APPRICA GAMES

Marketing Plan

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Apprica Games is a game design firm specializing in educational and entertaining mobile applications for school-aged children in developing global markets. We advocate unrestricted access to education to empower youth in developing nations, by leveraging the rapidly advancing use of personal mobile technologies across the world.

Our first iPhone app, “The Leone Ranger,” is an educational adventure game designed to teach young children in West Africa about the Ebola virus, safe sanitation, and preventative measures in a safe and light-hearted environment. Apprica has created this app in response to the need for properly educating young people about the Ebola virus, since a vast number of locals have many misconceptions about how the virus is actually spread, and sadly this has severely weakened the physical, social, and economic health of the affected regions. Through the combination of a simple storyline, fun graphics and interactive mini games, Apprica will raise awareness of the virus and provide practical sanitation instructions in a manner that is simple and easy for young children to understand.

With its unprecedented theme, highly niched target market, and minimal download costs, Apprica believes that “The Leone Ranger” will gain rapid popularity amongst children, and eventually result in a change in behaviour that can meet our estimated goal of decreasing the number of reported cases of Ebola by 30% in West Africa by July 2015.

By collaborating with other global humanitarian agencies to sponsor, distribute, and maintain accessibility to our products, Apprica hopes to pursue innovative technological solutions for other developing nations through research and development, bringing new products and services to this market in the near future.
2. ABOUT US

**Company Name:** Apprica Games Inc.
**Headquarters:** Stratford, Ontario, Canada
**Owners:** Amy Seo, Jessica Nancoo, Grace Lai, Lily Jiang, Sneha Karl, Jason Cho

Apprica Games is a game design firm specializing in educational and entertaining mobile applications for school-aged children in developing global markets.

**Mission Statement:** Through the development of informative user-friendly software tools, Apprica advocates unrestricted access to education to empower youth in developing nations, by leveraging the rapidly advancing use of personal mobile technologies across the world.

**Core Values:** Apprica strives to…
- Alleviate social injustices by breaching the global digital divide
- Pursue innovative technological solutions to improve literacy, teach financial management skills, raise sanitation and health awareness, provide access to information, and enable economic growth for developing nations
- Promote unrestricted access to education and accessibility of information to enable others to make healthy and responsible life choices
- Study the needs of its audience and accordingly create interactive, engaging digital experiences with meaningful and relevant content
- Provide simple and practical teaching tools to supplement the activities of humanitarian organizations, that is easily distributable and complements their ongoing efforts in other countries

**Business Goals for Apprica’s First Product, “The Leone Ranger”:**

*Specific.* Create an educational and entertaining iPhone game app to raise awareness of the recent Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, break social stigmas of this virus, and teach young players on signs and preventative measures.
Measurable. Drastically decrease the number of reported cases of Ebola by 30% in Sierra Leone, which is currently estimated to be 1.4 million cases by January 2015, doubling every 30–40 days.

Attainable. Distributing the app to children via humanitarian aid workers in Sierra Leone.

Relevant. Raise awareness of the Ebola virus and provide practical sanitation instructions in a manner that is simple and easy for young children to understand.

Time-based. Launch the app and share with industry partners in December 2014, and stagger the spread of the Ebola virus by July 2015.

3. OUR PRODUCT

Apprica’s first iPhone app, “The Leone Ranger,” is an educational adventure game designed to teach young children in West Africa about the Ebola virus, safe sanitation, and preventative measures in a safe and light-hearted environment.

Unlike the majority of mobile game apps available, Apprica focuses on the often neglected market of developing regions and hopes to leverage the wide use of smartphone capabilities in Sierra Leone to educate young people about the current epidemic in their region.

“The Leone Ranger” is unique and superior to the competition in the mobile game industry because of its unprecedented theme, its highly niched target market, and its minimal download costs. Although there are a few similar existing games (see wash-united.org), there is currently a lack of free online or mobile games that address the serious issue of Ebola, and as a result Apprica faces very few competitors in the market. Through the combination of a simple storyline, fun graphics and interactive mini games, the app is able to lighten the serious nature of the subject while simultaneously educating children about how to stop the spread of Ebola, and how to protect themselves from this disease.
Rather than seeking profits, the app will be free to download on the iTunes store for mobile users. Apprica hopes to collaborate with other global humanitarian agencies to sponsor, distribute, and maintain accessibility to the app within Sierra Leone. This would include the CDC, WHO, UNICEF, SOS Children’s Villages, and Save the Children. Besides the initial download onto the mobile device, the app does not require an internet connection in order to be used.

4. TARGET MARKET

Although the setting of “The Leone Ranger” is based in Sierra Leone, Apprica’s target market are all children ages 8 to 12 residing in West Africa, and currently facing the dangers of the Ebola outbreak. The three main affected nations include Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. The game is designed for both boys and girls who either come from families of varying sizes and any range of income, are orphans, or are under the care of humanitarian organizations in the region.

