



Evelyn Friel works in Champions Travel Ltd where she is the Financial Controller/Office Manager. She is a qualified Chartered Accountant who has worked in various industries before joining Champions Travel Ltd in 2017. Champions Travel is currently participating in a case study as part of the Generation Data Erasmus Project in conjunction with Letterkenny Institute of Technology. She is a past student of the Institute, gaining her Degree in Business Studies and her Master in Accounting with the Institute. This post is Evelyn's account of the Implementation of an API (Application Programming Interface) solution within Champions Travel

Champions Travel – API project

Background

Champions Travel is one of the largest official ticket agents for sports events in Ireland, UK and across Europe. We hold official agent status with most of the top English Premier league clubs and work closely with a network of official agents across the UK and Europe to ensure we can always meet the demand for any event. We provide an online bespoke live order database which is accessible to our global wide customer base 24/7.

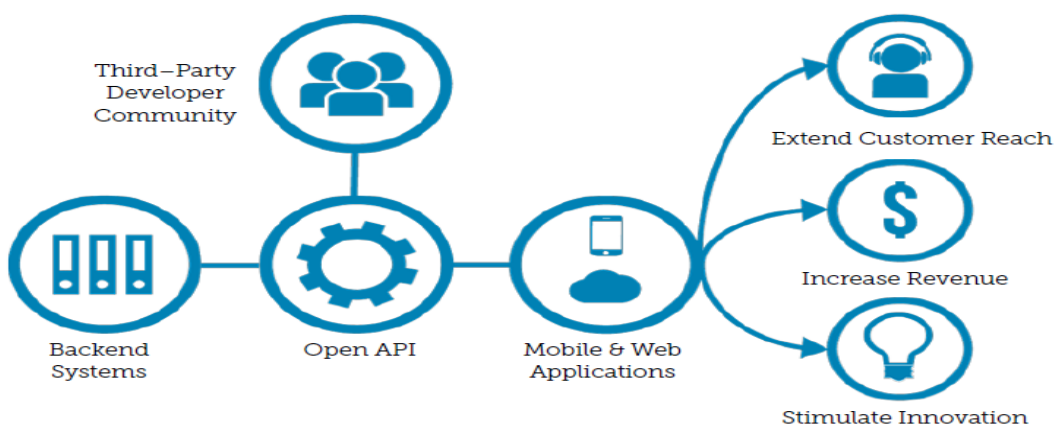
As a company we like to do our best to keep a competitive edge in our industry. From listening to potential and existing clients, we knew our next step was to provide an integrated data service solution. From our research and speaking to the experts our best options were to introduce an API solution.

An API (Application Programming Interface) allows our clients to request data from our system for use on their own site. This allows them to list our stock directly on their site. This eliminates administration work for our clients and benefits sales for both parties through automated services.

Groundwork

The first step for us, when beginning the project, was to learn what an API was and how it could work for us. Although we are a fast-growing company, we did not have the IT expertise in house and had to rely on our third-party supplier to provide the service. We looked at the return on Investment for the project and we knew instantly that the cost of implementing the project would pay for itself very quickly.

Champions Travel API Solution



Building the API

The API was unique to us and had to work with our bespoke database. This work was very much out of our hands and we had to rely on the work of the third-party supplier. We as a team ensured that we kept on track of the progress and were keeping in line with our project timelines.

As with most IT projects, timeline delays are normal and we were no different when it came to this project. The roll out to customers was delayed a few months.

