

Case Study – Countrywide Home Loans, Mobile User Interface

Challenge

In its efforts to expand its reach into the emerging mobile market, Countrywide Home Loans wanted to create a mobile user interface for its new DRTV microsite. With a big industry event coming up in a matter of weeks, company marketing executives wanted to be able to showcase a mobile version of their new microsite to business partners as a way of demonstrating its forward-thinking online capabilities.

As head of mobile marketing, Jon Samsel envisioned an interface that was simple to use, optimized for the most popular cellular devices, and developed very quickly. He had only 12 days from start to finish to deliver the finished product.

Solution

Jon and his in-house developer, William, focused on optimizing the company's highest-trafficked microsite pages for mobile, honing in on a small subset of pages to make mobile ready, and finally choosing just 20% of the existing microsite site content to port over. Applying the 80/20 proved to be a wise decision.

Next, Jon and William focused on optimizing the screen size. Their main task was to determine the best way to preserve the brand integrity of the microsite but to microscale the experience down to the average mobile user. Text, navigation, on-screen elements, and appearance were all debated prior to any real coding work being performed. This allowed for a creative environment where the best ideas could surface. The final solution was a fine balance of essential messaging, minimal functionality, and one click, touchable, call-to-actions -- keeping the core needs of the user in mind.



Jon and William made the decision to resize the interface design for immediate access of your average adult size fingers, since 'tappable' touch screen interfaces were the common UI between devices.

Next up -- sketching the core navigation and design elements to make the features on the smaller mobile pages stand out. Here are the mobile interface design sketches for the Countrywide mobile microsite along side with the final production designs for comparison.



Next, Jon shared these mock-ups with a few folks within the sales and marketing team to gather their feedback. For example, user feedback prompted Jon and his developer to add a 'single tap' click to call solution on the Apply Now page.



Lastly, the design specs were established and the coding began. Once the mobile code was ready and installed on our servers, Jon had Countrywide's website developers install device detection code on the main microsite so that site visitors would be auto redirected to the appropriate mobile version of the microsite based on discovery of an iPhone, Blackberry, or Android user agent.

Results

The 12 day development and deployment deadline was achieved.

The mobile version of the microsite not only provided an optimal experience to mobile smartphone users, but the interface was able to support both streaming audio and video, API feeds, and click to call technology.

The new mobile interface was showcased to hundreds of business partners and fellow industry executives to positive reviews.

Countrywide's management team had another breakthrough product innovation to talk about in marketing material.

“Jon is one of those rare individuals who can be counted on to spearhead a challenging initiative like the one we worked on together. His structured approach to requirements gathering, executive buy-in, development timelines, and user interface design makes him a pleasure to partner with.”

– William Chan, developer