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# Case Study: Pizza Pizza Cooks Up A Successful Mobile App

by Vidya L. Drego  
for Customer Experience Professionals





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by **Vidya L. Drego**  
with Adele Sage and Allison Stone

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of Canada's largest pizza chains wanted to be the first to market with a mobile experience that offered greater convenience to its customers. The company partnered with mobile agency Plastic Mobile, and together the two firms engaged in a customer-centric design process that resulted in a mobile app that exceeded their expectations. Firms new to mobile and even those that are planning second- or third-generation mobile offerings can learn from Pizza Pizza's example.

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Forrester interviewed Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile.

#### Related Research Documents

["Mobile Interactive Design Agencies Emerge"](#)  
January 26, 2012

["Executive Q&A: Six Things You Need To Know About Apps"](#)  
March 7, 2011

## SITUATION: PIZZA PIZZA WANTED TO INCREASE CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE

Pizza Pizza, one of Canada's largest pizza chains, wanted to maintain its market leading position and make it easy for its customers to do business with them when and where customers desired. Its primary customers —moms with families, sports enthusiasts, and the college crowd — were becoming increasingly mobile, with nearly 9% of the company's online hits already coming from mobile devices.<sup>1</sup> And it was only a matter of time before its primary competitors, Domino's and Pizza Hut, launched mobile apps for the Canadian market, since they already had for the Australian and US market.

To stay one step ahead, digitally savvy CEO Paul Goddard partnered with Plastic Mobile, a mobile agency with offices in Toronto and New York City, to explore the creation of a mobile app for customers. We spoke with Plastic Mobile's President and COO Melody Adhami and CEO Sep Seyedi to learn more about how they assisted with Pizza Pizza's mobile strategy and designed the Pizza Pizza mobile app experience.

## BEST PRACTICE: PIZZA PIZZA BEGINS BY DIGESTING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Pizza Pizza's objective for a mobile offering was to increase convenience — but what does convenience really mean to target customers when it comes to ordering pizza? To answer that question, Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile started with mobile adoption data for Pizza Pizza's primary personas to help them understand existing behaviors and patterns of use. Then they explored actual customer feedback, including:

- **Call center and website comments.** Plastic Mobile reviewed various feedback; it reviewed recorded calls, comments from the website, as well as feedback from call center representatives about the millions of calls they'd taken. Specifically, Plastic Mobile wanted to understand customers' existing challenges with ordering. It found, for example, that many customers preferred fewer steps to the online ordering process, as long as it wasn't difficult to go back and modify selections made in previous steps. Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile knew that it was imperative to avoid a lengthy, rigid process, specifically on mobile where the customer's context often requires speed.
- **Email feedback.** In addition to feedback on the website, Pizza Pizza also had an email address where customers could submit nonwebsite-specific inquiries. Here, Plastic Mobile reviewed nearly 5,000 logs to understand other types of customer challenges. It learned that menu options were often complicated and subtly different among touchpoints. For example, "double cheese" and "two times the cheese" were actually different toppings online and on the phone and were even added differently to an order. Simplifying such menu options was another action it needed to take to improve the mobile experience.

- **Reactions to competitors' apps.** While Pizza Pizza's competitors had not yet launched mobile apps for the Canadian market, they had launched in the US and Australia, as had several other food businesses. The Plastic Mobile team mined blogs, iTunes App Store reviews, and other app rating sites for insights about users that might hold clues for Pizza Pizza. They found that overall, consumers were very dissatisfied when they couldn't accomplish their goals on the device. First and foremost, customers expected to be able to complete an order after going through the trouble to download the app. And it wasn't just pizzas that they were looking to order; customers expected to be able to order sides and drinks that were available online or in the store. Customers also expected digital conveniences like the ability to save their orders and reorder easily. Finally, consumers didn't separate touchpoints in the same way the company does: If they received a coupon, even if it came in the mail, they expected to be able to redeem it anywhere.

