

ASICS / AQ make marathon racing more engaging with Contentful platform

About AQ

AQ is a design agency, founded in 2004 in Tokyo, Japan. Focused on designing imaginative digital products and services, to date AQ has worked with global brands like Google, ASICS, Gengo and Bagcheck (acquired by Twitter); breakthrough startups from Asia's top seed accelerators, including Open Network Lab and Orange Fab; and a variety of Tokyo art galleries and museums.



About ASICS

Founded in 1949, in the living room of its founder Kihachiro Onitsuka, ASICS grew to be a leading manufacturer of athletic gear. Its close cooperation with athletes, coaches and researchers, and continuous focus on quality, helped ASICS create highly functional athletic shoes loved by enthusiasts and professionals alike. ASICS is expected to generate \$3.1B in global sales in 2013.



Background

ASICS commissioned the digital agency AQ to develop a companion app for marathon runners. The app was to provide useful tips and key logistical information in the run up to, during and after an actual race. In the course of developing the app, AQ tackled a number of content-related challenges highlighted below.

Hit the ground running

Preparing the content for the marathon apps involves a lot of coordination. ASICS representatives communicate with organizational committees to obtain logistical details. The project team also works with different departments within ASICS to incorporate fitness tips, nutritional advice and practical checklists into the app.

As the date of the race approaches, the AQ team typically goes through multiple content revisions incorporating last-minute logistical changes and updating the gear section with event-related merchandise. "Initially, we managed this workflow with emails and spreadsheets," says AQ partner Paul Baron, "But as the number of apps and supported platforms grew, we realized that production flow needed to be upgraded."

"We wanted to move to a robust, flexible platform that would help useasily manage content. Contentful matched all our criteria and we found working with the system to be very straightforward. But where Contentful really surpassed our expectation was when our client team at ASICS started using it and got up to speed in no time."

Paul Baron, Managing Partner at AQ

Requirements

- An easy way to collaborate with the client in creating content
- Support development of custom content models
- A system that simplifies mobile app development process

Results

- Centralized system for collaborating on in-app content
- Flexibility to define their own content structure
- Out-of-the-box mobile development infrastructure



Rise to a challenge

Accommodating different types of content within the same platform was another challenge faced by the AQ team. The marathon app includes geo-tagged data, race track videos and merchandise images as well as lots of textual information. Open-source alternatives like Wordpress and Drupal provided an efficient way to manage standard web pages, but hacking them to support in-app content was a risky undertaking.

Even more importantly, applying these hacks for each new version of the app promised to add mountains of technical debt to the project. "Replicating our app's complex content model in Contentful was a crucial test to check how flexible and scalable the platform was," notes Paul Baron.

"In the end, we were done with content mapping in just a few days and I was amazed by how easy it was to go back and modify the model whenever we needed to streamline a certain section."

Paul Baron, Managing Partner at AQ

By defining their custom content model, AQ further benefited from built-in validation options, which alerted content editors to recommended entry length or permitted attachment types. "Validating content entries saved us a good chunk of time simply by alerting content editors on the spot to problems with their submissions."



Sustained oxygen boost

Once the latest edition of the marathon app ships to the App Store and Google Play, the team's focus will shift to long-term goals. As Paul Baron explains: "Given how successful ASICS is at engaging with marathon runners, we expect to double the number of races supported by the Marathon Navigator in the foreseeable future."

"In this context, it is important for us to have the ability to reuse, extend and update in-app content created to date, without the necessity of going through all the legwork," he added. In practice, AQ tapped the Content Management and the Delivery API to automate duplication of content and then used editor view for updating content and adding new sections.

However, time-savings achieved by the editorial staff do not even come close to the productivity leap seen on the development side: thanks to the robust Content Delivery API the development cycle was reduced by several orders of magnitude.

"We can now build apps at least 2-3 times faster than before! All the while avoiding technical debt & allowing our client to directly manage and update the content."

Gueorgui Tcherednitchenko, CTO of AQ



About Contentful

Contentful is content management platform for web applications, mobile apps and connected devices. It allows you to create, edit & manage content in the cloud and publish it anywhere via powerful API. Contentful offers tools for managing editorial teams and enabling cooperation between organisations.

To learn more about how Contentful can help you scale your publishing efforts, please visit our website at www.contentful.com or email us at sales@contentful.com.