Transforming Experience Plus with Ongoing Development and Innovation

— Exploring the partnership between Experience Plus and Rocket Jones —

Executive Summary

This case study explores the partnership between Experience Plus and Rocket Jones, which began in early 2019. Experience Plus sought a long-term collaboration to enhance their bicycle tour management platform, streamline operations, and prepare for growth. The document outlines the key milestones of this partnership, including comprehensive code reviews, updates to the code base, the creation of new products like the My Trip Portal, and the integration of third-party tools like Klaviyo. Through this collaboration, Experience Plus is set up to achieve a more efficient and robust system, improving both internal and external operations.

Introduction

Experience Plus engaged Rocket Jones in early 2019 with a vision to revamp their existing bicycle tour management system. This platform was essential for their operations, which involved organizing and conducting bicycle tours throughout Europe and Latin America. Rocket Jones was sought as a long-term partner capable of maintaining and enhancing the project, aligning with Experience Plus's growth plans.

Initial Assessment and Code Review

Rocket Jones commenced its partnership by conducting a comprehensive code review of Experience Plus's existing application infrastructure. The review aimed to identify areas of improvement, including security concerns, minor feature enhancements, and bug fixes stemming from the initial development of the site. This initial step laid the foundation for the transformation that would follow.

Maintaining Atlas: A Comprehensive Trip Logistics Tool

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A pivotal milestone in Experience Plus's growth is the development of the Atlas tool. Atlas was designed by a third party to manage complex trip logistics, ensuring that every aspect of the bicycle tours that Experience Plus hosted would be meticulously planned and executed. It is the heart of their operation, covering a wide array of components, including client interest tracking, booking management, invoicing, hotel accommodations, and bicycle rental logistics. While Atlas was not developed by Rocket Jones, the Rocket team has supported the application by porting it over to the CakePHP 4 framework, and by providing ongoing maintenance and improvement to ensure it will continue as the central hub for managing all trip-related details and providing a seamless experience for both staff and clients.

Challenges Amidst the Pandemic

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In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic heavily impacted the travel and tourism industry, causing Experience Plus's business to slow down. However, Experience Plus and Rocket Jones

remained committed to their partnership. As the company emerged from the pandemic's challenges, they took the opportunity to revisit their codebase. Rocket Jones successfully managed the migration from CakePHP 2 to CakePHP 4, ensuring that Experience Plus had an up-to-date and robust system for their operations.

Building New Features and Enhancements

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Experience Plus didn't stop after launching their Atlas tool and completing code migrations; they also collaborated with Rocket Jones to develop new features and enhancements for the benefit of both their customers and their operations. Previously, the Experience Plus team invested significant effort in manually tracking crucial pre-trip client details, including passport information, travel insurance, waivers, and bike selections. They recognized that a robust client portal could manage those details centrally, and effectively eliminate the hours their team spent tracking this information down. The upside would be additional time proactively focusing on client care and customer service. Working with Rocket Jones, Experience Plus kicked off the creation of My Trip Portal, a tailored solution designed to simplify administrative interactions between Experience Plus and their clients. This digital platform empowers customers to fulfill essential pre-trip tasks, such as signing waivers and receiving information from Experience Plus, all in one user-friendly location.

Integrating Klaviyo for Marketing

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Experience Plus identified the importance of direct marketing and reached out to Rocket Jones for assistance in integrating Klaviyo, a third-party email marketing platform, into the Atlas tool. With this integration, Experience Plus can effortlessly sync client contact information, ensuring a more personalized and effective marketing strategy.

Conclusion

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The collaboration between two dynamic companies like Experience Plus and Rocket Jones has proven to be a transformative partnership. Rocket Jones' technical expertise, ongoing maintenance, and development support have allowed Experience Plus to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, emerging from the challenges posed by the pandemic stronger than ever. Through the development of My Trip Portal, the maintenance and improvement of Atlas, and the integration of Klaviyo, Experience Plus will boast a more efficient and comprehensive system for managing their bicycle tours. This partnership underscores the significance of long-term collaboration in achieving lasting success and innovation within the travel and tourism industry.

Contact

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Website
https://rocketjones.com

Address
Rocket Jones Interactive
PO Box 2091
Fort Collins, CO 80522

Email
info@rocketjones.com

Phone
(970) 482-5790