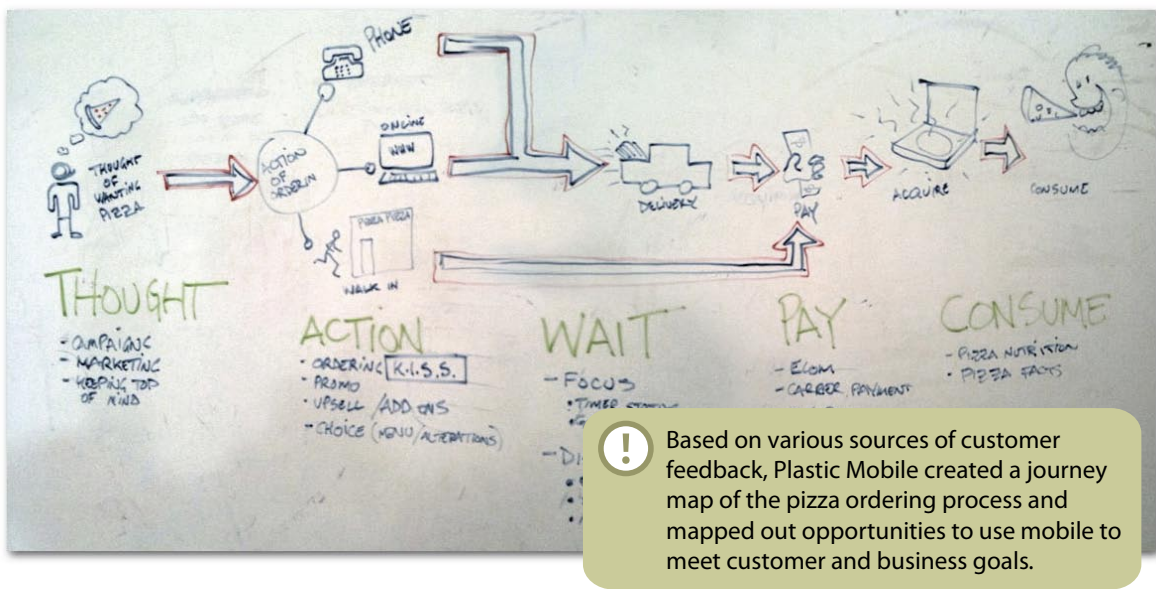
### BEST PRACTICE: PIZZA PIZZA DELIVERS FRESH AND CONVENIENT SOLUTIONS

Plastic Mobile's research led it to the recommendation that Pizza Pizza take the time to develop and launch a fully functional mobile ordering app — instead of a location finder or loyalty app that could have been launched quickly but would have likely disappointed its customers (see Figure 1). Its research also uncovered a number of design paradigms that it knew it had to achieve to drive the app's business objectives. They included:

- **Make it easy.** To be truly convenient for customers, the mobile app had to be simple and quick to navigate. But the traditional task flow for online pizza ordering required the user to input a delivery location before making pizza selections. Why? At one point the physical location of the store dictated the availability of topping options. Knowing that this would be a big barrier for mobile, the Plastic Mobile team worked with Pizza Pizza to devise a solution that allowed customers to go straight to food selection on the app and enter payment and order details at the end. This allowed Pizza Pizza to shorten the order flow to just three clicks for repeat orders (see Figure 2).
- **Make it delicious.** Stakeholders wanted the app to convey the breadth and freshness of their topping selection, which aligned well with customer demands to access the available breadth of toppings when ordering food. Plastic Mobile team members took this into account in the design of the app. They made sure that customers would not only have access to the available topping options, such as gluten-free toppings, but that those options looked appetizing. The app's background design looks like an artisan wood cutting block with pizza ingredients on it to give it a kitchen-like feel, and as the user selects her ingredients, clear images of her toppings as well as their names and descriptions appear on the screen. Finally, the descriptions of the toppings highlight their freshness (see Figure 3).

- **Make me come back.** Since Pizza Pizza had a large existing client base, the mobile app was not only targeting new clients but also heavily targeting existing Pizza Pizza customers. Thus repeat ordering was a primary success metric. To encourage loyalty, not only did it have to be easy to place repeat orders, there had to be a reason for the customer to really want to come back. Here, Plastic Mobile and Pizza Pizza employed a fun couponing strategy: After placing an order, customers were given scratch-and-save coupons that would be automatically applied to their next orders (see Figure 4).

