



ChaCha unlocks the key to success in mobile search – the human touch

BACKGROUND

To the frustration of mobile users, online information services typically misinterpret queries and return cumbersome links rather than direct answers. Now ChaCha has married the human element that distinguishes true “information desk” assistance to the dynamic messaging power of cell phone technology, creating a powerful solution for people who are mobile and need answers to questions. Adding a new user every ten seconds, ChaCha is being received enthusiastically, making it one of the fastest growing SMS-based applications in the U.S today.

“ChaCha makes every phone a smartphone, simplifying and personalizing mobile users’ search for answers.”

JAY HIGHLEY | Chief Sales and Marketing Officer | ChaCha

CHALLENGE

Several kinds of services provide mobile consumers with answers to questions. Some (such as Google) are web-based and when queried primarily return lists of links—so getting to the actual information being sought is usually hit or miss, taking time. Other services (such as OnStar) provide “valet” assistance by means of live phone calls. But that can also be inconvenient and may only work from a specific location, area, vehicle or phone.

The fact is, mobile consumers are typically preoccupied and in a hurry. When they have a question they just want to ask it in a simple and straightforward manner and in plain English, then get back a short, direct answer. Sometimes they may want to text a question, while at other times they may prefer to ask it via the phone. People do not want to play guessing games with a computer for the right set of words that will give them the answer they are looking for. If the whole process can happen offline, allowing them to retrieve answers at their leisure, so much the better.

SOLUTION

ChaCha has set out to be the best mobile answers service in the world. Using virtually any wireless provider and mobile phone to ask any question in conversational English—from restaurant recommendations to baseball trivia—it allows people on the go to receive an accurate answer via text messaging in just minutes, 24/7. Questions can either be phoned in to 1-800-2ChaCha, or via texting to 242242 (ChaCha) from a mobile phone. The service is free for users, apart from any charges imposed by wireless providers for text messaging or voice minutes used.

CASE STUDY

Key to ChaCha's effectiveness is the unique use of trained, certified human "guides" who research and answer questions. Besides being knowledgeable in different subject areas, ChaCha Guides are also able to understand and respond to nuance, intention, and abbreviation within any question—semantic and contextual subtleties that are typically very difficult for computers and automated systems to handle.

The human element is a genuine advantage that allows ChaCha to deliver better answers in a way that is, well, more human. And because the service keeps the thread of information for each user, it is easy for users to reply to the answers with follow on questions, as if having a conversation with a friend.

"We choose quality partners who can deliver with good diagnostics, reporting and most important timely support if something goes wrong. We know we have a better experience with mBlox."

CHRIS BROWN | Chief Operating Officer | ChaCha

MEMORABLE SUCCESS

In June 2008, just six months after the service went live, ChaCha is already handling more than 7 million queries per month. To put this in context, Google, the current leader in search, now handles approximately 37 million queries per month. However, it took Google almost four years to get to that level. ChaCha expects to be handling 50+ million queries from users per month by the end of 2008.

Once they try ChaCha, people usually find it to be powerful and a lot of fun, even addicting, with average use being more than 27 times per month. It is also proving extremely viral, with 88% percent of users saying that they heard about ChaCha from a friend and 93 percent of all users saying they would recommend the service to family and friends.

"Nothing is more important to our service than to deliver our answers dependably and consistently," said Chris Brown, Chief Operating Officer for ChaCha. "We choose quality partners who can deliver with good diagnostics, reporting and most important timely support if something goes wrong. mBlox can easily keep up with our rapid growth, scaling to the tens of millions of messages per month that we expect, while maintaining the quality and reliability of service that is so important to our success. We know we have a better experience with mBlox."

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