

CASE STUDY

Not Just Fun and Games Building the Mousebreaker Web Site

The Company

IPC Media is a leading UK consumer magazine publisher. Almost two in every three UK women and 44% of UK men read an IPC magazine. That's almost 26 million UK adults. IPC titles include NME, InStyle, Nuts, Now and Marie Claire.

In the summer of 2008, IPC purchased the popular games web site, Mousebreaker (www.mousebreaker.com). The aim being to build upon the excellent reputation for high-quality, engaging games but to package it in a more engaging web site which could offer a wide range of commercial advertising opportunities.

The Challenge

Having purchased Mousebreaker, speed to market was of the essence. The IPC Ignite sales team scheduled an event to present the new site and commercial opportunities to potential advertisers. The scheduled event meant that the IPC development team had less than 8-weeks to implement the site, and the deadline was immovable. The site had to be ready on time.

The Mousebreaker team recognised that an Agile approach was appropriate to their needs. They had used a Scrum-based approach in other areas of the business and felt that a combination of prioritisation and regular integration offered an excellent chance of success – even if the site was not 100% complete, the high-priority features would be available and demonstrable.

With limited experience of Agile within the Mousebreaker team, IPC engaged IndigoBlue.

Our Approach

IndigoBlue provided IPC with a senior Agile consultant; someone to provide day-to-day management and to guide and support the team in the introduction of the new process.

The immediate priority was to establish the business goals for the project. With tight deadlines it was essential that work was prioritised appropriately.

The process followed was a combination of Agile and Lean. Review and feedback iterations were used to provide regular engagement and reporting; and the developers used a Lean, Kanban approach to manage the workload of the team. Rather than constrain the development team to iterations, Kanban ensured that work would continually flow: user stories did not have to be artificially sub-divided to fit within time-boxes meaning that the team could maintain a focus on the business objectives.

IndigoBlue also introduced a test-driven approach combined with a continuous integration environment. On completion User Stories were immediately integrated into the main system and available for stakeholder demonstrations.

The Benefits

The Mousebreaker web site was delivered and in a live pilot environment (available from a link on the existing site) on time. More importantly, the incremental approach gave the IPC sales team the confidence that the site would be available at a very early stage in the project; within weeks, sufficient core functionality was available to support any demonstration.

The incremental availability of the new site also provided additional benefit to the sales team; as the system emerged, so too did their plans for the demonstration. This, allied to the intrinsic, provable quality provided by the development process, ensured that new stories could be delivered through to the final deadline, and included in the presentation.

The project achieved its key goals including the implementation of all standard IAB advertising formats, plus innovative InSkin and page-takeover adverts.

The Mousebreaker site is now live. Within 3-days of its full launch it achieved the previously elusive goal of 2,000,000 page impressions per day. This number continues to rise. The project was viewed by IPC as a resounding success.

"I'm very proud about how everyone has handled the new development process as I know for some it wasn't easy at the start, but everyone kept open minds, learnt a huge amount, ran with it and made it work beautifully, delivering one of our most important web projects of the year at a pace the business found hard to believe"

Kevin Heery,
Digital Development Director
IPC Ignite

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