HOW CROPMETRICS CREATED THE MOBILE APP THAT REVOLUTIONIZED THE FARMING INDUSTRY
INTRODUCTION

A few years ago in Nebraska, CropMetrics discovered an opportunity to make the lives of farmers and agricultural specialists easier, and an idea for an app was born. With the idea in place, development began with an independent developer. Over time, however, as the initial developer grew busier with other clients, deadlines were missed and communication was lacking.

CropMetrics understood the importance of bringing this technology to the mobile world, and providing farmers with access to an easy-to-use app - an app that provides farmers with vital information to ensure that they optimize their crop yield, so CropMetrics needed to find an app developer who could make this happen—seamlessly.

After extensive research into other avenues, Venice Consulting Group (VCG) was hired to continue development. VCG was tasked with taking the web application and evolving it into a mobile application.
This case study explores how Venice Consulting Group took the CropMetrics Virtual Optimizer web application, enhanced it, and developed it into a mobile application. All through VCG’s Hybrid Nearshore Model, *on time and on budget.*
When CropMetrics approached VCG, they had already completed building the Virtual Optimizer web app; however, the app was in need of enhancements to take it further. Looking to push forward with development as planned, CropMetrics turned to VCG for help. VCG was tasked with the job of completing a list of enhancements on the web app by a firm deadline to meet the farming season. VCG met this deadline on time, and on budget.

Following the success of the first round of tasks, VCG was brought on board to take the application into the mobile world. CropMetrics recognized a need in the marketplace that presented an opportunity to develop an app to help farmers with their crops. Initially, CropMetrics’ main priority was to develop a web application that could predict and determine factors that can assist farmers in yielding optimal crops on their land.

Once the app was up and running successfully, they wanted to transition their data and technology to the mobile realm. With farming season right around the corner, and farmers eager to take to the fields with their new technology, it was critical that they act fast and turn the project around quickly.
The technology is a first of its kind. It has revolutionized agriculture by enabling farmers to view and record past growth stage data, and then couples this data with forecasted weather data to help optimize crop output. The app helps farmers better manage and optimize the yield from their crops on both a daily and yearly basis.

Agriculture may not be the first industry you think of when it comes to mobile app use; however, consumer demand has put pressure on companies of all industries to build mobile apps for their businesses. It’s predicted that by 2016 there will be 310 billion downloaded apps generating over $70 billion in revenue.
CropMetrics Virtual Optimizer app is available for download at the iTunes store and is compatible with iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch. It requires iOS 7.0 or later. Future versions will be compatible with Android devices and will boast new features.
Introducing a mobile app to the marketplace is a difficult and expensive process. First, you will want to be certain that there is a need for your app in the marketplace. Next, you will want to find a highly-skilled and experienced team to manage the development; a team with different skillsets and coding abilities.

“The first deadlines we set for VCG were tight, but they met them without hesitation or complication. We knew they were the right company to continue our development with. Teaming up with VCG allowed us to be involved in the process every step of the way, and opened our eyes to alternative approaches that we had not been afforded in the past.”

- Nick Emanuel, CEO, CropMetrics
Initially, it was challenging to get the farmers to use the web app; however, it wasn’t long before the farmers were comfortable with the web application and demanded a mobile version. They soon realized the ease and accessibility that mobile apps provide offer over web applications, and now the farmers are adamant that if it’s not on mobile, they’re not using it.

CropMetrics understood this need, acknowledging that farmers spend most of their time in the fields and not in front of their computers, and forged ahead with their mobile development. CropMetrics knew they would need to rely heavily on a strong development team, and chose Venice Consulting Group to be that fill that position.

The VCG development team started worked directly with CropMetrics. There were weekly status calls where they discussed the development progress and reviewed upcoming timelines. This was also an opportunity for the client to provide insight on the development of the application.

The prominent difference between working with the initial developer and VCG is the team approach that VCG brings to app development. From project management to development, the VCG team offered a well-rounded, cohesive process, making a positive impact immediately.
By using Venice Consulting Group’s Hybrid Nearshore Model, CropMetrics benefited from cost effective development while negating the risks that are often associated with offshore development. Development costs can be reduced by as much as 40% when compared to using a U.S.-based team.

In addition, nearshoring keeps the planning and development processes in the same time zone, as opposed to dealing with other outsourcing options such as India or China. This allows for smoother communication and business transactions. Lastly, resources utilized in this model share the same language and similar cultures, negating any communication issues that can result from outsourcing.

