

Global Streaming Content Company Leverages In-Country Payment Instruments

— APPLAUSE CASE STUDY —

“IT WAS A MASSIVE LIFT FOR US TO EXPAND AT THE RATE WE DID IN NEW MARKETS. THERE WERE SO MANY MOVING PARTS. APPLAUSE REMOVED A HUGE AMOUNT OF — WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN — ADDED COMPLEXITY, AND STILL, WE NEVER COULD HAVE RECRUITED AND MANAGED THE NUMBER OF NEEDED TESTERS AROUND THE GLOBE.”

QA MANAGER, GLOBAL STREAMING CONTENT COMPANY

CUSTOMER

Providers in the highly competitive and ever-changing streaming content industry must continually meet the seemingly insatiable content demands of customers around the world. Everything from sign-up to search, viewing to billing must be friction free — and at best — provide an easy-to-use and pleasant user experience. It's key that streaming content providers avoid the show-stopper: payment fails and other payment-related issues.

A large, global streaming content provider with multiple brands was focused on providing seamless payment experiences to its existing global customer base and wanted to ensure that payments didn't interrupt expansion efforts into new markets. It needed a way to ensure that bugs didn't escape to production, and after apps were released, that they performed as expected with live customers.

CHALLENGE

The global streaming content provider wanted to ensure that all elements of their product worked without issue, but particularly needed to ensure that payment errors wouldn't be a factor in the customer experience, as failed payments could easily mean brand abandonment. With so many streaming content options in the market, the provider understood the high stakes around payment/onboarding,

COMPANY

Anonymized

INDUSTRY

OTT Streaming Content

TESTING TYPES

Payment Testing | Functional Testing | Localization Testing

APP TYPES

Web | Mobile | iOS | Android

CHALLENGES

- Recruiting and managing thousands of testers around the world in new markets
- Ensuring various payment methods worked flawlessly around the world on a wide variety of devices, OSes and local networks
- Checking for related functional, UX and localization issues

RESULTS

- Discovered significant functional, payment and localization bugs that could have caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost revenue
- Enabled a “liquid workforce” for streaming content provider's organization that can be scaled up or down as needed
- Provided peace of mind for global streaming content provider around pre-launch, launch and post-launch testing

or regular errors in billing, that might send customers in search of other entertainment channels.

Though the streaming company had more than 100 QA staff, the majority of those personnel were working on other QA issues during launches, such as the scaling requirements of the various subscription models and the upgrade and downgrade paths between these models. Even with the sizable QA team, they still lacked in-country payment methods, access to cards in the various markets in which they were launching. They also lacked access to the in-app purchases only available in specific countries.

SOLUTIONS

The streaming content provider teamed with Applause to initially help with functional testing that included payment testing for launches. Applause started by working with one of the provider's content channels and eventually expanded to test for four of their channels. Applause did regression testing for the company and executed beta testing for all release candidates. Teams from Applause would sign up and make a small purchase to do a live smoke test immediately after the app dropped. This phase of testing also included localization validation to ensure that all digital interactions were properly translated and that there weren't any offensive design elements when checked against local social norms.

After seeing success in using globally available Applause testers around the world, the streaming content organization decided to expand its work scope with Applause. In this new phase, Applause focused principally on payment testing.

Applause would execute payment testing approximately four weeks before launch. Teams tested twice each day for all countries, each time with a 1-2 hour turnaround window for results. Wherever testers were located, they would test to return results to the streaming firm by 9 a.m. ET U.S., and then again for 5 p.m. ET U.S., at which time the streaming provider would execute backend testing for invoice generation, reimbursement processes, application of discounts, ability to place accounts on hold and similar payment workflows. The streaming content company also routinely issued custom testing requests for a wide variety of areas that required rapid turnaround, and Applause would leverage its global crowdtesting community 24/7/365 to fulfill these needs. In addition to the aforementioned testing cadence, Applause also tested at launch as well as a week after launch.

Applause helped the streaming content provider roll out this pre-launch, launch and post-launch payment testing across New Zealand, Australia and the U.S. initially, followed by a first phase for Europe, then 60 countries in Latin



America (including many very small islands). After this, Applause assisted with the second phase of the European rollout.

After these major rollouts, Applause continued to execute payment testing, providing less regression testing and a new focus on subscription model changes: new subscription types, changes to cost or new functionality around subscriptions. Members of the community tested retention methods and offered feedback on account cancellation processes.

RESULTS

Since the start of its work, Applause has leveraged thousands of testers around the world. For example, for the Latin American launch, Applause leveraged more than 550 testers all at once. In total, for both European rollouts, Applause recruited, vetted and managed more than 1,100 testers. The testing for the Latin American and European launches included over 2,700 unique payment types (different banks), alternative payment methods such as Klarna, Elo, Mercado Pago and others in a total of 100 countries/territories. This fulfilled the major need of the streaming content provider, as it simply did not have access to testers with real payment instruments in all markets into which it planned to expand.

At a minimum, three payment instruments were used in each country, but there were often as many as six or seven. Testing varied from country to country. For example, in Korea, Applause testers tested 15 distinct banks. And, in each scenario, Applause testers used real payment instruments.

Since much of the testing was done in beta, payments rarely failed in production; occasionally, testers would uncover issues around fraud detection. However, in beta testing, Applause typically uncovered issues with incorrect pricing, incorrect messaging, taxation requirements and broken integration of alternative payment methods. After the app was released to production, testers would typically find problems with pricing displays on pages as well as issues of the app not being correctly pushed through to android, Apple or Amazon, for example.

When Applause tests payment flows and functional elements of subscription flows, it also provides feedback on localization issues. Testers assess localization on a wide variety of devices and OSes. For example, the streaming content provider's app would not start on one of the world's foremost smart TVs when a local user attempted to open it in Simplified Chinese. Distinct from localization insight, Applause testers also found functional issues, for example, infinite loading after a tester attempted to unsubscribe from the app. In another example, pricing information was incorrectly displayed for a significant 90-day promotion in Europe.



When taken from a subscriber's perspective, all of these bugs represent major issues. In the first scenario, hundreds of thousands of Simplified Chinese users would not have been able to access the app. In the second, subscribers wishing to leave the platform would have been unable to do so, perhaps adding to existing frustrated feelings about the brand. Finally, in the incorrect pricing scenario, new users would have been frustrated with initial impressions of the app and its service, perhaps feeling that they had been given a bait and switch around promotional pricing.

Through working with Applause, the streaming content provider continues to benefit from access to thousands of unique payment instruments around the world, functional and localization testing, feedback and insight, and reduced strain through an increased bandwidth for its internal QA team.



ABOUT APPLAUSE

Applause is a world leader in testing and digital quality. Brands win or lose customers through digital interactions, and Applause alone delivers authentic feedback on the quality of digital assets and experiences, provided by real users in real-world settings. Unlike traditional testing methods (including lab-based and offshoring), Applause responds with the speed, scale and flexibility that brands require and expect. Applause provides actionable testing results that help development teams build better digital experiences faster, and release them with confidence. The world's leading brands – including Google, American Express and Dow Jones – rely on Applause as a best practice and release partner to deliver digital experiences their customers love.

Learn more at: www.applause.com