Based on these demographics and the current circumstances in West Africa, Apprica has created this app in response to the need for properly educating young people about the Ebola virus. In fear of the disease spreading, many schools have been closed down, resulting in many children missing out on critical time for their education. Additionally, children suffering from Ebola are often ostracized and isolated by their community. In fact, there have been families so afraid of contracting the virus, that they have neglected to take proper care of their infected children. “The Leone Ranger” aims to counteract this tragic stigma, provide access to information, raise awareness of preventative measures, and educate people about how the disease is actually spread.

In addition to these reasons, children are the perfect audience for this app because they tend to learn quickly and can act as teachers to pass on important facts about the virus to younger siblings, parents, friends and neighbours. With this market in mind, the game is designed to be age-appropriate, friendly and intuitive as the controls are simple, objectives of the mini games are clear, and Ebola is presented in an educational and non-scary way.
By utilizing a game app as the platform for Ebola awareness with fun pixelated graphics, interactive games and adventure storyline, young children will be more interested in playing while gaining valuable knowledge on a serious, global matter. We hope to invest in building a brighter future for the people of West Africa.

5. COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

As previously mentioned under section three, Product, Apprica faces very few competitors in this highly niched, untapped market. However, we can attempt to examine the products of these several companies who provide similar offerings to improve our own product and strategy, by studying their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The main competitors we will be focusing on are the small group of game developers in Africa, such as Co-Creation Hub, Planet Rackus, and Leti Games, Kola Games, and Plegde51.

**Strengths:** These African game development operations primarily develop online and mobile games that generate local content, emulating real life experiences. Because of this localized focus, they are able to design highly customized content for their target demographic, rather than creating games that must scale widely. By understanding the needs and culture of their target users, these developers can adapt their product to accommodate their usage habits. The combination of the locally relevant content and emphasis on user focus makes these companies very strong contenders in the game application market. However, there is a severe shortage of educational tools designed for Sierra Leone or parts of Western Africa. Additionally, what differentiates “The Leone Ranger” from other existing products is the fact that most games only address general sanitation practices, while Apprica tackles the specific issue of Ebola.

**Weaknesses:** Since there are only a handful of African game developers in the industry, their products often experience bugs in the programming and errors in the mechanics of the game play. For example, some games possess “inconsistent rules that make the validation of points and progress less effective and render the user less engaged” (Hattery Labs, 2012). They also do not create realistic game environments, and place little emphasis on how the teachings in the game will actually translate into a change in individual behaviour.
Due to their minimal resources, these developers are unable to evaluate the influence and success of their games, and consequently have not fully considered the context of their users. While these games may gain popularity and a large user base, they frequently do not result in successful behavior change. Therefore, it will be extremely crucial for Apprica to adopt a new metric system to monitor success, and track how user engagement will eventually result in a change in sanitation practices.

Opportunities: Developers in the African gaming industry, including Apprica, can take advantage of several major external opportunities that contribute to the potential success these companies can achieve. Firstly, mobile technologies in the continent have “experienced unparalleled growth compared to other innovations in these regions” (Hattery Labs, 2012). Cellphones have become much more affordable, dramatically increasing its use for daily business and social activities. In addition, networks are now becoming easier and less expensive to develop, and access to the internet has spread rapidly across Africa. As coverage continues to spread to even remote regions of the continent, both urban and rural dwellers are now actively using data plans on their mobile devices. Lastly, as technical education programs improve and African developer communities grow in number, the market for localized content on cellphones will increase at a steady pace (Hattery Labs, 2012).

Threats: While there are several promising opportunities Apprica can look forward to, we must also recognize and prepare for the serious threats facing developers in Africa. The potential for success and growth can be limited by the unreliable infrastructure of the regions, inexperience of users in rural areas, and numerous technological problems. The faulty electric systems in cities inhibit large institutions from developing properly functioning infrastructures that can support electricity itself as well as internet connectivity. It is important to note that our app does not require an internet connection in order to be used, aside from the initial download. However, the electricity issue is not approaching an effective resolution in the foreseeable future, due to the “web of political and commercial arrangements” (Hattery Labs, 2012). In response to these environmental limitations, Apprica must engage the full capabilities and resources of its nonprofit investors to do its best to establish reliable infrastructures to support our technologies.
6. DISTRIBUTION AND DELIVERY CHANNELS

“The Leone Ranger” has been designed as an app for iOS devices, and will be made exclusively available on the iTunes store on mobile devices, free for all users with an Apple account to download. Since Apprica will be developing the game and then partnering with larger established nonprofit organizations, they would be considered the middle player in this delivery channel who will ultimately promote and distribute the app directly to the target market. After contacting these organizations, explaining the concept of our app, and gaining their insight on further steps to refine our product, we will then negotiate a reasonable value of the idea and labour invested in the product.

