Project Sea Cucumber Strikes Again! Product Development Goes 'On the Road' in Atlanta

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Back for more collaboration and rapid-fire onsite product development is Project Sea Cucumber.

Project Sea Cucumber – the silly working title that stuck – involves dispatching an agile development team to visit customers and learn first-hand about their experience with AppFolio Property Manager. As a follow up to last year's visit (https://www.appfolio.com/blog/2017/04/project-sea-cucumber-appfolio-agile-teams-go-road-austin-texas/) in Austin, AppFolians visited customers in Atlanta.

> *"There is nothing like physically sitting with a customer and experiencing their pains first-hand,"* said Samantha Britney, User Experience Design Lead for AppFolio Property Manager. *"This emulates the ideal scenario of having our customers engaged in real time throughout the software development process."*

Sea Cucumber & Customer Listening 101:

- 1:1 engage with customer in person. See where they work, how they work, and set the foundation for a stronger connection.

- Teach the customer how we work and include them in the process.

- Representatives from across the product development team come together to form a special single-project team.

- Receive customer feedback live throughout.

- A working prototype is delivered in a few hours.

- Customers influence a stronger product, while AppFolians develop a more personal relationship with our customers.

At AppFolio, our product development organization is powered by cross-functional agile teams of 2-4 Software Engineers, 1 Product Manager, 1 User Experience (UX) Designer, and 1 Software Quality Assurance (QA) Engineer.

Britney, an important member of Project Sea Cucumber, says her biggest takeaway is always the connection she experiences with customers. "They invite us into their space and open up about their business challenges. We work together to come up with solutions that address their challenges, create scrappy designs, review them together, and hack away at code to get a working prototype up and running. It becomes more personal as we get to know the people who we serve. They understand how much we really care about helping to improve their lives through software."

(https://blog.appfolio.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/office-visit-dwell-6.jpg)

(https://blog.appfolio.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/IMG_9666-2.jpg)

A product of AppFolio's recent visit is the "Back to Rental Applications" link that will preserve your filters and refresh the content without needing to refresh the page or reset your filters in your rental applications. Another property management company helped inspire three new prototyped features: additional work order information on work order surveys, asking an applicant for where they found the property listing while filling out an application, and adding a date filter to the maintenance surveys view.

Project Sea Cucumber will continue to drive customer listening in the future as agile development teams hit the road in search for feedback and new opportunities.

Senior Software Engineer Daniel Vicory, who also contributed to Sea Cucumber's success in Atlanta, noted that the project is not only important for its resulting developments and enhancements but also for the memorable interactions.

> *"As a developer, it is a pleasure to be able to see a user's face light up when you present new features. It's also a great way to share our product development style in a first-hand manner with customers. They are able to learn that even the smallest features require forethought and a balance for meeting all of our users' needs. This means we try to drill down to the root of the problem and empathize with the pain they're experiencing, contrast that with other users' pains, and work out a solution that can help everyone."*

For more on why we're so passionate about Project Sea Cucumber, visit Project Sea Cucumber – AppFolio Agile Product Development Team Goes On the Road in Austin, Texas. (https://www.appfolio.com/blog/2017/04/project-sea-cucumber-appfolio-agile-teams-go-road-austin-texas/)

> *"While the software has always been user-friendly there has been a steady increase of available features and user-focused changes to make the software even better. We really appreciate all that AppFolio does and look forward to being long term business partners."*
> *Donna Pasto of Gatekeeper Properties (http://www.gatekeeperproperties.com/).*

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