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Ben Weintraub
kajeet

Service Delivery and Charging Solution Brings Innovative “Tween” Service to Life

THE CHALLENGE

► kajeet™ was founded in 2003 with a fresh perspective on the “tween” market. Young people ages 8-14 represented a huge opportunity for mobile operators, with just 25% cell phone penetration. Yet kajeet noticed that the large wireless service providers and even the few youth-focused Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) were doing little to court this demographic.

Existing players missing the mark

For the most part, operators were either targeting a youth segment in their teens to early twenties, or simply offering family plans with required multi-year service contracts and cancellation fees. Few, if any, providers were focusing on calling, data, and messaging services that appeal to tweens or empowering parents to manage children's usage and budgets.

Crafting the right message, the right product

The founders of kajeet, three dads with young kids, believed it was possible to build a service that would strike a chord with both young people and parents.

Their market research (with input from more than 3,000 young people) and personal experiences confirmed their view that “kids are smart” and can readily learn to be confident and responsible with technology.

For tweens, they envisioned hip, full-function handsets with photo, video, instant messaging, and texting capabilities, as well as access to a “walled garden” of appropriate web games, content, ring tones, and wallpaper.

For parents, handsets would be affordable while the service would leverage new technologies to support a nimble, pay-as-you-go relationship — no contracts and no activation, cancellation, roaming, long-distance, or surprise fees. And a website that would make it easy to set and change controls, no matter what mobile service parents had for their own use.

In search of the right technology, the right supplier

When researching the enabling information technology, the kajeet team quickly discovered that not all vendors were the same. kajeet was impressed that the Telcordia Service Delivery Suite had already been deployed worldwide, and its real-time charging and policy capabilities were available as a hosted solution. In addition, Telcordia had a track record of supporting some of the world's most successful MVNOs.

Technically-speaking, at this time kajeet was “a blank slate,” as kajeet founder and EVP Ben Weintraub explains, since it had not yet secured investor funding to begin operations. Thus, besides innovative, flexible technology, kajeet considered vendor knowledge and experience to be critical selling points.

“It quickly became obvious that the other suppliers didn't have the architecture, relationships, and knowledge that Telcordia offered in order to provide the capabilities we needed,” says Weintraub.

THE TELCORDIA RESPONSE

► The companies embarked on an extraordinary collaboration to articulate the kajeet requirements and bring life to its vision. It was a creative give-and-take with both sides brainstorming ideas and direction based on the kajeet mission, the flexibility of the Telcordia systems, and the experience of the Telcordia experts, which allowed them to help kajeet craft an approach that was both innovative and realistic to deploy.

An unusual project dynamic

“I can't say enough about how hard Telcordia worked to 'get' us, to understand our business,” says Weintraub. “There was a rare level of honesty between our companies. We would say, 'Can you do this or that?' and Telcordia would tell us, 'Yes' or 'No,' or 'We may not be able to do that, but we can do something else really cool for kids that fits your paradigm.’”

As a result, the kajeet dynamic controls would include:

- **TimeManager** to schedule when phones can be used
- **WalletManager** to determine how much can be spent, designate who pays for what, transfer money between parents' and children's e-wallets, and cut off services when spending limits are reached
- **ContactManager** to identify who can call or text the phone
- **FeatureManager** to turn features on and off.

Telcordia was instrumental in helping kajeet define its technical and operational requirements and determining how those needs could be met.

“The Telcordia crew brought us to life,” says Weintraub.

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All systems go

With funding in place in January 2006, implementation went quickly. Within seven months, Telcordia configured the rules and logic of the solution's hosted service delivery application to meet kajeet specifications, while kajeet constructed interfaces from its customer management systems to the Telcordia application. In July, Telcordia had the solution ready to go, and, by August, kajeet was distributing phones to 100 young beta-testers and their families.

kajeet officials also visited Telcordia to demonstrate the product for an expanded audience of Telcordia technicians, salespeople, and senior managers. "During the demo, everyone in the room was smiling," says Weintraub. It was clear that the solution's flexibility supported all the self-service features and would allow innovative services to roll out quickly and cost-effectively, and, Weintraub adds, it was "the first time they had seen cartoon characters on a website associated with configuration of their Service Delivery Suite."

THE RESULTS

▶ With the Telcordia solution, kajeet launched more than a mobile phone service. It is an interactive, multimedia platform that is a hit with both parents and their children, and one of the only services in the world to give consumers the level of self-service that is usually reserved for enterprise customers.

The platform also allows kajeet to:

- Reduce the cost, risk, and time-to-market for innovative services
- Manage network and information technology with minimal need for skilled telecom experts
- Ramp-up with no service disruption as market share grows.

Less than a year after launch, 25% of subscribers were not only enjoying kajeet prepaid calling, but also using some or all of its online management tools and personalization features. Busy, low-tech parents were also reporting that the kajeet user interface made it intuitive and easy to configure their children's phone features.

"We built the user interface," says Weintraub, "but, like all of our services and configuration capabilities, it's enabled by Telcordia. Telcordia is one of our best vendors — helpful, collaborative, and obviously patient. We couldn't do what we want to do without Telcordia."

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