**Figure 1** Plastic Mobile Created A Journey Map To Identify Opportunities To Meet Mobile Needs

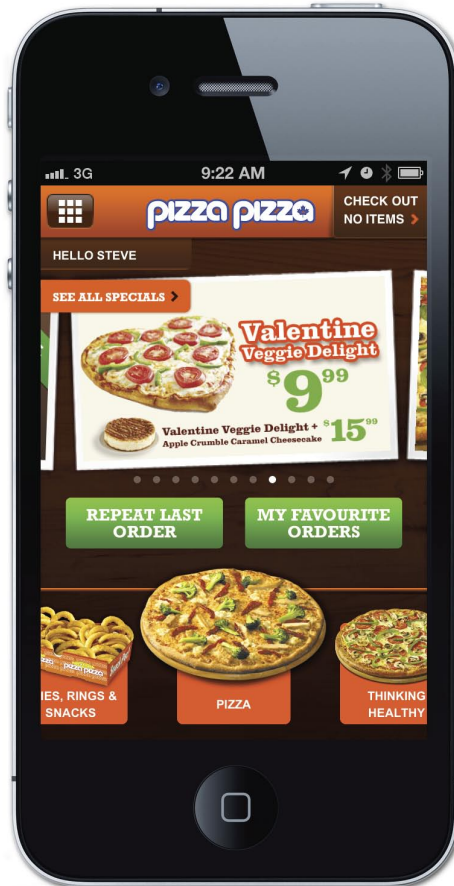


Source: Plastic Mobile and Pizza Pizza

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

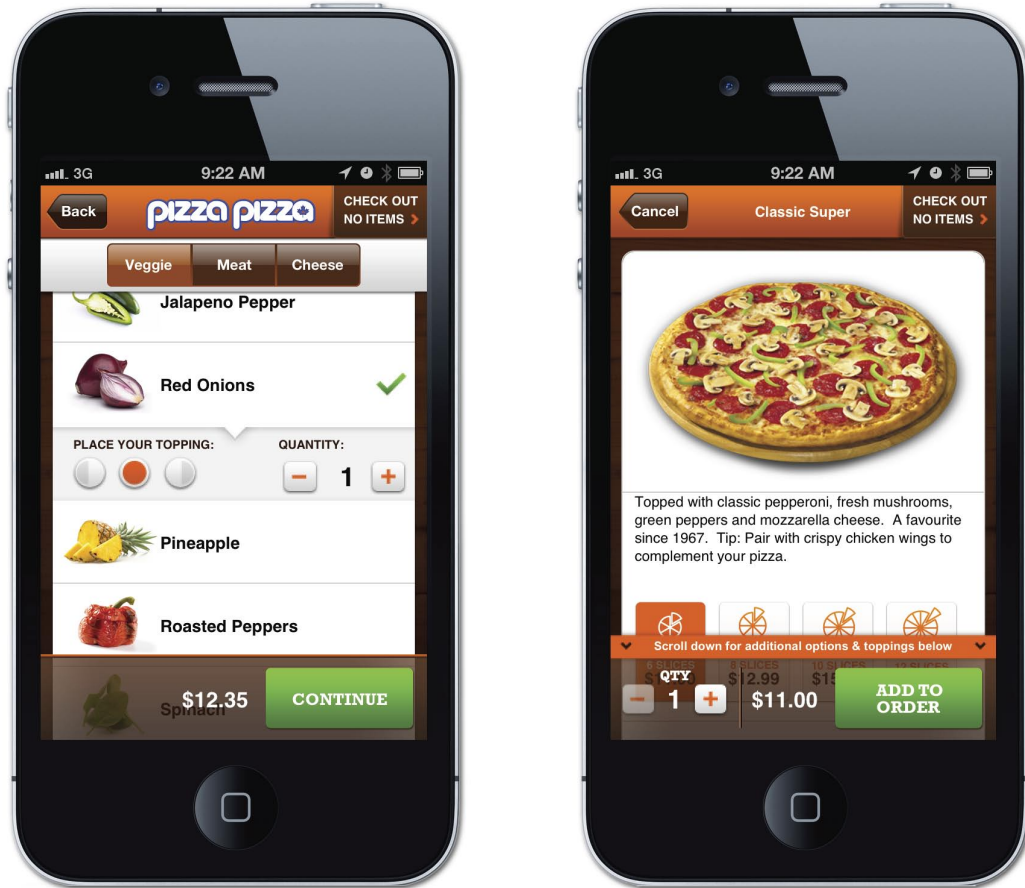
**Figure 2** Pizza Pizza's App Makes It Easy And Quick To Place An Order



