

Mobile banking case study: There's a better way to do it – Agile helps you find it



The problem with the Waterfall approach to software development is that you can't change your mind. With Waterfall, there's an assumption when starting out that you know exactly what you need, when it will be delivered, and how much it will cost. It never works this way.

In almost every development project, we guarantee that, once clients start seeing what's possible, they come up with new ideas, shift the goalposts, and change the scope. This is the way DevOps should be – Agile, flexible, and accommodating.

But for our client, a financial services provider with a presence in three African countries, its software development journey was anything but Agile.

The challenge

Our client – let's call them Bank X – needed a mobile banking application but did not have the in-house specialised mobile development skills or capacity to address the high demand for digital services and channels from customers.

Its initial approach was to outsource development of its customer engagement channels, using a third-party customised-off-the-shelf solution. But the problem with buying something that everyone has, is that you get what everyone has got. That's no way to differentiate yourself in a competitive market.

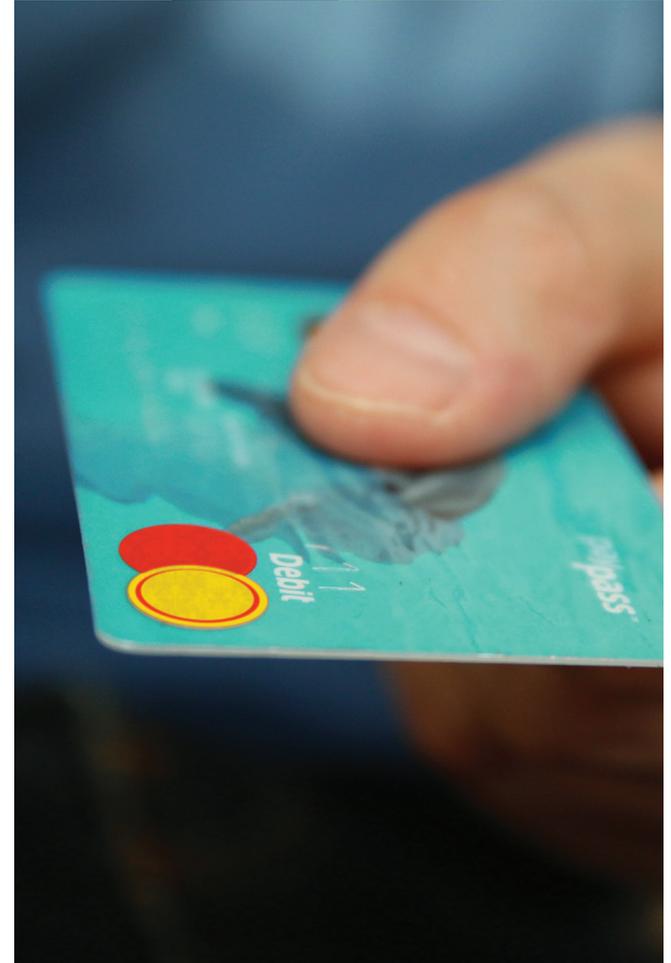
Why? Because customers expect more from their financial institutions. To differentiate on customer experience, service providers need to respond to customers' changing needs – fast. The only way to do that is if they own and control their

communication channels. But because Bank X developed its app on a third-party platform, it had limited control, and all changes had to be routed through a software development team that was based in the UK and charged in Pounds.

Eighteen months later, Bank X had a functioning mobile banking application, but it didn't provide the flexibility the bank needed to better serve its customers. It was slow, unreliable, error-prone, and had limited functionality compared to competitor apps. Making changes to features and functionality was difficult, which impacted the customer experience.

Bank X knew it was time to bring its channels in-house, so that it could own its customer interaction. It was ready to take a DIY approach but needed the support of a trusted, skilled partner.

We pitched for the tender for an Agile development partner to develop Bank X's Internet banking, mobile banking, USSD services, open APIs, and corporate banking channels. We were shortlisted to build a demo app – and we won.



Speaking about the partnership with iOCO, a representative from Bank X said: “The highlight working with iOCO was their total professionalism, open mindedness, and vast knowledge and experience of delivery in the Agile framework. Our business is also maturing in its Agile journey and we were able to use the iOCO team as a soundboard as it related to Agile and its implementation. The biggest learning for us as an organisation has been that focused teams deliver at a fast pace, with a good cadence and good quality.”

Our solution

Bank X appreciated the importance of the customer experience. And so, when we came onboard, we adopted a design-led approach. Together with Bank X’s project team, we mapped out the user journey and built our technology around it.

One thing was clear: Bank X’s out-of-the-box solution was a major obstacle to agility. Changes took a long time to execute and, when they were finally delivered, were not up to scratch. So, we started from scratch.

We built an entirely new infrastructure that was more than just a like-for-like replacement. The new platform offered a better user experience, better functionality, and gave Bank X the freedom to remove the features its customers no longer needed and add new ones that it hadn’t considered during the scoping phase.

That’s the beauty of Agile: you can change your mind. Agile accommodates scope changes and prevents wasted investment. It lets you test new features, tweak existing ones, and scrap bad ideas that once seemed like good ones.

Once Bank X started seeing what was possible with Agile, they come up with new ideas, like additional self-service functionality and scan-to-pay: two features that weren’t in the original brief but that we were able to accommodate within our project timelines.

The best part? The whole project took five months. Working with Bank X, we delivered more and better value in a third of the time, and for less cost, than its previous solution. We built once and will be able to launch the app in all three markets as part of Bank X’s rebranding – including two markets that don’t yet have mobile banking. This will position Bank X as an innovator and first mover.

Looking ahead

Bank X now has full control over its customer engagement channels via a modern native application and a UX designed around customer requirements. It can respond to, test, and deploy new functionality, quickly and cost-effectively. It’s now looking to replicate this functionality internally, because once you get a taste for Agile – done right – it becomes addictive.

No matter where you are on your Agile journey, if you’re ever stuck and don’t know how to move forward, don’t just outsource – find a business partner that will not only solve your technology problems but also your way-of-work problems. Someone that can facilitate internal discussions about where you want to go as a business and can advise on the best solution design and implementation to help you achieve success.