Turning innovative thinking into 'the norm'

STUDENTS NEVER ASK IF A UNIVERSITY HAS A WEBSITE. AND TODAY THE SAME IS TRUE FOR A MOBILE APP; IT'S SIMPLY EXPECTED.



At top institutions, like the University of Sydney (Sydney, Australia), innovation is considered 'the norm'. So making services easily available via mobile devices has become an expected part of the experience. "You don't thank the hotel staff when the plumbing works properly in your room. In the same way, our students expect to access university services via their mobile devices...it's just a given." says Dr. Geoff Gordon, Education Manager in Information and Communications Technology.

Because of this rising expectation, Gordon and his team knew that they needed to produce a high quality app to provide their entire community with immediate access to many facets of Sydney life. Plus, as one of Australia's premier institutions, providing an excellent app was necessary for the university.

GOING MOBILE: NOT 'IF' OR 'WHEN'. **BUT 'HOW'**

Understanding the immediate need for a mobile solution. Sydney looked into implementing a mobile website, but quickly realised that it could not meet all of their needs from a design, content, and interactivity stand point.

ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Founded in 1850, the University of Sydney is a cutting edge, face-to-face university featuring state-of-the-art teaching, research, and student support facilities that serve over 50,000 students.

"When we saw what Blackboard Mobile was doing in this area, we jumped at the chance to have them implement our mobile strategy," says Gordon. "Given Blackboard's experience, technology, and support, we knew they could deliver a product that did exactly what we wanted it to do. And we wouldn't have to take on all the work ourselves or worry about formatting it for different devices on the market."

The goal for their app was clear: to deliver a high quality app that gives their community access to most of the things they need, and showcases The University of Sydney as one of Australia's top institutions.



Partnering with Blackboard Mobile has enabled them to do just that: "Our mobile app delivers essential, up-to-date information in the quickest, most convenient manner for our students." said Gordon.

In mid-2012 Sydney launched their app, Sydney Uni - a custom app that delivers the essential information that their community needs. Prospective students and alumni can now

virtually connect with the university through interactive maps, videos, and events schedules. Current students can look up the location of the nearest bus, campus café, or ATM, check their Blackboard courses, and keep tabs on the latest news, all while they're on the go.

A QUICK PAYOFF

Even though the app was introduced halfway through the university year, Sydney Uni was downloaded over 13,000 times in the very first month.

In order to spread the word about their app, the Sydney Uni Marketing team rolled out an extensive (and quite creative) publicity campaign. Perhaps the most inventive part of their plan was a series of comical videos that ended up going viral in their local community.

In addition to the hit video series, they rolled out everything from digital banners and ads, to chalked footpaths and flyers - all driving traffic to their dedicated microsite. In order to reach their entire community, they made sure to tout the news across all channels, including their social media sites and weekly emails.

The application quickly turned into a true marketing asset, not only for attracting prospective students, but also serving as a strong connection point for all current students, faculty, and alumni.

ROOM TO GROW

At the University of Sydney, Blackboard Mobile is helping them discover the opportunities to enhance teaching, learning, and student support beyond the brick and mortar walls. The flexibility and compatibility of the technology allows for customisation, so the University plans to add additional features to their app that are campus specific. Continuing to focus on making their students everyday lives easier, their first step will likely be to add a computer lab finder to show the availability of computers at each location, followed by timetable information and virtual tours.

THE NEW 'NORM'

Making campus information and services available on mobile devices is quickly becoming 'the norm' for top institutions today.

By implementing a solid mobile strategy with Blackboard Mobile, institutions like the University of Sydney are engaging more students, building stronger relationships, and delivering a better teaching and learning experience.

On day one, the Mobile Central product delivers 90% of what we wanted. The out of the box modules fit our needs. The project manager responsible for delivering the app was from IT and he collaborated with our marketing mangers. They have all reported to me it was the easiest and best collaborative work they have ever done with a software vendor.

Dr. Geoff Gordon Education Manager in Information and Communications Technology



