



Delivered Efficiency

- Client won Pan Arab web Award 2009 for best website in Social networking category
- User Centered approach delivered competitive advantage to client by creating more engaging experiences for users, attracting users to the platform
- Leveraging on our cloud migration services, the client achieved reduction in total cost of ownership with on-demand, elastic storage and computing ability

Superior User experience drives growth for Social networking site operating in Arab region

A breath of fresh social media air– that was what we strived to achieve when client from middle east approached us to build a social networking platform primarily targeted to the Arab population.

It was mid 2008 – Social media fad was at its peak with new social networks being released every now and then. Some perished through the competition, but most others demolished into the history.

In this scenario we set out to build a new social networking platform targeted at the users in the Arab world. With Orkut banned, Facebook and Twitter yet to launch, the social networking market was still in nascent stage in the region. Opportunity lied in creating a differentiation and sustaining it over a period of time.

Some local platforms were operating in the region, but their penetration in the market was either confined by region or was marred by lack of features. There was no clear market leader, but the market was rapidly evolving.

This was opportunity that we set out to tap. Our objective was to build a social network platform that could

- Help people in the Arab countries to connect with family and friends
- Confine well with the local taste and preferences
- Be scaled to cater to million users, as and when need arises

Challenges

Ease of use

Since the social networking concept was still in its nascent stage in Arab region, ease of use was a prerequisite for success. Rich and engaging experience could boost chances of success of the platform by striking a chord with the population, majority of whom had no prior experience of using any social network.

Arabic and multiple language support

That none of the social network from the outside had still not penetrated into Arab region was primarily due to lack of localization of the look, content and language. The Arab culture demanded features that catered to the preferences of locals such as rigorous privacy options, ability to use Arabic text etc.

Non-availability of Arabic language support in development environments

None of the Rich Internet Application framework supported the right to left rendering ability required for Arabic language.

Scalability

Like any other social network, growth was expected to come exponentially. Key requirement of the design was to have ability to accommodate demand when a spike in demand may occur.

Time to market

For a volatile social network market space, Perennial team had to build the platform within tight time schedules to ensure that the product reaches the market at the right time.

“Perennial experts worked closely with us right from the concept ideation to concept implementation and from UX enablement to cloud migration making the application apt as well as cost effective. All thanks to their efforts that we won the Pan Arab web award for the best social networking site in 2009.”

- CEO, Fameego.com

Client Side Technologies

- Adobe Flex/AS3
- Flash
- Cairngorm Micro-architecture
- Perennial's RTL component library

Server Side Technologies

- Java/J2EE
- Blaze DS
- Hibernate
- MySQL
- ImageMagick
- Amazon Cloud Platform

Solution

Perennial worked closely with the client, understanding the requirements and mapping out a solution that could align well with the local population in terms of look and feel. We used RIA technology along with user centered design approach to deliver an exciting, elegant social platform. Following were the key ingredients of our success:

USER CENTERED DESIGN

We started development by creating user scenarios. These scenarios helped us understand experience bottlenecks and user preferences. This we followed by developing screen flow and navigation model. Once the specs were ready, our design team worked closely with the developers to build the platform. Such practice helped us create best experiences for the user in terms of appeal and navigation, engaging customer and increasing user stickiness— vital ingredients for success of a social network.

INNOVATIVE FEATURES WITH FLEX TECHNOLOGY

We built additional features for the website such as photo sharing, photo tagging, messaging, taps, reminders, gaming etc creating a distinct advantage for Fameego over other available social networks. The platform incorporated advanced features of Flex such as modules, deep linking, Runtime shared library, runtime style sheets, customized preloading, remoting with BlazeDS, Flex and Flash Integration, Cairngorm Microarchitecture etc.

CUSTOM COMPONENT FOR ARABIC LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Fameego is the first Flex based platform to be able to accommodate Arabic interfaces. For the purpose, Perennial created its own IP of custom components in Flex which could support right to left indentation.

ELASTIC STORAGE AND COMPUTING

In order to achieve scalability to support millions of users, the platform was hosted on Amazon EC2. This helped client achieve reduction in total cost of ownership with on-demand, elastic storage and computing ability.

ABOUT PERENNIAL SYSTEMS

Perennial Systems is a business and technology services company delivering IT solutions, consulting, systems integration and outsourced development services. We create value by successfully integrating people, business and technology to create effective, sustainable and scalable business ecosystems.

Features of the Application

- Fameego.com provides suite of communication tools for interacting with friends and family
- MyBoard— A dashboard of user profile, preferences, likes and dislikes
- Fameego— A dashboard of user friends and family tree
- Spot— User present location shared with his/her friends
- Album— User uploaded content such as photos, status etc
- Funboard— A collection of flash games to increase engagement of users
- Apart from that the platform gave localized culture specific look and feel based on user preferences or region
- Users are allowed to import existing contacts from other social sites
- Privacy control algorithms/rules are rigorous as preferred by Arab people