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Appstem is creating purpose-built apps that serve real needs in people’s lives



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“As technology continues to evolve into newer technologies like augmented reality, virtual reality and AI, the future is pretty exciting and we’ll be there. Helping our clients with whatever’s next.”
- Robert Armstrong

CEOCFO: Mr. Armstrong, would you tell us the concept behind Appstem Media?

Mr. Armstrong: Appstem is a full-service mobile strategy, design and development agency focused on creating apps that serve a purpose. Based in San Francisco, Appstem has delivered over 200 apps with a team of experts specializing in strategy, QA, development and UI/UX design. Our clients range from leading brands like Tesla, Enterprise and Johnson & Johnson; to high-growth startups like DUFL, Hubbub and EmployeeChannel.

CEOCFO: What do you understand about creating apps that work well?

Mr. Armstrong: We’ve delivered over 200 apps; our work is the result of a highly experienced team who have been working together for years. We believe that the combination of the right process and a complete team of mobile experts is the right way to build successful apps. We partner closely with our clients to combine deep market expertise and customer knowledge with our talent.

CEOCFO: Would you walk us through a typical engagement?

Mr. Armstrong: Our engagements vary quite a bit, we’ve worked with early stage startups and large enterprises who come to us with an idea or a problems and we’ll work with them through the entire process from strategy, discovery, design, development, QA, launch and ongoing maintenance and support. We’ve even had companies come to us that need additional help to speed up a project and we’ve inherited projects from other outside firms. We’re pretty flexible and happy to help where we can.

We are currently working with an early stage startup that is looking to launch prior to the upcoming NFL season. We are working with them to build their product from the ground up. This entrepreneur came to us with an idea and we helped them through the different phases of our process. We helped them with the planning, strategy, and requirement gathering, which is part of our discovery process. From there, we move into our design process and the deliverables are mobile apps. Then our design process including wire frames, a full visual designs. We help them with their branding too. We’re doing development for iOS and android as well as backend development. This is something that we are currently working on from soup to nuts. There will be QA testing and then publishing to the public app markets this summer.

CEOCFO: Are clients coming to you because you can provide soup to nuts if they need it?

Mr. Armstrong: Yes, a majority of the clients that come to us value having one team that can do everything from ideation strategy, design, development and support. They’re typically looking for an experienced team that is local and can move quickly to create high-quality products that are consumer-ready. They’re looking for a trusted partner that can help them through all phases of the process. However, we have inherited projects from other firms and even in-house teams that are looking for additional help to get their product across the finish line

CEOCFO: *Why is it so hard to find an app that works smoothly?*

Mr. Armstrong: In any software product where the technology is rapidly evolving, with new software and hardware it can introduce new software bugs. That's why we like to use application performance management (APM) software in our apps to track any issues that may come up. We also have a QA team to thoroughly test the app on different devices before we as part of our quality assurance process before publish the apps. It is also important to work find a partner that is familiar with mobile app user interface design and best practices to make sure the app is intuitive and easy to use.

CEOCFO: *When you are designing an app, how do you stay in-touch with the user's mindset?*

Mr. Armstrong: While anyone can build your app, do you know how it will stand out with 5 million Android and iOS apps out there? We start out with really understanding your audience and why they will use your app and keep coming back. Research and metrics are a big part of our playbook. From there we apply the nuts-and-bolts of years of experience building apps across all kinds of industries for many different use-cases.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to prospective clients?*

Mr. Armstrong: A large amount of our clients find us through referrals. People also find us online. We do some tradeshows in an effort to highlight our work and portfolio. We do that a lot of work in the healthcare industry and attend a lot of the major digital health shows. Last week we were at the Internet of Things tradeshow down in Santa Clara which focuses on smart devices and IoT. A lot of those hardware devices need some sort of mobile or web interface so we do a lot of that integration. These devices can be used for anything from consumer products to medical devices, really anything these days.

CEOCFO: *How do you stand out at a tradeshow?*

Mr. Armstrong: There are a lot of exhibitors at some of the shows we attend. The way that we stand out is by highlighting our expertise in that specific niche or vertical. We attend shows that we have strong expertise in, where we can provide some value to prospective clients and address challenges they're facing. We do this by highlighting relevant work samples of the products we have launched in that vertical or with a specific technology. People are receptive of that because when you look at a specific vertical they typically have similar problems and we can solve a pain point they're having.

CEOCFO: *How is business?*

Mr. Armstrong: Business is good. We've had a banner year so far and on track to have our best year ever with strong growth. As we continue to do new projects and grow the team, people see us as a trusted design and development firm in San Francisco and we continue to work on more exciting projects.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us more about the interaction with your client when you are working on a project and what do you look for in your people?*

Mr. Armstrong: Something that makes us unique is we do not offshore or outsource, everything is done by our team in San Francisco and Portland, Oregon. None of our work is offshored. I think having a dynamic agile team all in the same time zone is important. The team that we have is comprised of software engineers, UI, UX designers, QA testers, project managers. We're very agile and can move quickly. It's a huge advantage for us. We need to be flexible to meet our clients' needs and timelines. Our project managers will interface with the clients through our process to make sure the product is delivered on time and on budget. We use a variety of different software systems to help us manage everything including tools for project management, communication, and design prototypes to help drive efficiencies and communication not only internally but with our clients.

CEOCFO: *What surprised you as Appstem has grown and evolved?*

Mr. Armstrong: What has surprised me since we began Appstem is how popular and how prevalent mobile apps have become. It's hard to think back 11 years ago before Apple introduced the app store. It has really changed the way we go about our daily lives and has created large companies and industries that didn't exist 5, 10 years ago. The technology has changed a ton not only with software but the hardware as well. As technology continues to evolve into newer technologies like augmented reality, virtual reality and AI, the future is pretty exciting and we'll be there. Helping our clients with whatever's next.

CEOCFO: *Why choose Appstem Media?*

Mr. Armstrong: We have been in business for over eight years. What makes Appstem unique is our team, our experience and our reputation. We've created over 200 software products and have worked in every vertical. Some of our clients include Tesla, Kaiser Permanente, and Johnson & Johnson, and hiring senior level talent in California in Oregon, and the reputation that we have within the industry of putting out and launching successful and high-quality projects.