

Success Story

Unthinkable helps AreaOwl to realize their idea of a search engine that connects travellers with local businesses

Customer

Area Owl

Country

United States

Industry

Travel

About The Client

Area Owl is a U.S. based startup that connects local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, homestays and lounges to connect with nearby travelers. It provides travelers with a unique search engine where they could find all the information they may need, and on the other hand it provides businesses with a custom CRM solution that helps them cater to the travelling needs of the customers. Area Owl currently operates in 3 major cities in the US, Peninsula, South Bay, and San Francisco. However, their growth plans involve expanding their services across the US.

Technology Stack

MySQL

php

Drupal

Business Situation

There has been a growing demand for experiential travel for a number of years now. Getting the authentic version of a place is gaining more importance for travelers and they are eager for cultural experiences that are more interactive than gazing through the window of a tour bus. Providing these types of experiences have become more easier thanks to the technology that is making traveling easier. Eventually, Area Owl envisioned a local search engine that could help travellers to connect with local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, popular attractions, eateries, homestays etc. It wanted to revolutionize the way local businesses advertise their services and products to travelers visiting the local area.

AreaOwl approached Unthinkable Software to transform their vision into a market fit product. They needed a technology partner who could proactively contribute to design and ideation of their application, rather than just provide development services. The client chose Unthinkable for our best cost/value balance, extensive expertise in application development as well as for our innovation oriented approach.

- ✓ The requirement included two different applications. First, a search engine that could provide all the local information that a traveller may need, all in one place, all within a few clicks.
- ✓ Secondly, a cloud based white-label hotel guestservice platform that could be customized to incorporate each business's brand identity.

The Solution

The engagement started with the Unthinkable team setting up a strategic requirement gathering process in place. This was done through our unique Discover & Frame workshop, wherein we document app ideas, target market, persona, business model, competition, revenue streams, etc. This helps us get a clear understanding of what is the client's expectations and effectively develop a project roadmap. Once all the aforementioned aspects were documented, our expert business analyst team analyzed the application requirements, created user stories, feature lists, process flow diagrams and clickable prototypes of the application. On the techno-commercial front, they suggested the most viable technology stack, identified third party tools and Integration and proposed a block level architecture of the application.

The user experience was one of the project's cornerstones. We focused on creating intuitive usability to facilitate travellers to easily locate required information, as well as lucid visualization tools to allow businesses create their own web presence with ease. The UI/UX of the application was a result of an extensive research by our business analyst team to study the behavior and motivation factors of the defined user persona

Keeping all of requirements into consideration, Unthinkable recommended developing using Drupal, PHP and MYSQL as core technologies. Envisaging the utter need of scalability, and robustness of the application, a cloudbased architecture was designed so that the system is exquisitely responsive to increase in number of users.

Unthinkable developed a cloud based CRM application that enables local merchants to create an account for their services with custom information such as banners, menu, directions, website etc. A different module was developed for travelers that enabled them to search for businesses in their vicinity based on custom filters such as distance, business type, services offered, operating time, and review etc. Unthinkable followed the Kanban methodology for application development. While the project involved continuous improvements with add-on features for better user experience by the client, team Unthinkable successfully launched the app in 3 months of its inception. Some of the key features that we incorporated in the application were:

- ✔ Stripe payment gateway integration for local businesses to get started with paid subscription of Area Owl services.
- ✔ An admin panel for hotels and local businesses was created that enables them to create a web page to promote their services.
- ✔ Integrating the application with third party CRM for email events like sign up, web page creation etc
- ✔ Integrating applications with third party APIs (like bokun.io) for startups to better connect with the platform

The Impact

Area Owl was able to launch and market the product in a timely manner as Unthinkable ensured that the deliverables were provided on time and with maintaining quality so as to meet all the deadlines. Within a few months of its launch, the platform has received an amazing response from businesses associated with the travel industry. As per the feedback received from users, the platform is known to increase queries from travelers by 37%. More than 1000 local businesses have been associated with Area Owl and have served more than 10,000 travelers.

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