great ecosystem of solutions to add value to knowledge—to analyze it, host it, make it mobile, and predict with it. They are enabling us to be successful in a fast-moving market, and we are excited to be doing this work” says Antonio Carrasco Ruiz, CEO of PLM.



Solution components

Software

- IBM® MobileFirst Platform Foundation

Services

- SoftLayer®, an IBM Company
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Going MobileFirst—fast

Carrasco Ruiz approached IBM. “Because we are a small company with just 128 employees, I thought IBM would not understand our problem,” he says. “But I was surprised by their willingness to understand and supportive attitude. They’re doing a great job helping us.”

PLM deployed the IBM® MobileFirst Platform (formerly IBM Worklight®) to develop HTML5, native and hybrid mobile applications. “Training took just one month,” says Carrasco Ruiz. “We had our first app deployed in four months, and two months after that we had 28 apps. The IBM MobileFirst Platform enabled us to complete what we estimate would be a six-month development process in two months.”

To scale up IT capacity and support growth, PLM turned to SoftLayer, an IBM Company, for cloud services. “Using SoftLayer gives us the flexibility to jump into the infrastructure resources we need and jump off when we don’t need them,” Carrasco Ruiz notes. “We immediately moved our web traffic to SoftLayer because it’s growing at 4x a year. Now we can tap the power to go really fast, and that’s what physicians need in order to make quick decisions.”

Leading the way with 50 percent share

The IBM MobileFirst solution lets the development team write code once and re-use easily for Android, iOS and Windows platforms. “We went from one app to 28 quickly,” says Carrasco Ruiz. “Today, 140,000 doctors are using our apps.”

The mobile experience that PLM brings doctors makes them more efficient, Carrasco Ruiz explains. “We bring them the best information available quickly, such as the top 10 journal articles most relevant to a decision they want to make regarding a prescription. All this content is in their pocket, very easy to use.”

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—Antonio Carrasco Ruiz, CEO of PLM

PLM now has a 50 percent share of mobile apps being used by doctors in its markets. “We’ve built a high barrier of entry for anyone seeking to provide mobile content for doctors,” Carrasco Ruiz says.

Just ahead: new types of value to extract

Data that was locked in reference books is now fluid, digital and interoperable. There is much to learn from watching how data gets used, using closed-loop marketing techniques, says Carrasco Ruiz. “We can see who the doctors are, what medicines they choose, what they’re searching for,” he says. “We can correlate actions and see patterns that predict abuse of a drug. And doctors can be warned automatically if their patient is taking multiple drugs and a new one might produce a harmful interaction.”

PLM is working with the Watson team at IBM to take advantage of cognitive computing techniques. This can result in apps that understand and learn from the natural, unstructured language of healthcare information.

PLM mobile data is also a new resource in campaigns such as the fight against childhood obesity. The company is building a database that helps caregivers use their mobile devices to easily chart height and weight for children. “This is a free repository and it lets researchers see what is happening by state, gender, and country, based not just on 5,000 children, but millions throughout Latin America,” says Carrasco Ruiz.

Things are moving fast, Carrasco Ruiz adds. “If we didn’t jump on the train of technology quickly with IBM’s help, we would have been left behind.”

For more information

To learn more about IBM MobileFirst software, SoftLayer, an IBM Company, or IBM cloud services in general, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following websites: ibm.com/mobilefirst, softlayer.com or ibm.com/cloud-computing



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