By transitioning to the Nearshore Model, CropMetrics noticed a marked difference in the ease of access to planning and development. CropMetrics were pleased that they were engaged and active in the decision-making process, and without hesitation or miscommunication were afforded total transparency with all parties involved in the project. Additionally, since everyone works in the same time zone, they benefited from immediate turnaround, while still maintaining a high quality of work.

CropMetrics found that having constant and consistent communications with the development team was vital to the completion of the mobile application. Meeting deadlines, having open communication lines, and total process transparency are all development features that VCG exhibited during the application development process.
The Hybrid Nearshore Model is perfect for start-up companies looking to take their app to market and since VCG follows an industry-wide agile process methodology, there are no surprises in development processes, starting from:

- Receiving initial user stories and requested features from the client.
- Calls are scheduled with the client to review the feature set and flesh out the details of the desired features.

Once a good understanding has been established, the full feature list is then estimated

- Based on the estimates and strategic priority, the client will prioritize the release schedule of each feature. VCG engages the client for the entire development lifecycle.

The process helps with providing flexibility in the development process.

- Multiple status calls help keep all parties aligned and eliminates inefficiencies that can come as a result from conflicting objectives.
- VCG also provides project summary reports on the first and 16th of the month to ensure both parties are happy with the progress.
- Clients have access to the project management tools so they can see updates in near real-time; where the project managers update these tools daily. This process ensures that the client can monitor the progress of their project and see what tasks the developers are working on.
VCG was able to contribute a team based strategy to this project that differed from the approach CropMetrics was using. Offering a diverse team comprised of specialists in each field, coupled with bringing development closer to home allowed us to develop this mobile app on-time and on-budget.

- Jake Ryan, President, Venice Consulting Group
Eliminated Risks and Frustrations:
Differences in culture can lead to misunderstandings that negatively impact your deliverables. Certain business cultures avoid confrontation by agreeing to everything while masking over problems, leading to missed milestones and increased costs. The shared business culture of the Hybrid Nearshore model means fewer misunderstandings and more on time and on target deliverables—with a dedicated U.S. based project manager to provide personalized oversight.

If you’re wondering how Venice Consulting Group can help you develop your next app, be sure to also download “Mobile App Development: Defined, Designed, and Built for Success (with Less Risk and 40% Cost Savings)”.

Final Takeaways: Using the Hybrid Nearshore Model CropMetrics Reaped 3 Key Benefits

1. **Less Pain:**
The Hybrid Nearshore Model delivers synchronized teams of experienced and motivated professionals in the same time zone. No more midnight calls, crippling email delays, or broken video conferencing with teams halfway around the world.

2. **Reduced Costs:**
Nearshore firms offer reduced rate structures when compared with US-based resources. Using the Hybrid Nearshore Model, businesses may save up to 40% of what they would spend in-country. And when compared to an offshore model, companies can avoid the costs travel expenses, midnight conference calls, and re-work arising from missed milestones.

3. **Eliminated Risks and Frustrations:**
Differences in culture can lead to misunderstandings that negatively impact your deliverables. Certain business cultures avoid confrontation by agreeing to everything while masking over problems, leading to missed milestones and increased costs. The shared business culture of the Hybrid Nearshore model means fewer misunderstandings and more on time and on target deliverables—with a dedicated U.S. based project manager to provide personalized oversight.
CropMetrics is a precision agriculture company focused on advanced agronomic solutions while specializing in precision irrigation management. The company’s mission is to develop and supply precision management technology solutions that increase water, nutrient and energy use efficiency while fostering natural resource conservation.

CropMetrics is a leader in precision irrigation management with the introduction of the first commercially available full-service variable rate irrigation program. CropMetrics continues its pursuit in innovation and strives to deliver ultimate value to the grower customer.

The seamless integration of these unique offerings provides the framework for large-scale, data-driven, precision agronomic services that are readily marketed and supported by professional trained Precision Data Specialists.
VENICE CONSULTING GROUP is an Internet + Mobile application development company specializing in user experience and process optimization. With a valuable combination of regulated industry experience and technical expertise, VCG applies the latest proven technologies to meet our clients’ current objectives and improve their bottom line. VCG offers high-value and low-risk cost savings through its Hybrid Nearshore model.

We create powerful and entertaining iOS products and corporate applications that manage your business and interact with your customers. We are experts in developing software products that harness the promise of community and the power of collaboration using the latest technology.

CONTACT VCG TODAY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SERVICES

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