



SUCCESS STORY TRAVEL

INTERMILES MAKES MEMBER EXPERIENCE MORE REWARDING WITH AWS

Apexon powers company rebrand with expanded program on mobile

InterMiles is a travel and lifestyle reward program. Through its ubiquitous currency, InterMiles, the program helps its 10 million+ members fulfill their travel and lifestyle aspirations. As mobile has become the preferred channel for its members, InterMiles set out to provide the most rewarding mobile experience possible.

The InterMiles rewards program empowers members to earn and redeem 'InterMiles' across a wide network of program partners, from airline and hotel bookings, shopping, dining, fuel, and more — all around the world. InterMiles' appeal is based on its ability to offer a more unique, comprehensive and rewarding loyalty program in the form of both rewards and an engaging digital experience.

iñtermiles



AWARD-WINNING LOYALTY & REWARDS PROGRAM



10 MILLION+ MEMBERS



150+ PROGRAM PARTNERS



A core focus of the InterMiles program was expanding its mobile presence. The existing mobile capability was minimal, and relied almost entirely on mobile web, significantly limiting the experience for members. The company realized this was a huge gap for its on-the-go travelers looking for easy, anytime access to track their reward status and incentives.

As the company planned the brand re-launch of InterMiles in 2019, it turned to Apexon to design and develop a world-class mobile experience for its loyalty program members and help reposition it as a digital innovator in the travel and lifestyle space. Its goals were to create a seamless, multi-channel experience by adding a mobile app to its existing web and mobile web presence. It could then use this platform to expand its member base by taking the rewards program beyond airline rewards and continuously onboarding new partners.

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

2019

- InterMiles loyalty mobile application and SDK development

2020

- Launched an app for new brand
- 3rd party advanced mobile application launch
- Mitigate Covid challenges (Technical and strategic)
- Transformed the CX with experience design



THE RESULTS

KEY OUTCOMES



20% INCREASE IN CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

As a result of improved mobile user experience



15% GROWTH IN HIGH REVENUE CUSTOMERS

As a result of expanded selection of high-value partner offerings



FASTER TIME-TO-MARKET

Reduced time to add new partners from 90 days on legacy web platform to 30 days for mobile app



HIGHER CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Better customer engagement and experience levels on new mobile app vs legacy web app

OUR METHODOLOGY

THE DIGITAL LIFECYCLE

Apexon works with companies across the digital lifecycle.



GO DIGITAL

LAUNCH & EXPERIMENT



BE DIGITAL

AUTOMATE & ACCELERATE



EVOLVE DIGITAL

BE INTELLIGENT & AUTONOMOUS

Enable digital adoption in a quick, and agile manner

Apexon enabled InterMiles to get to market on time by developing a strategy that combined native mobile UX for select member interactions with existing web experience for others.

Build digital infrastructure and foundation for enterprises to scale

Apexon deployed a scalable architecture – leveraging microservices, containerization and React framework on AWS cloud to support application scalability.

A new flight accrual online platform was built in record time, providing the opportunity to earn InterMiles across all airlines.

Leverage data engineering to make strategic decisions and get digital right every time

Apexon Increased automation, agility and scale; providing easy access to application performance data.

THE CHALLENGE

TO OVERCOME TIME RESTRICTIONS TO COMPLETE PROJECT GOAL



Implementing a Hybrid Strategy

Initially, InterMiles planned to develop a brand new native mobile capability that incorporated all aspects of its offerings: airline and hotel bookings, membership tier status, rewards and incentives. However, the time requirements for that approach did not align with the planned brand launch. Accomplishing InterMiles' goal required a hybrid strategy that would enable it to get to market on time by combining native mobile UX for select member interactions with existing web experience for others where it did not impact the UX.



Scalable & Cost-Effective Cloud-Native

InterMiles also needed a scalable and cost-effective cloud-native option for their compute workload. Usage patterns spiked based on marketing campaign activity and it needed a solution that could scale up and down with that demand. Assuring the performance of their loyalty management platform was crucial to improving lifetime member value.

THE SOLUTION

FORMULATING A HYBRID APPROACH

When Apexon started working with InterMiles, the engagement covered multiple aspects of the new mobile experience, starting with assessing the situation and developing the strategy for its hybrid approach.

This involved several key decisions in concert with the InterMiles team:



The existing loyalty/booking engine was an important middle ground between access to existing member information and activity, and the new UX. Certain aspects had to be retained, and others had to be developed as part of the native mobile experience.



InterMiles wanted to ensure multi-channel business continuity and smooth customer experience so active user sessions were carried forward seamlessly as they moved from the native mobile UX to the existing web UX. This required a seamless handshake between the new native app and the existing web view.



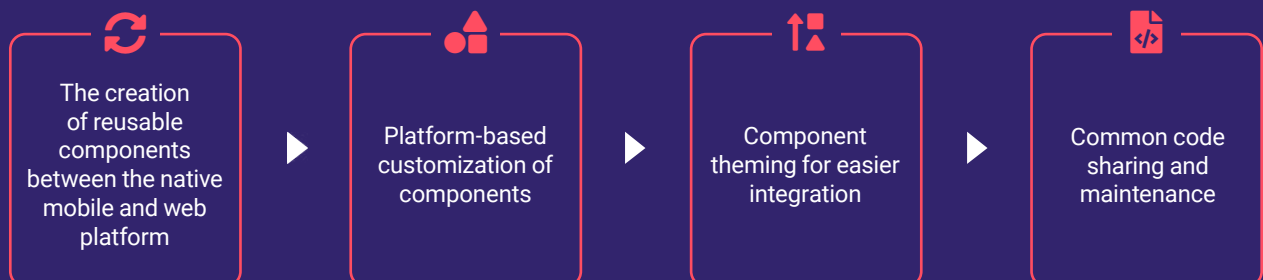
Additionally, the tight project timeline had to incorporate user feedback throughout the development process. This included the core team, main stakeholders, employees, and extended user groups, both internal and external.