Source: Plastic Mobile and Pizza Pizza  
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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

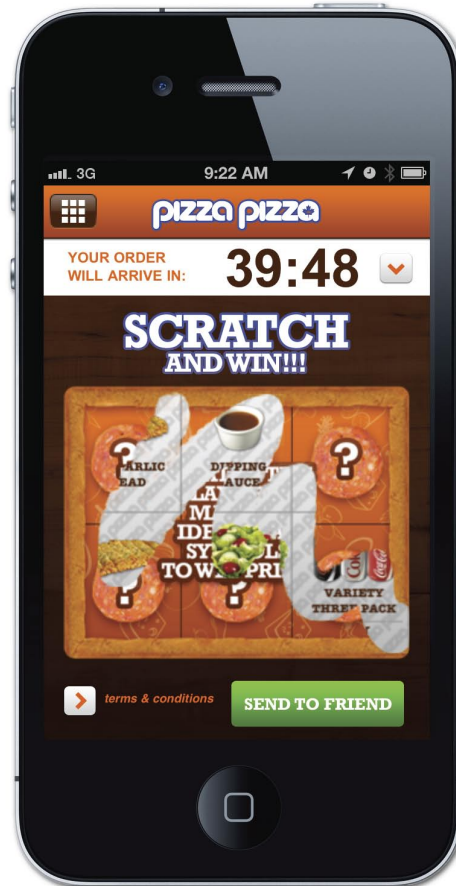
**Figure 3** Clear Imagery And Language Reinforce The Quality Of The Food



Source: Plastic Mobile and Pizza Pizza  
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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

**Figure 4** Scratch-And-Win Coupons Encourage Customers To Order Again



Source: Plastic Mobile and Pizza Pizza  
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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