7. ROLLOUT PLAN

In order to promote the new app, Apprica will post signs throughout towns in West Africa. These posters will primarily be displayed in public spaces, such as schools, offices, hospitals, clinics, churches, and humanitarian aid agencies. (Budget: $5,000) (Estimated time required: 5 months)

We will also place advertisements in social media networks, such as Facebook, to appear in the profiles of parents and young people. Once the user clicks on the advertisement, they will be redirected to the website for “The Leone Ranger.” This app landing page will feature an overview of the game, facts about the Ebola virus, as well as a link to download the game from the iTunes store. (Budget: $12,000) (Estimated time required: 8 months)

The major part of our promotions will be conducted through the efforts of humanitarian aid workers in West Africa, sponsored by North American and international charities, specifically those concerned with improving health care systems or the well-being of children in developing countries. These workers will reach out to communities to teach or treat those affected by Ebola, and will recommend our app to further educate their children. (Budget: $30,000) (Estimated time required: beginning January 2015, continuous).
8. CONTINGENCY PLAN

A few marketing challenges that Apprica can potentially face during the roll-out of “The Leone Ranger” include...

...issues with the users’ mobile devices, or the app’s incompatibility with certain operating systems. In order to prevent this from occurring, we will ensure that sufficient user testing is conducted on all prototypes prior to launching the app, so that we can diagnose and fix any technical flaws that may arise.

...losing market share or user interest to other game applications in the market. Apprica will attempt to deal with this challenge by heavily investing in the promotion of its competitive edge, which is the fact that it bridges two unique genres of education and adventure. We will also strive to continually enhance the game’s entertaining and engaging value by periodically inventing new levels and story lines for players.

Apprica also does not possess a comprehensive or in-depth knowledge of the cultural and societal practices in West Africa, and consequently the product could possibly be met with skepticism and a negative reception of the serious content matter. To mitigate the effects of this potential challenge, we will attempt to gather as much information available from scholarly and media resources on an ongoing basis, in order to make wise and informed decisions on the subject to incorporate into the game. Apprica will also work with industry partners who already have a longstanding relationship with these countries in West Africa, to gather their feedback and insight as to where this project is heading.

9. PRICING STRATEGY

A significant element of Apprica’s goal in promoting unrestricted access to education and accessibility of information to youth in developing regions of the world, implies that our products will be free and easily available, so that we do not alienate customers and ensure money is never a barrier for them.
Based on this mission, our app “The Leone Ranger” will be free to download on the iTunes store for all mobile users. The app will be distributed to children, much of which are raised in impoverished homes and cannot afford to purchase entertainment and educational tools. Since we are also trying to promote an educational campaign about the Ebola virus and safe sanitation practices, we recognize that not many young children would be as eager to play such a game, compared to other non-educational games available on the market. As a result, the minimal download costs will offer an incentive for them try out the game without any cost or risk involved.

The project will largely be funded by the financing of larger nonprofit organizations, to cover the expenses of research and development, skilled labour, programming, product design, promotional tools, training programs for field workers, and distribution of the app. Rather than selling the game to these organizations, Apprica will instead partner alongside them to develop and implement the product in the market.

10. FUTURE OUTLOOK

In the next five years, Apprica plans to grow its business by forming partnerships with other global humanitarian agencies (including CDC, WHO, UNICEF, SOS Children’s Villages, and Save the Children) to sponsor, distribute, and maintain accessibility to the various digital technologies we create in the future. As stated in our core values, another one of our goals is to pursue innovative technological solutions for developing nations through R&D, bringing new products and services to this market.

Apprica will achieve this growth by reaching out to other nonprofit partners who complement our mission to mutual advantage; connecting with their already established customer base and skilled workers to promote and distribute our products; making use of their capital to invest in further projects; seeking financing for research, implementation of new technologies, and staff training.
We will adjust our marketing activities to reach these goals, according to the new partnerships and financing we will have acquired. Instead of only directly advertising the app to consumers via humanitarian aid workers in their respective countries, Apprica hopes to harness the investment of larger industry partners to promote our products through television commercials as well as social media channels for each country.

11. REVIEW DATE

Apprica will review its marketing plan at least twice every year, in order to examine and accommodate the changing needs in the market, as well as the reception of our product. The first review will take place early January 2015, after the app has been launched and shared with industry partners in December 2014. The next review of the marketing plan will be carried out after July 2015, our estimated time goal to decrease the spread of Ebola.

12. SOURCES

Hattery Labs Report: WASH 2.0
http://www.impatientoptimists.org/Posts/2012/06/How-mobile-games-can-help-improve-sanitation