

Case study: iPlay&Learn

Customer: O2

Project Type: Educational application for children

Platform: iPhone

“We couldn’t have developed *iPlay&Learn* in such a short timeframe with anyone but Penrillian. They helped us to shape our own thoughts and to understand what we were really looking for in the application.” Stuart Proctor, Solution Designer, O2.

Product Overview:

iPlay&Learn is an interactive iPhone application aimed at pre-school children. The application is intended to help prepare children for school and to keep them entertained through the use of a bright, colourful learning and activity zone.

The application concentrates on early learning development and ties into the Early Years curriculum through the use of touch screen games and voice prompts to guide the child through the menus and puzzles.

The Challenge:

O2 chose to partner with Penrillian in 2009 to support an internal conference on innovative thinking, having heard about Penrillian’s history of working with clients to bring ideas into reality and their unique collaborative approach to developing software.

At the conference, around thirty small teams of employees were each challenged to originate their own ideas for a new iPhone application. The winning idea, as decided by a panel of judges, would then be developed by Penrillian in conjunction with the winning team.

Each team were given the following objectives:

Objectives:

- To originate a new, innovative application
- To develop a mobile application compatible with the iPhone / iPod Touch

- To develop an application of high enough quality for upload to the Apple App Store

The judging panel, which consisted of members of O2, Penrillian and an innovation expert selected *iPlay&Learn* as the winning concept.

Method Deployed:

Penrillian had only three weeks of development time to turn this initial idea into a professional, complete iPhone application. Therefore, it was critical that both companies worked together cohesively from the start, with an open and agile approach to the development of the project. Penrillian had a team of seven people working on the application, including developers, testers and graphic designers.



With time of the essence, Penrillian opted for a six week approach to the development cycle. Each fortnight during this period Penrillian spent one week developing the application, leaving one

week for feedback and to set the goals for the next week of development. This allowed O2 to see the progress of the application and to prioritise the key elements that needed to be developed.

Penrillian’s approach is very different from the industry standard for developing software – as most software development companies usually work on projects for weeks or months before feedback is given to clients.

At the heart of Penrillian’s approach is the ability to put both time and cost estimates against selected features, allowing our client to monitor the scope and cost of the project, whilst retaining creative control.

“The process of working with Penrillian was fast and painless. They were extremely agile in the way that they responded to our feedback and helped develop the ideas. Penrillian’s approach was instrumental in helping us work as a unified project team to deliver the end product”. Stuart Proctor, Solution Designer, O2.

Obstacles:

A number of challenges arose during the development phase, but Penrillian's flexible working methodology meant that problems or omissions could be flagged by the developers before the customer became aware of them.

The *iPlay&Learn* project was very fluid and far from fully-formed when O2 first came to Penrillian, so it was important to first work out which ideas to keep and which to discard. The project was still growing in scope while the development process was already underway. As such, strict control had to be kept over the features that were to be implemented, the development time remaining and O2's budget.

Additionally, Penrillian helped to manage a project team from two different companies who were geographically far apart. This meant that a complex project had to be largely coordinated via teleconferences and email. For this reason, Penrillian made sure that there were daily teleconferences between the teams to ensure a unified approach to development.

Chris Allison, Software Developer at Penrillian, comments: "We were very positively influenced by O2's team. They showed strong leadership and knew where they wanted to go with the application. *iPlay&Learn* was an interesting and fun project to be involved with".

Results:

The whole process, from the initial brief to commercial deployment, took approximately two months.

iPlay&Learn is currently available as a free download from the Apple App Store. While this is an achievement in itself, it is also worth noting that no similar applications are currently available. The application saw 4,283 downloads from the App Store in the first month and with an app store rating of 4/5 these figures continue to rise. The *iPlay&Learn* application can be found here: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/iplay-learn/id342679644?mt=8>