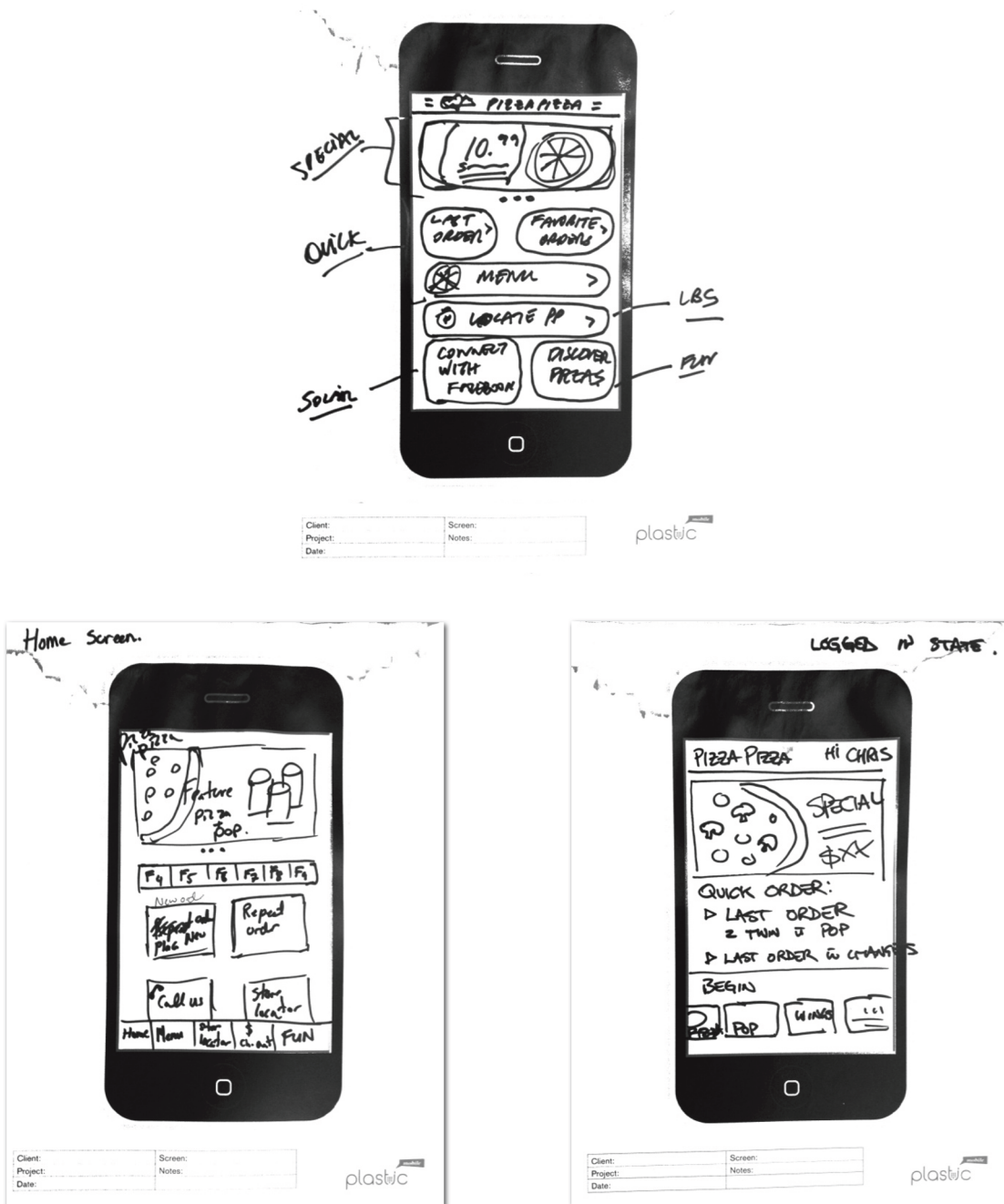


## BEST PRACTICE: PIZZA PIZZA TESTS IDEAS BEFORE THEY ARE FULLY BAKED

Just as any good chef tastes his food and adjusts the seasoning, a good designer tests his designs and makes improvements. Plastic Mobile and Pizza Pizza teams went through several iterations of their mobile app prior to launch, such as:

- **Testing wireframes with internal stakeholders.** To ensure that they fully understood business needs, Plastic Mobile team members held a workshop where they asked stakeholders to sketch what they thought was most important for the app's home page design (see Figure 5). After the workshop, the team took the sketches, used Axure RP (a wireframing software) to create several prototypes using key ideas from the sketches, and brought those prototypes back for testing with the same group. This exercise helped stakeholders better understand some of the challenges and modifications that had to be made to accommodate their ideas.
- **Evaluating static concepts with customers.** Once team members centered on a single static prototype, they filled in key elements of the creative design and brought in groups of users to test the prototypes using targeted scenarios (see Figure 6). This testing helped them identify elements that real users easily missed in the layout and directions or language they couldn't understand.
- **Assessing interactive functionality with usability testing.** Since the prototypes they tested were not interactive, the team members knew they would have to test the app again closer to launch. Once the app was about 80% built, they conducted usability testing. The team admits this wasn't ideal because it was more difficult to recommend changes with most of the app already built, but the team was still able to improve the interaction design. For example, team members found that users didn't recognize a carousel menu at the bottom of the screen as interactive. To demonstrate its functionality, they introduced an animation that shows the carousel scrolling when the app is first launched. This helps familiarize users with flipping through menu items using the carousel — and the fix didn't require a complete design change.
- **Trialing repeat ordering with a beta launch.** Since team members didn't have a chance to test repeat use in usability testing, they decided to do a beta launch of the app for three weeks prior to wider release. During that time, nearly 100 Pizza Pizza employees and their friends and family were asked to use the app and provide feedback to the Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile teams to help them identify and fix any last-minute glitches both to the experience and to the functionality.

