GETTING OFF THE TECHNOLOGY TREADMILL: EQUINOX BULKS UP ITS DIGITAL OFFERINGS

Mindtree
Welcome to possible

In Fall 2013, upscale fitness and lifestyle leader Equinox developed a multi-year technology transformation roadmap that was focused on elevating the member experience. As the leading luxury fitness and lifestyle company, Equinox along with its other brands — PURE Yoga, Blink and Soul Cycle—has built a solid footprint with more than 100 portfolio locations including New York, London, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Toronto, Boston, Dallas and Washington DC.

Samir Desai, Equinox's Vice President of Technology, knew a major technology project could simultaneously accomplish two main goals that Equinox had—provide a boost to their brand's value while also giving their customers the kind of premium experience expected in a digital society. With technological evolution fundamentally changing the way individuals approach their health and fitness goals (thanks to a flood of health and fitness apps and the explosion of wearable technology that helps people stay active and monitor their progress), Desai knew it was important for Equinox to be at the forefront of that transformation.

Aside from a major redesign to the their website that would offer enhanced functionality to members, Equinox planned to create a new app that would allow members to curate and personalize their experiences and workouts inside and outside of the club. Additionally, they wanted a total revamp of their customer relationship management (CRM) applications based on a salesforce.com solution: something that could be utilized by front line staff on the club floor through iPads, allowing them to give members customized, individual service.

The Warm-Up: Setting Goals and Planning a Tech Workout Regimen

Desai had his work cut out for him, based on Equinox's existing IT capabilities and their CRM and membership applications.

"We were using legacy applications or systems that we had outgrown and they weren't able to support what we were trying to do from a business perspective," he says. "There was a lot of data scattered across a lot of different systems and processes. Customer information was stored across maybe seven or eight different systems, sometimes not consistently. So we had no single view of our customers."

From a specific technical standpoint, there were the following issues:

- Non-standard middleware EAI implementation
- No centralized MDM that could be leveraged across brands
- Applications rapidly built to meet business needs, which led to an inefficient code base, and manageability, adaptability and scalability issues
- Lengthy time to market for any new business expansion
- On-premise systems that incurred costs to maintain and support.

Equinox's vision was for members of Equinox to feel like they belonged to a fitness club that truly understood how digital should be integrated into what is largely a physical endeavor. Part of the trick was not showcasing technology just for technology's sake, but the real drivers were personalization and digital integration. This required Equinox to assemble a cross-functional team, outside of just IT, that really owned these new capabilities and understood how to integrate them into the customer journey in the most effective and impactful way.

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The Workout: Mindtree as Personal Tech Trainer for Equinox

Through a word of mouth recommendation, Equinox engaged Mindtree about helping them to move to a SaaS-based model that would be more agile, and help them avoid dealing with any infrastructure maintenance or upkeep.

Equinox chose salesforce.com as their new CRM system, and Mindtree was able to quickly assemble an effective and nimble SaaS integration team that would create the glue that connects Equinox's new app, their new CRM platform, and all of their back-end systems and data. All of this was done in a phased approach, so as not to impact Equinox's ongoing business and front-end applications.

Mindtree provided the end-to-end solution architecture, including the following primary implementations:

- IBM Cast Iron and WebSphere process server to integrate customer on—premises applications with cloud-based CRM and membership management systems
- Integration with SaaS solutions using SOAP/REST Web service
- Integration with Amazon SQS Queues and S3 file system using Amazon SDKs and Cloudberry
- Virtualization of existing service platform via mediation modules on ESB and implementation services on WAS.

Mindtree extensively used the features provided by Cast Iron and Enterprise Service Bus to help to reduce the time to market by delivering around 100 unique services in four months, and Equinox was able to leverage the benefits of cloud implementation while continuing to use their POS system without significant changes.

According to Desai, of equal importance was Mindtree's flexibility from a staffing perspective: "They were able to ramp up and ramp down a team in pretty short notice, and still have the right quality and caliber of people. That was fairly unique for us; we hadn't seen that. Typically there's a pretty long lead-time, and that impacts the overall ability to deliver something to the business. We're talking days or weeks versus months. That kind of nimbleness and agility were pretty paramount."

Given the reach of the transformation, the solution was also created to provide for flexibility in the operational model and integration with solutions that might come up in the future:

- SOA-based approach so the solution can be accessed by their ERP and other systems, facilitating future integration with other solutions
- Configurable user privileges-based workflow that can cater to variations in the operating model across various countries and changing business models
- Provision for data push and pull from other related systems.

> *"Mindtree has been an exemplary partner with the right fit of culture and competence, integrating seamlessly with the Equinox team and quickly becoming one "Enterprise Team" with new capabilities and extended bandwidth," says Eswar Veluri, Equinox's Senior Director of Digital Solutions, who championed many of the customer facing digital initiatives.*

The Cool Down: An Integrated App and a Singular Customer View

From a customer-facing view, the new Equinox app allows club members to book equipment (with an equipment map specific to each club), schedule training, log and track workouts or yoga sessions, browse and schedule classes, and much more. The app is also integrated with Apple's Health app, which will help Equinox's team of personal trainers tailor training programs for members.

Equinox also rolled out new iPads to all of their clubs, so that front-line staff could access their new CRM platform on the club floor. With all back-end data systems integrated, each staff member can quickly get a singular, 360-degree view of any member needing assistance. This allows for immediate, personalized service that can be logged for future reference.

Equinox will measure success of the program by monitoring how their technology improvements affect things like customer retention length and net promoter score. So far, member response has been extremely positive, and the project has put Equinox at the forefront of using technology to serve their fitness customers.

Equinox/Mindtree Partnership Highlights
Full-scale customer data integration for fast, on-demand use by front line staff
Move from multiple on-premises CRM applications to a single cloud-based CRM application system
Integration of the Equinox app with the Apple Health app for personalized training assistance