



Debenhams Launches a Progressive Web App as First Step in Digital Transformation



WEBSITE

[debenhams.com](https://www.debenhams.com)

MOBILE REVENUE

+40%

DAYS TO LAUNCH

90

SPEED INCREASE

2x

When UK and global department store Debenhams set out to upgrade its mobile site, the team knew speed was the key to competitive differentiation. According to Ross Clemmow, Managing Director Retail, Digital, Food and Events and Paula Hassett, Director of Customer Experience and Operations, the biggest pain point for mobile shoppers that Debenhams needed to address was speed. And it needed to fast.

“Debenhams Redesigned”

The retailer had already announced its “Debenhams Redesigned” strategy, a transformation plan based, among other things, on the deeply-researched conclusion that mobile would unite online and offline shopping and build better relationships with customers.

“Shopping had shifted decisively toward mobile so we wanted to elevate the experience for customers and harness the opportunity for our business,” says Clemmow. “Beyond mobile, we were working from the perspective that we needed to undergo a digital transformation to be ready for the future of commerce.”



Ross Clemmow, Managing Director Retail, Digital, Food and Events at Debenhams

Debenhams’ existing mobile site was experiencing 60% year-over-year growth, but conversions lagged behind desktop. Because customers were dropping off at various points along the shopping journey, refinement of the entire purchase process was needed. A complex environment of older legacy systems didn’t make integrating a new mobile site easy, but in order to capture mobile traffic in time for its peak trading season, Debenhams needed a better solution and quickly.

1st Step: A Progressive Web App

“PWAs had the credibility of being a Google-driven initiative and the promise of faster speed and smoother, app-like experiences,” says Hassett. Additionally, the retailer wanted to get ahead of mobile-first SEO indexing.

“We knew we needed a PWA fast so starting from scratch didn’t make sense as Mobify showed great results in converting mobile traffic into revenue and had a fully-packaged platform for building PWAs,” Hassett says.

Adds Clemmow, “The Mobify Platform enabled us to drive revenue with mobile enhancements whilst updating our legacy systems behind the scenes. It was the perfect first step for our digital transformation.”

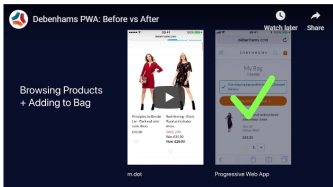
Mobify’s front-end PWA experience is separated from the backend through an integration layer, which enables Debenhams to make backend architecture changes without impacting the customer experience. Also key to Debenhams final decision was Mobify’s product strategy, which included the opportunity to scale to other channels beyond mobile in the future.

Debenhams chose experienced implementation partner Sapient Razorfish, who helped develop the customer experience using agile methodology and digital best practices. They were key to assuring a great customer experience within the tight peak trading deadline.

Revenue-driving PWA in 90 days

The Debenhams PWA went live after 3 months of development. “Immediately noticeable was the fresh user interface, which looked like a slick app,” said Hassett. “We didn’t want shoppers to have to download an app or chase updates.”

Also key was friction reduction: with the new mobile site, a Debenhams customer looking for a dress could find the page quickly, view the details page, select a size, and add to bag for checkout – all in 20 seconds. On top of this, PWAs keep working in offline mode even with intermittent connections.



See how long it takes to browse products and add to bag on the old Debenhams website versus the new PWA.

“We’re finding the typical shopper journey now takes less than half the time,” says Hassett.

Right from the start, the Debenhams PWA was clocking at double the speed of the previous site. With speed and a newly-elevated mobile customer experience has come a big payoff: the new Debenhams PWA is driving more revenue. **The retailer reported a 40% lift in mobile revenue, and a 20% increase in conversions.**

“These are stellar results on mobile,” reports Hassett. “The Mobify PWA allowed us to leapfrog the competition for a fraction of the cost.”

Solid base for the future

Debenhams now views mobile, and the new PWA, as the primary means of customer interaction, enabling it to reach more customers – where they want to engage – thereby building loyalty and personalization.

Says Clemmow, “We see mobile as unifying our channels and our interactions with customers, as well as broadening our reach.” To that end, a tablet-optimized version of the PWA is underway to support colleague and shopper interaction in store, with more channels to come.

Clemmow summarizes Debenhams’ unique approach: “Being able to quickly deliver a fast, affordable mobile customer experience that is also high-converting alongside other architectural upgrades is the formula for our digital transformation.”