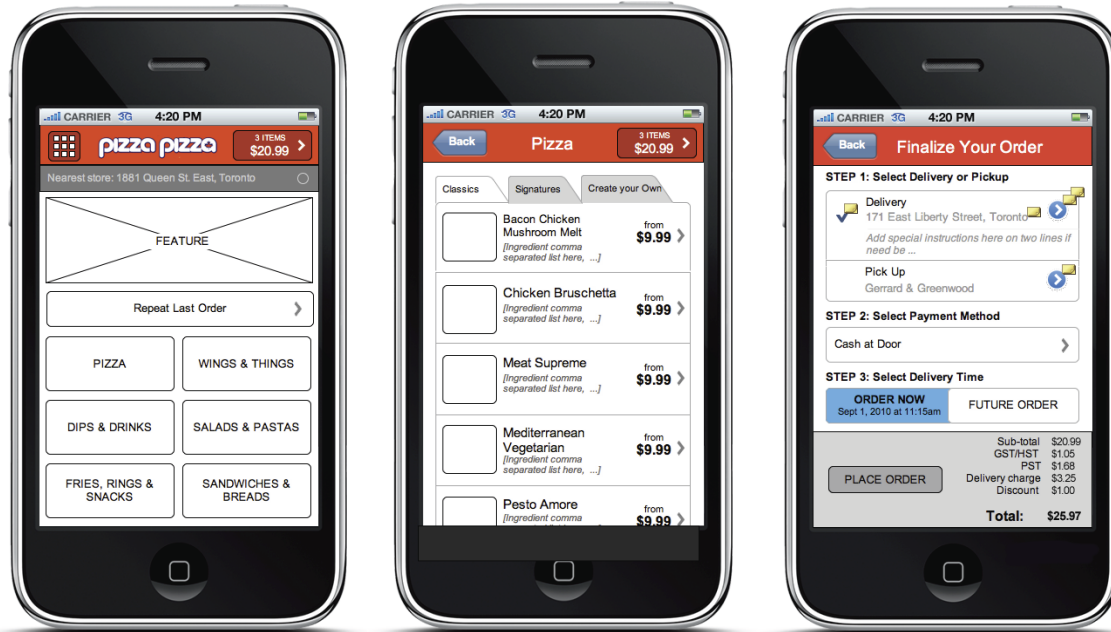
**Figure 5** Pizza Pizza Stakeholders Engaged In Co-creation Exercises With The Plastic Mobile Team



Source: Plastic Mobile and Pizza Pizza

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

**Figure 6** Plastic Mobile Tested Wireframes Of Its Designs With Real Users

Source: Plastic Mobile and Pizza Pizza  
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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

### Next Steps: Pizza Pizza Plans To Maintain, Grow, And Innovate Its Mobile Presence

The Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile teams have organized their future work in three areas. They plan to:

- **Maintain the current app.** Now that the app has launched, Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile have begun to gather feedback and reactions to the app. The team members have created a road map for future enhancements — some at the behest of customers and some that they weren't able to fit into the first round of development. Most recently they released a version with background support so that customers could take calls or send texts while ordering without losing a started order.
- **Grow to new platforms.** The initial app launched for iPhones only, but team members hope to closely follow their success with other device releases to reach a broader range of users.
- **Innovate the pizza-buying experience.** Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile's research uncovered a number of customer perceptions — particularly in the blurring between the online and offline experiences — that provide fodder for future innovation. Together the agency and client teams continue to investigate these options to evolve Pizza Pizza's experience.

