

Starcomms deploys first location-based family and friend finder service in Nigeria



Key benefits:

- » Additional revenue stream for operator.
- » Creativity Software operated as a 'one-stop shop'.
- » Opportunity to further enhance and develop the brand through the launch of an innovative service.
- » Starcomms established itself as market leader for LBS in Nigeria.
- » Increased levels of customer satisfaction.

Starcomms selects Creativity Software to deploy location-based services in their CDMA network

Nigerian mobile network operator, Starcomms, is pioneering the way for location-based services in West Africa. The CDMA operator, which listed on the Nigerian stock exchange in July 2009, is a key player in one of the most rapidly expanding mobile markets in Africa - 75 million mobile users and rising. Starcomms is ideally positioned to deploy innovative location-based service solutions and leverage the benefits of being first to market - differentiating it from the competition and helping to attract new subscribers.

Challenge

Starcomms follows a "best and first" strategy which by its very nature, creates a constant and demanding challenge to find new and innovative services to bring to market. The main driver for deploying location-based services was the continued drive to innovate and develop the Starcomms portfolio of services. Innovation, time-to-market and strategic fit were all key in the decision making process. Starcomms could see the substantial benefits of deploying LBS solutions and recognised the unique position they were in as a mobile network operator. Consequently they decided on a proactive approach to deploy a commercial LBS solution while they still had the opportunity to do so. Had they not deployed, this would have left the door wide open for a competitor to seize the LBS opportunity in Nigeria. The deployment of location-based services (LBS) was a natural, if not crucial, progression for the operator.

Solution

To adhere to its "first and best" strategy, Starcomms decided it needed to look for new value added services to offer its subscribers. After careful consideration and market research, location-based services were identified as the most innovative and lucrative solutions to invest in. Starcomms then set about looking for an end-to-end LBS provider with the relevant expertise, experience and synergies. The operator also identified the need for a provider with a broad suite of LBS applications to ensure future deployment options for their roadmap.

The vendor selection process saw Creativity Software selected as the LBS specialist of choice. As an end-to-end expert in LBS with an extensive product suite of applications and deployment experience across five continents, Creativity Software was identified as the perfect partner for Starcomms.



“The need to be in touch without necessarily interfering in each other’s activities makes StarTrack the service of choice. Lovers can catch up with each other without calling and parents can track children without any exchange of voice or SMS”. **Mr Tushar Maheshwari, Chief Commercial Officer of Starcomms.**

The launch of STARTRACK is instructive for other operators as this is mainly uncharted territory in Africa. The opportunity for mobile network operators to capitalise on the revenue generation potential behind the service is substantial.

The fact Creativity Software were already used by some of the world’s largest mobile operating groups reduced the level of risk for the operator.

Not only did Creativity Software offer compelling capabilities in terms of its applications, but it was also able to act as a ‘one-stop’ shop for Starcomms, providing highly experienced and knowledgeable staff throughout the deployment process.

Starcomms decided to deploy FamilyWise, the Family Finder service from Creativity Software. The application was white-labelled (a feature available for all Creativity Software applications) and branded STARTRACK by Starcomms. STARTRACK enables subscribers to locate their loved ones, through the Starcomms network, providing peace of mind at all times. Using real-time location, parents can see the location of their child’s mobile phone without making a call, providing reassurance without intruding on the child’s space and freedom. The service also facilitates the ever increasing popularity of social networking among friends, allowing them to quickly and easily locate one another.

It was also important that the service was deployed via the most suitable method for Starcomms subscribers. It was crucial that the service was accessible to all users and to meet this requirement, Creativity Software selected an SMS-based deployment which avoided the need for any modifications to handset devices. Privacy and protection issues also needed to be addressed and Creativity Software ensured this was diligently done via a two step registration and confirmation process.

“STARTRACK is an innovative service which we are extremely pleased to be offering our customers, says Maher Qubain, CEO of Starcomms. We are proud to be pioneering the first deployment of its kind in West Africa and firmly believe we are leading the way in innovative value added location-based service solutions. Creativity Software is an experienced end-to-end LBS supplier which reduced the risk for Starcomms and meant clear guidance and expertise were provided throughout the deployment process. They have a full suite of location-based applications which will enable us to utilise our unique position as a mobile network operator in the location arena, and we look forward to working on further location deployments with them in the future”.

The introduction of STARTRACK has provided Starcomms with a new revenue stream from multiple sources. Firstly, via increased SMS usage by their existing subscriber base as well as an opportunity from potential customers who are being drawn to the peace of mind and social networking functionality offered by the STARTRACK service. The strategic fit is perfect for Starcomms both in terms of the range of location-based service solutions provided by Creativity Software and also with them as a supplier. The buzz around the launch and subsequent success of the deployment has further raised Starcomms profile in the Nigerian market, enhancing brand recognition.

The service has clear benefits for Starcomms customers and provides real value to them. Parents can gain assurance that their children are safe in one simple, low cost step, whilst friends can participate in the increasingly popular social networking trend. Customers are excited by the new service and pleased to be part of the network which is leading the way in innovative location-based services.



creativity software

About Creativity Software

Creativity Software is a UK company that specialises in Location Based Services. The company provides Mobile Network Operators globally (GSM & CDMA, 2G & 3G) with Location Positioning Infrastructure, Middleware and Applications, enabling them to:

- comply with lawful intercept government legislation for security or emergency services purposes
- deploy zone billing (preferential mobile phone rates for calls within the user home zone for example), and
- deploy new revenue-generation services for both consumers (e.g. Family & Friend Finder, Travel, Social Networking) and enterprises (Vehicle Tracking, Field Staff Management, Location Based Advertising).

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Customers are also keen to learn which location-based service Starcomms will deploy next. The service delights subscribers on numerous levels, but the key benefits are those of safety, security and social networking.

Results

Due to the successful collaboration between Starcomms and Creativity Software, Starcomms was able to launch the first LBS deployment in West Africa by a mobile network operator and the first deployment on a CDMA network in the whole of Africa. Starcomms have been able to harness the unique position they are in as a mobile network operator in terms of the location information they possess and also establish themselves as first to market for LBS.

Starcomms are already seeing increased revenues as a result of boosted premium SMS traffic generated by the new cost effective service. The service has also helped reinforce the strong brand recognition Starcomms already enjoys and engendered greater exposure. Starcomms anticipate a reduction in churn and an increase in new subscribers wanting access to this new value added service. Starcomms anticipate that LBS solutions will feature strongly in their aggressive expansion plans and assist in continued strong growth.

By instructing Creativity Software, Starcomms now have a flexible, robust platform from which to drive its future LBS strategy forward. Creativity Software and Starcomms are currently preparing for the deployment of a Personal Emergency Alert service (EmergencyWise) in Q2 and are also in the planning stages of introducing location-based mobile advertising as the next revenue generator.



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