THE APEXON TEAM THEN TURNED ITS FOCUS TO DEVELOPING AND LAUNCHING BOTH IOS AND ANDROID APPLICATIONS QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY IN LINE WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE INTERMILES BRAND.

The hybrid approach cut the original project timeline by 67%. By leveraging native mobile for the highest priority interactions and web views for lesser interactions, InterMiles was able to deliver an outstanding user experience for both existing and prospective members.

It used native web UX for initial levels of interaction; e.g., new user engagement, onboarding, profile updates and search initiation, and maintained web UX for ensuing interactions; e.g., search results, and bookings. The key was ensuring a seamless experience between native and web using tokens, cookies and 3rd party libraries.

There were several key tenets core to the Apexon approach:



User experience, value-added content and engagement were also of utmost importance to the InterMiles brand transformation. Apexon worked with the InterMiles team to deliver an experience that reinforced the new brand and its full value proposition for travelers:



Simplified Enrollment and Login – made member access frictionless



Gamification & Interactivity – increased member engagement and reinforced app use



Member-Exclusive Offers – along with special-tier benefits further incented use and engagement



Referral Programs – encouraged social sharing and increased visibility



Instant Account Updates – provided on-the-go notifications of reward credits, debits and status



Easy Reward Redemption – enabled members to collect and redeem awards for flights, hotels, shipping and fuel

FOR INTERMILES, THE NEW MOBILE EXPERIENCE REINFORCED THEIR FRESH, NEW BRAND IMAGE AND HELPED RESHAPE EXISTING AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBER'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT THE COMPANY HAD TO OFFER.

Apexon helped support this goal by enabling InterMiles to get to market more quickly with an outstanding user experience. Member engagement increased almost immediately, and satisfaction levels were extremely high based on member feedback. Equally important, InterMiles had the digital foundation that enabled it to scale the mobile channel quickly and flexibly as its member base grew.

OUR JOINT APPROACH

AWS CLOUD

InterMiles was a long-time AWS customer and wanted to build on its existing AWS environment. Apexon leveraged its AWS expertise to help it do just that:



Developed a micro-services architecture based on JAVA APIs to support mobile and web applications hosted on the Amazon ECS cluster. Scaling policies are defined in such a way that whenever there is a demand for one or more services, only those services are scaling up for optimal resource utilization.



Leveraging the auto-scaling feature of Amazon Aurora to support unexpected spikes in the usage.



Using Amazon ElastiCache (Redis) to store API response temporarily to improve response time and user experience.



Using the Kibana dashboard to monitor the performance, failures of the APIs and report anomalies in the ecosystem.

AWS WELL-ARCHITECTED REVIEW

Apexon introduced AWS Well-Architected Framework (WAR Program) to InterMiles.

AWS WAR defines key concepts, design principles and architectural best practices for designing and running workloads in the AWS cloud. Using WAR, the Apexon team helped InterMiles identify how well their architecture aligned with these best practices and provided guidance for improvements.

Key areas of focus included:

WAR PILLARS



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE



SECURITY



RELIABILITY



PERFORMANCE EFFICIENCY



COST OPTIMIZATION

FOCUS AREAS

Running and monitoring systems to deliver business value and continually improving processes and procedures

Protecting information and systems

Ensuring a workload performs its intended function correctly and consistently

Using IT and computing resources efficiently

Avoiding unnecessary costs

RISK IDENTIFIED

2+
High risk issues

3+
High risk issues

2+
High risk issues

3+
High risk issues

High risk issues

IMPACT

Configuration management solution

Annual expectancy cost due to security breaches

Disaster recovery architecture

Application performance workflow

Cost-intensive resources by tagging and using optimization techniques

KEY OUTCOMES FROM AWS WAR REVIEW



Identified & fixed high-risk issues

Concerning performance, operations, reliability, security and cost, with significant improvement in customer engagement and lifetime value



Employed new AWS services

Addressing high-risk issues observed during the discovery phase



Enabled continuous monitoring & automation

For tasks with high impact on mission-critical functions



SERVICES USED:



Amazon Elastic Container
Service (Amazon ECS)



Amazon ElastiCache
for Redis



Amazon Aurora



AWS WAR



Apexon is a pure-play digital engineering services firm focused on helping companies accelerate their digital initiatives from strategy and planning through execution. We leverage deep technical expertise, Agile methodologies and data-driven intelligence to modernize systems of engagement and simplify human/tech interaction.

We deliver custom solutions that meet customers' technology needs wherever they are in their digital lifecycle. Backed by Goldman Sachs and Everstone Capital, Apexon works with both large enterprises and emerging innovators — putting digital to work to enable new products and business models, engage with customers in new ways, and create sustainable competitive differentiation.



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