## BEST PRACTICE RESULTS: PIZZA PIZZA APP DOUBLES MONTHLY MOBILE ORDERS

Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile's customer-centered process resulted in an app performance that exceeded Pizza Pizza's objectives.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the app makes it easy for customers to:

- **Order pizza.** The Pizza Pizza mobile app launched in April 2011 along with a targeted marketing campaign in stores, online, in the iTunes App Store, and in print to help drive customers to the app. It received 75,000 downloads in the first two weeks of launch alone, and mobile orders grew from 9% of website orders on the launch to about 18% of total digital orders 10 months after the launch. The app has not only converted online or call center clients to the mobile channel, it has also brought new customers to Pizza Pizza.
- **Order pizza . . . again.** The app wasn't just a hit when it launched; it has sustained its strong performance. The number of mobile orders continues to grow at a healthy clip, ranging from 15% to 35% growth month after month. What's more, the mobile app currently has 10% more customers making repeat orders than the website.
- **Applaud Pizza Pizza.** Customers have shown their approval of the mobile app not just via sales but also with superior ratings in the iTunes App Store. The app's current version has 4.5 stars based on 620 ratings and 4 stars over its lifetime based on 1,059 ratings. Several comments cite that the app "makes ordering pizza really easy."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### FOLLOW PIZZA PIZZA'S RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

For firms that haven't yet created mobile experiences for their customers, Pizza Pizza's example holds a number of obvious best practices. But many firms already have a mobile site or app and are looking to improve or expand those experiences. What can those firms learn from Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile?

- **Convenience drives mobile use.** Building the mobile application with a user-centric approach had to challenge Pizza Pizza's existing ordering process. This required changes to the way its back-end systems handled online orders. While using a similar ordering task flow as the website would have been easiest for the company, it recognized the importance of making it easy for the *customer* — particularly for mobile — and worked to devise a solution to do just that.<sup>3</sup> The extra time spent on a design for convenience resulted in a better experience that delivered on a key customer need.
- **Testing is crucial for mobile usability.** Although Apple and Google both publish design guidelines for building apps on their respective platforms, some of the interactions they specify aren't so intuitive for app users. Plastic Mobile found in usability testing that a horizontal scroll wheel, even with affordances to show that it contained more items, was not recognized by

customers as something interactive. Without the testing, it might have been impossible based on post-launch statistics to understand why consumers were not ordering other menu items. This combined with the frequently changing interaction capabilities with mobile devices requires that even firms launching second-generation mobile apps must test those apps with real users to ensure that users are able to use them as their creators envisioned.

- **Integration drives long-term mobile adoption.** Pizza Pizza partnered with mobile agency Plastic Mobile to create its mobile app, but that doesn't mean that mobile operates in a silo. Plastic Mobile works closely with Pizza Pizza's website team members, trading insights on the feedback that they've received and sharing findings to help them improve the online experience. In addition, they collaborate with in-store merchandising teams to promote the new app in store messaging, in print, and on their in-store digital screens. Because customers are likely to call when they have trouble with the app, Plastic Mobile also works with the call center teams to help them address questions. And finally, the Plastic Mobile team continues to explore ways to bridge the physical/digital divide using mobile devices. It's this type of cross-channel integration that helps ensure that Pizza Pizza will continue to serve customers' needs as they evolve.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Although Pizza Pizza did not previously have a mobile app, customers were already using their smartphones to order from the company's website.
- <sup>2</sup> Pizza Pizza and Plastic Mobile won a Webby award in 2011 for their mobile app. In the category of mobile shopping apps, they beat out Target, Wal-Mart, and others. Source: The Webby Awards ([http://www.webbyawards.com/webbys/current.php?media\\_id=127&season=15](http://www.webbyawards.com/webbys/current.php?media_id=127&season=15)).
- <sup>3</sup> The mobile industry has long imagined that cell phones may one day displace the PC for many consumer activities. For now, the vast majority of consumers prefer the PC to a mobile device for most Internet-based activities. But that will change as mobile experiences continue to emphasize the three things that Forrester considers to be the killer advantages of mobile devices: immediacy, simplicity, and context. The success of mobile services in pulling people away from the PC will depend on how conveniently they deliver these three things. See the October 14, 2009, "[The Convenience Quotient Of Mobile Services: A Facebook Case Study](#)" report.

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