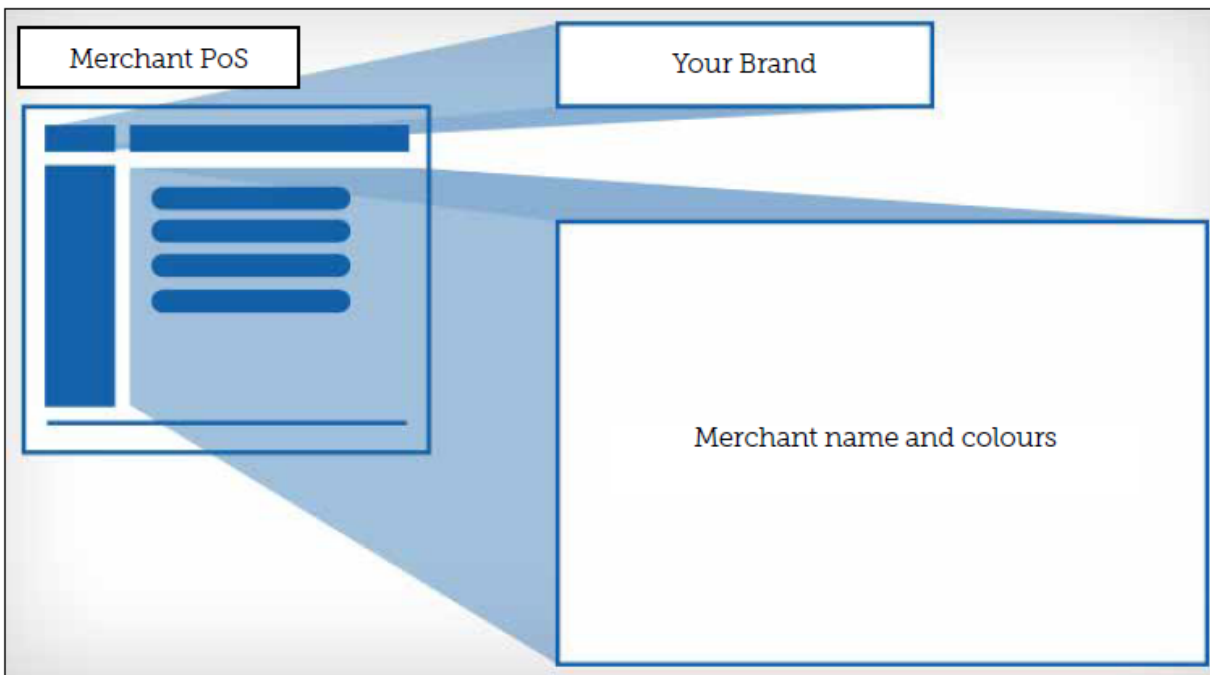
Testing out the API

Once we were ready to roll out, we used our own e-commerce website to test the viability of the API. This allowed us to test and iron out any bugs within the API and to make any changes we felt it needed before we went live with our customers.

It was at this stage we learned that for successful implementation and smooth integration of an API our customers would also require access to IT expertise with programming skills. We knew this was not an issue for our bigger clients as they were already aware of this and had the resources in place.


However, our smaller customers needed another solution. We went back to the drawing board at this stage and found a second solution that we could introduce; this is now our white label solution. This solution uses iframe technology, which allows our clients to integrate with our site in the same way they would a payment gateway.

Champions Travel are delighted to announce that we are now able to offer a new White Label Service for all our trade partners. This service will allow trade customers to easily integrate their existing website with the Champions Travel system, using Iframe technology, similar to that used by payment gateways.



Rolling out our API

Once we were ready to go live, we ensured we had customer service resources in place with our third-party supplier to provide customers with the knowledge and help they needed to allow a smooth integration with our site.



It is a great benefit to us to be able to provide a solution to all our customers. We were able to serve those who wanted the API and those who wanted to integrate with an alternative solution.

We now have existing and new clients getting involved on a daily basis. This was been a great step for the company, we are seeing growth in sales with these clients and we are seeing huge time savings in administration work, as more and more orders come directly through our online service.

What we learned

Research and doing the groundwork at the beginning of the project is key. You need to know at the beginning what is involved and what you want to achieve.

Ensuring you put the time into getting the right person to complete the project for you. This was huge for us, as we did not have in-house expertise.

Although this project was an IT intensive project, it is important for everyone involved to understand how the applications work and that they can easily explain the offering to customers.