



UKTI puts 51Degrees in touch with business decision-makers

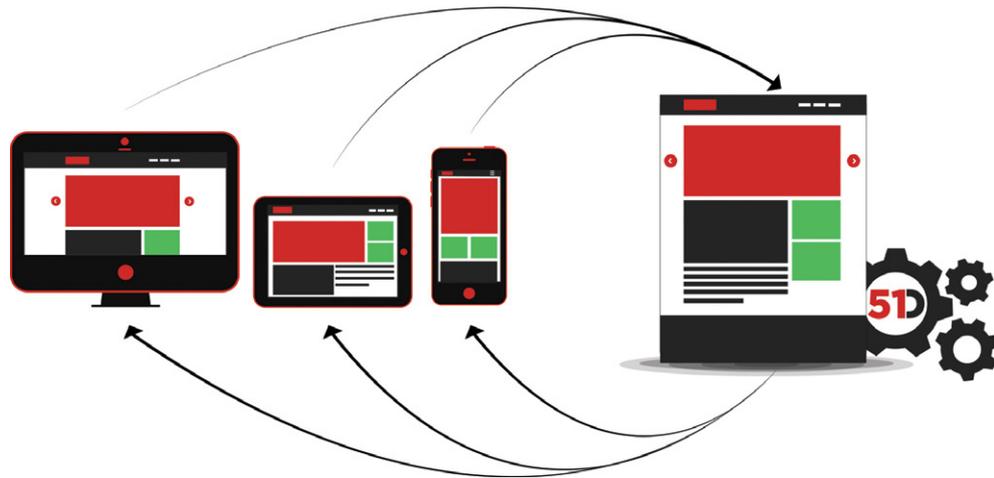
Fast facts

Company: 51Degrees Ltd

Industry: Information Technology
and Services

Target Market: North America

www.51degrees.com



UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) helped fast-growing mobile Internet start-up 51Degrees broaden its horizons. Expanding from its roots in technical innovation, the company is now building relationships with business decision-makers in a growing number of countries around the world.

51Degrees serves a need that's increasingly urgent in a world where the internet has gone mobile: it allows sites to detect the type of device being used to access online content, and tailors web pages specifically for that device, cutting out extra data transmission and processing chores.

"What I saw was that there was all this digital content being built around the world for the big screens found on laptops and desktops. It was pixel-perfect, but that was not translating well onto mobile phones. It was like watching

a big-screen TV through the letterbox," says James Rosewell, 51Degrees' founder and CEO. What's more, the system was 'horribly inefficient', since a lot of unneeded data, including large images, was being sent over wireless data networks, and devices were wasting power shrinking those images so that they could appear on the screen.

51Degrees' service began life when James created an open-source software package aimed at solving these problems. The software was initially distributed for free to interested developers, and quickly caught on with websites and service providers - it is now used by 1.5 million sites globally, with growth averaging 10 percent in 2013.

In some ways, 51Degrees' path to export was the reverse of the typical situation: in its case, the product was popular outside the UK from the beginning, and the question was how

to build a business around it. The company's answer was to provide extra services around the software: the open source program itself is free to use, but customers pay for the features required by large websites, and for data files that add support for the latest devices.

After two years this business model started to pay off, particularly outside the UK - 95 percent of the company's revenue is from abroad, with North America being the largest market by revenue, and other important regions including South Africa, Australia and India. As the business began to grow, James came into contact with UKTI at the Mobile Mondays networking event in London, and entered its competition for a place at the Mobile World Congress trade show in Barcelona, Spain. Winning a spot in that competition was the beginning of a new chapter for 51Degrees. "We went to Mobile World Congress in 2013, and it was fantastic.

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James Rosewell, founder and CEO of 51Degrees

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More importantly, the show brought 51Degrees into contact with a different type of client from the technology-focused developers it had dealt with until now. “Whilst you might think a trade show like that is not important, it is when you want to raise your brand with decision makers and people who aren’t developers,” says James. “We were talking to senior executives, to more senior people from design agencies. They knew there was a problem, but they didn’t necessarily know the answer. On the back of that, they started to refer us down to other people within the company.”

Starting from that experience, 51Degrees began to change its positioning, shifting from being purely a “tech company for geeks” to using its technical experience to provide authoritative business information. The company began to provide market data, including the share held by competing mobile hardware vendors across different national markets, something that helped raise its profile in the press and with network operators.

In February 2014, 51Degrees again joined UKTI at Mobile World Congress, and in March 2014 formed part of the British delegation to CeBIT in Hannover, Germany, an experience that helped James appreciate the size and potential of the German market. In both cases, UKTI was instrumental in helping 51Degrees access a different breed of customer. “The important thing is making the connection with the leaders of other businesses. It’s very hard to do

that over the internet. Business leaders are too busy leading their businesses to engage in social media,” says James.

In engaging with trade shows, the guidance provided by UKTI has been invaluable. “Providing access to trade shows is a very important service that UKTI provide, because it helps smaller businesses make what is a big investment that little bit easier to justify,” says James.

The export market remains of paramount importance as 51Degrees looks to the future, with plans to further engage in the US market and potentially establish a base in Sydney or Melbourne. “The challenge ahead for us is how to support those international markets, and that’s where we see UKTI providing assistance for the future,” says James.

The UK and USA

The US is the largest economy in the world. With GDP almost twice the size of China, the US represents an attractive market with opportunities for UK technology companies across a range of sectors. The US spends almost twice as much on R&D as the UK, has one of the strongest technology clusters in Silicon Valley and has a strong technology investment community. Exports from the UK to the US have grown on a rolling basis by 4% in the last few years, with export goods worth £13.4bn over the year. UK SMEs are finding real success currently with SMEs accounting for over £1 in every £5 of goods exports.

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UKTI was delighted to support 51Degrees in its business overseas.



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