

Software Development for Startups and Fortune 500 Companies



Garrett Ross
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Mobelux

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CEOCFO: *Mr. Ross, what is the concept behind Mobelux?*

Mr. Ross: We wanted to get smart people together to make great software under one roof. That is why we started the company seven years ago and that is what we are striving to do today. Initially it was just pure mobile native products and it has grown into platform development, branding and creating not just products but companies.

CEOCFO: *What makes software great?*

Mr. Ross: To us, I think a lot of it comes back to usability and experience. We really care how user experience is created and that goes from the little nuances of how something looks and feels to the subtle animations to how they access with speed and simplicity what is important within that application.

CEOCFO: *When you are first meeting with a company, is there an aha moment when they understand the depth of your offering; it appears to be a cut above normal? On the other end, are you able to feel out which companies want to meet the effort that you need to have the greatest product?*

Mr. Ross: We do not consider ourselves a typical services company. We started our company initially by making a product, it just so happens that Tumblr acquired our first product and we became a services company in helping grow one of the largest social platforms out there. We think a little bit different when we come into solving problems. We are about shipping and making sure as much as possible that our clients are going to succeed. I think the difference is there are always gaps that happen in making a product, so who is going to cover those gaps? Sometimes it may be that we do it and step up, finding ways to get innovative and sometimes it is being creative with financial things. Sometimes, it is the client understanding and working with us and working together to come to a needed resolution to make sure that product can ship. I think that is the intangible element with us. When we are talking to someone, we try to get an idea of why they are building what they are building, what is their approach, and try to convey enough of our story of how we approach building things. You try to find commonalities that they care about those same attributes and that helps us fish through some of the opportunities that we look at.

CEOCFO: *What types of companies are typically coming to Mobelux?*

Mr. Ross: It is a little bit of a mix and it's starting to change even more because I think the economy is changing and the culture is changing. In the beginning, it was primarily start-ups. We are a great runway for start-ups. People have an idea of how to put together a full team and we can fill in gaps of that team as well as provide a full technology and branding capability for them. Over the last couple of years, it is starting to transition to bigger enterprise companies that are needing an accelerant to help their companies solve a problem and create something. They are finding that working with agencies like ours helps them solve those problems pretty fast and efficiently with great quality.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach potential clients and how do they find you?*

Mr. Ross: The funny thing is we have not done much looking. I would say the most effective form of advertising that we have done has actually been through a podcast sponsorship (ATP) and it just so happens that the podcast that we advertised on is run by Marco Arment, who we personally know and have worked with. He was one of the co-founders of Tumblr. We developed the Instapaper for Android for hi as well. I think it was just the right audience when it came out with a natural endorsement by Marco. That was our best form of advertising so far that we have found. We also develop some

of our own products, like Elixir or Carousel. These typically create good opportunities as they convey capabilities that are proven. Our best source of work though really is through referrals from our existing clients.

CEOCFO: *What types of projects would you prefer to work on given a choice? Are there areas that most companies do not see as necessary that you think should be in the mix when you are developing a product and a project?*

Mr. Ross: We have primarily been a mobile-minded company since the beginning and enjoy projects that have a mobile variant to them. We like solving problems that are definitely beginning to take shape in the mobile industry. For the last couple of years, it has basically been how you leverage for your company mobile tools whether, it is a native app for a customer or employee or maybe bringing your website to a good mobile experience. Those are common things that people are addressing. Now we are getting into the age where it is more about how mobile technology interacts with the hardware as you go into the stores, interacting with environmental surroundings, and figuring out what types of things you can do to make that a smarter, more engaging experience is a challenge we have enjoyed working on. Those are things that we are excited about. It is tied to mobile, there is a mobile variant to it but it is more than just the screen in your hand.

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CEOCFO: *How do keep up with the trends and technology and how do you design something for a client so that it can move with the times as quickly as needed?*

Mr. Ross: It is a tough question because no matter how great you are at making something, it requires change over time and it is hard to know exactly how everyone responds to it. Keeping up with the latest technology trends for us first begins with how we have hired. Our employees are the ones who really love what they are doing. They keep us up as a company on what is important and what is coming up because they really do care. The exciting thing is that software can be a great medium where you can identify adoption barriers, make subtle changes and gather a lot of valuable information to help guide those changes to continue to improve a product. From our standpoint, we try to use modern technologies, coupled with solid design principles and great proven user experience techniques. We try to follow that type of formula to create great products, but also being open, knowing that things need to adapt and change and humans are going to want to work together and continue to evolve a product based on user feedback.

CEOCFO: *Mobelux has been recognized on the Inc. 5000, so clearly business has been good. How do you continue on the same path?*

Mr. Ross: I think for us it is continuing to focus on our quality of work and finding ways to improve our value to companies that we can make a more significant impact on. The other area of focus is looking at smart opportunities where we can invest in different types of startups and products to overall grow our value. Mobelux is a company that has carefully built a foundation. We took our time growing because we wanted to build the type of team that can support a lasting company. You have to go through the different battles together and ship a certain amount of products together to make that happen. At Mobelux, we have a valuable niche and that is our employees. We are proving that you can make great quality software in the city of Richmond, Virginia that is accepted at a national level. We are involved in the community; we put together hackathons and support educational opportunities. So the formula for our future success? Continue to focus on building a great team, ship amazing products, and build lasting relationships with our clients.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

For more information visit: www.mobelux.com

