CASE STUDY

MyNeighbor adds SMS messaging in a single development cycle

A marketplace for neighbors to share resources was an easy build-out with Bandwidth APIs

MyNeighbor is expanding the sharing economy by providing a way for neighbors to lend and borrow items and services through the use of an app. The neighbor-to-neighbor marketplace helps borrowers save time and money and allows lenders to raise funds for themselves or a favorite charity.

MyNeighbor offers more than convenience. The mobile app strengthens the community by providing a way for neighbors to get to know each other while reducing waste and avoiding unnecessary consumption. A person who needs a power washer for a one-time job can borrow one from someone nearby instead of purchasing a costly item that will sit in the garage for years at a time, or someone who likes dogs can pet-sit for someone down the block. The neighbor with the item or service helps someone in the community while earning a little cash for family expenses or a local non-profit. And in the process, relationships are established.

Situation: Reduce risk by reusing technology

As a startup in a new market, MyNeighbor wanted to limit its risk during early trials. The company expected initial traffic to be low, so it needed to keep investment low as well; high upfront costs or recurring fees would reduce the value of the marketplace from the start. At the same time, MyNeighbor expected traffic to grow quickly, so its solution had to expand along with its user base. A scalable, pay-as-you-go service was the answer.

MyNeighbor was highly focused on ease of use, both for internal purposes and for users. "As a company, we needed an easy path from prototyping to development," said Sebastien Martel, Co-Founder & CTO of MyNeighbor. "And from the users' point of view, we had to give neighbors a simple onboarding process and flexible communication options."

The company wanted to use existing solutions for anything that wasn't core to lending or borrowing. According to Martel, "If we had chosen to build out our marketplace ourselves, we would have had to do a lot of engineering and re-engineering. That would have slowed our time-to-launch and put our expenses through the roof."

Instead, the company wanted to reuse existing software instead of writing its own from scratch. The best way to do that was to use APIs, prewritten bits of code that access the functions of established technology solutions. And to shorten the development cycle even further, MyNeighbor decided to use APIs written by a provider in order to get up and running with speed and ease.



" Bandwidth gave us the telecom power that used to be available only to big companies with big budgets. Their Communications API Platform makes it possible for anyone with a good idea to build a business without building a big infrastructure. Small and lean is what innovation looks like now."

SEBASTIEN MARTEL
CO-FOUNDER & CTO,
MYNEIGHBOR

Solution: SMS in a single sprint

"MyNeighbor needed an API provider that could get us ready for business fast and scale with us as we grow," said Martel. "Cost was a big factor, but we also wanted a provider that was willing to work with us." After performing due diligence on several vendors, the company chose Bandwidth. "We never felt like we were talking to a website," said Martel. "It felt like a partnership from the first call."

The Bandwidth Communications API Platform makes using APIs easy with a fully-featured user interface that lets anyone with basic web development skills create voice and messaging applications. The platform includes a rich inventory of how-to guides, sample code, and API helper libraries that shorten time to launch.

MyNeighbor had to be as convenient as possible for users. "We wanted users to be able to handle a single transaction seamlessly across emails, SMS, and our website," said Martel, "so a conversation started on one medium could be continued on another without missing a beat." Bandwidth had both the APIs and the deep knowledge of telecom to deliver that functionality out of the box. "We spent six weeks doing research and prototyping," said Martel. "Once we decided how we could best use SMS to add value to the solution, it just took two weeks—a single development cycle—to integrate SMS functions into MyNeighbor."

When MyNeighbor was evaluating API providers, it looked for a vendor with good data privacy rules. The marketplace is based on neighbors trusting neighbors, so identification verification is important, and Bandwidth's APIs made it possible for MyNeighbor to identify users simply and easily by sending links to their mobile devices via SMS. The API lets the company verify a customer's identity and then text private information to the customer's mobile phone.

Results: 'Mobile First'... fast and robust

With the help of Bandwidth, MyNeighbor achieved its goals of a quick prototype and a quick launch. "The Bandwidth folks were very keen on seeing us integrate successfully," said Martel. "But we barely needed tech support because the documentation was so complete." Once MyNeighbor was operational, there were no technical issues to worry about. "It just works," says Martel. "We pay for the service as we need it, and we don't have to think about it any further than that."

MyNeighbor is successfully using Bandwidth's Communications API Platform to provide the best customer experience. The APIs seamlessly enable MyNeighbor customers to start a conversation at their desks and continue it on their mobile devices or other computers. Early customer feedback is positive, and MyNeighbor is adding more functionality via the APIs as the marketplace evolves.

ABOUT BANDWIDTH

Bandwidth helps companies of all sizes to create innovative communications solutions. Offering voice and text for on-demand service apps, a seamless multi-screen experience for large enterprises, and a category disrupting WiFi-first mobile phone service, Bandwidth's solutions are shaping the future of how we connect. At the core of Bandwidth's offering is a platform that allows companies to launch and scale next generation applications using the nation's largest VoIP network, without the telecom headaches. This communications platform as a service (CPaaS) includes a wide range of solutions anchored around phone number provisioning, voice calling, messaging and emergency services, all built on Bandwidth's carrier-grade network.